

Paris workers speak to WSWS on October 19 day of action

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WSWS reporters in Paris spoke to demonstrators marching against French President Nicolas Sarkozy's pension cuts in the national one-day protest organized by the trade unions on October 19.

This was the sixth national one-day protest held since September 7, and it came amid a rising strike movement by energy and transport workers, as well as high school students. The protest march in Paris gathered 330,000 workers, according to union estimates.

Workers who spoke to the WSWS wanted to widen social struggle against the government, stressing that they were opposing a set of policies that went far beyond Sarkozy's pension cuts.

Milena, a child care worker in the CGT (General Confederation of Labor) union, came to protest pension cuts and because at her "work place, there are major problems with staffing levels."

Asked about what she thought of the trade unions, she said: "It's true that for the moment, the unions are poorly organized. They are not dynamic or mobilized against the reforms."

Asked about arguments that the bourgeois "left" Socialist Party (PS) might undo Sarkozy's cuts if it returned to power—claims advanced by CGT union secretary Bernard Thibault and so-called "far left" parties like the New Anti-capitalist Party of Olivier Besancenot—she answered: "If the PS returns to power, I don't think they will go back on the reform. It's always the same thing, I don't believe in the PS."

She said broad action had to be organized: "The only way to halt the reform is to block the entire country. People aren't ready to do it yet, but I think there has to be a general strike."

Billant, a worker in the environmental sector, said he was disappointed that wider strike action was not being

organized at his firm. He explained that the lack of strike funds played an important role in this: "I understand why certain strikers cannot continue striking. It costs a lot. It's very difficult if you have a family with children."

He said the current strike was a broad struggle: "People are demonstrating not only against pension cuts, but against all social problems, the lack of support for education, and so on."

He criticized the government for ignoring public opinion: "The government does not want to back down on the reform. I think it is mistaken on this. ... We're at a dead end; the government yet again does not want to listen to what people are saying in the streets. But we are ready to stay like this for a long time, if it's necessary."

He elaborated: "We have the means to carry out a tougher struggle, for example, with the refinery strike, even though [Prime Minister François] Fillon claims there is still petrol. I think that's false. They're just saying that to try to discourage the strikers."



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