

France: LCR's Besancenot provides left cover for labour bureaucrats' treachery

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On the evening of the March 28 nationwide demonstrations against the "First Job Contract" (CPE), the Revolutionary Communist League (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire—LCR) held a public meeting at the Paris Mutualité. The main speaker at the meeting, which began late and lasted just one-and-a-half hours, was Olivier Besancenot, the official spokesman of the LCR and their presidential candidate in 2002. After his speech, the several hundred participants rapidly left the hall. There was no discussion.

Besancenot's speech was an exercise in demagoguery aimed at disguising the opportunist policy of his party.

He began his contribution with the words, "We are not far from victory," and ended with the well-known Che Guevara battle cry, "Hasta la victoria siempre!" ("Forward to victory!"). He shouted, gesticulated and was at pains to animate his audience to laughter and outbursts of enthusiasm.

The mood was brilliant, the mobilization exceptional, the situation for the government fatal, he cried out. "Today the street has spoken. The street is the ultra-majority, the government is in the ultra-minority," etc., etc.

His pompous rhetoric about an imminent victory was aimed at throwing sand in the eyes of his audience. Besancenot said absolutely nothing about the dangers and political tasks confronting the mass movement in France. Apart from some side swipes at the right wing in the Socialist Party, he said nothing about the role of the trade unions, the official "left" parties and their student federations, all of which are desperately working to contain the movement and lead it into a dead end.

While the LCR glorifies the movement of school youth and students, it is busy behind the scenes suppressing any criticism of the bureaucratic organizations and working to strengthen their control of the movement. This is the real content of its calls for "unity."

In a special edition of the *LCR Rouge* newspaper distributed at the March 28 demonstrations, it states: "It is possible to make the government retreat, it is possible to secure the withdrawal of the CPE.... It is possible to make the government resign if we are everyone together. Everyone together, the young and the less young; everyone together, high school students, university students and wage earners; everyone together, unemployed persons and workers!"

The call "tous ensemble" (everyone together) runs as a red thread through all the statements and publications of the LCR. While for the youth protesters and workers "unity" means standing united against a detested government, for the LCR "unity" means strengthening the hand of the bureaucratic apparatuses.

The latter fear nothing more than a disruption of the bourgeois order. Their appeals to the government and the president all have the same content: "Take care lest the conflict get out of control and shatter the social peace!"

Bruno Julliard, chairman of the student union UNEF, which has close links to the Socialist Party, spoke for them all when he explained in an interview with Europe 1 Radio that the aim was not the overthrow or defeat of the government. "We want neither a winner nor a loser at the end of this movement," he said.

Meanwhile, President Chirac and Prime Minister de Villepin have made it absolutely clear that they do not intend to back down.

To the extent that the LCR cannot completely ignore the reactionary role of the bureaucracies, it declares that the spontaneous and intrinsic dynamic of the movement will be enough to overcome all problems. Thus, in an editorial in *Rouge* from the middle of March, the LCR states: "Irrespective of the aims and political calculations of the Socialist Party, and the fears of the union leaderships of a confrontation with the government and the state, they have all been forced to accompany and support the

movement. This is because its strength and dynamic are the young people who are taking up the fight...”

The sheer “strength and dynamic” of youth and workers is enough to force the Socialist Party and the trade union bureaucracy to support the movement! What a fraud!

The entire history of the workers’ movement, the innumerable defeats suffered by the working class due to the betrayals and sabotage of its leaders—particularly in France—prove just the opposite. The call for “unity” in the manner raised by the LCR has a long and dishonourable tradition in the history of the French workers’ movement.

In the 1930s such a call was made the basis for justifying the Popular Front. In the name of “unity against fascism” the Stalinists and the Social Democrats subordinated the independent interests of the working class to an alliance with the Radicals—the traditional party of the French bourgeoisie. In 1936, the Popular Front government of Léon Blum suppressed the most powerful general strike in French history and thereby paved the way for a return of the right wing to power, as well as for the defeat of the Spanish revolution and for the eruption of the Second World War a few years later.

Just three years ago the LCR once again raised the call for “unity,” urging a vote for Jacques Chirac as president against the neo-fascist candidate Jean Marie Le Pen. The National Front’s Le Pen had beaten the Socialist Party candidate Lionel Jospin in the first round of voting and entered the second round as challenger to Chirac. With its call for a vote for Chirac, the LCR strengthened the authority of the right-wing Gaullists and worked to prevent a mass movement from developing in an independent direction against Le Pen.

Now, as the mass movement against the CPE is reaching its peak, the LCR is preparing its next betrayal.

In the middle of March, the LCR addressed a letter to the congress of the Communist Party in which it called for the “unity of anti-liberal and anti-capitalist forces.” It proposed putting up a joint list of candidates for the presidential and parliamentary elections due in 2007, and declared: “The question of the mobilization against the government and employers, as well as the issue of an alternative, are at the centre of your considerations, which we share.”

One should not forget that the French Communist Party has a long history as a reliable prop of bourgeois rule. Over the past 25 years it has participated in all Socialist Party-led governments and supported their policies.

CP Chairperson Marie Marie-George Buffet, who was confirmed at the congress with a large majority, was a

minister in the cabinet of Jospin for five years. And while the LCR is agitating for a joint candidacy with the CP, the latter is seeking a joint candidacy with the Socialist Party. The LCR is therefore merely the last link in a chain aimed at the defence of bourgeois rule.

There can be no doubt that the greatest possible unity of the working class, youth and broad layers of the population—and not only on a national, but on an international basis—is absolutely necessary to repel the attacks against past social gains and democratic rights, which are being carried out across the globe. But such unity can be obtained only in a struggle against the influence of the old trade union and political organizations which defend capitalist property and subordinate the working class to bourgeois-national interests.

To forge the unity of the working class and youth a program is required that articulates the needs of all oppressed social layers. In other words, it requires a socialist perspective, which is directed against the capitalist system.

“Unity” with the trade unions and official “left” serves only to split and weaken the working class. This was shown in exemplary fashion by the experiences made under the government of the “Plural Left” headed by Jospin. After five years of the Jospin government, some oppressed layers of the working class were so profoundly disillusioned that they were prepared to give their vote to the right-wing demagogue Le Pen.

The unification of students, young people and workers is inseparably bound up with the task of constructing a new, revolutionary leadership. The LCR is doing all that it can to suppress this question and create the greatest possible confusion. It constitutes the left wing of the political establishment. While adapting its language to the radical moods prevalent amongst young people, it is painstakingly attempting to suppress any criticism of the bureaucratic organizations and apparatuses, and increase their authority.



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