

- **Ep. 294 (to air Feb 4): French Strikes**

- <https://www.businessinsider.com/french-austerity-measures-are-rejected-by-firefighters-2020-1>

*The reform could save money. But critics fear it would also harm France's retirement system, which is one of the best in the world. [Ninety-three percent of older people in France are secure from poverty](#), which is the highest rate in the European Union. The reforms would also increase the minimum age for retirement benefits to 64, up from 62*

- [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-strikes-in-france-are-drawing-to-a-close-but-theres-no-real-winner/2020/02/01/a02d3fda-4113-11ea-99c7-1dfd4241a2fe\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/the-strikes-in-france-are-drawing-to-a-close-but-theres-no-real-winner/2020/02/01/a02d3fda-4113-11ea-99c7-1dfd4241a2fe_story.html)

- <https://therealnews.com/stories/france-neoliberal-protest-pension-strike>  
**RENAUD LAMBERT, deputy editor of Le Monde Diplomatique:** *Well, it's a twofold effect. I mean, for one it's very scary. I mean, protests in France are common. There is a culture. I used to go on protesting, marching with my kids. I would never dream of doing it now because it's too dangerous. I mean, that has happened over the last three years and I surely am not an exception in this. So the atmosphere during marches is totally different but that's the first part of the implication. The second part is that whenever you are opposed with that type of violence, simply for marching and you are literally being attacked by police forces for simply standing there on the street.*

*I mean, that tends to radicalize people. People understand that they are struggling against something more than just a reform plan and this has led to an intensifying of the determination of the people to struggle and to the fact that people are no longer marching against a reform, but there's a word that comes back on the street. It's no longer just a plan, an idea or way of reorganizing something but it's a system, a way of seeing the world, and I think in this respect, what is happening in France is similar to what you see happening in other parts of the world, in Chile, in Colombia, whereby people are not simply contesting this decision or that decision, but an entire way of structuring the world of seeing as society's built.*

- <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/13/arts/dance/paris-opera-ballet-strike.html>

*The Paris Opera Ballet's dancers currently stop working at 42, then receive monthly payments equal to 45 to 48 percent of their top salaries. (According to the company, an entry level dancer's gross earnings total about 35,000 euros, or \$39,000 a year; an "étoile," or star, whose salary is negotiated privately, may make upward of €77,000, and often much more.) While retired dancers often work as teachers or ballet masters, the pension ensures a smooth professional transition. The average annual wage in France is €35,856.*

*On Monday, Franck Riester, France's culture minister, tried to sell a compromise to the dancers. He restated an offer made in December that would allow current company members to retain their existing privileges; the new rules would apply only to new hires.*

*"In order not to penalize those who didn't foresee this change in the social contract, the idea is that we'll only count those who are hired after Jan. 1, 2022," Mr. Riester said on LCI, a French news channel.*

*The first time they refused that offer, the striking dancers said in a statement, "We are a small link in a chain stretching back 350 years," adding, "we cannot be the generation who sacrifices those who follow."*

*"The pension comes from Louis XIV's era, when dance was revered as one of the most important cultural assets," said Benjamin Millepied [aka Natalie Portman's husband], a former director of dance of the Paris Opera. "It's a wonderful tradition from a time when culture held that kind of place in society."*

- <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Europe/2020/0109/French-pension-reform-strikes-hide-deeper-issue-distrust-of-politics>
- <https://fortune.com/2020/01/10/paris-pension-reform-strikes-france/>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/28/french-unions-strikes-emmanuel-macron-pension-reforms>

*It's hard not to think that unions could have been better prepared. After all, it's not like this reform was a surprise. Macron has been promising to overhaul the retirement system since [his 2017 bid for the Elysée](#). As Bruno Poncet, national secretary for [SUD Rail](#) (the most militant union at the national railway), explained to me, his union began gearing up for the pension strikes as early as last September, handing out flyers and organising discussions to build support for the walkout. Unfortunately, that sort of work has been rare: for many unions, the strategy appears to be putting out strike calls and crossing fingers that people jump on board.*

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-51078405>