

French unions aim to strangle fight against Macron by delaying protests until June 6

Anthony Torres
10 May 2023

The French union bureaucracies' decision to wait until June 6 before the next protests against Macron's pension cuts, while also reopening talks with him, is a betrayal of the working class.

Workers' militancy and the popular anger at Macron remain intact even after the adoption of the pension cuts as law. An overwhelming majority of the French people reject this illegitimate law of Macron, who rules openly against the people. Two-thirds of French people want to block the economy with a general strike. But far from continuing the fight, the all-trade union alliance is doing everything it can to stifle and demobilize the political struggle emerging between the workers and the capitalist state's illegitimate diktat to the people.

This confirms the analysis of the PES: to fight against Macron, the workers must build their own organizations of struggle, rank-and-file committees of action, to mobilize independently of the union apparatuses.

In its communiqué the union alliance admits there is broad opposition to Macron, since 2.3 million people marched in May Day protests in France. But it offers an impotent perspective to restart negotiations with Macron, while pretending to pressure the French National Assembly to oppose the cuts in a bill criticizing Macron's reform that might be brought before it on June 6. The communiqué declares:

"This bill [presented on June 6 at the National Assembly] will allow for the first time the national representation to vote on the pension reform. We call on our organizations to go and meet parliamentarians everywhere to call on them to vote on this bill. In this context, the

intersyndicale calls to multiply initiatives with notably a new day of common action, strikes and demonstrations on June 6, allowing all the employees to be heard by the members of parliament."

This proposal is impotent, because the National Assembly has already proven its hostility to the majority of French people who oppose Macron's reform. In March, it decided not to censure Macron when he imposed this pension cuts without a vote in the Assembly. Thus the Assembly has indicated that in its majority it supports Macron's illegitimate reform.

In reality, the all-union alliance is doing everything possible to chain the working class to the bourgeois parliamentarians in the Assembly and to political submission to the capitalist state. In reality, there is nothing to negotiate with Macron, nor with the Assembly. The mobilization against the reform in recent months has clearly shown that the working class is in a political struggle against the entire capitalist state machine.

The all-union alliance declares, on the other hand, that it will relaunch its negotiations with Macron, though without giving a precise schedule. Clearly, the union bureaucracies are joining the rest of the capitalist state apparatus that is trying to impose the reform on the French people. They write:

"The government has announced the opening of a cycle of negotiations, without the subject or the framework of the negotiations being precisely fixed. The trade unions will reiterate their rejection of the pension refo

“They will work on joint inter-union proposals involving employers, so that employees' concerns are finally taken into account, in terms of wages, working conditions, health at work, social democracy, gender equality and the environment in particular. Popular mistrust is deep and the dialogue can only be restored if the government proves its willingness to finally take into account the proposals of the trade unions.”

The *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* has stressed that the situation is objectively revolutionary, because of the irreconcilable conflict between the working class and Macron, and because this struggle is unfolding amid a wave of strikes by millions of workers in Germany, the UK, Portugal, Belgium and beyond. NATO and Russia are rapidly moving toward a major escalation of war, and governments are discredited. To stop Macron's policies in this explosive political context, the working class must bring him down.

The intersyndicale, on the other hand, wants to restart negotiations directly with Macron. It is now clear that they did not dare to do so before, not because they refuse to negotiate with a dictator who tramples on the will of the people, but because they feared the workers would mobilize against both Macron and their own bureaucracies if they did so.

The hostility of the union bureaucracies towards the interests and the struggle of the working class exposes these organizations, which are closely tied to the state. They impose the impoverishment of the workers in order to plunder the wealth created by the workers for the financial aristocracy and to finance Macron's war preparations. The cut in social spending carried out by this reform is to be used to finance the increase in the French military budget by about €90 billion before 2030.

This policy is not the result of a tactical error by union leaders or the product of the personal corruption of one or another union leader. It reflects the material interests of the union leaders, a layer of the petty-bourgeoisie hostile to revolutionary class struggle and closely tied to the state machine through corporatist “social dialog” with the French presidency.

In exchange for services rendered, the state and

employers pay billions of euros each year to the union bureaucracies. This means top union officials receive salaries that are several times higher than the average worker's salary. In his 2012 report on the financing of the French unions, lawmaker Nicolas Perruchot wrote:

'As we can see, almost 4 billion euros are probably spent annually on trade union activity in France. Most of these resources (90 per cent) seem to come from the exercise of the right to organize in companies and the civil service, while the direct contributions of union members in the form of dues would represent, after deduction of tax aid, only 3 to 4 per cent.’”

The betrayal of the union bureaucracy also exposes the bankruptcy of the organizations of the petty-bourgeois pseudo-left like the NPA, Révolution Permanente or LO, which beg the union leaders to provide workers a 'battle plan' against Macron. They reject revolutionary measures, instead advancing a national program subordinated to the 'democratic' capitalist state. This is ultimately just a thin pseudo-left veneer applied to a policy of subordinating the working class to their negotiations with Macron and his police state.

Strikes and struggles must continue against austerity and war, and be linked up to struggles unfolding beyond the borders of France, independently of the pro-capitalist trade union apparatuses and their political allies. To do this, workers must create their own rank-and-file committees, breaking with the union bureaucracies to take control of their struggles. This is the only way to continue the struggle already begun against Macron, to prevent the unions from strangling the struggle, and to stop Macron's attacks by bringing him down.



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)