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France

**“The priority is to win against
Macron's candidate, but also
against the PS candidate, who
broke the agreement here“**

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The NPA once the agreement with NUPES failed [1] decided to support candidates of different types depending on the local situation. [2] *International Viewpoint* has already published an article on a broad non-aligned candidacy “[Raphaël Arnault, the antifa who wants to be an MP](#)”. This interview with Penelope Duggan, member of the NPA leadership and activist in the 20th arrondissement of Paris, gives a view of NPA involvement in a NUPES campaign.

Can you give us a quick introduction to the candidacy?

In the 20th arrondissement of Paris, Danielle Simonnet needs no introduction. A local councillor since 2001, she has always been very involved in the struggles of the working-class neighbourhoods of the arrondissement. As early as 2001, as a deputy mayor, she launched the first parity “citizenship council of non-EU residents”. She participated in the strong united campaign in the district for the “no” vote in the 2005 referendum on the European Constitution. In 2006, she initiated the first sponsorships for young undocumented high school students. The unitary collective for the reopening of the Tenon Hospital abortion clinic, created in 2009, has always benefited from her active and visible support, as have all the struggles of employees and users of public services (post office, transport) and private sector employees.

Elected on the Socialist Party list in 2001 and 2008, she left with Jean-Luc Mélenchon to found the Left Party (Parti de Gauche) in 2009 and has since played an important role in the Left Front (Front de Gauche), La France insoumise and the Popular Union (Union Populaire).

How does the campaign work?

This grassroots campaign is organised through general assemblies and action groups, and in a very active way by distributing leaflets in front of schools in the morning, in the local street markets and at underground stations, and especially by door-to-door visits in housing estates in the late afternoon. The meetings, rather than being held in halls, take the form of festive open-air aperitifs in the various squares of the constituency. At each meeting, actors of local struggles are invited to speak to demonstrate that these struggles are part of national politics, because in the end it is the laws adopted by the National Assembly that will regulate everything.

This willingness to go to the people stems from the concern to mobilize the voters of the presidential elections - Mélenchon scored 45% and was in the lead in all polling stations in the constituency in the first round of the 2022 presidential elections - but also the abstentionists. We are not forgetting those who may consider themselves the campaign does not concern them because they do not have the right to vote. The campaign is defends the right to vote for foreign residents and has issued an by those who do not have the right to vote to vote for Danielle.

What are the local issues in this campaign?

The 20th is a “left-wing” arrondissement with a tradition of united-front mobilizations, notably around the issues of racism, solidarity with undocumented migrants, and the defence of its public services such as Tenon hospital. This electoral campaign mobilizing the forces of the left, including the NPA, must serve to reinforce this readiness to mobilize in a united and collective way to face the attacks of a Macron bis government or, in the case of an Assembly with a left majority, the blockages of the system against the implementation of the NUPES programme.

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So the priority is to win against Macron's candidate, but also against the PS candidate, who has broken the agreement here and is presenting a candidate who is not a grassroots activist invested in the struggles and with the perspective of leading these battles.

What forces and collectives are you working with?

The campaign brings together the forces of the NUPES agreement (FI, Générations, POI, EÉLV, PCF) except the PS. The NPA is present as such with our logo on the campaign material. The campaign involves both experienced activists from different local struggles and many young people, and not young people, who were attracted by the Mélenchon campaign.

Anything to add?

The media obviously love to talk about "How the Parisian left is tearing itself apart in the 20th arrondissement" (Le Journal du dimanche, 14 May). And, since 3 June, they have found another subject: "Legislatives: two LFI candidates criticized for appearing with Jeremy Corbyn" (Huffington Post, 4 June) by bringing out the slander that Jeremy Corbyn is anti-Semitic, an accusation already made against Danielle Simonnet herself for her opposition to the inauguration of a Jerusalem Square in Paris, with the rejection of the mention of Jerusalem as the capital of the two states on the plaque as she had proposed, and the invitation of the mayor of West Jerusalem alone. The campaign collective remains proud to have had Jeremy Corbyn as a surprise guest bringing international solidarity at its recent people's aperitif.

6 June 2021

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from **l'Anticapitaliste**.

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[1] See "[Statement of NPA National Political Council on the parliamentary elections](#)" and "[A new electoral union on the French left](#)".

[2] See "[Support for the NUPES radical candidates, independent candidacies](#)".