

SAYING NO TO NEOLIBERALISM IN FRANCE AND CANADA

April 30, 2005

It has been some time now since there was any major progressive challenge in the western capitalist countries to the anti-social direction of our societies. In France such a challenge is emerging in the form of a 'NO' vote in the current French Referendum on the neoliberal-consolidating institutional reforms in the proposed European Union constitution. The business, political and social elite supporters of the constitution are attempting to isolate that opposition by characterizing it as simply backward-looking and nationalist. The continued political pursuit of neoliberalism with the backing of elite opinion is indeed fuelling the insecurity and xenophobia that the hard Right is exploiting. But this should not be mistaken for the political rebellion unfolding in France. And it makes the Left's resistance to the proposed EU constitution all the more urgent.

There is, once again, the argument from the 'YES' supporters that there is no alternative to further globalization and free market reforms. Much like NAFTA, the proposed European constitution embeds neoliberal ideas as basic law, allowing private property rights and the market to prevail over democracy and national parliaments and sovereignty.

Solidaristic support from abroad for the Left in France against its demonization by the Right for standing against neoliberalism and elite opinion is, in this context, vital. Unions, social movements, and Left political parties in France are leading this inspiring struggle and rejecting the cant that there is no alternative to neoliberalism. They are insisting that the French people have taken an independent course before, can do so again, and that 'another world is possible' and it is time to take that direction. Enough is enough. These developments in France are part of the international frustration with, and an international struggle against, capitalism's increasingly anti-social nature and the false promises of neoliberalism. This is a critical voice in the global social justice movement reclaiming the terrain of democracy. There is right to say 'NO' to neoliberalism in the referendum in France and thus 'yes' to social justice.

The struggle in France today for the right to say 'No' is a struggle that the Canadian Left and social justice movement knows well from our own struggles against free trade, neoliberalism and the elite forces in favour of globalization. And we support these same struggles in France today in defiance against those who say there is no alternative.

Please find attached below a call for support from France and information on the recent events there.

On behalf of,

Socialist Project (at www.socialistproject.ca).



Dear Comrades,

I am writing to you on behalf of Project K <www.projet-k.org>.

As you are no doubt aware, the opinion polls in France are currently showing that a substantial majority of the French electorate is planning to vote 'No' in the referendum on the EU 'constitution' on 29 May. Even more importantly, this majority against the referendum has a strongly left-wing and 'social' colouration, in the context of an upsurge of strikes and demonstrations in France and despite the support for the 'Yes' vote by the majority of the Socialist Party.

One of the few arguments remaining for the supporters of the 'Yes' vote is that voting 'No' is some kind of an act of political isolation from the rest of the European Left, and that it can be thus reduced to a type of French nationalism, rather than the expression of rebellion against the neoliberal EU that it really represents. That is why we in Project K have taken the initiative of launching an international petition in solidarity with the left-wing 'No' vote, to try to counter this form of political blackmail. We hope to be able to publish it eventually in the French national press. We are asking you if you can try to gather signatures for it from leading trade unionists and politicians, representative organisations and associations, prominent left-wing intellectuals, artists etc in any European countries. Please get back to us as soon as possible on this.

Thanks for your solidarity

Sebastian Budgen for Project K

Project K

No to the proposed European constitution!

Solidarity with the French left's campaign to vote 'No'!

The proposed European constitution, adopted by EU member states on 18 June 2004 and currently being subjected to various types of ratification in countries across the EU, is a danger to democracy. It is an attempt to impose a socially destructive and economically neoliberal order on a European scale.

If the constitution is adopted, life for those living in the EU will be increasingly subjected to the laws of the free market and governed by institutions which defy any form of popular control. Europe's international role will be subordinated to NATO and to militarist ambitions.

Various political, social, associational and cultural forces across Europe are opposing this project. In some countries a referendum will allow the electorate to express itself directly on the matter. In France, in particular, the referendum of 29 May is a major political battle for the forces of the left, in all their diversity, who have joined together to campaign for a 'No' vote against the proposed constitution. Their battle is also our own. This text will make attacks on living conditions easier. Its defeat is a necessary condition for halting the reactionary drift in mainstream politics and opening up the possibility of a future founded on social rights, democracy and peace.

The victory of the 'No' vote in France would be a powerful boost to all those who are struggling for these values to win, in Europe and throughout the world.

Initiated by Project K <www.projet-k.org>

