

# Macron's War on Labor Rights

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On Thursday, French **Prime Minister Edouard Philippe** and **Labor Minister Muriel Penicaud** unveiled what **Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire** called "the mother of all (labor) reform" plans.

Its 36 measures in five separate decrees are long on business-friendly policies, dismally short on anything benefiting workers.

Macron's popularity plunged from 62% after his May electoral triumph to 40%, according to an Ifop poll released last Sunday.

He fell from grace because of unpopular neoliberal spending cuts and wanting business more empowered to negotiate hours, pay and benefits, slash the number of worker committees, and limit penalties for wrongful dismissals - without union involvement, disempowering them, the gold standard for business, the worst one for workers.

France's General Confederation of Labor (CGT) union strongly opposes his worker-unfriendly policies. Its head Philippe Martinez called for strike action from September 12 - 23, urging millions to take to the streets in protest, warning rank-and-file members: "All our fears have been confirmed."

CGT's heavy membership in ports, railway, petrol, transport and manufacturing gives it leverage to bring the country to a halt if that's its intention.

Leftist France Unbowed political leader **Jean-Luc Melenchon** called Macron's labor reform a "social welfare coup d'etat."

Business leaders love it, wanting the ability to exploit workers freely. Employers federation head **Pierre Gattaz** backs it, calling it "an important first step in the building of labor laws which are in step with the daily reality inside our companies."

Prime Minister Philippe deplorably called the plan "ambitious, balanced and fair." Saying it'll "make up for lost years of mass unemployment" turned truth on its head.

CFDT and Force Ouvriere union heads expressed strong "disappoint(ment)" with much of what's proposed. They haven't asked their members to join the CGT's strike action.

Macron's plan circumvented parliament through executive orders expected to be adopted

next month - rubber-stamp parliamentary ratification to come after the fact, the National Assembly dominated by Macron supporters.

According to labor specialist **Patrick Thiebart**, his plan will "allow France to regain real competitiveness" by giving companies more control of workers, letting unions retain the illusion of representing them - as negotiating partners with business.

Labor gets short shrift in America, notably since the neoliberal 90s. New Deal, Fair Deal and Great Society benefits eroded greatly, heading for elimination altogether.

Labor is ill-treated in Europe the same way. Monied interests never had things better in Western societies - at the expense of ordinary people, lacking political advocates.

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