

Half way to disaster?



Management launched talks with trade unions on a voluntary departure package (PDV) in March. Where are we now?

95 net job cuts

The “consultations” are due to wrap up at the end of May. Unless management suffers a setback, the plan will formally begin at the start of July with the setting up of a special team of advisors to advise those interested in leaving. During a Works Council meeting on April 19, the unions refused allowing this team to begin working ahead of the official approval of the plan by the French administration.

When management unveiled its plan to cut a net 95 jobs at the end of March, not all of the journalist posts that could go had been identified. Now we know which jobs in the French economics, politics and general news departments are targeted, information which has prompted deep concern in these services. Plans to cut nearly a quarter of the editors on Desk France has also prompted concerns.

While the number of journalist jobs currently scheduled to be cut is slightly less than the number given in March, the figure of 95 net job cuts remains unchanged -- either less video journalists will be hired or less text journalists replaced after the plan ends.

But management has still not provided precise information how certain services will work with less employees.

The DSI in the crosshairs

The greatest job cuts (in total numbers) are to be made in the IT Department (Direction des Systèmes d’information or DSI). The cuts are to be made by a (nother) sweeping reform that aims to make the DSI a “partner of professions ... in the service of operational excellence and the creation of value”. Decrypted: a reduction of 31 posts, or 16 percent, to 159 posts.

As we have already warned, such a massive reduction could cause serious problems such as longer breakdowns. See our tract: *AFP breaks down?* - “We assume the risk” - <https://www.sud-afp.org/spip.php?article550>

The anxiety caused by the voluntary departure plan is already causing some employees to leave, including key technicians. Where management sees natural turnover, we see serious problems ahead. A dialog of the deaf...

'Do less, but better'

For journalists, the watchword is a contemptuous "*do less, but better*". Journalists who have made huge efforts and sacrifices to provide the coverage requested by management are now being told something along the lines: *Thanks, but actually we don't need all that as our clients tell us they are drowning in information*. What about our public interest mission, confided by the French state to AFP and for which it pays handsomely every year?

If our strategy is to develop in the area of images, why are we cutting photographer jobs in Paris? According to management they don't have enough work. At the same time, Paris services complain of difficulty getting photographers for their stories.

A second priority is to put more boots on the ground, yet production posts are being cut in services that are already stretched.

No deal on worse working conditions

The Direccte, the French agency which supervises employers, has told AFP's management to clarify certain parts of its plan. *SUD* also calls on management to demonstrate in a serious and credible manner that those of us who remain after the voluntary departure plan won't be overburdened with work.

As the consultations draw to a close, the trade unions need to be wary of signing a deal which risks being as bad as the "Grand Accord" of March 10, 2017.

In short, if there is a *majority deal* the review conducted by the Direccte is considerably less thorough than if management presents a unilateral plan. If the Direccte verifies in all cases that the proper consultation procedure was respected, it is only in the second case that it verifies if a plan is proportionate to a firm's resources. We thus believe that trade unions who sign a deal are *renouncing this review by the French administration*.

Refuse the Fries Plan

The Fries Plan will inevitably lead to new degradations in working conditions and a drop in the quality of the information we provide.

To make management reconsider its plans we need to change the balance of power as only discussions, unfortunately, won't work. *SUD*-AFP supports all actions that contribute towards battling this plan. We need to hold a staff assembly. All together, stop the Fries Plan!

Paris, May 6, 2019

***SUD*-AFP (Solidarity-Unity-Democracy)**

Sud
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