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France

Pensions: nothing to expect from the Parliament, let's build a hard and lasting strike!

- IV Online magazine - 2023 - IV577 - February 2023 -

Publication date: Wednesday 1 February 2023

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The day of strikes and demonstrations 31 January was a success! Two and a half million people took to the streets, more than on Thursday 19 January. The time has come to step up the mobilization: to strike while the iron is hot, to put this government in a minority and impose purely and simply the withdrawal of the reform.

Growing anger

“Chaos-provoking”, “lazy”. The provocations of a government that is less and less legitimate but still just as contemptuous have not dampened the determination. Despite the Prime Minister's refusal to accept the 64 years of age as a "non-negotiable" compromise, the mobilisation is taking root with massive demonstrations in all cities. It is growing with the addition of new demonstrators, notably from the educated youth and the private sector.

The government's strategy of smoke and mirrors has failed, as has the misleading “pedagogy” that would have us believe that women would not be penalized by the reform. Workers have clearly understood that this reform is neither fair nor essential.

Beyond that, the scale of the mobilization reflects a generalized frustration with the economic and social situation. Low pensions, low salaries, inflation, electricity bills: the anger is piling up and it is the whole policy of this government, considered unjust and authoritarian, that is contested.

Impose another choice of society!

The Macron government would have us believe, like Margaret Thatcher in her day, that there is no alternative to capitalist options. Yet there is no shortage of money when the war-mongering Macronie allocates more than 400 billion to the army.

For us, increasing the indirect wage, the social contributions, would make it possible to finance the pension system. Retirement at 60 with 37.5 years of service in the public and private sectors, at the full rate, would only cost an additional 3% of the share of GDP devoted to pensions.

The issue is political. If we win, we will be able to impose these measures and many others on wage increases, job creation, public services... Beyond that, it is the power of the capitalists to dispose of the wealth created by our work that we could challenge. On the other hand, a defeat would lead to a new round of counter-reforms and social regressions.

Unity and radicalism: towards a general strike

The parliamentary process will last until the beginning of March at the latest. There is nothing to expect from this

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institutional calendar where Macron and the right have all the cards in hand. Like for the victory against the CPE in 2006, it is by continuing and massively mobilization, even after the vote on the law if necessary, that we can win. [1]

For that, we need to remain united, from the bottom to the top. This is why the NPA is working everywhere to bring together trade unions and left-wing parties to demand the withdrawal of the reform. At the same time we also need to raise the balance of power, by multiplying mass actions, blockades, demonstrations, and by generalizing the strike. The new dates set by joint trade-union committee, on 7 and 11 February, must make this qualitative leap possible.

The strikes in the refineries from 6 to 8 February, the rail strike on 7 and 8 February, are important points of support to discuss in mass meetings continuing the strike everywhere it is possible. Not counting on certain sectors to strike on behalf of others the challenge is, in the short term, to go on strike everywhere and at the same time.

The pension reform crystallizes the confrontation between the classes. Winning is vital for our social camp, to stop this project and to get rid of this government. There is no other option than victory!

1 February 2023

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).*

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[1] See ["2006 youth protests in France"](#).