

French youth denounce union bureaucracies' "mediation" with Macron

Our reporters
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In the past week, *World Socialist Web Site* reporters interviewed students in Paris and Amiens about the struggle against French President Emmanuel Macron's pension cut. On Thursday, millions of people demonstrated for the 12th time against the cut as the Constitutional Council prepared to give its approval to the law. This means that there is no longer any legal obstacle to this law, even though it is opposed by 80 percent of French people.

Valentine, a student at the Sorbonne, denounced the dictatorial nature of Macron's regime. "I think it is an attack on democracy. I think the government really wants to implement its ideas, despite the people opposing it, and not accepting to listen to people if they don't agree."

Evan, a student at the Sorbonne, explained why he took part in the protests against Macron. "I went to all the protests and I am against pension reform. Why? Because it is a reform that is a little unfair due to the increase in the retirement age. And also due to the use of [article] 49.3 because it makes it possible to forcefully pass a law when it is said that 80 percent of the French population is against this law."

Evan underlined the lack of a clear perspective on the part of the unions against Macron. "We have to try to make Macron and his government bend a little, however this is quite tough. We see it now. Already, there are some [strikers] who are being requisitioned, like garbage collectors. In truth, it's a little hard to go on strike when after three weeks you see that things aren't moving too much and that the government can use a 49.3 ... still it is important to go to the picket lines, etc."

Evan expressed his opposition to the unions' efforts to begin a new "mediation" with Macron, saying, "I find that the techniques of the inter-union, at the

moment, they annoy me. They bring together a lot of people during the demonstrations and everything, but afterwards, we know very well that they're going to discuss with [French Prime Minister] Elisabeth Borne, it will not move anything. She is stubborn in her idea with Macron to pass this reform thanks to 49.3. I have the impression that they block the movement a little. Okay, we have a protest every week and everything, but it's not enough."

Evan and Valentine signalled their support for the perspective proposed by the Socialist Equality Party of forming rank-and-file committees, independent of the union apparatuses, to bring down Macron through a general strike. Evan said, "I think it's up to the students or the workers to come together and try to really do something."

WSWS reporters in Amiens also interviewed Nairon and Chanis, two high school students who joined the April 13 protest against Macron's pension reform. Nairon explained that she had come to demonstrate against Macron "to avoid being retired at 70 in the long run, if we can stop the retirement at 64 we can stop further increases. It's degrading what Macron is doing, and there's no point in retiring at 64."

Chanis added, "We want to give a little more strength to people struggling at work because of their age and to people here for our future. 62 years old is already hard, going back to 64 is even harder."

Asked what would defeat Macron's reform, Nairon replied, "A revolution," to which Chanis added, "Yes, a revolution because otherwise they will never stop trying to raise retirement to 64 years."

In Amiens, the WSWS also interviewed a Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) official, professor of philosophy Carole Prompsy, who said, "The inter-union unity that has lasted since January 19

is a strength and I think that everything must be done to maintain it...”

Prompsy solidarized herself with the strategy of union “mediation” with Macron and applauded the former head of the CGT Philippe Martinez as well as the election of a leading bureaucrat of the federation of executives at the head, Sophie Binet of the CGT. She said, “I stand in solidarity with CGT and Martinez, he did well, I’m glad it’s Sophie Binet now.”

The contrast between these comments and those of the young people in struggle underline the class chasm that separates the majority of French people from the corrupt maneuvers of the union apparatuses. Dissatisfaction is mounting among workers and young people against the deceitful role of national union leaders who promote “mediation” with Macron but do not mobilize workers more widely to defend garbage collectors and refiners threatened with requisition and attacked by the cops.

This is why the Socialist Equality Party calls on workers and young people to build their own rank-and-file committees, independent of the union apparatuses, to take control of their own struggles and prepare for the general strike to bring down Macron.



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