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France

France: A united response to the pro-austerity and racist government?

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After three motions of no confidence on 6 and 10 February, the French national assembly approved the state budget and the social security budget, which were hardly different from those presented by the then prime minister Barnier in the autumn of 2024. The current government, led by François Bayrou, which wants to reduce the public deficit to 5.4% of GDP by 2025, has cut the budgets of several ministries: public development aid, ecology, culture, agriculture, research and higher education. A few gestures on natural disaster prevention, the Green Fund and the budget for the French Overseas Territories. Local authorities continue to lose 2.2 billion euros.

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Measures that hit the hardest

A temporary effort in income tax for the wealthiest households should bring in around €2 billion. The 'exceptional contribution' (for this year only) on the profits of large companies should bring in €8 billion. VAT on gas and electricity will be raised from 5.5% to 20% on 1 August, while the tax on financial transactions will rise to 0.4%. No mistake for a right-wing government!

[L'Anticapitaliste](#) 13 February 2025

To take account of inflation, the budget increases the brackets on the income tax scale by 1.8%. According to the Ministry of the Economy and Finance, this measure will enable 619,000 taxpayers to avoid paying tax. How charitable! On the other hand, the wealth tax has still not been reinstated. And still no progressive tax scale... far from revolutionary! The measure lowering the VAT exemption threshold for self-employed entrepreneurs from €37,500 to €25,000 of annual turnover has been withdrawn. While the government has abandoned the idea of extending the number of days civil servants have to wait before being entitled to sick pay to three, the compensation rate has been reduced from 100% to 90%. It's a double penalty: sick and less pay!

A racist, austerity-minded government

The budget for the AME (state medical aid) has been cut by €111 million compared with Michel Barnier's budget, to maintain it at the 2024 level (around €1.3 billion). A symbolic reduction for a Prime Minister who is talking about a debate on what it means to be 'French' and the 'droit du sol'. A right called into question by Pasqua in 1993 when he was in the Balladur government... with Bayrou, then Minister for National Education. Bayrou's way of serving up the soup to all the far-right politicians gives Retailleau and Darmanin free rein, whether on immigration or juvenile justice.

Censorship, a tool!

Those who, like the Socialist Party, have allowed this budget to be imposed in the name of responsibility cannot claim to represent the interests of young people and the working class as a whole. The ridgeline on which these MPs walk is so narrow that they can be thrown into the arms of the Macron party at any moment by trying so hard to distance themselves from Jean-Luc Mélenchon's la France insoumise (LFI) party. So it is with the extreme political polarisation, reflecting the very tangible conflict between capital and labour, between profits and public goods.

LFI, for its part, can pride itself on holding the line against the coherent attacks of the right and the far right and being useful to our social camp on an institutional level. It's clear that the divided left does not lack a programme – there is that of the Nouveau front populaire (NFP) - but mass support for that programme, militant and united support that can be seen on the streets and in mobilisations, that can be organised and unionised, and that can overcome the apparatuses and their leaders. This is the broad front we need to build.

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