VW Action Committee announces intensive campaign

Break the collusion between the union and management at Volkswagen!

Our reporters
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At its online meeting July 15, the VW Action Committee launched an intensive campaign to break the control of the IG Metall union apparatus and its plant officials and begin a serious fight in defence of jobs. Watch on YouTube

The meeting issued an appeal to workers at all sites to contact the Action Committee and report on the situation and mood in their plant or department. “We want to expose and publicise the corrupt machinations and intimidation by works council reps and sections of the shop stewards,” it was repeatedly emphasised.

In his introduction to the discussion, Ulrich Rippert went into considerable detail on the close collaboration between the corporate executive board, the IG Metall leadership and the works council. He showed that VW chief Blume and the oligarchs of the Porsche and Piëch owner families who stand behind him are only able to act so brazenly and announce ever more dramatic waves of redundancies—first 35,000, then 50,000, then 100,000—because they know that IG Metall is deploying its entire bureaucratic apparatus and plant officials to prevent a joint struggle by workers at all sites against the slash-and-burn policy.

Rippert emphasised that IG Metall does not merely describe itself as a “co-manager” but acts as an integral part of management in the interests of the owners, and that the collaboration of the so-called “social partners” has taken on the character of a conspiracy against the workforce.

“The last supervisory board meeting made this perfectly clear,” said Rippert, adding, “IG Metall had a majority at that meeting because Julia Wiegand from management stepped down some months ago and has not yet been replaced. In addition, two representatives of the Lower Saxony state government also sit on the management side—a government that has always emphasised its closeness to workers’ interests—namely Social Democratic Party (SPD) State Premier Olaf Lies and his Education Minister Julia Hamburg of the Greens.”

There is the further factor that the VW Act stipulates that plant closures can only be decided by a two-thirds majority on the supervisory board, that is, only with IG Metall’s agreement. Rippert explained that the summer vacations were now being used to negotiate a deal and spin off some companies from the group so that they no longer fall under the VW Act. That too, however, requires IG Metall’s agreement. The Action Committee will systematically expose this conspiracy against the workforce.

Three questions stood at the centre of the discussion at the Action Committee meeting. First, why must we fight to defend all jobs at all sites, and how do we do so? Second, why must the conversion of plants to arms production be opposed? Or, put differently: why is it necessary to link the defence of jobs with the struggle against war? And third, why is close international cooperation with workers at all sites necessary, and how do we organise it?

A young participant reported on discussions he had held with workers at the Wolfsburg North Gate and then posed the question: “How can one explain the fact that only a year and a half ago IG Metall justified its agreement to the elimination of 35,000 jobs and a significant reduction in pay by claiming it had used these concessions to prevent plant closures? And now—just a short time later—four plant closures are being announced.”

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The question led to a lively discussion in which it was once again stressed that it is precisely the constant concessions by IG Metall and the works council that lead to ever further and ever more sweeping attacks by management. The conclusion was clear: IG Metall must be deprived of the initiative, and for that reason building the Action Committee is the most urgent task.

At the end it was agreed that a meeting of the Action Committee will be organised after the vacations to which Will Lehman would be invited. Will works at Mack Trucks in Pennsylvania and was last month nominated as presidential candidate of the United Auto Workers (UAW) at the union's congress in Detroit. The Action Committee wants to publicise Will's campaign in as many car plants as possible—beyond VW as well. One speaker summed it up at the end: "If it is possible in the United States to organise a rebellion against the corrupt union leadership, then it's possible here too!"

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