



Grand Accord: Journalists spared?

Twice in the past two weeks the Agency's administrative and technical staff have gone on strike to push management to withdraw its proposals on a new wage scale as part of the Grand Accord. Management's proposals would result in lower payments at retirement and in case of being laid off, as well as a drastic reduction in RTTs and vacation.

In the name of "equity", management has chosen to target administrative and technical staff for the greatest reduction in benefits. To justify the cuts, management has argued the funds saved will allow it to maintain or even expand the editorial network, while protecting essential journalist benefits.

Not only is this method of dividing the staff into "haves" and "have-nots" morally and socially questionable, nothing could be further from the truth than management's arguments.

All of the Agency's staff, including journalists, will be affected by management's attack on wages, benefits and working hours. What does management propose for journalists?

Working hours

According to management's proposals, journalists working in production posts will see their number of RTTs fall from 18 to 7, a loss of 11 days. Alongside this management proposes creating leave days based on seniority: 2 days after 5 years of service in AFP, 4 days after 10 years and 6 days after 15 years.

Compared with the current situation, a newly hired journalist would lose 11 days per year for 5 years, or 55 days total. The next five years the loss is 9 days per year, for a total of 45 days. After 10 years, the loss of 7 days per year for 5 years totals 35 days. After that, the loss is 5 days per year for the rest of the journalist's career.

If a journalist worked in production at AFP for a full 43-year career (the current number of years to retire with full benefits), that translates into working an extra 275 days more than now. That works out to nearly 46 work weeks, or **giving the Agency for free a working year of vacation over their career.**

An entire career on an editing desk would result in 96 weeks of vacation given up.

Pay

Increasing the number of days worked without an increase in salary means a drop in per hour pay. Management's current proposals don't provide any guarantees about wage increases.

Concerning the proposals for payment of astreintes that management was forced to make, the amounts are so ridiculously small that some employees would even lose money.

Employment

The 2000 agreements on reducing working hours at AFP resulted in the creation of 79 posts, including 50 for journalists. At the end of 2002, there were 875 full-time journalists with French contracts, out of 1,457 employees overall.

Contrary to what our CEO has asserted, AFP has since cut jobs as at the end of 2015 the Agency

had just 1,407 employees, or 50 less. Among journalists, the head count fell from 875 to 858, a loss of 17 posts.

At the same time, new services were created (such as multimedia and video) and others expanded.

The result: more workplace stress as services are overstretched, greater insecurity as more people have to work longer in short term or on local contracts as AFP shifts more work to countries where benefits are lower.

Management intends to continue to whittle away at employment in France as the recent attempt to cut an editor job in Rennes shows.

We are quite far from a will to reinforce the editorial network, at both home and abroad, judging by management's latest proposals.

Expatriation

A proposal recently provided by management confirms the reduction in the number of expatriate posts: 184 in the 2016 budget against 200 in 2013. Furthermore, a dozen of these posts are not occupied by headquarters-status journalists, but by local staff.

The proposal would transform more expatriate posts into local status, while creating two levels of expatriation (with different and lower levels of benefits). It would open up another 10 to 20 posts to regional status employees.

A divided Agency

Management justified renouncing our wage and benefits agreements to "unify" the various texts with the objective of more "equity". Its proposals will do the opposite: create more divisions within our ranks as benefits vary even more between jobs.

To discuss management's proposals and the necessity of building a movement among journalists to oppose them, the CGT, FO, and SUD trade unions invite you to attend a

Information session and debate
Thursday, June 9 at 14:00
HQ 1st floor meeting room

Paris, 6 June 2016

The CGT, FO and SUD unions at AFP