

French Socialist Party's labor reform boosts far-right National Front

By Francis Dubois
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As workers in France mobilise in struggle against the Socialist Party (PS) and its labor law, they face a political struggle against the entire ruling class, as the reactionary policies of the PS and its allies strengthen the positions of the extreme right within the bourgeois political establishment.

On May 12, the neo-fascist National Front's two representatives in the National Assembly voted for the censure motion against the PS government for imposing the labor law, presented by the conservative parties The Republicans (LR) and the Union of Democrats and Independents (UDI). They also called for the dissolution of parliament.

Throughout the movement against the law that began in March, the FN, which boasts of being "the first party of France" and the party "of the people" representing the masses, abstained from any visible presence in the streets and from commentary in the media. The FN does not have a precise position on the law, often stating it is "against" it and criticising certain of its provisions. It participated in one, carefully-staged right-wing protest against "anti-cop hatred," which enjoyed PS support.

Here the FN and the ruling class resorted to a proven strategy. For 25 years, at every major struggle of workers and youth against austerity measures from right-wing or PS governments, the FN disappears from the political scene. The purpose of this manoeuvre is to avert a clash between the working class and the neofascists, and to preserve the FN's entirely false populist veneer as a defender of the "people." After every defeat of the workers organised by the unions and their allies, however, the FN's position inside the political establishment emerges reinforced.

The press noted this "anomaly." Under the title "On social aspects, the FN is silent," *France Inter* wrote:

"While the left and right tear each other apart on the El Khomri law, the FN has disappeared ... after months of media saturation, admittedly one is a little surprised to not hear anything from the extreme right."

Several opinion polls make clear that this reactionary process has strengthened the FN's positions inside the political establishment. According to Odaxa's survey on April 29, "The communication strategy—or these days non communication—Marine Le Pen is definitely very effective. Qualified without fail in the first round (and often in first place) in most polls, her positive ratings are ... quite sizeable. Thus in our latest political poll published April 26, 25 percent of the French population declared that they feel sympathy for Marine Le Pen ..."

The polling institute adds, "while only 13 to 19 percent of French people have declared that they 'often' agree with the stance of the FN between 1992 and 2002 ... now 33 percent have said they agree with [M. Le Pen] in our survey. This is nearly double the support that the FN's ideas had in April 21, 2002."

According to a poll by Elabe on April 27 for *Les Echos*, "Marine Le Pen would qualify for the second round in all tested hypotheses. The voting figures in her favour confirm the dynamism of the National Front, with scores oscillating between 23 percent and 28.5 percent [depending on the scenario]. In each of the eight scenarios, the score obtained by Marine Le Pen would allow her to qualify for the second round of the presidential election if it were held next Sunday."

What explains this contradiction?

The fact that this neofascist party, whose tradition is the violent repression of the working class, is increasing its poll ratings in a period of open struggle between workers and the ruling class, is due not only to the reactionary policy of the pro-EU austerity by the

PS, supported by the trade unions, but particularly of the role of the pseudo-left organisations like the Left Front (FG), the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA), Night Stand (Nuit Debout), and the other satellites of the PS.

Hollande's state of emergency, his invitation of Le Pen to the Elysée presidential palace, and the PS' endorsement of the principle of deprivation of nationality, partially rehabilitating the legacy of the Nazi-collaborationist Vichy regime, are clearing the obstacles in the FN's path.

Over four years of escalating austerity under Hollande's presidency, the pseudo-left has done everything in its power to block a political struggle of the working class and youth against the PS. It succeeded in demobilising the initial wave of protests so that the PS could impose the law in the Assembly. The working class and youth, on the other hand, ever more clearly identify the PS as an enemy.

For two months after the beginning of the movement in March, the unions, supported by the pseudo-left and #UpAllNight (#NuitDebout) movement, did their best to isolate strikes that are now developing, calling only certain sections of workers to strike, and insisting they would not call for a general strike.

The social attacks, security policies, and the repression conducted by the PS in the name of "leftist values" enables the FN to gain influence by posing as a defender of the oppressed.

The FN's "opposition" to the El Khomri law has nothing to do with a defence of social rights. The FN is the political heir of a party of the imperialist bourgeoisie, which is preparing to use the labor law to impose an authoritarian government. The FN is ultra-nationalist, and thinly veils its anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim positions under calls for the "defence of secularism."

To the extent that it makes criticisms of the law at all, it is to make reactionary appeals to small business. Marine Le Pen said on March 9, "The El Khomri bill on labor law does nothing to solve the economic problems of the very small businesses (TPE) and of the small and medium businesses (PME), who are once again those who suffer the most in this reform. Indeed, this project reveals an acute ignorance of the problems and expectations of entrepreneurs and in particular owners of small businesses. We should first allow them

to fill their order books."

While security forces, inside which the FN has considerable influence, attack strikers and protesters, the FN has launched a law-and-order initiative titled "For a pacified France." Ensuring the "pacification" of society—a term rooted in France's colonial wars in Algeria, Indochina, and Madagascar—in the face of rising class struggle is possible only by state violence.

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