Macron’s moves to form right-wing French government expose bankruptcy of New Popular Front

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This week, press reports revealed that President Emmanuel Macron is preparing to form a right-wing government, trampling on the results of the July 7 election. Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s New Popular Front (NFP) won the election amid a surge of opposition to Macron’s policies and to the far-right National Rally. However, Macron is still considering naming right-wing politician Xavier Bertrand as prime minister.

Yesterday, *Le Figaro* reported that Macron discussed Bertrand, a former health and labor minister under previous right-wing governments, as a possible prime ministerial choice with close associates sent by Bertrand. “How is he?” Macron asked them. They replied, “He is ready to take up the challenge. He’s prepared.”

These plans amount to a conspiracy against the people and, above all, against the working class. They are discussed behind the backs of the masses, with the media almost entirely focused on the Paris Olympics, and at the height of the French summer holidays. But even after Macron’s party has been reduced to a small minority in the National Assembly and his policies have been rejected by an overwhelming majority of the French people, moves are afoot to name a government based on the same forces as before the July 7 election.

The main enabler of this conspiracy, however, is Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the NFP coalition. The NFP holds the largest single bloc of votes in the National Assembly, after carrying the votes of the bulk of the urban working class in the 2022 presidential and 2024 legislative elections. Yet the NFP has proven itself completely incapable and unwilling to call on its millions of working class voters to mobilize and strike to bring down Macron’s right-wing conspiracy.

Instead, the NFP has proven utterly feckless, unable to rouse itself to any action against Macron’s reactionary maneuvers. Mélenchon has not issued a single tweet or statement on his blog since July. The NFP has left the task of criticizing Macron’s maneuvers with Bertrand to the political nonentity it unanimously chose as its proposal to Macron for prime minister, the obscure 37-year-old Finance Ministry bureaucrat Lucie Castets.

By thus abandoning the political field, the NFP is leaving the way open for Macron to plot the installation of what would be an illegitimate, violently right-wing government. Bertrand, a former labor minister under right-wing President Nicolas Sarkozy, would pursue an agenda of austerity, police state repression and attacks on immigrants, while Macron continues to participate in NATO’s wars internationally.

Reporting on Bertrand’s attempts to market himself as a possible prime minister in his back-channel talks with Macron, *Le Figaro* writes:

> [He] recalls that the closure of the “Jungle” [immigrant camp] in Calais in 2016 took place as he was president of the region, working with [Socialist Party] Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve. So did the cut-off of state contracts to the Averroès Muslim high school. This shows that on military-police issues, he does not promote a “weak consensus.” He is now making many contacts on the right and left, among business circles and the trade unions.

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Macron and Bertrand clearly expect they can rely on the support of parts of the NFP to implement a right-wing agenda. Together, their two parties have only 146 of the National Assembly's 577 seats, well short of the 289 needed for a majority. And so Bertrand is now in talks not only with the union bureaucracies, who backed the NFP in the elections, but also parties that joined Mélenchon in the NFP—such as the bourgeois Socialist Party (PS), the Stalinist French Communist Party (PCF) and the Greens.

The fecklessness of the NFP is exposing the thoroughly petty-bourgeois character of Mélenchon and his France Unbowed (LFI) party, the leading force in the NFP coalition. Beyond the NFP, moreover, an entire layer of middle class descendants of renegades from Trotskyism, like Workers Struggle (LO) and the Morenoite *Révolution permanente* (RP) tendency, which promoted the NFP as a way forward for workers also stands exposed.

Macron, the "president of the rich," is despised for ruling against the people, enforcing policies demanded by finance capital but rejected by the international working class. A staggering 91 percent of Americans and 89 percent of West Europeans oppose sending NATO troops to Ukraine to wage war on Russia, which threatens to escalate into nuclear war. Similarly, 91 percent of the French people oppose the pension cuts Macron decreed last year without a vote, in the face of mass protests and strikes, in order to finance the war.

The outcome of the July 7 vote revealed the widespread opposition in France to the xenophobic, anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant policies of both the neo-fascist RN and Macron, as well as deep-rooted opposition to the Israeli regime's genocide in Gaza. However, the NFP squandered this political opportunity, rapidly forming an election alliance.

The NFP and its satellites do not represent the working class. Like allied parties across Europe such as Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain and the Left Party in Germany, they represent affluent layers of the middle class in academia, the trade union bureaucracy and the political-media establishment. Tied to the capitalist state machine and the ruling class, they pursue pragmatic maneuvers within a national framework, based on gender and racial identity politics.

The NFP cannot put itself at the head of the overwhelming working class opposition to Macron, because this would rapidly take it much further to the left than it is willing to go. Indeed, the NFP election program that LFI agreed to with the PS called to send French troops as "peacekeepers" to Ukraine and to strengthen French intelligence and military police internally. The NFP therefore fears a movement in the working class against Macron that would also be directed against its own policies.

Instead, Castets is promoting herself based on her sexual orientation. This week, she gave an interview to lifestyle magazine *Paris Match* revealing that, in addition to being a "Parisian technocrat who oversees the servicing of the capital's €8 billion debt," she is a lesbian with a wife and children. She commented, "I want to say who I am."

The decisive question in the political identity of the NFP, however, is that it opposes socialism and blocks the construction of a movement in the international working class against war, genocide and capitalism. The burning question facing workers and youth is what political conclusions must be drawn from the exposure of its counterrevolutionary role.

An explosive confrontation will emerge between the working class and whatever government ultimately emerges from the July 7 elections. However, workers cannot wage this struggle under the control of national union bureaucracies tied to the NFP. It requires the building of independent organizations of struggle in workplaces, schools and working class neighborhoods that can mobilize the vast social opposition among workers and link it to developing struggles of their class brothers and sisters around the world.

Inseparable from this is the struggle to build a new revolutionary leadership in the working class to smash the political obstacle posed by the Stalinist, social democratic and populist forces of the NFP. Only one party warned of the reactionary role of Mélenchon and the NFP. That party, which must be built today, is the Parti de l'égalité socialiste, the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement.

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