

Barnier government ministers embrace policies of French far-right

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The ministerial cabinet selected by French Prime Minister Michel Barnier with the support of President Emmanuel Macron and its initial statements to the press amount to the effective adoption by the French state of the program of the far-right National Rally (RN). Drawn from the rump of Macron's Ensemble movement and the right-wing Les Républicains (LR), it controls a minority in the National Assembly, where its survival depends on RN support.

The installation of this government, assembled over three months of back-channel talks after the July 7 elections, is a humiliating exposure of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's New Popular Front (NFP). The NFP formed an electoral alliance with Ensemble in the July 7 elections, withdrawing its candidates to support Macron's candidates instead, claiming this would keep the neofascists from power. Even after withdrawing many of its candidates, the NFP nonetheless won first place.

Yet Macron formed a government not with Mélenchon, but with right-wing forces closely tied to the RN. After Macron named Barnier to assemble a government, polls showed three-quarters of the French people believe that Macron did not respect the election results, and 56 percent distrusted Barnier, a longtime European Union (EU) bureaucrat viciously hostile to immigrants.

This flagrantly antidemocratic installation of an illegitimate government aims to impose policies rejected by the overwhelming majority of the population. Polls show 91 percent of the French people want to rescind Macron's pension cuts, imposed last year by decree in the face of mass protests. Large majorities oppose Macron's plans to send ground troops to Ukraine for war with Russia, as well as French and NATO support for Israel's genocide in

Gaza.

Nevertheless, this was the policy Barnier laid out Sunday night in a brief, perfunctory prime-time interview on France2 state television. Declaring that his government shares the same "values" as the Ukrainian regime, which rules without elections and relies on far-right militias sympathetic to the Nazi collaboration in that country, he also embraced Israel's "right to defend itself," even as Israel launches a war of aggression against Lebanon.

Barnier advanced a program for class war at home to wage imperialist war abroad, thinly covered by ritualistic promises to "listen a lot" and remember "those down below who must be respected." Remaining silent on Macron's diversion of hundreds of billions of euros to bank bailouts and the military machine, he demanded "firmness" against immigrants and vaguely alluded to plans for further, deep social cuts. He called for "truth on the financial and ecological debts that already weigh heavily on the shoulders of our children."

Similarly, Barnier's ministerial picks have an indubitably fascistic character. Barnier named as interior minister Bruno Retailleau, a member of Philippe de Villiers' royalist movement who joined LR and presides over the party in the Senate. Retailleau infamously blamed last year's urban riots after the police murder of Nahel on a "regression to ethnic origins" by immigrants. Barnier's consumer affairs minister, Laurence Garnier, is notorious for opposing constitutionally-protected rights to abortion and gay marriage.

Yesterday, Retailleau said, "There will be much more rigor, there will be a break" on immigration policy, demanding "more expulsions, fewer regularizations." He advocates the suppression of State Medical Aid

(AME) that funds medical care for refugees who cannot afford it, as well as the repudiation of EU immigration law. After these measures were struck from an earlier immigration law by the Constitutional Council on the grounds of their unconstitutionality, Retailleau demanded in an interview yesterday on TF1 television regarding a new law on immigration.

It is widely admitted in ruling circles that the RN now controls government policy, especially on immigration. An anonymous high-ranking state official told *Le Monde* that the debate over immigration in France is “escaping all rationality,” adding: “If [the government] passes a law, it will be under the RN’s control and will have to rely on its support to get its law adopted. If it does not pass a law, the RN will demand that it do so.”

Macron is directly responsible for this situation, having rejected an alliance with the NFP, which had won the election, to instead ally with LR and, above all, the RN. However, it must also be said that Mélenchon and the NFP, a coalition of parties led by Mélenchon’s France Unbowed (LFI) and the big-business Socialist Party (PS), were the decisive enablers of the far-right regime, by working to keep Macron’s forces in the Assembly who are now allied to the RN.

Leading figures inside LFI are now denouncing the government and pledging to present a motion of censure, for which they do not have a majority in the Assembly.

PS legislator Jérôme Guedj told Sud Radio: “I will vote a motion of censure [against the Barnier government] because I have no illusion on its programmatic content. Whether you look at the composition of the government or the first statements of Michel Barnier, we have a right-wing line that does not undo the pension cuts. The second reason is democratic. We must oppose this turn of events and the failure to respect the message of the July 7 elections.”

“This government is a coalition of losers, with some people who are more or less there for show, for fakery, and others who will be the real bosses,” Mélenchon said, calling Barnier an “illusion.” Retailleau, Mélenchon added, “will be the person making the decisions in this country, since in parliamentary procedure all bills pass through the Senate. So the Assembly can vote what it wants, but at the end of the day, Mr Macron will be forced to say yes all the time to Mr Retailleau.”

But Mélenchon’s observation that the government is a coalition of losers only begs the question: how were the losers allowed to form a government? Workers and youth must have no illusions in the cynical and impotent posturing of the NFP. It aims not to prepare a political struggle of the working class against this unpopular far-right regime, but to maintain the grip of the NFP and allied union bureaucracies over the class struggle, so that pension cuts, genocide and war continue.

Mélenchon received the votes of much of the urban working class in 2022 and 2024. But he then made electoral deals with Macron, claiming this was the only way to block the rise of neofascism. After the elections, even after it became known that Macron was holding extensive back-channel talks with the RN, the NFP was unable and unwilling to call for its millions of working class voters to strike and protest against Macron’s conspiracy. By thus abandoning the field, the NFP let Macron plot the installation of an illegitimate far-right regime undisturbed.

This self-defeating policy is bound up with the class basis and political program of LFI. Made up of affluent layers of academics, union bureaucrats and professionals favorable to French imperialism, it shares much of Macron’s program. Indeed, LFI agreed to passages in the NFP’s election program that called to send French troops to Ukraine as “peacekeepers” and to strengthen the intelligence and military police services.

Workers and youth will soon enter into conflict with the Barnier government, but they cannot struggle against it under the diktat of the NFP and the union bureaucracies. These forces have also lost the confidence of millions of workers who now vote RN to mark their disgust and frustration with the PS and Macron. The working class must be politically mobilized and unified in struggle based on intransigent opposition to war, genocide, and fascistic social reaction on a program of placing the working class in power and waging a struggle for socialism.



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