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France

No Christmas truce! No presents for Macron's government!

- News from around the world -

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After French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe's announcement on Wednesday, 11 December – which only confirmed what we already knew about the attack on pensions, and despite the continuation of strikes and the success of the mobilization day on 17 December – the government is putting on the pressure to put a stop to the strike movement by the end of the week. Adopting belligerent and contemptuous postures – which only goes to show how they are vacillating after this week's resignation of national pension administrator Jean-Paul Delevoye– President Emmanuel Macron and Philippe do not know what to do. We must figure out how to take advantage of their indecision!

With stints as a mayor, parliamentarian, Minister of the Civil Service under conservative President Jacques Chirac, national Ombudsman, president of the Economic, Social and Environmental Council, Delevoye, the High Commissioner for Pensions led a distinguished career. Yet he has obviously suffered some recent "memory lapses," first forgetting his role as an administrator within the Insurance Professionals Training Institute, then his seat on the board of directors of the national rail French National Railway Company (SNCF) Foundation, then a dozen other overlapping plum appointments (as revealed by the newspaper *Le Monde*).

Delevoye's career follows the well-worn path of bureaucratic henchman for the capitalist class. He first passed through the conservative Rally for the Republic and its heir the Union of Democrats for the Republic before today becoming a convinced Macronist. In fact, Delevoye's journey sheds ample light on the government's current project, exposing it as an attack on pensions and an attempt to disrupt solidarity among different sectors of workers so that the big insurance companies and providers of expensive supplemental pension may finally get their hands on the lucrative publicly-guaranteed provision. His resignation does not change the project for which he was partly responsible, and we can only regret that his resignation did not take his reform down with him.

The powers-that-be want a showdown

Philippe's December 11 speech, in which he repeatedly bastardized words like "equality," "solidarity," "redistribution," and "justice," only confirmed that the government's poorly-named "universal system" will translate into a reduction in pensions (calculated on a person's whole working life as opposed to their best-paid years), an extension of the contribution period (raising the so-called "pivotal" age at 64), and a "harmonization" (that is, a race to the bottom) aimed destroying collective agreements and the end of "special regimes" or sectoral contract agreements that enshrine benefits.

After refusing to heed the all-out strike movement that started almost two weeks ago, the government today asked the SNCF and RATP public rail agents to end their strike for the holidays... Blackmail! If this strike is difficult for everyone, and most of all for those who are on strike themselves, then it is the government alone that bears responsibility by seeking to impose at all costs a bill unanimously rejected by all unions, even by unions that are frequently open to so-called "social dialogues." In fact, Philippe and Macron's proposal is only supported by the Chamber of Commerce (Medef) and the big insurers ... But the movement is standing strong and opinion polls confirm in the main that a majority continue to support mobilization and oppose to the pension reforms.

Cancel the reforms, spread the strike!

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So far, the strikers have not fallen for the government's divide and conquer maneuvers. They have rejected its attempts to play workers against one another, for instance, those covered by general state contracts against workers who have specialized contract agreements in their workplaces against, men against women (whose pensions the government aims to penalize for child rearing), and, especially, older employees (who would not be impacted by the reforms) against young people who are entering, or are about to enter, the workforce. In fact, all of us are being targeted and we must continue to fight, united and determined, all together!

The national strike on Tuesday, December 17 was massive with particularly large participation, huge demonstrations, and sustained determination, and Delevoye's resignation further encouraged strikers who celebrated the news in general assemblies. Tuesday should make it possible to take a step towards organizing a general strike, a total blockage of the country which is the only way to force the government to back down. Tuesday should also reinforce the all-out strike movement in transportation and extend it into sectors like education (where the few days remaining before the school holidays should be see amplified strikes and mobilizations) and the hospital sector while opening up the potential to build it in new sectors. Delevoye's misadventures have weakened the government's power. If we can break free from Macron and his pension reform, anything is possible.

Translated by [NoBorders News](#) from [l'Anticapitaliste](#), 18 November 2019.

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