

French rail workers denounce Macron and his fraudulent “mediation” with the unions

Gregor Link, Alex Lantier
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Yesterday, members of the Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) interviewed railway workers on the struggle against Macron and his widely despised pension cuts. Over three-quarters of the French people oppose these cuts, which Macron has rammed through parliament without a vote, and two-thirds want a general strike to block the economy and defeat Macron.

PES members asked the railway workers about their opinion of the call of the PES to oppose Macron, who is ruling against the people, and to prepare a general strike to bring him down.

Iannis told PES members he frontally opposes Macron's cuts. “We are really suffering,” he said, pointing to Macron's requirement that workers pay into the pension system at least 42 years to retire with a full pension. He said, “When already after 30 years we lose our health, we have difficulties on the ground, to do 42 years is not acceptable. I have colleagues who left at 64, a few weeks later they flatlined. Two weeks after retiring, not even that, they were dead.”

He pointed out the health problems that make it dangerous for a rail worker to stay on the job too late in life: “There are breathing difficulties, a lot of back pain, many colleagues on crutches. We are always on our feet, the ramps for people with reduced mobility are extremely heavy. All year round, it wears out the human body. There are respiratory problems too, because of the work in the station, the trains, the dirt in the station, it plays a huge role. The conditions at the station are not very clean.”

About Macron, Iannis said, “I feel he's a dictator. He doesn't listen to the people, the one who doesn't listen to the people he creates a conflict situation. He prefers to go have fun in clubs in Africa, then there is [Junior Minister for Social Economy] Marlène Schiappa who is

posing on the front page of *Playboy*. It's not credible. We don't know if it's a government or people sent from who knows where.”

Iannis dismissed the union bureaucracy's “mediation” with Macron, saying, “It's nonsense, they passed the 49.3 [on pension cuts]. Giving an appointment to the unions is not credible. The reform must be withdrawn, and with inflation everything is just getting worse.”

Iannis supported the PES's call to bring down Macron, saying, “That's what they say at work; we clearly have to overthrow the guy. He despises the people. I'm screwing my health at work, so to work two more years and then die two weeks later, sorry, that won't fly. So we'll see how it goes, but clearly he needs to be overthrown, that's what's being said at work as the days go by. There's no other choice.”

PES members also interviewed **Nadia**, a worker nearing retirement at the French National Railways. “I am completely in solidarity with the strike,” she said. “I would like Macron to withdraw what [Prime Minister Elisabeth] Borne and the whole government have put in place. There is a palpable anger. We feel that people are disillusioned, disgusted. Two years is a lot for a person who is at the end of his career, who has only one desire, it is to get done ... even if he liked working at his company.”

About the “mediation” between Macron and the union apparatuses, she said, “Frankly, I do not even imagine that anything positive can come of that. ... Now, the people are reacting and I am very happy. They aren't letting themselves be taken advantage of.”

PES members also spoke to **Stéphanie**, who works for a subcontractor for the French National Railways that provides assistance to the disabled.

Stéphanie stressed that even though she works for a

subcontracting company, she supports the rail workers' strike against Macron: "I find it abusive to ask people who have worked almost all their lives to continue two more years. There are some jobs that deserve much better. For example, the disabled service: You have to lift, you have to push, you have to carry. Sometimes you have to help the disabled change trains."

She continued, "We have one worker who is 68 years old and, unfortunately, he does not have all his years of paying into the pension system yet. So he can't retire and still has to work. You see him on the rail platforms, he looks like a dead man walking. He is there, he walks slowly. He is at the end of his life, but unfortunately he has no choice because he does not have the entire pay-in period yet. It is not easy for him. As for me, I think this reform is terrible."

On Macron, Stephanie said, "He rules against the people, because he does not take into account what all the workers tell him or make him feel. ... It annoys me so much."

She added that union "mediation" with Macron would accomplish nothing: "Will he even listen? Not at all. He's doing his thing, he stays in his thing. ... For me, for sure, Macron is a dictator. He doesn't even give us a choice." If workers don't bring down Macron, Stephanie said, "We have four more years of suffering."

Stephanie stressed her support for a general strike, mobilizing all workers: "I find that we are not all in solidarity in this movement. For example, there is a strike on Thursday, but we are not on strike because we are subcontractors. We should all seriously block the economy but, really, when they say 'strike,' let everyone do it, stop France. And when I say, 'Stop,' I really mean do nothing."

She stressed the weakness of the political line advanced by the union bureaucracies and the political parties allied to them: "It fails to convince people to want to block the whole system. ... But eventually, one day, you block everything. I think that would be a good idea. But the leaders of the unions, they don't do it, that's true."

Hakim, an experienced worker who works in cleaning for an SNCF subcontractor, said of Macron's cuts: "In my opinion, he wants people to die at their jobs, while on the other side, there are young people who want to work. That's what makes me angry. I

already have 33 years of work behind me."

Asked about the perspective of bringing down Macron, Hakim said: "For modest families, it's already hard to make ends meet. If in a couple, both spouses are working, it's okay. But if there's only one, and with kids also, it's really not obvious what to do. In my opinion, Macron is governing against the people. It is of no use to the people if he stays."



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