

# Why a rebellion against Germany's IG Metall union apparatus is necessary

Ulrich Rippert

18 November 2024

The new contract in the German metal and electrical industries, which IG Metall agreed to without a workplace vote and despite the declared opposition of many members, marks the beginning of a new stage in the struggle against the union apparatus.

Even before this, many metalworkers were outraged by previous below-inflation contracts, fruitless pseudo-protests against plant closures that the IG Metall officials had long since agreed to, and the intimidation of anyone who dared to speak out against it by works council representatives and shop stewards. More than a few have long since turned their backs on the union.

But the tentative contract negotiated in the Bavaria and Coast districts in the past few days, and now being adopted by all the other districts, takes the betrayal and sell-out by the union to a new dimension.

The highly paid union bureaucrats, bought and paid for by the corporations, who sit on the negotiating and wage commissions and often also on several supervisory boards, have pushed through a contract that ties workers' hands behind their back. The 3.9 million employees in the metal and electrical industries are once again supposed to accept massive cuts in real wages in order to finance higher profits and military rearmament. The long duration of 25 months and the associated "industrial peace" clause are also intended to prevent them from fighting the mass layoffs and plant closures that have already been announced by many companies.

Immediately after the collective agreement was announced, a storm of outrage erupted on the IG Metall Facebook page. Here are some quotes:

Andrè writes ironically: "Thanks for this loss of purchasing power."

Andy says: "Even a day later, you can't talk up the deal. Instead of sitting at the negotiating table for 18 hours, it would be better to take to the streets!"

Stefan complains: "We won't see most of the payments or the 3.1 percent [increase] until 2026!"

Ralf replies: "If we still have jobs then!"

Matthias reflects: "It's about time we thought about leaving this joke. The result is once again more than pathetic. [...] Unfortunately, I am very disappointed."

Valentin writes: "Without the union leadership, we could have achieved much more..."

Dennis therefore suggests: "In view of the many negative reactions, it would be fair for us, the members, to decide on the result, whether it is accepted or whether negotiations continue."

Markus agrees: "That's why I am calling for a strike ballot."

Mario also writes: "The result would have to be voted on by the members."

In order to develop the widespread opposition into a serious struggle that can break the dictatorship of the IG Metall apparatus and develop the power of the rank and file, it is necessary to understand the political background of the contract dictatorship and build independent action committees that enforce a strike vote and prepare industrial action against layoffs, wage theft and social cuts.

After the election of Donald Trump in the US, German big business and establishment politics are preparing to invest even more billions than before in

rearmament and the war against Russia and to intensify the global trade war. This requires massive attacks on the working class, which will bear the costs of war and trade war.

The trade unions play a key role in implementing these attacks. Their top officials are members of the Social Democrats (SPD) and work closely with the government. They support its pro-war policy and agree to wage cuts in the interests of big business.

IG Metall leader Christiane Benner and German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) chair Yasmin Fahimi embody the out-of-touch union apparatus, which has fully aligned itself with the government and corporate camp and acts as a law enforcement agency against workers. Previously, Fahimi was SPD general secretary and a state secretary in the labour ministry.

Benner praised the new contract, saying, “Social partnership is the most important stabilising factor for companies and employees in uncertain times. We find joint solutions.” She presented the agreement as a model for all political parties and called on them to work together in partnership to implement policies of war, wage cuts and social cuts.

The integration of the trade unions into the government and their support for the policy of rearmament and war have deep objective causes closely linked to the globalization of production. The worldwide integration of the economy and the transnational production processes have deprived the trade unions of the national base upon which they were able to agree to limited social reforms in the past. Now they are unreservedly backing German corporations in the struggle for raw materials, markets and cheap labor, dividing workers and supporting rearmament and war.

The lousy contract shows that it is no longer possible to avoid a confrontation with the trade union apparatus. It is impossible to defend jobs, wages and social rights without breaking the dictatorship of the trade union apparatus.

The building of independent action committees is now of great importance. The common front of government, corporations and trade unions must be opposed by the international unification of the working class. Those who create all the wealth in society and bear the full brunt of war and economic crisis must intervene independently in political events and oppose the big banks and corporations, as well as their stooges

in government.

This requires a rebellion against IG Metall and the rejection of its class-collaborationist politics.

The class struggle from above must be counterposed with the struggle of the working class. By building independent action committees, it is possible to unite workers across all borders and fight for a perspective that places the rights and interests of workers above the profit interests of investors, speculators and the super-rich.

“Volkswagen and the other transnational corporations must be transformed into public utilities, run by the workers themselves for the benefit of all,” reads the call for a global campaign against job cuts by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC). “This must be connected to a fight by the working class against war, which is being driven by US and European imperialism’s drive to conquer resources, markets and supply chains.”

We call on all workers in the metal and electrical industries and beyond: Break the dictatorship of the IG Metall apparatus! Demand a strike vote and reject the contract. Participate in the founding of action committees and support the building of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party-SGP), which arms workers with a socialist perspective in the fight against mass layoffs, social cuts and war.

*Contact us via Whatsapp at +491633378340 or fill out the form. Now is the time to take action to prevent a catastrophe.*



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**