

<https://internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article879>



French one day strike

# Workers say 'No' again, but this time in the streets

- News from around the world -

Publication date: Saturday 8 October 2005

---

Copyright © International Viewpoint - online socialist magazine - All rights reserved

---

**The mobilisation for the one-day strike and day of action on Tuesday October 4 called by a united front of French trade unions was expected to be massive, and it lived up to expectations. Across the country there were an estimated 1.3 million demonstrators in 150 towns and cities.**

That compares with a million in 115 towns and cities during the last big day of action on March 10th. The most notable element this time was the participation of workers from the private sector, on a wider scale than on previous occasion.

Also significant was the participation of large numbers of what in France are called "cadres" - middle-and lower-level management.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/Francestrike1.jpg>]

The central theme of the demonstrations was opposition to the measures adopted by the government this summer, which amend the labour code to make it much easier for employers to sack workers without having to justify it.

But in fact the mobilisation represented a much broader protest against the whole of the government's economic and social policies - a continuation in the streets of the "No" vote to the European Constitution on May 29th.

Outside of Paris, where 150,000 demonstrated, the biggest demonstration was in Marseilles, with 100,000 taking to the streets. Leading the demonstration were the workers of Nestlé who are fighting to defend their jobs and those of the SNCM, the publicly-owned ferry company that runs services between the South of France and Corsica, who are opposing government plans to privatise it.

In the days preceding October 4th, the port of Marseilles was paralysed by a strike of port employees in support of their comrades of the SNCM.

Meanwhile members of the main trade union, the CGT, occupied a ferry, while their colleagues of the militant nationalist Corsican Workers' Union took one over and sailed it back to Corsica.

In spite of the peaceful nature of the takeover, the government reacted by cowboy tactics, sending in elite police units by helicopter to take back the ship. This put the final spark to an already explosive situation in Corsica, where hundreds of mainly young demonstrators battled police in the streets of the port city of Bastia and rockets were fired against a government building and a Customs boat.

On the eve of the October 4th, a mass meeting in Marseilles in support of the workers of SNCM was addressed by leaders of the French Left, among them Marie-George Buffet of the Communist Party, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, a leader of the Socialist Party Left, Olivier Besancenot of the LCR and Arlette Laguiller of Lutte Ouvrière.

Besancenot predicted that there would be "other Marseilles" in the coming weeks and months. The development and extension of the social movement of resistance to the De Villepin government and the building of a political alternative to neo-liberalism are the two intertwined challenges facing the radical Left in France

## Workers say 'No' again, but this time in the streets

---

in the coming months.

**PS October 6th.** Hundreds of ferry workers pressed on with their strike on Thursday, keeping pressure on Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin as he prepared to defend his economic and labour policies on national television.

Unions at the SNCM ferry operator in the southern port of Marseille decided to continue their strike against government plans to privatise the struggling company.

*Photos: Phototheque*