Pseudo-left Workers' Struggle (Lutte ouvrière) welcomes far-right "freedom convoys" in Paris

Anthony Torres
19 February 2022

Asked on France's Info news channel about the "freedom convoy" movement demanding the lifting of all COVID-19 restrictions, Nathalie Arthaud, presidential candidate of the pseudo-left Workers' Struggle (Lutte Ouvrière) group hailed it as "salutary."

Lutte Ouvrière (LO) is thus working to promote a movement organised at the behest of the far right, falsely claiming that this convoy—which calls for a health policy that produces mass infections—defends the interests of the working class.

The convoys met a week ago in Paris, where they were banned by the Paris Prefecture. These convoys were not as successful as the organizers had hoped, having no support among the workers. However, on France Info, Arthaud presented these convoys as a "denunciation of the soaring price of petrol, of the French petrol company Total's super profits, of precariousness, of low wages. They are right to fight and I applaud them for inviting themselves into this election campaign. It's good to finally hear about the problems of the working classes."

She added: "The increase in the price of petrol is the will of the oil trusts. In reality, Total is raising the price of petrol and that's what makes its super profits. I think that workers should pay zero tax and that should be compensated by confiscating part of the profits. So, this movement puts all that on the table."

Finally, Arthaud put forward a rambling list of demands: "Workers must be able to demand wage increases that are commensurate with their salaries and increases in retirement pensions that we haven't seen for 52 years. The minimum wage must be €2,000 (US$2,275) net per month, this must be a minimum for wages and pensions. We need to hire in schools, in hospitals and we need to pay the care assistants better, the workers, they carry the company, they should have priority."

Nathalie Arthaud falsifies the origin and class character of the "Freedom Convoy" movement by calling it a "social protest" against the high cost of living. Inspired by the Canadian "Freedom Convoy", which is linked to the far-right forces involved in the attempted coup d'état of former US President Donald Trump on 6 January 2021 in Washington, convoys have been organized across Europe by organizations linked to far-right parties such as QAnon or far-right activists who campaigned against vaccination last year.

The forces behind this reactionary movement are the same ones behind the letter from former generals and active officers calling for military action against political opposition on French soil. They are involved in the preparations for a dictatorship at the highest levels of the state and the military apparatus, representing powerful sections of the financial aristocracy.

The demands of the "freedom convoys" are above all aimed at accelerating the elimination of health measures against COVID-19, which European governments are in fact already doing.

Significantly, despite the ban on the convoys in Paris, French President Emmanuel Macron said he understood the movement. He said: "We are all collectively tired of what we have been living through for two years. This fatigue is expressed in several ways: by disarray in some, depression in others. We see a very strong mental suffering among our young and not so young people. And sometimes, this fatigue is also

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expressed in anger. I hear it and respect it."

LO, like the other pseudo-left parties, is working to align angry and desperate workers behind the far right. LO did it last summer, supporting anti-vaccine demonstrations organized by the far right; now, LO is trying to throw them behind the "freedom convoys."

With unerring class instinct, LO and other allied petty-bourgeois pseudo-left groups line up with social reaction against the working class. Four years ago, they denounced mass "yellow vest" protests against social inequality as a far-right movement; now, facing a genuinely far-right movement with virtually no popular support in a highly-vaccinated population, LO enthusiastically promotes it.

The "yellow vest" movement, driven by the sympathy of large masses of workers, has drawn in self-employed people and small bosses, whose living conditions are closer to the workers, overflowing the trade union organizations and the pseudo-left. This movement, although defining itself as "apolitical", carried workers' demands. This movement, which took place at the same time as a series of strikes in the USA, initiated a wave of demonstrations and strikes on five continents against social inequality.

LO is a nationalist, anti-worker organization deeply integrated into the French trade union bureaucracy. It helps plan factory closures, layoffs and attacks on workers' social gains as well as participating in the framework of Macron's and the EU's bailout packages for the stock markets and the super-rich, and the official policy of mass infection on the pandemic.

A chasm separates LO, which supports the far-right movement to lift health restrictions, from the opposition of the working class and youth to mass infections, as a new wave of COVID-19 claims thousands of lives every week in France.

The pandemic and the unprecedented social and economic crisis it has caused globally is rapidly exposing the pseudo-left parties. Hostile to a Marxist and internationalist orientation, LO has over decades subordinated the working class to the interests of the trade union bureaucracy by promoting the trade unions as the only organizations that can decree a workers' mobilization. These arguments were politically exposed by the "yellow vest" protests four years ago, which were organized totally independently of the unions, via social media.

Now, as it fears a movement outside the control of the trade union bureaucracy, LO does not seek to build a left-wing and international alternative to the national bureaucracies, but instead seeks to demoralize and confuse opposition by calling for alliances with the far right.

Workers' economic problems caused by the pandemic cannot be solved by calls for tax cuts from the far-right protests that LO is cynically promoting. These protests are in fact putting forward a policy that will prolong this pandemic and its trail of death and economic dislocation indefinitely. Workers must oppose these movements and seek to convince the minority of workers who are influenced by the "freedom convoys" of the need for a scientific fight against the virus.

This requires a break with the pseudo-left, and in particular with LO, which is conducting false propaganda to confuse the workers and sabotage a struggle to eradicate the pandemic. For this the workers must create their own independent organizations, an International Workers Alliance of rank and file committees, and build revolutionary parties by joining the Socialist Equality Parties, national sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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