

Mobilize the working class against Macron!

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After weeks of mass “yellow vest” protests against austerity and inequality, the French government of President Emmanuel Macron announced yesterday that it would temporarily suspend its planned fuel tax increase targeting workers and pledged to hold a “debate on taxation and public spending.”

The claims by Macron and Prime Minister Edouard Philippe that the government is listening to popular grievances are worthless. Macron, determined to restructure French society in the interests of French and international finance capital, is on a collision course with the working class.

Rather, his government’s tactical retreat is determined by military and police calculations. It is taken aback by the outpouring of working-class anger at the financial aristocracy and at capitalist exploitation erupting outside state-sanctioned trade union channels. Its mass arrests of hundreds of protesters, tear gas attacks and beatings have not halted the protests.

Macron’s government is playing for time, attempting to regroup, and preparing the next wave in the assault on workers’ social rights, to be enforced, if necessary, through a re-imposition of the state of emergency and other police-state measures.

Long historical experience shows that the initial confusion of the ruling elite does not ensure victory to the workers. The discovery that police posted snipers on the rooftops of the Champs-Élysées to monitor and take aim at protesters last Saturday, and Macron’s hailing of Nazi-collaborationist dictator Philippe Pétain last month as a war hero, are so many warnings. Terrified by rising working class anger, the bourgeoisie is preparing ruthless measures.

As Macron prepares a new round of attacks, workers must make their own preparations. Already, growing sections of the organized working class—including ambulance drivers and refinery workers, as well as student youth—are joining the demonstrations.

The critical question is expanding the struggle to

ever-broader sections of the working class, both in France and internationally.

The *Parti de l’égalité socialiste* (PES), the French section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, calls for the formation of committees of action in the working class.

These committees must be independent from the trade unions, which have for decades betrayed every effort by workers in their struggle to defend their social rights. New organizations of struggle—organizationally and politically independent from corporate, pro-government trade unions—are the only way for workers to coordinate strikes and protests to defend against government attacks.

These committees of action will draw together the different sections of workers and youth, counter official efforts to isolate and dissipate these struggles, and address pressing tasks of the movement against Macron. These include actions for the release of protesters railroaded into jail by kangaroo courts, the defense of demonstrators and working class districts from police brutality, and strikes and protests against Macron’s austerity agenda and the return to military service.

As “yellow vest” protests spread to Belgium, Bulgaria and the Netherlands, such committees would allow workers and youth in France to seek out and organize collaboration with their closest allies: the European and international working class. Driving developments in France are not essentially national, but international conditions, raising at every point the need for the international unity of the working class.

The Socialist Party (PS) and its affiliated media, the union bureaucracy and their petty-bourgeois political allies are all seeking to trap the protests in the straitjacket of the trade unions, and thereby subordinate them to the interests of the capitalist ruling elite.

Le Monde editorialized that there is a danger of a “tipping point” in Macron’s presidency and criticized

him for supposedly weakening trade unions, “which are crucial to control social conflict of this sort.” The French Democratic Labor Confederation (CFDT) union praised Philippe for “opening dialog” and maintaining the taxes, which it hailed as “a necessary ecological transition.”

The official parties in what passes for the “left” are united in rejecting a struggle of the working class to bring down the Macron government. Jean-Luc Mélenchon is calling for “new elections,” apparently hoping to realize his offer to serve as Macron’s prime minister.

The Pabloite New Anti-capitalist Party’s (NPA) *Révolution permanente* website calls for “convergence” of the “yellow vest” and the Stalinist General Confederation of Labor (CGT) union, whose boss Philippe Martinez refused to support the protesters, insinuating they are neo-fascists.

Outside of the PES, not a single political tendency claiming to be on the left is fighting for an expansion of the struggle against Macron. Rather, by seeking to put the unions back in the saddle, they are working to engineer a settlement on the terms most favorable to the government.

Workers must reject all such efforts to draw down the struggle. Rather, the fight must be expanded through the broadest possible appeal to the working class, in France and internationally, and by building committees of action to take the struggle into every workplace, school and university, in France and throughout Europe.

The development of organizations through which the class struggle can be prosecuted against Macron must be connected to the development of a political leadership based on a revolutionary and socialist perspective. Inevitably, the fight that is developing in France and internationally is not just a fight against one individual or one government, but the whole capitalist system.

The PES calls for the broadest discussion of this perspective at workplaces, in schools and universities, as well as on social media. It encourages those who want to participate in this fight to contact and to join the PES.

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To contact the WSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>