

# Unions move to end month-long Radio France strike

By Stéphane Hugues  
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After a strike meeting held behind closed doors yesterday, the unions organizing workers at Radio France decided to suspend the month-long strike of 400 workers beginning at 1pm today. The move comes in defiance of widespread support for continuing the struggle—among both Radio France workers and the public as a whole.

With the withdrawal of the strike call by the unions, workers would have to defy the law in order to continue strike action.

As during last year's Air France pilots strike, the unions intervened to strangle the strike precisely when it became clear that the strikers were in a powerful position.

After four weeks on strike, the unions and the government knew that the strikers' determination to fight restructuring and layoffs at Radio France was stronger than when the strike began. Millions of Radio France listeners were following the strike and were sympathetic to it. The Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande and the unions all feared that the strike could rapidly spread and mobilize broader social discontent against austerity, and they have therefore intervened to legally strangle it.

In a general assembly of strikers on Tuesday—the day before the decision to end the strike—all the unions pushed for a halt to the strike in the face of overwhelming support for continuing the strike among the workers. Four unions—the CFDT (French Democratic Labor Federation), SNFORT (National Union Workers Force Radio-Television), UNSA (National Federation of Autonomous Unions), and SUD (Solidarity, Union, Democracy)—openly rescinded their strike calls.

The night before, workers had loudly jeered UNSA when its representative called for an end to the strike.

For two hours Tuesday, the unions unsuccessfully tried to convince strikers to go back to work. A *Télérama* report gave a picture of the tense atmosphere: “Applause greeted every speech supporting the strike. There was no doubt that the strikers at the meeting wanted it to continue. ‘Let’s vote, let’s vote,’ all the strikers began to chant, eager to measure their strength in a forest of raised hands.”

SUD's Jean-Paul Quennesson sought to justify his union's decision to end the strike by claiming that “we took a vote by our members.” However, *Télérama* notes that at the meeting itself, “his members were disavowing him.”

The Stalinist General Confederation of Labor (CGT) sought to deliver a deathblow to the strike: “The CGT's Jean-Matthieu Zahnd got up. He took the mic and...warned, ‘There will be differences of opinions. What I can say is that from our standpoint, is that we only voted to continue the strike yesterday in order to continue mediation... Our position is to continue the strike, but we will join the position of the rest of unions,’” who in fact were all pressing to end the strike.

The CGT's position expresses the unity of the trade union bureaucracies who are working with Radio France management and the PS government to impose the cuts and end a strike that the PS government considers to be dangerous. The CGT only agreed to continue the strike for another day because it feared that otherwise the unions could lose control of the strikers.

Faced with mass anger from the workers, the CGT felt compelled to wait a day to consummate its betrayal of the strike. As *Télérama* reported, “The entire room was shouting, drunk with rage, furious of having been forced onto the terrain of capitulation.”

It cited comments from workers attacking the union officials, like “Go home,” “Oh now they are switching sides,” “Is it because you can’t go on vacation if we keep striking, is that why you want to stop?” “You are really preparing a funeral for this strike,” and “what you are doing is awful.”

The strike points to the enormous anger building up in the working class against the austerity policy of the PS and the European Union (EU), and the class gulf separating the workers from the petty-bourgeois defenders of austerity in the union bureaucracy.

In France, Hollande’s approval ratings are at historic lows and his party has suffered three straight defeats in major local elections. However, the government is determined to continue with its austerity program.

The militancy of workers at Radio France is part of a deep social anger rising among workers in France and across Europe. The trade unions and their affiliates in the pseudo-left parties are intervening to strangle strikes in individual workplace struggles that could encourage workers to mount broader mobilizations.

During the Air France pilots strike last year, the government and the National Airline Pilots’ Union (SNPL) intervened to end a strike when the company was on the verge of defeat, arguing that if the pilots did not surrender, it would hurt the company’s bottom line. The pseudo-left New Anti-capitalist Party presented the unions’ treacherous organization of defeat as a victory.

The only way forward for Radio France strikers and for workers entering into workplace struggles is a fight for a broader mobilization of workers in France and across Europe in a political struggle against austerity, the EU and the PS. Strikes and workers struggles must be taken out of the hands of the unions and the pseudo-left parties, who will do everything they can to crush workers’ demands.

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