

AFP management wants to limit right to strike



AFP's management has presented to unions a proposal on labor rights that seeks to limit severely the right to strike, which is guaranteed by law, via the new Grand Accord.

Ironically, the proposals were to be discussed in negotiations scheduled for May 19, a day we did not participate as it was a national day of strikes against the proposed El Khomri labor law that would roll back social rights and give companies more power to strip benefits.

The main points of management's "proposals":

- **Mandatory preliminary negotiations:** each strike must be preceded by negotiations that follow a strict calendar. If those fail, a strike may only happen between 9 and 17 days after the initial notification.
- **Restrictions instead of rights:** not only is the proposal not balanced, it reduces the right to strike to a reminder of the rights of employees to not go on strike, threats of legal prosecution and withholding of salary...
- **Introducing a minimum service requirement:** in order to ensure the "uninterrupted service", management makes a cynical and opportunistic reference to the agency's public interest mission and article 2 of the AFP's 1957 statute.

One would have appreciated the same attachment to AFP's founding principles when the statute was watered down in 2015. Instead of an unequivocal affirmation of AFP's public interest mission, the European Commission acknowledged it only temporarily, and put France on notice the entire media sector may soon come under the iron ideological rule of market competition. We saw this with the writing into our statute an obligation develop activities based on a chase for profits, and are seeing it with a government-driven effort to cut costs (including our wages).

A labor law expert who reviewed the proposals told SUD:

"You have to pull out the stops to have those proposals withdrawn. They contain nothing for unions or employees (the conflict resolution procedure is worthless as it doesn't hold AFP to any obligations, allowing it to dodge questions and gather information for potential lawsuits) while placing strict restrictions on the right to strike collectively and individually. And this isn't even taking into consideration the introduction of a minimum service.

This isn't a real proposal, and is only fit for disposal. Even "reformist" unions may find this difficult to accept. If I was a labor representative, I wouldn't even make counter-proposals: only the withdrawal of this proposal is acceptable."

For SUD, it's clear: withdrawal of the strike restrictions, just like the other main proposals of Plan Hoog - cutting RTTs, working more for less...

We won't back down! * Withdraw El Khomri! * No to Plan Hoog!

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