

French social-democrats back Macron to install minority Lecornu government

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Yesterday, Sébastien Lecornu's minority government survived censure motions in the National Assembly from the France Unbowed (LFI) party and the far-right National Rally (RN). The big-business Socialist Party (PS) jumped ship, abandoning LFI and most of the rest of the New Popular Front (NFP) parliamentarians, to join President Emmanuel Macron's supporters and the right-wing The Republicans (LR) party in backing Lecornu's unpopular government.

LFI's motion received 271 votes, 18 short of a majority in the 577-seat Assembly. LFI deputies together with all but three Stalinist and two Green deputies voted together with the RN's deputies to support it. The RN's motion attracted no votes outside the right, getting only 144 votes. The Assembly thus abetted Macron's rule against the people—installing a prime minister who, before his previous, short-lived government fell less than two weeks ago, stood at 15 percent in the polls.

The failure of the censure motions against Lecornu exposes LFI leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon's perspective of a "citizens revolution" channeled through parliament. It vindicates the position of the *Parti de l'égalité socialiste* (PES). Stopping attacks on the working class and the consolidation of the police state requires building a movement in the working class for a general strike to bring down Macron, independently of the NFP bureaucracies, in an international struggle for workers' power and socialist revolution.

Responsibility for Lecornu's installation lies above all with Mélenchon. The PS is serving as a tool of the capitalist oligarchy—backing a government despised for imposing policies of austerity and militarism by police-state repression of mass protests. But this is what the PS has done for over four decades, and why it collapsed to 1 percent of the vote as Mélenchon got 22 percent in the 2022 presidential elections. LFI, by forming an electoral front with the PS and backing its candidates in the 2024 legislative elections, again put it in a position to play a decisive role in official politics.

LFI parliamentary faction leader Mathilde Panot's cry that "The PS bears a historic responsibility" and her threats to

resubmit failed impeachment motions against Macron recall the robber who cries "Stop, thief!" as he flees the scene. This result is the outcome of the bankrupt perspective of building the NFP. LFI bears historic responsibility for giving the PS the chance to once more advance policies of austerity, war and police-state repression it always enacted when in government.

With such parliamentary maneuvers, which worked to block the mobilization of mass opposition in the working class in a strike movement to bring down Macron, LFI has strengthened the position of the RN. Together with French far-right media, the RN will predictably denounce left-wing politics as a whole as tools of the system.

Yesterday, after Lecornu survived the censure vote, RN party president Jordan Bardella said, "All those who today refused to vote for censure are responsible for the suffering that is to be visited on this country ... A majority built through corrupt deals today managed to save its positions at the expense of the national interest."

In reality, the French capitalist oligarchy is preparing to bring the RN into government to intensify repression against the working class. Bardella's posturing against Lecornu is cynical, as Lecornu is no opponent of the RN. He was a leader of the negotiating team that Macron quietly sent to the RN leadership during the 2024 elections, expecting an RN victory, to plan a future RN government. Behind the scenes, such talks are no doubt continuing, as the ruling class plans what to do when Lecornu's weak minority government faces serious working class opposition.

The capitalist oligarchy did not immediately bring the RN into government under Macron. Amid protests at the beginning of the school year, it feared that it would be too politically provocative to make the far-right visibly the tool of France's despised president of the rich on the first time the far-right entered government in France since it collaborated with Nazism during World War II. The ruling class prefers for now to lean on the PS, allowing the NFP to discredit itself by unsuccessfully begging Macron to name it to the government.

The PS and allied layers of the union bureaucracy are fraudulently claiming they have obtained concessions from Macron in exchange for backing Lecornu. Marylise Léon, the general secretary of the PS-linked French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT), pointed to Lecornu's pledge to temporarily freeze Macron's pension cuts, declaring: "This is a true trade union victory, above all a victory for workers who see the rise in the pension age and the pay-in period stop."

But the installation of Lecornu is no victory for the working class, and Lecornu is not a principled "democratic" opponent of the RN who makes social concessions to the workers in response to strikes and protests. As defense minister, he was a fervent advocate of increases in military spending amid the NATO-Russia war in Ukraine. He is committed to war spending and to escalating the social attacks on Macron's police state on the working class.

France's previous prime minister, François Bayrou, fell after he proposed €44 billion in cuts. In his open letter to France's CEOs, Bardella pledged to make €100 billion in cuts if the RN took power. But yesterday, the influential Economic Analysis Council (CAE) linked to the prime minister's office indicated that Lecornu plans even deeper attacks than either Bayrou or Bardella proposed.

Under Lecornu, the French government will set itself the goal of €112 billion in social cuts and tax increases, to stabilize France's unsustainable debt of 114 percent of its Gross Domestic Product. To avoid the collapse into economic depression that it expects would result if the cuts were made all at once, the CAE proposes to make the cuts in stages, over the several years—starting with €26 billion in social cuts this coming year.

This exposes Lecornu's claims he will pursue a less anti-democratic policy by freezing Macron's pension cuts and pledging not to impose such cuts by decree as Macron did in 2023, but instead via a vote of parliament.

Lecornu's "freeze" of Macron's pension cuts means temporarily suspending their further application, not rescinding them. It leaves the cuts where they currently are—with the pension age at 63.5, raised from 62 but just short of the final target of 64—until the suspension is lifted, and the retirement age and pay-in period continue to rise. As the French state faces growing pressure from financial markets to pay down its €3.4 trillion debt, there can be little doubt that Macron will soon be demanding further cuts to pensions.

Moreover, this "freeze" is written as a provision in the Social Security budget stuffed full of other unpopular austerity measures, including a €7 billion cut to health care spending, with the doubling of patient co-pays on prescription medication. To vote to "freeze" the pension

cuts, the PS and its trade union allies will have to vote also for this attack on the health of the population.

The 2023 pension cuts exposed the impossibility of opposing austerity if the class struggle remains controlled by union bureaucracies linked to the NFP. Millions of workers joined strikes against the measure, which is opposed today by 91 percent of the population, and riots erupted nationwide after Macron imposed the cuts via decree, without even a parliamentary vote. But the union bureaucracies responded by strangling the class struggle, calling off strikes once Macron promulgated the cuts as law.

Only a struggle of the working class, mobilizing rank-and-file workers independently of the NFP bureaucracy, can avert further social attacks and halt the bourgeoisie's accelerating maneuvers to install a neo-fascist dictatorship in France. As the PES explained in its statement, "Which way forward for the working class after the fall of the French government?":

Two stark alternatives are presented. Either the capitalist oligarchy builds a fascist dictatorship to crush the working class, or the working class wages a revolutionary struggle on a socialist program to expropriate the oligarchs. This requires breaking through the straitjacket of the union bureaucracies and building genuine, rank-and-file organizations dedicated to prosecuting the class struggle.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) calls for the transfer of power from the trade union bureaucracies to the workers in all factories and workplaces. Such new forms of class organization, uniting workers in France and throughout Europe, are necessary to organize resistance to and defeat the corporate-financial oligarchy's program of fascism, genocide and war.



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