Resolution of the Rail Action Committee in Germany

“The struggle at Deutsche Bahn is not over with the strike ballot, it has only just begun”

Rail Action Committee
30 August 2023

After intensive discussion, the following resolution was passed overwhelmingly on Tuesday evening at a meeting of up to 70 active and former railway workers and their supporters in Germany. A detailed report from the meeting will be published by the WSWS.

Rail Action Committee resolution of 29 August 2023.

The Railway and Transport Workers Union (EVG) has stated that a narrow majority of 52.3 percent accepted the arbitration offer by Deutsche Bahn. Almost two-thirds of the members reportedly took part in the ballot.

We consider this to be a vote of no confidence in the EVG and an expression of huge opposition. Although the EVG exerted massive pressure and the Federal Executive Board recommended acceptance, barely a third of those entitled to vote decided to support the conciliation result.

Despite all the arithmetic tricks of the Federal Executive Board, the fact remains that the arbitration result means a massive reduction in real wages. The EVG states that the average wage increase will be 14.2 percent. Even though it is not clear how they arrive at this percentage, it does not even cover the losses from the last contract.

In 2021, citing the coronavirus pandemic, the EVG made enormous concessions to Deutsche Bahn (DB) in its so-called “reorganisation collective agreement.” With a term of 24 months, they agreed on a salary increase of only 1.5 percent. However, according to the Federal Statistical Office, consumer prices rose by 17.1 percent in the same period. The price increases for food, energy and rents were much higher.

In addition to this reduction in real wages, the EVG also agreed to an increase in work loads in exchange for the supposed increase in personnel costs. Working conditions are already unbearable in many areas.

The new contract shows that the EVG apparatus does not represent the interests of the members, but those of the DB group.

The DB board is backed by the federal government, after all DB is fully owned by the federal government. As was already the case at Deutsche Post and in the public services at federal state and municipal level, the government is pushing to impose severe cuts in real wages.

The government is using the Ukraine war, which is being fuelled by NATO, for a huge rearmaments offensive that is devouring hundreds of billions. This is supported by all parties in the Bundestag (federal parliament) and the trade unions. At the same time, the corporations and banks are showered with more and more cash gifts, which are recouped by cutting social spending and wages.

This development has only just begun and is accelerating. It is taking place in every country in the world. In the US, 110,000 railway workers threatened to paralyse traffic last year. They were stopped by the intervention of the Biden administration, which issued a legal ban on strikes. In Britain, railway workers fought for 18 months to defend their pay and conditions. Then last week, the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union announced the de facto end of the strike.

The struggle at Deutsche Bahn is therefore not over with the strike ballot, it has only just begun. The struggle to defend living standards, wages, jobs and conditions can only succeed if it is organised, led and

© World Socialist Web Site

politically conscious. This is the most important lesson from the contract bargaining round at DB. Therefore, the Rail Action Committee must be strengthened and expanded.

At its founding meeting, the Rail Action Committee decided on two basic principles:

> First: We stand up for the principled defence of workers' rights. This means that the rights and needs of workers and their families take precedence over the profit interests of investors, shareholders and speculators.
>
> Secondly: We strive for international unification and cooperation. We deliberately address our call to permanent and temporary workers, colleagues of all nationalities, whether they are members of a trade union or not. This is because we will not let ourselves be divided! For us, international cooperation and the coordination of cross-border struggles are of utmost importance.

Therefore, the Action Committee sets out to tackle the following immediate tasks:

• The action committee must be built up in all locations to take the resistance against the cuts in real wages and the deterioration of working conditions into our own hands.

• The new contract and the methods used to impose it must be exposed. This concerns the result of the vote and the way it was achieved. We call on colleagues to inform us about possible irregularities in the election. We also need reports on how the EVG and its works council reps exerted pressure to get the arbitration offer agreed to.

• The consequences of the new contract on working conditions must be documented. We also ask colleagues to inform us about the actual changes in their working conditions. Report on the effects of the contract and which works councils agree to which undermining of conditions. We will report this on the WSWS, stand up against the deterioration in our pay and conditions and mobilise fellow workers.

• To build and coordinate a network of local and workplace action committees, we will exchange information regularly in nationwide meetings.

• International cooperation is important. Workers everywhere have similar experiences and face the same problems. We will promote communication and common action across sectors and borders.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site