

30,000 postal workers demonstrate in Berlin against amendment of postal law

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On Monday, almost 30,000 Deutsche Post/DHL workers demonstrated in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin against the planned amendment of the Postal Act, which is expected to bring about a further deterioration of working conditions and endanger the jobs of tens of thousands of letter delivery workers.

The legal move is part of a decades-long process of privatisation and deregulation of formerly state-owned infrastructure companies. In addition to the postal service, this process also affects Deutsche Telekom and the railways, as well as countless municipal enterprises. The federal government is thus pursuing the goal of freeing up these companies for the enrichment of financial investors and in this way increasing exploitation.

The demonstration was the product of the close and routine collaboration between the Verdi union and the Deutsche Post management. It was not a strike, but a company meeting, supported and paid for by management. Verdi is not concerned with the interests of the workers, but with maintaining the competitive advantages of Deutsche Post on the backs of the workers. That is why they had only called out postal workers to participate and not other logistics workers.

Because many workers have no confidence in these hollow protests organised by Verdi, only a fraction of the approximately 200,000 postal workers in Germany showed up despite the elaborate organisation. Between February and April, Verdi had overruled an overwhelming strike vote of 86 percent of its members at Deutsche Post and imposed a wage settlement on workers that was far below inflation.

Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* distributed a leaflet to participants analysing the consequences of the planned amendment to the law and calling on all logistics workers to join together in rank-

and-file action committees, regardless of their company or union affiliation. These committees must be committed to the grassroots and take the fight against the amendment of the Postal Act and the inhuman working conditions into their own hands.

Despite Verdi's careful orchestration, workers' determination to finally confront the decades-long downward spiral was also clearly felt at the demonstration in Berlin. In conversation with the WSWs reporters many participants expressed great interest in the action committees. Many warned that tens of thousands of jobs at Deutsche Post alone are in immediate danger.

"The state wants to change the postal law to our disadvantage," one delivery worker told WSWs. "This puts tens of thousands of jobs at risk. We would then only deliver on five days in future and our representatives who take over on our days off would end up on the street. A lot of work would be handed over to other postal companies, with worse conditions. We already know this game from what happened with parcels."

Asked about the perspective of the action committees, he replied, "A joint struggle is exactly right and would be necessary. The event today is actually not a strike at all, but an internal event of Deutsche Post. It was organised mostly by management, who provided transport and even the food."

Asked about the need for a joint struggle of all delivery service providers, another delivery worker said: "Colleagues at the other delivery service providers should have the same rights as we do. The people at Amazon and the other delivery services are already at the bottom. There should be no deterioration, but an improvement for all: The same good wages and working conditions, not dumping-level wages." He

added, “Rural areas will die off in terms of postal delivery if the law goes through like this.”

“I’ve been against the privatisation of Deutsche Post for 25 years,” said a delivery worker who had travelled from Lake Constance with several colleagues: “Tens of thousands of jobs are at stake if the postal law goes through. For the new recruits it also means less pay.” Her colleague added: “We don’t only want to protect our jobs, but also those of other companies. People at Amazon and Hermes should no longer be hounded and have no more time pressure.” He said it must be about improving working conditions for everyone.

“My colleague of many years travels twenty kilometres by bicycle every day. She works in the village,” reported a retiree from near Düsseldorf who travelled to the rally in solidarity. “They always save on the workers, never on the managers’ salaries. It’s been like this for decades.”

A postal worker who had been working at Deutsche Post since 1980 reported: “When I started, the work was varied and the relationship with our superiors was good. You were still trained. Then there was a lot of outsourcing and today you are just a number to your superiors. What new recruits have to do is back-breaking work. If you do that for 40 years, you break.”

A 59-year-old employee who has worked for Deutsche Post for 42 years said: “I am here for the youth who are no longer trained at all. The work is getting harder and harder, the conditions are no longer reasonable. There is a lack of important work equipment.”

Another long-time postal delivery worker notes, “Our union president is also on the supervisory board of the company, this interweaving of the union and the company is really worrying.” He adds, “The main utilities should all be nationalised. This concerns telecoms, water and basic services, waste disposal and hospitals. Instead, the exact opposite has taken place over the past decades.”

In response to a WSWS reporter’s comment that the slogan “Workers of all countries unite!” has never been more relevant than today, a postal worker said: “Nobody talks about Marx any more, although he should really be praised to the skies. He was right—everything in his books has come to pass.”

The class confrontation at Deutsche Post is part of a wave of international working class struggles from

Royal Mail workers in the UK to UPS parcel delivery workers in the US. But everywhere the union bureaucracies play a key role in isolating the struggles from each other and thus stifling them. To push through their demands, workers therefore need their own organisations and an international perspective.



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