



Dear comrades,

Since 19 January, we have been fighting against the Macron government, which continues its constant policy of attacks on workers' rights. The pension reform, which aims to lower the retirement age and the number of years of contribution, is rejected by 94% of the working population. Whatever the government says, the workers of this country have understood that this reform would lead to a general impoverishment, to a decrease in their life expectancy in retirement and ultimately to deprive them of the right to a healthy retirement.

The first victims are women, those with precarious jobs who have had a chaotic career, people doing heavy work, and more generally, all those without whom the vital needs of our society are no longer provided.

Behind this reform, the government is in fact seeking to compensate for the tax gifts and generous subsidies given to companies, impoverishing the social protection systems while paving the way for private pension funds to manage the pension system. These financial justifications are seen as a provocation by all those who suffer from high inflation, while at the same time dividends paid to shareholders of the largest French groups are reaching record levels. However, these pseudo-justifications are contradicted by most experts and economists who describe this reform as unfair and useless!

It is in this context that the entire French inter-union movement, determined and united, has taken the lead in a historic mobilisation that has now lasted two months. The millions of demonstrators and strikers during these days, figures that have not been seen for decades, show a strong commitment and a massive rejection of the law by the population. Workers in the waste treatment, energy, transport, oil, glass industry and port and dock sectors have been everyday on strike since 7 March. Demonstrations, torchlight marches, blockades, strikes, causing major disruptions to economic activity, are taking place every day in the territories. The number of union memberships has multiplied, testifying to the workers' approval of the struggle led by the trade union movement.

This pressure put on by workers alongside the unions has let the government's in an unsustainable situation. The government's contempt for the unanimous refusals of workers and citizens only serves to increase the level of anger and distrust of the institutions.

A new step was crossed on Thursday 17 March, the day the text was voted on in the National Assembly. A part of the conservative right, whose votes were necessary for the government to reach a majority, gave up in front of the pressure by the popular movement and finally let alone the government. The latter, more isolated than ever, is locking itself into democratic denial by seeking to force its way through with Article 49.3 of the constitution, allowing it to override the vote in the assembly.

This suicidal and anti-democratic choice is serious and opens a deep political crisis. Spontaneous rallies and wildcat demonstrations have multiplied since the evening of the government's announcement and continue every day since. Strikes have been renewed by workers in many companies and administrations, whose determination has only been strengthened by the contemptuous attitude of the president and his ministers.

The President and his government are constantly condemning what they consider to be violence. If there is violence, it is the result of the contempt assumed by the President and his government, and the responsibility cannot be placed on the trade unions, the workers and the population. This reform marks the complete fiasco of this president and his government. France's image in the world is stained, and the world press is astonished by this democratic anomaly that constitutes the forced passage of a text rejected by 94% of employees.

The government has no alternative but to withdraw this text. We see no other possible way out of the current situation, for which the executive is totally responsible. Delaying, waiting for it to pass, only makes things worse. Because this time it will not pass!

Following the call of the inter-union group, which is determined to fight for the definitive withdrawal of the law, Thursday 23 March will be the 9th big day of strikes and demonstrations throughout France. We welcome this commitment to the social progress of workers in our country alongside the unions. This gives us hope, in these troubled times, for the many common struggles that we must wage alongside you, dear comrades, within a united and fighting international trade union movement!

Montreuil, 20 March 2023