

Oppose the Verdi union's divide-and-rule strategy: For a united strike by German postal, public service and transport workers

Joint appeal by the postal, Public service and BVG action committees
9 April 2025

The United Services Union (Verdi) is in the process of selling out the contract struggles of millions of employees in the postal service, public service and Berlin Transport Company (BVG), thereby enforcing massive wage cuts to finance the insane war policy of the German government.

We will no longer accept this, and call for a joint online meeting of the action committees at the post office, in public services and at the BVG:

On Thursday, April 10 at 7 p.m., we will discuss with all interested colleagues how Verdi and the employers can be stopped in their assault on wages and working conditions. We will discuss how we can fight together in all three spheres to ensure that our wages are enough to live on and cover rising costs, while also ensuring our work does not ruin our health.

We, the employees of the postal service, public service and BVG, have taken part in massive warning strikes, demonstrating that we are ready to fight for higher wages and better working conditions. In the BVG, as many as 95.4 percent voted in favour of an unlimited strike in a ballot. But everywhere Verdi is sabotaging the willingness to fight—always proceeding according to the same pattern.

We have the potential to paralyze the entire country. If parcels and letters are not delivered, garbage remains uncollected, buses and trains do not run and daycare centers remain closed, this has far-reaching effects on everyday life throughout society. Verdi, however, does not organize strikes in order to use the mobilization of the workforce to put pressure on employers. For Verdi the strikes are merely a vent for workers to let off steam. In doing so, the union apparatus is careful to ensure that the various professional groups never go on strike together. Every section of workers, every action is neatly separated by profession and location. As a result of this division and

isolation, the existing militancy fizzles out.

In the contract bargaining rounds, the union leaders then sit down with the employers and plan how they can enforce the austerity dictates that were already in place before the negotiations began and how they can prevent an all-out strike. Verdi has developed the same approach in all three contract bargaining areas—postal service, public service and BVG.

The contract negotiations are purposefully organised to break down, in order to then go into arbitration. In some cases, Verdi agreed on such a procedure with the employers years ago to prevent all-out strikes.

The Verdi contract commissions then recommend acceptance of the arbitration results, all of which are aimed at reducing wages while failing to make any improvement to working conditions. After they have prevented, sabotaged and stalled any real struggle, the union bosses then brazenly claim that the best possible result has been achieved and that more was not possible.

Afterwards, a vote is held among Verdi members on the arbitrator's decision. In this context, the Verdi leadership argues that rejecting the arbitrator's recommendation would mean voting for an indefinite strike. However, according to the Verdi statutes, at least 75 percent of votes cast are required for an indefinite all-out strike. If this 75 percent majority is not achieved, then the arbitrator's recommendation is deemed to have been accepted.

At the post office, the majority of Verdi members (54 percent) spoke out against the miserable outcome of their dispute following arbitration. However, Verdi ignored this majority and accepted the arbitrator's decision. The extended term of the contract of 24 months accepted by Verdi is intended to prevent strikes in the long term. Shortly afterwards, the post office management announced it would cut 8,000 jobs.

This scenario is now to be implemented in the public sector and at the BVG. According to Verdi, the votes of only 25 percent of voting members, a fraction of the workforce, are needed to enforce the scandalous recommendation of the arbitrators Roland Koch (CDU) and Hans-Henning Lühr (SPD) in the public sector and Matthias Platzeck (SPD) and Bodo Ramelow (Left Party) at the BVG. To make sure that this happens, Verdi is trying to make it as difficult as possible for workers to vote. Many postal workers reported to the action committee that they had not had the opportunity to vote against the arbitration result. Colleagues in the public services and at BVG take heed!

Verdi's actions in these three contracts make it clear that we employees not only confront the employers, i.e., the federal, state and municipal political parties as well as the managements of the postal service and the BVG. We are also facing the trade union apparatus, in this case Verdi.

This is because the Verdi leadership unreservedly supports the warmongering policy of both the outgoing and incoming federal governments. When Chancellor Olaf Scholz (SPD) proclaimed a new era three years ago by earmarking an initial €100 million for the German army (Bundeswehr), Verdi leader Werneke supported the move, while complaining the sum was not enough.

Now Werneke justifies the latest one-trillion-euro armament package with the words: "Europe must be able to defend itself, the Bundeswehr must be operational." Werneke also downplays the role of the special infrastructure fund, as a "real opportunity to resolve the investment backlog in our country," although the main aim of this fund is to prepare for war.

The union's support for government policy is not just about corruption and cronyism, although there is no doubt these factors play a role. In June 2023, *Business Insider* reported that shortly after Werneke's deputy Christine Behle was elected to the top of the union, she gave her husband a permanent position while her ex-husband also received a permanent position at the Verdi headquarters.

The main issue is that Werneke and Behle share the view of those in power that Germany must once again strive to great-power status, not only economically, but also militarily and politically. They are both longstanding SPD members. Nancy Faeser and Karin Welke, who as federal Minister of the Interior and Lord Mayor of Gelsenkirchen, respectively, represent the employers of the federal and municipal governments in the public sector, are both members of the SPD. So here we have

long-standing SPD officials sitting around the table hatching their attacks on workers.

Faeser is also a member of the SPD delegation conducting the current coalition negotiations with the CDU, while Verdi is sitting at the table in the person of SPD chairperson Saskia Esken. Esken is a member of Verdi, and the SPD leader Lars Klingbeil, who is leading the coalition negotiations, used to be one; he is now a member of the IGBCE union.

Verdi and the SPD are working hand in hand to provide an additional €1 trillion for rearmament and the development of a "ready for war" infrastructure, while refusing to make a single additional cent available for adequate wages and salaries.

To defend jobs, wages and rights, workers must organize independently of the unions and unite internationally. That is why we have founded the action committees, which are controlled by the rank and file and are responsible only to them. We reject all concessions on wages and social achievements and defend every job on principle.

For us at the post office, in public service and the BVG, this means:

- Reject Verdi's maneuvers to prevent indefinite strikes and enforce the austerity measures through arbitration!
- Prepare an indefinite strike to fight for sufficient wage and salary increases, to secure jobs and working conditions!
- Take part in our online meeting on Thursday, April 10, at 7 p.m.!

Contact us via Whatsapp message to +49 163 3378340 or register here using the form below and join our online meeting on Thursday, April 10 at 7 p.m.



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