

Germany: Defend rail jobs and working conditions against the government, Deutsche Bahn, and the union apparatus!

Rail Action Committee
5 August 2024

We call on all Deutsche Bahn workers to join our rank-and-file Rail Action Committee to prepare the defence of jobs and the functioning of rail transport as a whole.

The announcement by Deutsche Bahn (DB) boss Richard Lutz to cut 30,000 jobs is a frontal assault on all rail workers. We are also addressing our colleagues who work in administration in particular. We will not be divided.

The administrative jobs that are to be destroyed will not be cut in the real “bloat”—the thousands of board members, managers, division heads etc. who are highly paid by DB in its numerous companies. These are the ones who carry out the job cuts; and the devil does not cut off his own claws!

According to DB, the jobs to be cut are “first and foremost” in administration—i.e. not directly on the trains, in stations, in workshops or on the tracks. But they are still essential for the operation of the railways. This would affect workers in accounting, procurement, planning, IT and so on.

The cutbacks in these areas are just the beginning; jobs are also to be cut in all other areas at a later date.

The announcement that “first and foremost” it will affect the administration is part of an arrangement between DB top management and the two trade unions representing rail workers, the GDL and EVG. The GDL has already agreed to the job cuts “if they take place in the administration and not in the direct [rail] area.”

If the job cuts were then extended to the rails, including train drivers, the EVG would nevertheless agree to them since it expressly supports “scrutinising and questioning processes and structures within the company.”

The unions and management are seeking to play rail workers off against each other and divide us in order to prevent a joint fight in defence of all jobs.

If they are successful, only the highly frequented and therefore profitable lines will remain of the once state-owned rail and railway transport system. This would be the inevitable consequence if rail transport and the rail network are organised according to their “competitiveness” and “profitability” and not according to the needs of society and ourselves.

For economic reasons, the goal is not seeking more passengers and more freight by expanding services or reducing road transport due to climate change. Fully utilised rail routes are in themselves “economical” and “competitive.”

A rail strategy paper released to the press last week emphasises that in future, long-distance trains should only be run where demand is high. There, the main routes could be extended to half-hourly intervals. A “reliable basic service” should be offered in the regions “where it is economically viable.”

This is the code for further route closures. At the end of June, citing a confidential letter from DB to the Federal Network Agency, news weekly *Der Spiegel* had already reported about line closures, particularly in eastern Germany.

Since the initial privatisation of the railways in 1994, more than 500 lines or sections with a total length of more than 5,200 kilometres had been closed by the end of 2021, according to the Federal Railway Authority, around 12 percent of the network. Rail traffic has increased, freight traffic by 80 percent and passenger traffic by 47 percent (source: Pro-Rail Alliance).

Now further closures, cutbacks and rationalisation are

taking place at the expense of rail workers, the general population living in urban areas outside the major centres and, not least, the climate.

Our workloads are already extreme. Fewer and fewer colleagues have to do more and more. Many are switching from DB to other rail transport companies or leaving the industry altogether. In our experience, the worst situation is at DB Cargo. In recent years, massive cutbacks have driven the entire group to the wall. We are paying for the extreme workloads with our health and often with our lives.

Now this is to be extended in an intensified form to all parts of the DB Group. And to what end? Every last drop of profit is to be squeezed out of us, just so that the German government can earn its required return of 5.9 percent on its equity capital and then invest the money we have earned in armaments and war.

The attacks on rail workers are part of the government's comprehensive attack on the entire working class. The huge increase in spending on war and armaments is being financed at our expense. The coalition government of the Social Democrats (SPD), Liberal Democrats (FDP) and Greens is supported by the trade union apparatuses of the GDL and the EVG.

The Rail Action Committee therefore calls on all workers at Deutsche Bahn and all rail transport companies to prepare for the principled defence of our jobs and working conditions—against the government, the company and the trade union apparatus. This also applies to the defence of the railways as a whole as a climate-friendly and efficient transport system.

Our demands:

- Recruitment of 30,000 workers instead of further redundancies.
- Unite workers at all rail transport companies independently of the trade unions. In the last round of contract negotiations, their bloated bureaucracy has proven it stands on the side of Deutsche Bahn.
- The rights and needs of rail workers and passengers must take precedence over the profit drive of the government, investors, shareholders and speculators.
- Stop all military transports by rail! No weapons and ammunition for the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East and the genocide in Gaza.
- For the international unity of all railway workers. The privatisation of state-owned railways into global corporations is a worldwide development with

catastrophic consequences in all countries of the world.

Get in touch with us via Whatsapp at +49-163-337 8340 or register using the form below.

Take part in our online meeting on Tuesday 13 August.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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