

**DON'T BE TRAPPED IN THE RITUAL OF "CITIZEN"
DEMONSTRATIONS!
TAKING THE FIGHT INTO WORKPLACES, INDUSTRY
SECTORS AND NEIGHBOURHOODS FOR WAGES,
PENSIONS AND UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS IS A
MATTER OF URGENCY!**

An indispensable step...

- The demos continue to be "monster"-sized even if they seem to have platformed. Strikes, on the other hand, are weakening. Only isolated cases stand out, such as the air traffic controllers at Orly on Saturday 11 February.
- The government has not budged one bit. Even the supposed concessions are not concessions. We discover, for example, that the minimum of €1,200 gross per month will only apply to new retirees who have made full quarterly contributions and given up waged work at the legal age. "Long careers" are still under discussion in the National Assembly between LR and Renaissance. The government's preferred lure to the unions is the consideration of hardship jobs. Women, along with the elderly, are the prime targets of the reform: the former will be blackmailed into having children so as not to work two years longer, and the latter will have to accept working two years longer with the very likely prospect of agreeing to lower wages so as not to be sacked by the bosses.
- For the **unemployed**, whose access to benefits has been tightened up since the beginning of 2022 and whose benefit period has been shortened, and for pensioners, whose pensions have been growing at a much lower rate than wages for decades, there is nothing to get excited about. The casualisation of jobs is advancing rapidly, so "long careers" will soon become a museum piece.
- In workplaces, the pace of work is constantly increasing; the power of the corporation with its procession of foremen, executives and managers of all kinds is becoming more and more pervasive in both the public and private sectors.
- Wages are increasingly insufficient to end the month with dignity, while wage rises, which are increasingly individualised and almost exclusively granted in dribs and drabs in large companies, are systematically conceded only in exchange for more work, more submission.
- The **bosses** remain silent because they have been assured by the government that their companies will not be asked to contribute in any way to enable the state to make savings on the back of workers' contributions. Their only concern, which is totally unjustified, is that the government will force them to keep older workers. The compulsory publication of a "senior index", which has just been rejected in the National Assembly, was a smoke screen for older workers. The index did not prohibit companies from sacking them, if necessary.
- The so-called opposition **parties** of the left, like the right, are performing their usual theatre, simulating a life-and-death struggle under the gilded panelling of the Republic. Their objective is clear: to exploit the situation to attract votes in the next elections. They thus actively contribute to imposing on proletarians in struggle a mode of action subordinated to the times and details of parliamentary life and the ballot box, like the proposal for a referendum on the "reform".
- The **unions**, all the unions, are using all their strength to keep the opinions of people regularly questioned by polling institutes favourable to their strategy. They separate the fight against the pension "reform" from the urgent fight for equal wage increases for all, for higher unemployment benefits and for higher pensions.

The parity principle and the “value of labour”, the sacred totems of the enemies of workers

- Behind the appearance of a merciless battle between the executive and their political and trade union opponents, they all have the same objective: to preserve the **“parity”-based pension system** which brings to the same table the government, the employers and the trade unions to manage it. This system is based on the illusion of “intergenerational solidarity”, which instils the idea that younger workers should finance the pensions of those who are retired. This completely hides the fact that retirement is nothing more – and should be nothing more – than a wage that is paid out decades later. If this is understood, it is obvious that pensions should be paid for entirely by companies and their state, without calling on workers to contribute to them. Pensions should therefore be the object of struggles against the bosses and their state, workplace by workplace, sector by sector and all sectors together, just like wages.

- The other common thread that unites the bosses, the parties and the state unions is the religious cult of the **“value of labour”**. It is in the name of this presumed value that they claim to confront each other. All live and prosper thanks to the wage labour of proletarians. Logically enough, they are constantly trying to convince them to like their jobs, to fulfil themselves as individuals in the daily grind. But workers know that work is a necessity for them to earn a living and not an opportunity for emancipation. It is normal for proletarians to want to work less, for a shorter time and, if possible, to be well paid. Two irreconcilable logics always clash: that of the ruling classes who enrich themselves and strengthen their absolute power over society by exploiting the vast majority of the population, and that of proletarians whose only fundamental interest is to escape **together** from corporate command, control and social segregation. To fight finally against the pension “reform” is to fight against the parity system, “value of labour” and those who defend it.

How to build the conditions for an offensive struggle

While acknowledging the scale of the demonstrations, the government repeats each time that it *“will not move because representative democracy takes precedence over the street”*. The unions increase their membership, by pretending to contest “reform” and the so-called parliamentary opposition parties regain their political credibility by heckling in the Chamber. Faced with the impasse of the “citizens” marches, the unions threaten to *“block the economy”* by calling for renewable strikes from 7 March. But this perspective offers no more hope than their others as long as, workplace by workplace, sector by sector, working class neighbourhood by working class neighbourhood, Job Centre by Job Centre, pension fund office by pension fund office, proletarians concerned do not organise themselves in the struggle for equal increases in pay, pensions and unemployment benefits. Separating these three aspects of wages by fighting exclusively against pension “reform” keeps many workers, unemployed and pensioners more concerned with the very real daily problems at work and outside of work, out of the struggle.

Similarly, delegating the organisation of this struggle to parties and unions interested in preserving the parity system of pensions weakens the prospect of making companies and the bosses’ state pay for their pensions and unemployment benefits in full. The high-point of audacity shown by the parties and unions opposing the “reform” is to “make the rich pay” by increasing the employers’ contributions, but they never push their boldness to the point of breaking their “parity” toy, by claiming that all aspects of the wage – wages, pensions and unemployment benefits – should be fully financed by the companies and their state. So, there is no alternative: we must organise independently of them and fight exclusively to defend the interests of the exploited class.

**Proletarians can only count on their own direct action and
autonomous organisation to win**

FOR THE REVIVAL OF WORKERS’ INITIATIVE

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