

Working hours, RTTs, forfait jours:

Management to turn the screws How far?



Two-and-a-half years after having presented cost-savings figures¹ and more than a year after it renounced almost all of our work and benefits agreements, AFP's management has finally revealed the most important cards in its hand: **the reduction in the number of days off and an increase in working hours**. The last negotiation session (October 6) helped clarify where things stand.

Complexity and disparity

Management has promised a *simplification* and "*greater equity*" as part of its Grand Accord. Now we see that instead we'll get *complexity* and *greater disparity*. Management wants to set **three different reference weekly working hours**: 35 hours for journalists on desks, 37 hours for employees and laborers, 39 hours for reporting journalists and cadres.

For reporting journalists and cadres, the work week passes from 35 hours to 39 hours, while the number of RTTs drops from 18 to 7 days per year. A 30 minute daily break is no longer considered as integrated as part of the work hours, so they'll need to stay a half hour longer in the evening.

For desk journalists, management wants 35 hours of effective work time, which implies 7 hours and 30 minutes of presence as a 30 minute break will no longer be considered as part of working hours, and must be taken no later than after working 6 hours. The number of RTTs will drop from 18 to 4 per year. However, some desks may pass to a 39-hour work week, and the number of RTTs would be 7 per year.

Employees and laborers will see their work hours increased from 35 to 37 hours per week. The number of RTTs will drop from 14 to 4. The 30 minute break is no longer considered part of working hours.

All staff will also receive up to 6 days off depending on how many years they've worked at the agency.

Forfait jours

When the CEO announced his plans for a Grand Accord in 2013, some believed that sacrifices by desk journalists and employees and laborers would permit a "*rebalancing*" in favor of reporting journalists and cadres who are de facto working many more hours than the 35 written on their pay sheets. That was misplaced faith.

The details provided by management confirm that **all of the agency's staff will be asked to make further sacrifices**, including those who are working long hours. Most people consider long working hours to be more or less compensated by the RTTs, with the norm still considered a 35 hour work week. Seeing the number of RTTs drop from 18 to 7 is bad enough prospect. But the introduction of the **forfait jour** will be even worse. It installs the expectation of 10 or even 12-hour days without any real counterparty.

What is the **forfait jour**? It is another way of looking at working time. Instead of setting the

¹ <http://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article251>

number of hours worked per week it sets only the number of days off per year. You are expected to work as many hours as needed until you complete your job, with only a minimum number of rest hours guaranteed by law.

Management's text states that the forfait jour is supposed to be strictly voluntary, but we found out quickly that it does not intend to honor this any more than its pledge of a wage hike. During the negotiation session management stated openly they may require new hires to accept the forfait jour and may begin requiring it when advertising job postings. Thus we'll all sooner or later be required to accept the forfait jour.

The only advantage of the forfait jour compared to staying on a 39 hour work week is that the number of RTTs is 10. In many other companies there is a financial reward for accepting the forfait jour, but management ruled that out.

Another point about the forfait jour, which has yet to be discussed in the negotiation sessions, is that it introduces a real annual performance review. According to the labor code, one function of this review is to adjust the amount of work if the person is working too many hours, but given the specificities of AFP, it is hard to envisage management lightening the workload of beat journalists. Another element of the annual review is remuneration. This raises the specter of the abandonment of the career plans and playing favoritism in wage hikes.

A turning point?

Another development at the October 6 negotiation session: *nearly all unions have now made counterproposals that would have us work more* (no doubt to try to limit losses). **SUD still refuses to start down this slippery slope**, especially as management has yet to provide updated figures about the savings different measures will provide.

The figures that management provided in **April 2014** calculated annual savings of **€1.32 million** if all staff on French contracts went from 44 to 36 days of vacation. Savings of **€0.36 million** were forecast from the elimination of RTTs for desk journalists, employees and laborers.

These figures, if confirmed, are a paltry amount of savings for the degradation of working conditions and health they will no doubt cause.

A deal that provides little in real savings while demotivating and harming employees will be counterproductive.

AFP's employees are not responsible for the agency's financial difficulties. The sacrifices demanded of us will not put it on a secure financial standing.



**Come join us for an open discussion on Tuesday,
18 October at 13:00**

(First floor meeting room opposite the library and CE).

Paris, 10 October 2016



SUD-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)

