

# THE PROLETARIAT MUST RETURN TO THE TERRAIN OF MATERIAL CLASS INTERESTS TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE COUNTER-ATTACK AGAINST THE AUSTERITY PLANS

## The class enemy's plan

For many years now, the state and its social partners have been leading a prolonged attack against proletarian incomes. The main axis of this attack is the restriction of benefits that the most insecure proletarians rely on. Some examples: for unemployment benefits, making them harder to access, reducing the duration of benefits, gradual reduction; for the RSA [Active Solidarity Income – for someone who is destitute]: unpaid activity is obligatory.

Bayrou's budget plan was in continuity with this attack: freezing (therefore reducing in a period of inflation) social benefits, pensions and the wages of civil servants, reductions in reimbursements for long-term illnesses, checks on recipients of disability benefits for adults, and encouragement for social partners to resume new supposed negotiations on unemployment benefits in order to make savings.

This budget plan may well have fallen with the Bayrou government, but it marks a profound tendency and demonstrates the tactic adopted by the dominant classes: attack the incomes of the most insecure proletarians (poorest, pensioners, sick, disabled etc.) while hoping to divide the class between those the state designates as “good workers” and those considered “scrounging layabouts”, between the young, disadvantaged in the labour market, many not allowed RSA until they are 25, and the supposedly privileged “retired”.

Let's consider the working population: according to the INSEE report on the labour market in 2024, the unemployment rate is 7.4%. Among employees (two-thirds of the economically active population), 26.9% are in insecure employment. We must also take into account the 13.8% of permanent contracts that will end within a year. In total, over a year, it can be estimated that nearly half of the working population is potentially affected, at one time or another, by the social safety net. To this must be added the economically inactive (disabled, sick, retired), including 4.5% of those aged 15-64 who are not working but classified as being in the “halo around unemployment”, and people working illegally, a significant proportion of whom are undocumented migrants.

These are the targets of the present attack.

But we can't ignore it: the strategy of the ruling classes is to weaken the proletariat on the margins so that they can then attack the core of social spending: Social Security and unemployment benefits, not through marginal adjustments, but through structural savings, by cutting off access to a growing portion of the population and drastically reducing the level of benefits. This is what we already see in the United States and the United Kingdom. This is what will happen in France without a proletarian counter-attack.

## The Lecornu government in continuity

In the absence of a majority, Macron will be ready to let Lecornu find a compromise with the Socialist Party, for example by taxing higher incomes or assets, *“on condition however that it will not attack the attractiveness of the country, or its production capacity”*, according to *Le Monde* on 11 September.

Translation: you can tax the richest, but not in a way that changes anything. The plan has not changed. It's just a matter of throwing a few crumbs to get the budget passed in the National Assembly.

Whether the new government manages to push it through or is forced to compromise with the left, it doesn't matter. These will only be adjustments designed to perpetuate the attack on the most vulnerable proletarians.

## **Against abstract slogans and the logic of managers, let's fight for our incomes, in all forms**

The various benefits are only wages grabbed by the state and then redistributed in a deferred manner. It is our collective labour which produces all social wealth, part of which is then returned to us, whether it's directly, by each boss, or deferred as benefits, pensions etc.

Opposing workers and unemployed, young and retired, plays the game of the ruling classes. In the capitalist economy, unemployment is necessary and unavoidable. It is used to force down wages by maintaining competition on the labour market.

We don't care if bosses and landlords leave for Dubai to escape taxes, or if rating agencies downgrade France's public debt. How the ruling classes finance our wages, both direct and deferred, is not our problem. Nor are elections, dissolutions, or resignations; there is nothing to be gained from them.

Our problem is the balance of forces. Yet, general and abstract up-in-the-air slogans, such as "Let's block everything" and "general strike," do nothing to build this balance of force.

When blockades are carried out by proletarians external to the productive territory being blocked, they are an open admission of weakness. When you block an Amazon sorting office or a bus depot from outside, you show that the proletarians employed there prefer to work rather than go on strike. In the same way, calls for a general strike ring hollow when workers in workplaces are unable to establish a balance of force against their bosses.

We need to get involved in workplaces, not with generic national slogans, but in order to improve wages and working conditions in every factory, office, and supermarket. For proletarians who have been driven out of work, we must occupy the agencies responsible for policing them — France Travail, CAF, and their service providers — and fight there for access to benefits and against cut-offs of benefits.

For that, we need deeply rooted class organisation. To patiently prepare strikes in every workplace, rather than wait for them to fall from the sky on dates chosen on a national level.

## **FOR THE REVIVAL OF WORKERS' INITIATIVE**

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