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France

New hope on the left

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Following the success of the presidential campaign of Olivier Besancenot, the LCR now faces the challenge of consolidating its support in the elections for the National Assembly (parliament). It is obvious that this will be a hard task. The shock of the 21st April has not been forgotten, and many electors will undoubtedly feel that they should vote for the parties of the traditional left from the first round. The first opinion polls confirmed this, showing a rise in the support for the SP and CP (to 6%) and a clear drop in the support for the radical left (LO and LCR) to only 3%.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/03eu.jpg>]

The campaign is only just starting and it is too soon to make any serious predictions. However this situation confirms how important it would have been to be able to make an agreement between the LCR and LO in order not to divide the far left vote. The reasons for [LO's refusal](#) and the [LCR's reply](#) are contained in the accompanying letters. In this situation the LCR is making an enormous effort to present candidates in 412 constituencies, and is supporting candidates of local groupings of which it is part, in areas such as the Rhone (A Gauche Autrement - Another Left), Brittany (Tous ensemble a gauche - Together to the Left) or the Motive-e-s groups in the Paris region. This brings the total to almost 450 constituencies where we will be present, compared to only 130 in the last elections in 1997.

This effort has only been made possible by the strengthening of the LCR by the hundreds of people who have joined or declared themselves as supporters since the presidential campaign, and enable us to be present in 90 of the 95 departements in metropolitan France as well as in Reunion (Indian Ocean).

The LCR has also made an effort to respect the law on parity (there must not be a variation of more than 2% in the percentage of women and men who are candidates, otherwise the political formation has to pay a fine). This is not the case for the others, the Union for the Presidential Majority around Chirac has only 20% women candidates, and the Socialist Party, which introduced the law, has only found 35%.

Olivier Besancenot is standing in the 18th arrondissement of Paris where he lives. His Socialist Party contestant is the former Minister of the Interior Daniel Vaillant, (and for the UMP their youngest candidate, Roxanne Decorte). The LCR campaign will focus above all on the questions of "security" and "law and order" of which the PS made much during the presidential campaign, thus playing into the hands of the right and far right. Olivier Besancenot, who is back at work as a postman, will be running his campaign like the other LCR candidates with the aid of members and sympathisers of the LCR in this socially mixed but generally underprivileged area of Paris. Like the other LCR candidates he has no local offices, no full-timers and the meetings will be informal ones in cafes, a public meeting in a school and leafletting in the local street markets and underground stations.

And, also like the other candidates, his campaign will turn around the "Ten Action Proposals" ([see next page](#)) that summarise the proposals of the LCR for a radical change of society. Ten proposals that are a radical break with the policies of the former left or current rightwing government. The challenge for the "one hundred per cent left" candidates in this election is to convince the electors who voted for Besancenot on the 21st of April that they were right to do so, that to continue the fight for an alternative through the ballot boxes as well as in everyday struggles and demonstrations, is the way to create a new hope on the left, rather than voting for the worn out proposals of the SP or the CP as a bunker against the far right.