



NEITHER LAW NOR LABOUR

TEXTS FROM THE MOVEMENT
AGAINST THE NEW LABOUR
LAW IN FRANCE

Ni Loi Ni Travail!

Since March 9th, France has been the setting of what could easily be described as an uprising. Although initially called for against the introduction of the El Khomri labor law (*loi du travail*), it would be a mistake to discuss this uprising as tied exclusively to a single law, or even to a series of laws and measures. As will be made clear, this revolt seeks to contest the meaning of life itself. A slogan that has been popularized—at least amongst the autonomous segments of the rebellion—is *ni loi ni travail*, neither law nor labor.

The following are a selection of (mostly translated) articles and reports from France, originating from the anarchist and autonomist milieus. They were chosen not only because they provide key insight into the current situation, but also because we, the editors, are partisans of their positions. This info-packet does not claim to, nor want to, provide some neutral overview.

In the back there are additional resources to find more information.

The World Or Nothing

Classes cancelled, wild demonstrations, graffiti, breakage, tear gas, a government under stress and a faculty on strike. Something is on its way to be born. “We” are on our way to be born. To name what is on its way by a name of that which has preceded it is to try to kill it. It would be a process of neutralization to attempt to bring together all that we have seen in the streets since last Wednesday, that which has been bubbling for weeks, the rage that growls all over in the “shadow of the CPE”¹ and all the howls. What could be the relation between the words of the unions and the school kids who tagged “the world or nothing” just before methodically attacking the banks? None. Or just perhaps a miserable attempt at recuperation performed by zombies. Never have the unions or the politicians been so visibly trailing behind a movement. If they are so feverish in their desire to frame everything to their liking it is because everything could very well escape their control. It’s quite simple what has happened: a group of YouTubers² have added their ‘likes,’ they’ve spoken outside of this framing, outside of any sort of desire to be ‘representative’ and have taken to the streets; a woman who represents no one but herself has launched a petition against the proposed labor law; and because what she said sounded right and came upon a diffused sentiment, a general disgust, we have taken to the streets and we have been numerous. The organizations have followed us. The risk of not coming on board was too great for them. If they were to stay behind, their mandate would be null and void. Those which they pretend to represent would have taken to the streets without them, without being able to put their banners at the front, without being able to cover our voices with their terrible soundsystems, their boorish slogans or their dead & buried discourse. They would have been bared naked. The leaders thus have followed us, as always.

THE PROBLEM IS NOT THE LABOR LAW BUT A WHOLE SOCIETY ON ITS WAY OUT

We are the youth. But youth is not just youth, but something more than that. In every society, the youth are the image of that which is disposable. The youth are an image of general dispensability. The young are nothing. They are those which are not yet taken. They are not yet taken on by a boss, by debt or by a CV. They are not yet taken, or in other words chained, by a whole social machine unless that machine would cease to operate. The media while talking about the threat of a “youth movement,” seek to counter a real threat, and the real threat is that the whole of those which are seen as disposable in this society would join those that those who see that the problem is more than just this labor law; that the whole of society on its way out will join us. That they will join us and become a *mass*. Because these days the

Published by **Lundi Matin**
Translated by **L.A. Onda**
March 16th 2016

1. The CPE was another labor reform bill that sparked intense protests in Spring 2006.

2. A reference to the viral video released in late February by YouTube vloggers calling for people to resist the labor law.

incredulous are legion. The social lie, the farce of politics no longer takes. That is the big problem that the government currently faces. And not just that: who could be as stupid to still vote for the Left, for the Left of the Left, for the Left of the Left of the Left when we see what that gave Greece last summer? A radical left government that is above all implementing austerity.³

AND YOU OLD TIMERS! YOU HAVE NOT BEEN BETRAYED. YOU HAVE JUST LET YOURSELF BE FOOLED

To our old timers. You say that you feel betrayed. That you have voted for a Left party and that the current state of politics is not what you expected. You talk about “being denied.” But where were you in 1983? The 80s, the decade of money, Tapie⁴ in government, Libération⁵ declaring “Long live the crisis!”...didn’t that say anything to you? We weren’t there but since then your defeats have become part of history courses. And when he hear this history we tell ourselves that Emmanuel Macron⁶ is just finishing the job that begun in 1983. It’s the same program as back then. It has not changed at bit. You have not been betrayed. You just let yourself be fooled. You preferred to cultivate your illusions. These are just the words that have served, at every election, to bring you out to the polls so that the same program can be continued to be put into place, to continue with the same offensive. An offensive for 35 years now, rigidly carried out on at every level at once: economic, security, social, cultural, existential, etc.

WE SHALL NOT DISCUSS THIS LAW

That which is on its way to be born has little to do with the labor law. This law is just the point of upheaval. It’s one attack too many. An attack much too arrogant, flagrant and humiliating. The Bill on Intelligence,⁷ the Macron Law,⁸ the state of emergency,⁹ the threat of loss of citizenship for state undesirables, the anti-terrorist laws,¹⁰ the penal reform project and the labor law all make up this system. It’s a single enterprise bringing to heel the whole population. The El Khomri Law is just the cherry on top. That is why things are happening now and why things were not happening under the Macron Law. Ultimately, if we take to the streets against the labor law, it’s because it has to do with work. It is because the question of work is the question of how we use our lives; and as we see it work is the negation of life, life made into shit. We are no longer in the 60s, your Glorious Years, keep them to yourself because we never knew them. No one among us believes we will reach “self-realization” at some job. That which we defend ourselves against is the that the bit of life we have after work, outside of work, does not get reduced to nothing. The little games of the unions and parties to limit the terrain of conflict to a question of the labor law, or negotiation with the government, is just a way to contain our desire to live, to lock up all that escapes their stifling sphere of scheming. You do not have to be a soothsayer to see that the unions and parties, then and now, will throw us to the ground at the decisive moment. We don’t hold it against them. That’s their role. Likewise, do not ask us to trust in them. Just because we are young does not mean that we were born yesterday. And another thing, stop haranguing us with your old tricks that don’t work: whether “massification,” the “convergence of struggles” that don’t exist, the People’s Mic and the pseudo-feminism that only serves to stifle the general assemblies, to monopolize who gets to speak, forever repeating the same things. Really, it’s too much. The question is not one of massification, it’s one of being right and of determination. The only thing that makes a government back off is not the number of people in the streets, but their determination. The only thing that makes a government back off is the specter of an uprising, the possibility of the loss of total control. Even if we just wanted the labor law repealed, we would still have to aim for an insurrection: strike hard, take on the means to gain respect by force from the police, blockade the normal functioning of this society and attack targets that would make the government shake. The “question” of violence is a false question. That which the media describes as “violence” is felt as determination, as

3. SYRIZA, a left-wing populist party, celebrated a landmark victory by coming in first place in the 2014 parliamentary elections. After gaining much of their power through the social movements of the past several years, SYRIZA continues to implement the same (or worse) austerity policies of the previous administrations.

4. Bernard Tapie is a businessman and former politician with the Radical Party of the Left (PRG).

5. Libération is a left-wing daily newspaper in France

6. Current French Minister of the Economy, known for pushing through business-friendly reforms (see below).

7. The Bill on Intelligence was drafted after the Charlie Hebdo shooting in January 2015, and would dramatically increase the surveillance capabilities of the French state.

8. The 2014 Macron Law contains several pro-business reforms.

9. The state of emergency was declared in France November 2015 after a large-scale attack by Daesh in Paris. It has been extended on multiple occasions, presumably because of the the ZAD occupation and the current uprising.

10. This is possibly a reference to the case against the Tarnac 10, arrested in 2008 on terrorism charges related to railway sabotage. These arrests popularized the book the group was accused of writing, *The Coming Insurrection*. In 2015 the terrorism charges were dropped, however the defendants still face conspiracy charges.

rage, as seriousness and yet also joyfulness for those of us in the streets. This is what we felt last Wednesday and which has given the government a few reasons to freak out: we showed courage, our fear dissipated and we were sure in ourselves. Sure of wanting to march on the heads of those who govern. On the heads of those who, all year long, have marched all over us.

STRIKE HARD! STRIKE TRUE! #BatailleDeSolferino

Counter to what the bureaucrats of the UNEF (French Student Union) or the NPA (New Anticapitalist Party) say, striking hard is not what is going to “isolate us from the masses,” if the targets are true. On the contrary this is what is going to make all of those tired of all this to come and join us and that’s quite a lot of people. The question that the labor law poses is that of the politics that the Socialist Party has undertaken for the last 35 years and of knowing whether or not they’re going to be able to complete their decades-long campaign. It’s also a question of politics in general. Here we have a movement that rises a year after a presidential campaign, which generally imposes silence and waiting among everyone, as many speak at length of profound indifference and yet just look at the hostility that it has already set off. We know that the upcoming elections are not the solution, but rather form part of the problem. It is not by some random chance that spontaneously, last Wednesday, the students of Lyon had sought out the Socialist Party HQ and had clashed with the police to make this happen. And it is not by random chance that the HQs of the Socialist Party in Paris and Rouen were defaced. This is what the movement seeks for itself. Rather than to get locked into foolish trapdoor negotiations, that what must be done is attack, all over France, starting next Thursday, all the HQs of the Socialist Party. In Paris, it will have to be the Battle of Solférino. Next up, we’ll see. We’re gonna have to play this one out very well. But the stakes are colossal.

THEY’RE BACKING OFF, ATTACK!

Our Revolt is not Civil

In Paris, the revolt and the Up All Night [known as Nuit Debout] are difficult for citizenists of all kinds to contain, who are yet to maneuver. People are outraged, and wild demos link together. Yesterday evening [April 9th], CCTV cameras, banks and a cop station were targeted. A demo took off in the middle of the night towards the home of [Prime Minister] Manuel Valls, before being pushed back by cops.

Facing this tough-to-control determination, the “leaders” of Up All Night (it’s a movement said to not have a hierarchy, but not without spokespersons and representatives, nor security personnel) ended up calling the cops, quickly revealing what they really aim for: maintain the dissent within the framework of Power, control the anger to divert it towards electioneering logic, as was the case with SYRIZA and Podemos.¹ While repression has rarely been so intense to break a social struggle, these kind citizens have chosen their side: work with the police.

On the parliamentary chain, two “representatives” of Up All Night even congratulated the police for their know-how and their calm. And this wasn’t irony... Need we remind that, in Paris, there has already been dozens and dozens of arrests, sometimes buses completely filled with people arrested, and as many people injured...

Long live the fire!

Published by **Nantes Indymedia**
Translated by **Contra Info**
April 15th 2016

1. A political party in Spain that has risen out of anti-austerity social movements, much like SYRIZA.

Build the Hacienda, Burn Down the Palaces

Published by **Lundi Matin**
Translated by **Ediciones Chafa**
April 28th 2016

1. What we've been living through is new. It is certainly not just another "social movement." "Social movements" have a frame, so that everything escaping it is defined as a boiling-over or a break-away [*débordement*]. Yet what we've experienced since March 9th has been an uninterrupted series of such breakaway moments, with the old forms of politics trailing after them from behind. The call to demonstrate on March 9th was an breakaway from the unions by the YouTubers. The demonstrations since then have seen constant breakaway marches led by the "youths", while the traditional image of union marches headed up by the various union bosses has been systematically replaced by groups of hooded youths defying the police. *Nuit debout* overflows every recognized political frame, while the "wild marches" that leave from its site at place de la République are themselves a breakaway from *Nuit debout*. We must continue to begin—or in other words, continue to break-away, to remain on the move, to surprise.

2. Attempts to assimilate the new into the already-known are part of the arsenal of neutralization. Just as the demonstrations against this new labor law have little to do with the struggle against the CPE, *Nuit debout* bears very little relation to the Indignados of Puerta del Sol¹ [Madrid, Spain]. Whereas [the occupation at] Puerta del Sol declared itself pacifist, [the occupation at] Place de la République had, last Friday, hours-long clashes with the police. "Everyone hates the police" has become a noted chant hit. Whereas [the occupation at] Puerta del Sol called itself "apolitical," we have lost count of the calls by unions and the speeches by unionists at place de la République. However, Puerta del Sol was really occupied, which is not the case with place de la République. At Puerta del Sol food was made for thousands, people stayed day and night, the police were not making daily evictions, nor ordered to takedown this or that, or to stop folks from cooking. This last difference indicates a path to follow: if we want to make place de la République more than just an interminable general assembly where curious on-lookers are giving a first-hand look at its powerlessness and the inconsistency of its "decisions," then we must really occupy it; this means building real spaces and defending them from the police.

3. What place de la République really constitutes is a public counter-space. Since the public, political and media space that exists has become an integral lie, we have no choice but to desert it. Not by falling back into silence, but to positively desert it by constructing another. And speech is like freedom: when you first take hold of it you start to say or do some dumb shit, but that's not what's important. What matters is to not to dwell on that first fuck-up. We must instead say that we have a long way to go, that these past weeks comprise our first few breaths. It's been years now that a coalition of forces have made the situation unbreathable, between the "threat of the National Front,"² "war on terrorism," "crises" of all kinds, the state of emergency laws, climate apocalypse and the permanent campaign for the next presidency. What characterizes the reigning public space is that it offers a space for nothing but contemplation: what we witness, what we hear, what we learn never becomes an act or bears any consequence because we face it all alone. As was made evident in exemplary fashion the evening of the 'nightcap at Valls' place',³ what is vibrant and powerful about a counter-space is the capacity for acts to follow speech. Consciousness and the capacity to act are not disjointed. This is the way that a counter-space can positively destitute the existing public space. Hence the great curiosity and jealousy of the media.

4. The conflict around the El Khomri law is not just a conflict around the "work" law, it's a conflict around the possibility—or *not*—of governing, which is to say, a *political* conflict in the true sense of the term. No one can stand to be governed any more by the puppets in the [National] assembly, which is why, in our point of view, the

1. A movement similar to Occupy in the United States, which began on May 15th, 2011 (from which it takes the name, 15M movement).

2. The National Front (FN) is a far-right nationalist political party in France.

3. See "And The Party Has Just Begun..." Ediciones Chafa, April 12th 2016.

law cannot pass; yet the government itself cannot afford *not* to pass this law—this means, it has been factually destituted [*destitué de fait*], and can no longer govern. This refusal is even seen in a union like the CGT, whose rank-and-file can no longer bear to be governed as it had previously been by its management. If one listens to the speeches people give at place de la République, most fall into either one of two camps regarding this question of destitution: some wish the moment of destitution to be followed by a constitutive moment where they a new constitution could be written and a new society founded, where as others think the destitution should be without a conclusion because it is first of all a process of construction, and that for fiction of a single society we must substitute the reality that there exists a plurality of worlds, each of which express and incarnate their own idea of life and of happiness. Those of us writing here share the latter position.

5. Let's be pragmatic: no one's going to be able to write a constitution until this regime has been overthrown. And being that you do not overthrow a democratic regime democratically, i.e. that it will defend itself against any fundamental challenge until its very last riot cop, the only path leading to a new constitution is an insurrectional path. However to lead a successful insurrection, like that of Maidan⁴ for example, place de la République must be really occupied, barricaded, guarded, etc.; also, all political and existential sensibilities favorable to insurrection must be able to find each other; to this end, for the desperate search for a consensus never to be found in the middle of Paris, a consensus of a more or less frightened metropolitan petty bourgeoisie, we must substitute the material existence of a plurality of spaces, of "houses," where each of the sensibilities of the insurrection could come aggregate themselves and enter into a fusion. Those who are passionate about writing a constitution are welcome to build their own house where they can write up as many drafts as they like. And as for those who want to put the constitution into place, well we'll discuss this when Valls and Hollande will have already taken their jet to take refuge in the USA, Africa or in Algeria.

6. A poster in the Parisian metro a few years ago declared, "Who organizes spaces, rules over them"; it was decorated with a majestic lion supposedly representing the sovereignty of the RATP Group [management of Parisian state-owned transport]. What is the power to be found in place de la République? It resides the management of the place itself, and the forces of order who impose respect thereby. Power is thus this grand empty esplanade; the flux of cars and their din; and the anti-police vans posted on all sides. How can an assembly seriously claim to be sovereign which then debases itself by respecting the real sovereignty that dictates its every move? Impossible to take it seriously. But we would not have gathered together, nor been as numerous and determined as we've been, if we weren't very serious. By serious, here we mean that we have taken it upon ourselves to manage this place, to express our intention to hold out by constructing the means for doing so, to refuse to be added to the list of mediatic flashes in the pan that let themselves be swept away at the first attack. We we are going to be able to welcome comrades from all over, we have to escape the precarity that imposed on us by the current forces of management, and to arrange things as we see fit – we have to be constructive, in other words.

7. We are in the middle of a ford, at the heart of peril: there are too many of us to simply return home and not enough of us to throw ourselves into an insurrectional assault. We must "shift into second gear" as some say. To hold out till the end of April is already not bad. We cannot count on the union bosses, because even if a few strikes that can be re-directed spring up here and there, by nature these strikes will be against their will. However we know the danger that awaits us if this situation closes up again, a danger we already struggle against even now: that of the electoral system, the democratic blackmail of having to choose between the plague and cholera, between Alain Juppé and Marine Le Pen. Those who are apt to join us are precisely those whom are disgusted by such a reality, those who cannot bear for politics

4. Maidan refers to the base of the 2013-14 "Euromaidan" protests which later escalated into armed conflict. The author's measurement of "success" in this case is questionable, especially considering how influential the far-right was in this movement.

to be reduced to the insignificant process of voting. Politics is in what we plan, in what we build, in what we attack and in what we destroy. Shifting into second gear means: build the hacienda, burn down the palaces.

Reflections on Violence

Published by **Lundi Matin**
Translated Anonymously
May 1st 2016

“Little by little, the ‘question of violence’ appears for what it is: a diversion.”

Since the events of April 9th and the wild week that followed, the *Nuit Debout* (Rise Up At Night) assembly put the question of violence at the center of debate. While citizens persist in their rigorous pacifism, stances in favor of the “diversity of tactics” are multiplying. The National Student Coordination itself has explicitly refused dissociation between rioters and demonstrators.

Amongst this proliferation of discussions, the *Nuit à Bout Action Committee* has gathered the positions that seem pertinent to the context of the reinforcement of the movement as well as its repression. The more we seriously assume our presence in the Place de la République, the more frequently situations leading to confrontations will present themselves to us. We must prepare for them. This isn’t a question of convincing everyone that violence is a viable option or a necessary route. It’s simply a matter of finding the forms of action, perhaps frightening, that will deliver us from fear.

I

What must be explained is not why things sometime get out of hand around the *Nuit Debout* gatherings in Paris, but why it doesn’t happen more. In the end, it’s clearly understood why people who have been gathering every night for two weeks to envision the end of capitalism end up exploding the windows of the Société Générale bank (#PanamaPapers). Obviously this is right, it makes total sense.¹ The problem lies elsewhere. This is why neither the moral apologies for violence nor the theoretical or ideological justification of trashing will succeed in bringing more people to fight against the police or smash bank windows.

We shouldn’t forget that if many people are keeping themselves quiet in demos, it’s not because pacifism is in their blood, but simply because they’re afraid. To surpass this fear is a collective task that is nowhere better accomplished than in the streets. In drawing attention to everyone, and not only to one’s friends; in taking care of each other, even in the worst situations.

II

“Diversity of tactics” is an expression which, like its cousin, “convergence of struggles”, tells us nothing about what must be done when people are brought together who don’t have the same ways to struggle, or don’t even have any way to struggle at all. This expression actually hides a pretty liberal idea: everyone struggling next to the other, in their own way, without bothering or talking to one another.

It’s nothing more than another subtle way to dissociate oneself. When will we get a “*diversity of corteges*”? This is something the FIDL already claim at every demo of high schoolers.

III

The question is not to be or not to be violent. The question is to be offensive, or inoffensive. Three gangs of five friends determined to smash vending machines but incapable of organizing on a larger scale than their own affinity circle are as inoffensive as 10,000 unionized citizens slowly marching behind the CGT’s sound-system-french-fries-van. Conversely, 3,000 people holding their ground in the tear-gas and a bunch people throwing rocks from behind a banner almost succeeded in taking a drink at Valls’ house.

1. Some within the anarchist milieu have written against this sort of moralizing on what targets are “right” for people to break. See “Anarchists Defile Libertarian Procession” *Attaque*, May 21st 2016.

All the strong moments experienced in the streets since March 9th have implied, at one time or another, that those who are ready to fight and those who are not draw attention to each other, decide to hold together, and not just stand side-by-side in polite and diplomatic indifference. On April 9th at *Place de la Nation*, there weren't enough tear-gas grenades in all the capital to separate the hundred of people who were bombarding the CRS lines from the hundreds of people who were booing and filming the cops, while cheering or nursing the rioters.

IV

Little by little, the “question of violence” appears for what it is: a diversion. As long as we continue to talk about this, and moreover to speak about it in moral and ideological terms, we won't confront the true strategical problems posed by the demonstrations. To make the apology of violence yet again will do nothing. There are plenty of people ready to defend themselves from the police. What's missing is precisely a *cortege* to defend.

V

A demonstration is not a symbolical ritual. It is a test of strength, where the population that has reasons to revolt meets, physically, the people who get paid to maintain the world in the deplorable state we now find it in. Every demo is the actualization of the *rapport du force* between those who are ready to take risks to change the situation, and those whom we pay to preserve it. The problem of official and union demonstrations is that they downplay the existence of such a *rapport du force*. They give an image of life, of struggle, that disgusts us. Sponsored balloons, sausage-slogans and security squads; if “struggling” means to march like the CGT, than to struggle means: to remain passive, to repeat the same gestures again and again, and to never take risks. That, in addition to being deceptive, is intolerable. One only starts to fight when one ceases to be inoffensive: it may seem tautological, but the whole of the union forces spend their time affirming the opposite. Their gestures, in the streets, express nothing but submission.

VI

The police maintain order. Because it is a protest against the order of things, a demonstration is, in its essence, a confrontation with police, no matter what form it takes. Therefore, when night comes, there is a winner and a loser. Either the police win (April 5th), or the demo wins (March 31st). The police win when everything goes as planned by the prefecture. Demonstrators win when everything doesn't go as planned by the prefecture. Freedom then, is gained when we pull something off in the face of the police. Winning *matters*. As much for the construction of a *rapport du force* as for our ties to each other, for our courage. Too many people come to rallies like tourists, unconscious of the importance of successfully breaking the mold. Those people can be sympathetic clowns dancing in front of the CRS, or rioters who are indifferent to the behavior of the *cortege*. It doesn't matter: they are inoffensive.

VII

To ensure that everything happens as expected, the cops set up apparatuses: kettles, closed streets, hordes of undercover, etc. In demonstrating, the challenge to combat is the police apparatus: we must keep it from working, we must break it down. Not only are there thousands of different apparatuses, but there are thousands of different ways to break apart the same apparatus.

Likewise, there isn't much to say about a demo where the police apparatus hasn't been put into question. That's why the media's approach to demonstrations is to set their sites solely on the outbreaks. These alone mean something. To say that, “confrontations occurred on the fringes of the *cortege*,” makes about as much sense as saying that, “goals have been scored on the sidelines of the football field”.

VIII

Trashing is the easiest, most obvious way to break a police apparatus. It is also one of the least interesting, and most boring. What most narratives on rioters miss is that the latter would often prefer to do something else: to break police lines to free the *cortege*, to occupy a building, to start a wild demo, to hold barricades, paint inspired tags, etc. Trashing is often a second-best option. It is the zero degree of the demonstration. As for the classical union rally, family-friendly and good-natured, it isn't even a demonstration: it is a police operation.

It's worth noting that there's rarely been as few windows broken in a social movement as that of the month that just passed. One doesn't trash anything when one confronts the police. One has better things to do.

IX

If the Nuit Debout's assembly can be in turns entertaining, touching or ridiculous, it won't help us in any way to organize with a revolutionary perspective. This statement is a practical one: one can't discuss such things like one takes a ticket at the butcher shop. The infinite succession of stop-watched and disconnected speeches all but abolishes the conditions of a constructed conversation. Nobody can say anything intelligent in two minutes. Everybody sees it, but everybody goes along with it. However "democratic" the will of certain organizers or "facilitators" may be, the decision and voting procedures are usually nothing but a farce. What they parody in "formal democracy" is the impotence related to the fact that the decision, in the end, engages nobody. Yet, to keep up the confrontation requires that we make certain decisions – decisions which the general assembly makes *de facto* impossible. We attend them as we would watch *The Voice*. To elaborate a revolutionary perspective requires that other modes of speaking, of sharing and of building collective intelligence be deployed at the same time in the square.²

X

Our corteges will start to look like something once everyone shares, not a tolerance of principle towards the actions of others, but a common strategical perception of the situation. That is to say, once we perceive all demonstrations as battles we must win by any means necessary; once we are all inclined, not to violence, but to taking the offensive with speed and surprise. It is by drawing attention to the movements and affects which agitate our demonstrations that we will succeed to find a common ground allowing a true convergence of struggles – its meeting point, Place de la République.

There are thousands of non-violent gestures that then come to mind which would increase many-fold our efficiency in the streets:

- March in masses on sidewalks in order to prevent the lateral movements of the CRS from catching the demo in its claw.
- Raise concerns over the routes of wild demos. Those leading the *cortege*, in the heat of the action and improvisation, don't always choose the best routes. Help them.
- Get in the habit of hiding our faces at the right time: as much to sabotage the identification and surveillance work systematically and massively conducted by the police as to make indistinguishable demonstrators taking part in confrontation from the others.
- Confrontations tend not to unfold in silence or on mute. Slogans and chanting express the spirit of the movement. Thus, they have their place in all moments of confrontation. When others fight, sing and dance.
- Be mobile and do not allow any holes to form in the *cortege* when security squads or police attempt to divide it.

2. This of course draws many parallels with similar occupation movements across the world, such as Occupy in the United States. It would be remiss not to mention the series "The Anarchist Critique of Democracy" Crimethinc, March 16th-May 26th 2016.

- Learn to protect ourselves from tear gas so that it's not just those who are equipped in the clouds.
- Systematically send back tear gas canisters, or at least keep them away from the cortege.
- Stay calm during police charges to avoid brawls. Hold together and don't back off a hundred times farther than where the police line stops so as not to give them free space.

Their morals are not ours.

The following is edited together from multiple report backs published on the blog La Serveuse, subtitled "Notes on the movement against the loi du travail, by a waitress." For the full versions, please check the original site (link on the last page).

May 9th through 26th

Published by **La Serveuse**

May 24-27th 2016

This will be a collection of notes, written by a waitress, that attempts to put together experiences from Paris and from the rest of France during the *mouvement contre le loi travail*.

The previous two weeks were just as enervating as the ones preceding, if not more, since the French police have newly discovered kettles. Tuesday the 10th, for example, began with a 7am call for blockades, a word of the week. The plan, it seems, was to block Bercy, the train and bus terminus, since there was a strike from *Sud*, a rail workers' union, the same day. This was well organised and began at Opera, where early risers boarded the metro, going on several lines, and in several directions, before ending up in a wild chase. The cat and mouse dispersed around the station of Dugommier at about 8.30am, which was encircled by *gendarmérie*. Manuel Valls passed the law sometime around lunchtime using a special decree.

Thursday the 12th was another manifestation, beginning near Montparnasse. There were clashes at first, tear gas mingling with passers by. A solitary shopping bag filled with paves (paving stones, taken amidst the crowd) was left on the ground in the chaos as CS gas was once again sent into the midst, the march was so tied up that it couldn't move forward, although some breakaways later achieved road blockades. The CGT were openly collaborating with the police¹ to control this demonstration, and this was evident as the vans broke through police lines, without helping pedestrian protesters, or those younger, or masked, through as well.

That evening the *Beaux-Arts* art school in *St Germain des Près* was occupied, and an *Assemblée Générale* began around midnight. This occupation led to several disputes, particularly as many students attending the university made positive appraisals of it, saying that it was different to any other institution, they loved and identified with it. The occupation resulted in two computers being broken, which eventually split the student body, and a castle was built out of street plackets in the middle of the courtyard, resembling one that was built on April 28th at République, before it was violently evicted. The *Beaux-Arts* occupation was evicted in the early hours of Saturday morning but was beautiful while it lasted.

On Tuesday, the collaboration of the CGT with the police continued. The *Service d'Ordre de CGT*, who are a section of that union, were out in a huge block. The SO are basically self-elected strongmen from each union who are supposed to control the march. In the last weeks their aim seems to be to try to get the head of the demonstration.² The discourse against the *casseurs* (rioters) has seemed to strengthen in the last week, since the *Loi* was passed, and it seems the unions want to strengthen this distinction, between those who 'work' (in more secure, unionised jobs) and ironically those who can't work or don't in the same capacity.

1. See "Images of the French CGT union's 'services d'ordre' stewards" Libcom, May 31st 2016

2. The autonomous bloc generally aims to take the head of the demonstration. The maneuvers by the CGT to prevent this is another form of policing the march.

Anyway, on Tuesday's manifestation, which followed generally the same trajectory from the École Militaire through teargas, molotovs, disengagement grenades, burning bins and flying bottles to place Denfert Rochereau, the *Service d'Ordre* formed a kettle as people tried to escape from a police charge and an intoxicated square.

On Wednesday a police demonstration was called to stop "*la haine anti-flics*" (the hatred of cops) which of course would require a counter demonstration. On the morning, we turned up too late, to find extremely tense lines of police, hundreds of people being expelled, spilling out of the square in hundreds. We were always five minutes behind but found our way to Quai de Valmy, where there were plumes of acrid black smoke coming from the remains of a police car.

Thursday 19th was a huge manifestation beginning at Nation and finishing at Place d'Italie. The *cortège*—the 'autonomous' part of the manifestation, that is the part which is not affiliated to any union—was huge (10,000 people, they say), and took the front of the demonstration. There were some clashes, and at Place D'italie police stormed the square, making charges at protesters, and threw the usual gas. The Service d'Ordre were again attacking the march. This became the site of many clashes, before things were disbanded.

After Wednesday the 18th's demonstration, as part of which a police car was burnt, 5 people were arrested and had their houses searched. They seemed to have been chosen at random, and this choosing was justified by the fact that they'd received a 'prohibition notice' forbidding them from attending Tuesday (17th) morning's protest. This notice was cancelled on Tuesday morning and was no longer active. One was released after being detained for 1 day, and the remaining four were presented to the judge on Saturday, accused of:

- Attempted homicide
- Wilful violence toward someone of public authority
- Damage to public property
- Participation in an armed gathering

Three were released on bail on the night of Tuesday 24th.

The oil strikes and blockades, which are now being reported more in the international press, have been ongoing since Thursday 19th, and with increasing strength. On Thursday we heard it was not possible to get cash or oil in Rennes, since the ATMs were smashed during the manifestation, and the refineries were on strike. This is an explicit case in which the actions of *casseurs* support the actions of a strike. Every day there has been news of another refinery blocked, a new one evicted. They are often reoccupied. Road blockades are too many to count.

The longer that refineries remain blocked, the more chance there is that they will have to close down all together, since it is a health and safety concern to keep them running without workers. Tuesday 24th, 1/3 of gas stations were in complete or partial penury, according to Le Parisien, 6/8 refineries were stopped or functioned only partially, petrol boats were blocked in Marseilles, there was a call for a strike on the SNCF with 10% of members already striking. By Thursday 26th, 1/5 of gas stations nationally were without gas according to LeMonde's live feed, and 40% of gas stations in Paris were having trouble obtaining gasoline. The pickets had casualties too, in Cherbourg a unionist was killed on his motorbike on the way to a picket, whilst on another blockade a protester was injured being run over by a truck driver.

Thursday was counted as the 8th of grand day of mobilisation against the *Loi du Travail*, meaning that there were large mobilisations across the country, union marches, accompanied by strikes and blockades. The CGT had already started walking when we got to the Paris demonstration, presumably to stop the non-affiliated sections of the march from taking the head.

Sections of this *tête*³ break off, break stuff, including the glass of bus shelters, the

3. From *tête de cortège* meaning 'head of demonstration,' referring to the autonomous bloc.

glass of moving billboards, and the glass of shop fronts. The rest of the crowd call to each other to wait, applaud when things are broken, and protect each other. They have a quiet solidarity with those more active, masked sections of the march, contradicting what is said against *casseurs* in the press. At one point the march tails to the right, presumably for an action, but after letting thousands through the gendarmerie try to form a kettle. The police push the advancing demonstrators back, gas them, but the whole of the march is there. As people are gassed, others take over. *Everyone hates the police*, the crowd chants, moving forward again. The police push back, beat people, use pepper spray. Later I hear that there were thousands crushed in to this space and the tear gas and disengagement grenades caused several protesters to go on fire, since the missiles landed on pieces of clothing. The crowd advances saying *cassez-vous* (fuck off). Eventually the cops are defeated, give up, let everyone go.

More is smashed, including a skoda shopfront, which people get inside. The graffiti along the walls says things like *1789: les casseurs prennent la Bastille!* (1789 the rioters take Bastille) and *vivre, sans temps* (to live without time) and *enfin une manif qui se passe bien* (in the end, the march went well).

The police have the perimeter of a half moon of the square and moreover the rest of the cortège has not arrived yet. People, standing on the grassy banks, on the floors, on beds of roses, on the square, throw things at the police. For a moment the sky is full of stuff, flying at random, then the gas comes back. The BAC (undercovers) come in, steal a random boy, everyone runs at the BAC, they come back with iron bars in their hands. It is reported that earlier that two of these undercovers were chased out of the demonstration, and that one got his gun out and pointed it at a protester. The square was again gassed, leagues of riot police charged, from one direction, from the next.

More Resources

Attaque is an anarchist counter-information project that publishes communiqués from across France in many languages.

<https://attaque.noblogs.org>

Contra-Info is an anarchist counter-information project that publishes communiqués from across the world in many languages.

<https://en-contrainfo.espiv.net/>

Ediciones Chafa is a writing and English translation project that has primarily focused on the uprising in France.

<https://edicioneschafa.wordpress.com/>

La Serveuse is a writing project from a waitress based in Paris with reports from the uprising in English.

<https://laserveuse.tumblr.com/>

There are many different websites in French for much more comprehensive updates. If you are any good with French please take the time to translate even a little bit—one crucial form of solidarity we in the United States can show is the circulation of information.

Likewise, it is important to build a practice of revolutionary solidarity: there is no better way to support the struggle against capitalism and the state in France than to attack the manifestations of capital and the state here at home.



A *casseur* sprays paint on a storefront in Nantes, March 31st



A police car burning in Paris, May 18th

Subversion press

subversionpress.wordpress.com

