

Norwegian union makes M.A.N. Truck & Bus workers pay for a phoney strike

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A collective bargaining dispute at M.A.N. Truck & Bus in Trondheim (Norway) has now been going on for five weeks. The so-called “dagsing,” or “go-slow,” by the Fellesforbund union, which began on January 8 and is still ongoing, is a cynical farce that workers are paying for with significant wage losses. It is necessary to draw important conclusions from this.

The background: Labor law in Norway creates a two-tier framework for collective bargaining between trade unions and the employers’ associations. Every two years, a national collective agreement is negotiated, which local management and works councils then adjust according to local company profits and workers’ living costs through a supplementary wage agreement. This gives employers maximum flexibility to pay lower wages in an economically depressed fishing village in northern Norway as opposed to the booming oil and gas industry city of Stavanger.

However, local supplementary negotiations fall within the period of legal obligation to maintain labor “peace” in collective bargaining. This legal framework therefore effectively bans local strikes. Strikes are therefore not available to local works councils. These “local supplementary negotiations” are better termed a “local begging operation,” in which employers can effectively set the local wage supplement at their own discretion.

M.A.N. has been doing exactly that in Norway. After each round of collective bargaining, the Munich-based company simply sets a central additional wage increase for all its Norwegian truck and bus workshops, thus saving itself the trouble of wage negotiations with the local works councils. The company also uses the low regional wage agreement to pay lower wages than competitors such as Volvo or Scania. In the past, this has often led to mechanics in economically stronger

cities switching to competing companies in order to afford the higher cost of living.

Since 2022 at the latest, the costs of the global economic crisis and war have been passed on to the working class in Norway in the form of sharp price increases for food, energy and housing. This additional reduction in real wages has intensified the exodus of skilled workers from M.A.N. and developed into a real problem for the company. This is, of course, a problem for which the Norwegian government and the unions are responsible based on the agreed collective bargaining laws, along with M.A.N.’s wage policies.

In economically strong Trondheim, the largest union federation of private companies, the Fellesforbund, is now trying to act as a final arbiter, after the same union was responsible for the miserable regional collective agreement. Since January 8, 2026, Regional Department 12 of the Fellesforbund, together with its works council at the Trondheim branch of M.A.N., has been conducting a local “labor dispute” in order to enforce local supplementary wage negotiations. If successful, the works council is demanding a 5 percent local allowance instead of the national flat-rate allowance of 1.21 percent offered by M.A.N. The likely result will be a local allowance of approximately 2 percent, which would not even begin to compensate for the real wage cuts suffered by workers for years.

However, with its local “industrial action,” the Fellesforbund is encountering the trap set for workers in the national right to strike: the two-year peace obligation of the regional collective bargaining parties, which prevents local strikes as a means of industrial action. The Fellesforbund is therefore trying to make do with the form of industrial action known as “dagsing” or “gaa-sakte-aksjon,” the “day laborer” or “go-slow” strike. Under Norwegian law, “dagsing” is not

considered a strike and may therefore be used during the peace obligation period.

With full attendance of workers in the contested company, daily work output is reduced to 45 percent—but so is pay! This form of strike prevents workers from mobilizing broader solidarity actions by colleagues both in Norway and internationally. At the same time, the “non-strike” is not compensated by the union strike fund for organized workers, nor by the NAV employment agency for unorganized workers. Although regulated in writing in the right to strike law, “dagsing” actions are rare and little known in Norway and primarily harm workers and their families.

The local online newspaper *Nidaros* expressed the workers’ dissatisfaction in an article headlined “Major conflicts and dismissals: This is basically ‘suicide’ for employees.” It quotes works council chairman Jon Olav Bergem’s revealing statement that “dagsing” is “a powerful weapon that has consequences for both employers and employees.” By contrast, one worker is quoted as saying, “We’ve already had a month where people have used up their savings to cover the costs. Next month, most of them won’t be able to pay off their debts, and most of them have children to support.” The worker added, “The action is destroying people’s lives, and no one is talking about it.” Another says, “Solidarity in the workplace has now been completely destroyed.”

The “dagsing” at M.A.N., which has now been going on for five weeks in Trondheim, has already cost employees almost three weeks’ wages—over 4 percent of their annual salary—which is about as much as they would gain from a 2 percent increase over two years. The financial side effects of this farce of a labor dispute were deliberately concealed from them in advance by the union and the works council leaders; they were only informed after the action began on January 8. The union federation is thus deceiving the workers, withholding strike funds paid for by membership dues, and plummeting workers into financial ruin instead of organising strong industrial action—all within a legal framework that the union apparatus helped to organize at the national level.

The effect on the mood, cohesion and morale of the workers at M.A.N. in Trondheim has been devastating. And this is no coincidence. Fellesforbund’s attempts to suppress the struggle of the workers at M.A.N. are an

expression of its support for the Norwegian Arbeiderpartiet (Labor Party, AP) government. With around 175,000 members, Fellesforbundet is the second largest union in the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO). The LO provides financial and political support to the AP, whose leader, Jonas Gahr Støre, is also Norway’s prime minister. The finance minister is Jens Stoltenberg (AP), the former NATO secretary general.

Since Støre came to power in 2021, the AP government has drastically increased military spending, co-organized NATO exercises and maneuvers in Norway against Russia, and allocated billions to the imperialist war in Ukraine. Its current minority government can only implement its right-wing policies thanks to an agreement with some so-called left parties, including the Socialist Left, the Greens and Red Party. As in other countries, the Norwegian Social Democrats have long since abandoned their former national reformist policies and turned into the most aggressive warmongers and open opponents of the working class.

The working class must therefore organize independently of these organizations and internationally with the aim of taking political power into its own hands. Only in this way can workers defend their interests. The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) has therefore launched the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to support the building of independent rank-and-file committees in all workplaces and organize their collaboration. All those interested in building independent action committees should fill out the form below to contact the *World Socialist Web Site* and the IWA-RFC!



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