

France: Workers mobilise Against Vote on Pension Bill

Thursday 23 September 2010, by [LATHAM Chris](#) (Date first published: 22 September 2010).

As expected France's National Assembly, on September 15, passed the Pensions Bill that will reduce workers access to pensions. The National Assembly debate and vote was met with small protests and other actions by workers. With the Bill set to go to the Senate, France's unions are looking to expand the campaign to defend workers' pension rights.

The Bill was passed by 329 to 233, reflecting the large majority which the Union for a Popular Movement of President Nicolas Sarkozy and Prime Minister Francois Fillon have in the National Assembly. If the Bill is passed by the Senate it will increase the minimum age at which workers can retire from 60 to 62 years and increase the period that workers must work to qualify for the full pension from 40 to 41.5 years.

During the session, thousands of activists protested Place de la Concorde — across the Seine River from the Assembly — calling on the government to scrap the legislation. Other protests were held across France. These protests followed protests and strikes involving close to 3 million workers on September 7.

On September 9, the coalition of seven union confederations that is leading the campaign had issued an open letter to the President, Government, and Parliamentarians. In the letter they argued that bill would increase inequalities within French society, without addressing the long term challenges facing France and that workers should not be made to pay the price of a financial and economic crisis which they were not responsible for.

Following the September 7 mobilisations unions called a national strike to coincide with start of the Senate debate. The Senate debate has postponed until October 5, the strike will go ahead, with the Union Coalition calling on September 16, for workers to strengthen the mobilisation which had been called for September 23. A further meeting of Confederations is scheduled for September 24 to set the next stages in the struggle.

Chris Latham

P.S.

* Chris Latham maintains the Revitalising Labour blog.