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France

An LCR candidate for the presidential elections

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Shortly after the French local elections of April 2001, which confirmed the increased electoral strength of the far left, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR - French section of the Fourth International) proposed a joint campaign for the Spring 2002 presidential and legislative elections to the other main organization of the French far left, Lutte Ouvrière (LO). Such an electoral bloc would have made it possible to crystallize the dissatisfaction of significant sectors of wage earners and popular layers who are breaking with the current governmental coalition led by the Socialist Party and also including the Communist Party and the Greens.

While the employers, under the misleading term of "social refoundation", continue to wage a large scale offensive against social rights, the Jospin government which has been in power since 1997 has introduced a series of socially regressive measures, in some cases going beyond what the employers have actually demanded. Since the local elections the employers have taken advantage of a period without immediate electoral contests to proceed to a series of massive dismissals, unhindered by the so called "social modernization" measures adopted by the left parliamentary majority.

This situation has proved favourable to a more autonomous activity of certain sectors of wage earners, like the June 09 demonstration in favour of a law forbidding dismissals, called by workers at Danone and Marks & Spencer. On the political level, the dissatisfaction of sections of the popular layers with the institutional left has been expressed regularly at elections by abstention and, for some years by votes for the far left.

This made it possible to send five revolutionary deputies (two for the LCR and three for LO) to the European Parliament in 1999, on the basis of a common campaign. In the April local elections, LO had rejected unity. For the presidential elections of 2002, the LCR had proposed that Arlette Laguiller, LO spokesperson and popular political personality, should be the common candidate for the LCR and LO, on the basis of a political agreement reflecting the orientations of the two organizations. LO rejected the proposal and refused to even meet to discuss it!

In these conditions, the LCR decided to put forward Olivier Besancenot as candidate for the presidency of the Republic. Olivier Besancenot, a member of the political leadership of the LCR, is a 27 year-old postal worker. He is particularly involved in the trade union movement in his workplace and in the mobilizations against capitalist globalisation.

This candidacy will be opposed to the right wing and the policy of the government. In particular it will defend a new policy for youth and workers, rejecting inequality, unemployment and poverty and aspiring to a radical transformation of society. On the French political scene, it is a new candidacy, because it represents the emergence of new generations in the world of work, in the associative world, the political world and the struggles of recent years. A generation that rejects neo-liberalism both in relation to capitalist globalisation and in everyday life. A generation that rejects the world becoming a commodity, the worsening of inequalities between rich and poor, job insecurity and low wages while profits soar.

This candidacy, representing this new generation, will also reflect the problems of the workplace in the face of the neo-liberal capitalist offensive.

The candidacy of a postal worker and a trade unionist symbolizes the situation of million workers confronted with the policy of privatisation of the public services required by the European Union and the international economic

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institutions. Privatisation that will worsen the living conditions of millions of employees - which will lead to job insecurity, impossible working hours and wage austerity.

In this situation, this candidacy is, naturally, in solidarity with all struggles against layoffs and in defence of wages and all social rights. The main themes Olivier Besancenot will campaign around will be: the prohibition of the dismissals (in particular by profitable companies); an immediate increase of 1,500 francs per month in wages and minimum social benefits; the taxation of profits and financial speculation; emergency ecological measures; a democratic revolution in France and Europe; equal rights between French citizens and immigrants, men and women, straight and gay.

Finally, this candidacy will be the only one to establish the link between the daily fight against capitalist exploitation with the struggle against capitalist globalisation.