

No to Macron and Le Pen! For an active boycott of the French election!

Political Committee of the Parti de l'égalité socialiste
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The Parti de l'égalité socialiste, the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), calls on workers and youth to boycott the second round of the French presidential election. The PES rejects the claim that workers must support ex-Rothschild banker and Socialist Party (PS) Economy Minister Emmanuel Macron against the neo-fascist candidate Marine Le Pen.

The arguments put forward to try to blackmail the French people into voting for Macron are a combination of sophistries and lies. First we are told that a Macron vote is a vote for democracy against the threat of dictatorship. But France was placed under a state of emergency by the PS government of which Macron was a part. Democratic rights were suspended, and behind the backs of the French people President François Hollande, acting on his own say-so, re-introduced a policy of extra-judicial killing.

Next we are told that Macron's opposition to Le Pen's nationalism is the only way to hold the European Union (EU) together and keep France and Europe from falling back into nationalism and war. But it is Macron, the EU supporter, who is proposing a return of the military draft and backing the imperialist war drive led by Washington and Berlin against Syria, Russia and North Korea.

Finally, we are reminded that the neo-fascists are bitter enemies of the working class. This is true. But Macron was part of the PS government that sought to inscribe in the French Constitution the principle of deprivation of nationality, the legal basis for the deportation of Jews to the death camps during the Occupation. He is pledged to make tens of billions of euros in social cuts and use the PS' regressive labor law to tear up social rights won by workers over generations of struggle in the course of the 20th

century.

Marine Le Pen is a vicious reactionary, appealing to anti-immigrant and racist sentiments. Her National Front (FN) descends from the Nazi-collaborationist regime that ruled France during World War II. The critical issue, however, is the development of opposition in the working class to both Macron and Le Pen from the left. Otherwise, Le Pen will be free to use her populist and protectionist demagoguery to continue posturing as the Joan of Arc of French working people.

The purpose of an active boycott of the election is to prepare the working class for struggle, regardless of which reactionary candidate wins the second round. The active boycott call is made not from the standpoint of parliamentary calculations, but the dynamic of the class struggle.

With the elimination of the Socialist Party (PS) and The Republicans (LR) candidates in the first round, France is passing through a historic collapse of the two-party system that ruled the country for 50 years. The fact that Macron and Le Pen have emerged in the second round shows that a bitter confrontation is being prepared between the incoming president and the working class, amid explosive social anger over unemployment, austerity and growing economic inequality.

The PES' call for an active boycott has nothing in common with political passivity or indifference. It entails a campaign of public meetings to oppose both reactionary candidates, calls for demonstrations and the encouragement of political strikes and struggles by workers. It is a means for the working class to break the straitjacket imposed on it by the elections and gather strength for a decisive struggle against the capitalist class, which is set on a course of dictatorship and war both in France and internationally.

The response to this crisis of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's Unsubmissive France movement (UF, formerly the Left Front) offers no way forward. Mélenchon won nearly 20 percent of the vote amid a surge of anti-war sentiment after the April 7 US bombing of Syria. He carried Marseille, Toulouse, Lille and the working class suburbs of northern Paris. Now, the former PS minister is proposing to poll UF's 440,000 Internet members, offering them the choice of backing a Macron vote, a blank vote or abstention.

This is a cowardly evasion of political responsibility, effectively subordinating Mélenchon's 7 million voters to the PS yet again by offering them the choice between backing Macron or the dead end of a symbolic, one-time gesture carried out alone in the voting booth.

The PES is aware that among Mélenchon's voters there are countless workers, youth and students who hate everything Le Pen stands for, despise Macron, and instinctively sense there is something ugly and horrible about the choice they are being given. They are looking for a way forward. It is critical that, unlike in 2002—the last time that the FN advanced to the second round and faced conservative candidate Jacques Chirac—they not be railroaded by the PS and its political allies into the blind alley of a vote for the FN's bourgeois opponent.

The working class is making enormous political experiences regarding the bitter costs of opportunism and the rejection of revolutionary principles. The PS and its allies proved not to be socialist organizations, but tools of finance capital and enemies of the workers, whom they oppressed for decades.

The PES insists that, on this centenary of the October Revolution, the only way forward is for the working class in France and internationally to renew its ties to the struggles of the Bolshevik Party and the Russian working class in 1917. Macron and Le Pen are forms of the same disease: the capitalist system, which is rotting on its feet.

An active boycott of the election will prepare the way for a struggle by the working class against war, austerity and dictatorship. This means a fight to break the stranglehold of the capitalists over the economy through the nationalization of the corporations and banks under the democratic control of the working class, and the victory of socialism in France, Europe and internationally.

The PES appeals to workers and youth who are

opposed to the dead end of the French presidential election to fight for a boycott of the election in the working class, support the PES, study its program and join the struggle to build it as the political vanguard of the working class in France.



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