

French New Popular Front backs top finance ministry official as prime minister

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Last week, the New Popular Front (NFP) alliance led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon arrived at a last-minute “consensus” on the prime minister it would propose to President Emmanuel Macron. It chose Lucie Castets, a top finance ministry official and adviser to the Socialist Party (PS) administration in Paris. By naming Castets, NFP leaders like Mélenchon and unpopular former PS President François Hollande are proposing someone who could easily work with Macron, based on repudiating whatever social promises the NFP made workers in its election program.

An examination of Castets’ record confirms the assessment the Parti de l’égalité socialiste (PES) made of the NFP—as a trap for the working class. While it proclaimed that it was fighting against a potential neo-fascist victory in the legislative elections, the Mélenchon-Hollande alliance is capturing votes from workers hoping for left-wing policies, to then impose upon them a government led by a bourgeois economist.

The proposal of Castets followed weeks of factional struggles inside the NFP. The Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and then Mélenchon’s France Unbowed (LFI) party proposed Huguette Bello, the president of Réunion island’s regional council. The PS proposed ex-Pabloite Professor Laurence Tubiana, with the support of the PCF and the Greens. Tubiana, who openly called to junk the NFP’s election promises in order to work out an election alliance with Macron, saw her candidacy rejected by LFI. In the NFP, talks collapsed for a time.

Finally, a few hours before Macron was set to speak on the government crisis, the PS—the bourgeois party of imperialist war and austerity from which Macron himself emerged—made an agreement with LFI to back Castets. She is a virtually unknown functionary at the

finance ministry, who was trained at the same, elite National Administration School (ENA) as Macron.

In a communiqué, the NFP declared that Castets is a “high functionary who has worked on the repression of tax fraud and financial criminality.” It presented her as a woman deeply committed to “non-governmental associations’ struggle for the defense and the promotion of public services,” but also “in the ideological struggle against raising the retirement age to 64.” In an AFP interview published minutes after the NFP publicly announced its endorsement of her, she claimed that she supports “the abrogation of the pension reform” imposed last year by Macron.

On X/Twitter, Mélenchon applauded the NFP’s promotion of Castets and called on Macron to name her as prime minister. He wrote:

The proposition of Lucie Castets for the role of prime minister is a confirmation of the capacity of the New Popular Front to raise itself to the seriousness of the circumstances, while respecting the promises that have been made to the women and men who placed it first among their votes. The President of the Republic should dither no longer. The country is impatient to see its decision acted upon!

In a *FranceInter* interview she had agreed to on July 24, Castets claimed she would refuse all coalitions with Macron’s party due to their “profound disagreements.” Without clearly explaining what concrete differences on policy she had, Castets claimed only that she would want to “convince people bill after bill, law after law” and “change methods” to stop a “very Jupiter-style”

exercise of power by Macron.

An hour later, on French state television, Macron swept her proposals aside and stressed that he will insist on a repudiation by the NFP of all its social promises. “The question is not who we should name, but what majority can be formed in the Assembly so that a government can adopt cuts and a budget,” Macron said. Dismissing the NFP, he said it “does not have any majority whatsoever.”

However the talks between LFI, the PS and Macron ultimately end, Castets’ nomination is a signal that the NFP intends to betray the promises it made to workers and youth who voted NFP to oppose both Macron and the neo-fascist National Rally (RN). Castets is an ENA graduate whose political and professional record presents only minor differences with the policies of Macron, the president of the rich. Indeed, Macron is negotiating with the NFP, which is promoting Castets, even as he also secretly negotiates with the RN.

LFI attacked the PS’ attempt to nominate Tubiana as “unserious” because she was too openly compatible with Macron. However, LFI is now backing Castets, whose political profile is no different than that of Tubiana. She is also an economist trained by the bourgeoisie to be part of the ruling elite and to implement PS austerity measures against the workers at home.

Castets is a former PS member and ran in 2015 on the PS electoral list of Nicolas Mayer-Rossignol in the Haute-Normandie department. “She left the PS because she disagreed with the political orientation of François Hollande’s presidential term,” claims LFI deputy and strategist Paul Vannier. But while Castets, like Macron, left the PS when it faced explosive anger amongst workers after Hollande’s reactionary 2012-2017 presidency, she continued to work closely with this bourgeois party.

Castets worked for PS mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, who selected Castets as her economic adviser before naming her to run the “Finances and Purchases” of the city. “She has the confidence of the mayor in order to have such a great responsibility,” said Hidalgo’s deputy, Patrick Bloche.

Workers must be warned: a Castets government would defend a police state waging imperialist war abroad and class war at home in order to finance military escalation. In her statements, Castets has been

silent on Macron’s call to send troops to Ukraine to wage war with Russia, on the Israeli genocide in Gaza, and on Macron’s support for the Israeli regime.

The NFP’s choice of Castets, a graduate of the unpopular ENA, is no coincidence, as France is being targeted by the European Union for excessive deficits. The NFP is joining in the political maneuvers of the financial aristocracy by selecting someone trained by the school infamous for being the training ground of bourgeois politicians. Indeed, despite her criticisms of Macron’s pension cuts last year, Castets is set to agree to austerity policies that Macron intends to impose against an overwhelming majority of the French people, especially workers.

Workers in France must recall the experience of their class brothers and sisters in Greece, who voted Syriza (the “Coalition of the Radical Left”) into office to stop austerity. In power from 2015 to 2019, Syriza imposed more deep austerity cuts, while loyally defending and financing Greece’s role in NATO by building “Fortress Europe” detention camps for refugees in alliance with the European Union (EU). It demobilized and betrayed the expectations of workers and youth who were hoping for a more left-wing policy.

Syriza had won power in an electoral landslide, promising the end of the austerity measures of the EU and the International Monetary Fund, but demonstrated in a matter of a few weeks that it was a party devoted to serving the bourgeoisie. Workers cannot expect fundamentally different experiences from a formation like the NFP, which can advance figures like Castets.

The working class will enter into explosive conflicts with whatever government emerges from the ongoing talks between LFI, the PS, Macron and the RN. These coming struggles must however be transformed into a movement against not only Macron and the neo-fascists but also the suffocating diktat of the political and trade union bureaucracies making up the NFP. The precondition for such a struggle is building a revolutionary Marxist vanguard, that is to say, the PES, in the working class.



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