

238. Topic n°4: « Our position in the European and global unionism »

239. Social inequalities: deepening of the gap

240. Social inequalities are increasing in the world, fostered by the economic and social system implemented in most countries. 85 persons possess the equivalent of 50% of the world population's income, which is as much as the earnings of 3, 5 billion human beings.
241. The cumulated fortune of the 1% wealthiest in the world will be greater than that of 99% people, if this horrendous growth is not reversed.
242. The net fortune of the richest 85 persons in the world amounts to 1 900 billion U.S. dollars. It has increased by 50% in four years. And if the rich are getting richer, they are doing so at the expense of the poorest. 50% of the poorest populations are even poorer in 2014 versus 2009.
243. It is easy to claim that the world's economic system leaves more than 6 billion people out.
244. Flaring inequalities hinder the struggle against poverty in the world, as one of nine persons suffers from hunger, and more than 1 billion people earn less than 1 dollar 25 a day.
245. Those huge riches change hands from generations to generations, and the elite use their considerable resources to make sure that international rules favour their interest.
246. France is ranking 2nd in terms of the highest number of world millionaires with 2, 4 million individuals, and ranking 5th in the world in terms of individuals owning over 50 million-dollars wealth, with more than 4 150 individuals.
247. In France, 50 % of the poorest households own only 7 % of the national wealth.

248. To strengthen the CGT international union action

249. This area has gained a growing significance in the past years in our union structure, as international and European issues became growingly crucial and as the pressure on workers increased through relocations, competition between business units within one same group, and the conditions of those employees posted by employers.
250. As a consequence, we must mobilise to counter-break the opposition organised by employers in most companies, to organise a better and stronger, planet wide, all-together stand, despite all the too-well known challenges caused by local specificities of union organisations in the countries.
251. European and global initiatives are needed to take action against globalised capitalism and uplift the rights and collective guarantees for the workers of the world.
252. This is the full meaning, for instance, of the euro-marches regularly organised by the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation), for example the contest

movement demanding a plan to allocate 2 % of the European GDP, i.e. 240 billion Euros per year, to invest in production and in jobs, to develop and upgrade the European industry.

253. The 13th ETUC conference held some weeks ago in Paris was an opportunity for the CGT as well as other European Union organisations, to claim our demands for an action-driven, confrontational unionism (see the CGT report for this conference).

254. Developing internationalisation in the large groups

255. The States leave more and more economic power into the hands of multinational companies, the latter going as far as dictating public policies. Workers are experiencing that their own leverage in terms of decision-making in the running of these companies, loses its frame along with the loss of its national boundaries; they discover that the political sphere prevails no more and loses ground facing the economic and financial pressure exerted by multinationals.

256. With the management's outsourcing, subsidiarisation and relocation strategies, the international dimension is impacting employees from large multinational groups and from public enterprises as well as all the workers in the value chain.

257. Everyday, employees are experiencing the domination-based relationships between contractors and third parties, along with the increase of all forms of insecure employment. The outsourcing of activities by large groups makes sub-contractors totally dependent from the contracting parties. And this labour organisation has an impact on all the workers.

258. One of its loudest consequences in Europe today, is the growing number of insecure employment statuses. Undeclared or incompletely recorded labour and bogus self-employment are soaring across the world, Europe; and France is not spared.

259. Standardised work allows and fosters the relocation of production. The CGT must undertake an analysis of labour issues, and make sure this item is on the agenda of international and European unions.

260. The CGT must carry on its active focus on large multinationals, grounding its actions on the experience of the workers themselves.

261. The European Works Councils (EWCs) are opportunities to leverage on the management's strategy. For utmost efficacy and usefulness in company-based unions, our own action must make use of the EWCs.

262. Large groups from France and Europe operate in other continents: unions from the headquarter countries must perform a watch on the working conditions and contracts, environmental issues, respect of union rights and attempts to pit employees against each other by installing competition between different production units.

263. The main purpose of large groups' internationalisation is to increase the multinationals' margins, so that ever-growing dividends are paid to shareholders. The financialisation

of operations, even industrial ones, is largely facilitated by tax dodging and aggressive tax planning, practices encouraged by States.

264. The CGT stand point is that before being Chinese, Indian, Moroccan or French, we are workers having to confront the same employers. We have the same interests to fight for, facing our employers. It is therefore our primary necessity to organise.
265. This explains the CGT's active participation in European or international unions and our development of bilateral relationships with all our counterparts who respect democracy and are independent from governments, employers and political parties.
266. We aim at building cooperation among peoples, workers, and unions, and we oppose the current financial mechanics, creating competition, fuelling racism, xenophobia, hate, and war.
267. In 1974, labour immigration stopped. It is no mystery that today working migrants are first of all, undocumented workers. Following their great strikes which the CGT either supported or initiated, we must increase our efforts to fight, enforce the law texts adopted per force, and surpass them.

268. International trade

269. The European Union is competent to issue its own international trade policies. The European Commission is using this monopoly to impose a neoliberal deregulation agenda, by negotiating bilateral or multi-lateral free trade agreements. This is for the only benefits of employers, and for the financial interests of large groups. Wide scale citizen and union mobilisations succeeded in bringing awareness, demonstrating that commerce, if not thoroughly reoriented, harms populations – workers and consumers alike-, all over the world.
270. One proven example: the NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) approach and its trail of production sites relocations, underpaid posted labour, unemployment, hundreds of thousands jobs lost in the United States after the free trade space was created. Creating competition between workers from the United States and Canada on one hand, Mexico on the other, has only cut down salaries in the north without ever improving the Mexicans' working conditions. Despite the forecasts, the price of manufactured goods never went down in the same period. Workers have lost on the whole business.
271. Issues of public service protection, precaution principles in the technical regulation, and workers' rights, must be addressed for the benefits of general interest. With the debate on the regulatory litigation mechanisms between investors and the State, union mobilisation is needed, more than ever, to impose another way of international trading, more social, humane, and cooperation-based.
272. The CGT has to fully engage in this battle during the next term of office.

273. About informal work

274. Facing an increasing variety of atypical forms of work in Europe, we need to communicate with our neighbours, both close and faraway; these methods on trial

in Eastern Europe some years ago are now on their way of being implemented here.

275. Alone, we cannot impose respectful labour and wage conditions, neither can our neighbours. The only fight-back possibility lies in cooperation and exchange, if we are to gain new rights and guaranties.
276. Even though informal work largely prevails in the South, the local unions often have a very effective way to deal with it. Their approaches, their unique union actions and creative solutions should be an inspiring wealth for the Northern unions 'strategies.
277. The CGT will engage into stronger bilateral international union ties, whilst consulting the regional unions in charge of coordinating the actions.

278. International Solidarity

279. Countless refugees, at the gates of the European Union, must be welcomed with dignity by every member-State without dithering and regardless of nationality or religion. By the Geneva Convention, by the European treaties, in our Constitution: asylum is a right!
280. France, priding itself to be the land of Human rights, must step up and take action as a host. 24 000 refugees to be hosted in two years by decision of the French government are way below our country's capacity, especially in such dire times of need. Everywhere, solidarity must flourish, and we can do it as a people as proven in the past.
281. Besides, even if this migration flow is stronger than usual, it is only 0, 2 % of the European population. 24 000 refugees in two years: this is less than 1 refugee per municipality. In its last report, the OECD shows once again that immigration is truly an opportunity, which pays back more than it costs, and this should be the spike of argumentation against the racist and xenophobic ideas fuelled by extreme right wing.
282. The tragedy suffered by all these men, women and children, is the result of disastrous policies. It was born from the chaos caused on all Mediterranean shores by the wars in Iraq and Syria, by the destruction of the Libyan State, by the rise of dictatorship in Eritrea.
283. The European States, France in particular, cannot claim they had no share in this chaos. And more bombing in Syria or elsewhere will certainly not solve anything. Bombs fall and countless new families flee for their lives. The only way out is but political and multilateral: the United Nations. It is now time to engage into dialog with every possible contributor.
284. We once more reaffirm our commitment in favour of the recognition of Palestine and against the colonisation policy implemented by Israel on Palestinian land. The CGT shall keep its watch of the French companies and take action against those which activities support the occupation economy in Palestine. We will advocate banning products manufactured on occupied lands from the European markets.

285. In order to fight we have to organise at the European level

286. The ETUC, founded in 1973, gathers 90 unions from 39 countries of Europe along with 10 E.U. union federations. It is the highest representative level of democratic and independent unions in Europe. The CGT became a member in 1999.
287. With changing times and stakes, the ETUC has transformed itself from a lobbying unionism operating on European institutions, into a confrontational and action unionism sprung from the reality of the workplace.
288. For example, the ETUC demands that the European Union sets up an economically and socially efficient investment plan. To do so, the ETUC's proposal to allocate 2% of the next ten years European GDP, would foster quality employment and develop sustainable energy systems to meet the social, economic and environmental challenges.
289. Since its 2013 Conference in Athens, the European workers' situation has profoundly deteriorated under the austerity policies imposed by the European Union, and this decline fell into dramatic depths in the countries under the direct troika supervision. This came along with changes in the European institutional apparel so that no one would escape these policies.
290. Under the pretence of the recession, the governments either imposed or yielded to the principles of ordoliberalism and transferred their authority to the European Commission in order to further push for the integration of the so-called «economic governance».
291. In the same time in the Euro Zone, the European Central Bank's influence grew proportionally. Decision-making, in the ECB Executive Board, is far from being a mere currency management; it is a rule of thumb for the economic and social becoming of several member States. The Greek situation is its most recent demonstration.
292. The democratic legitimacy of decision-making by the Union bodies has further receded. There, technocratic federalism serves a neoliberal project targeting the dismantlement of the welfare state as the remains of all forms of the European social model dwindle.
293. From the workers' standpoint, this accelerated integration in the European Union has a direct and adverse impact, especially in the Euro zone. In the name of the sacrosanct country per country production costs, employers can now create competition between employees and pit them against each other. Shifting production sites within the Zone is now possible without any financial toll. Trade unions must brace themselves against this practice which equates to an incentive for social and fiscal dumping, causes competition between workers and relocating blackmail.
294. Indisputably, we, the countries of the European continent, must closely cooperate against intensified and globalised exchanges in all sectors. Unification must be on its

way with the peoples and for their sake. Unification to meet the workers' needs, to protect the weak and to secure better living conditions for the future generations. Unification is to favour cooperation and not competition, solidarity and not division, employment and not profit.

295. The last ETUC conference in September 2015 confirmed this claim as well as trade unions' opposition to the austerity policies in Europe. A set of alternative progressive measures was also proposed by all its affiliates, in order to meet the workers' social needs.

296. We have to organise at the international level.

297. The CGT is an affiliate to the International Trade Union Confederation, the ITUC, and is one of its founders. The ITUC was born in November 2006, during the founding Vienna Conference in Austria. It is an embodiment of the world union movement and acknowledged as such by all international institutions.

298. Today, many ITUC affiliates are trade unions we are used to working with; with them we share common core strategic orientations.

299. The CGT unconditionally argues in favour of our conception of internationalism in every rank within the ITUC. Our purpose is to work for the unification of international unionism within a core of solidarity and power with ambitious, confrontational targets, using open and engaging methods.

300. Over the past years the ITUC has grown its fighting spirit. Without flinching, it slammed the door of international negotiation rounds such as the Warsaw Climate Change Conference in November 2013. It is often spearheading campaigns, with its branch federations, against the almighty effrontery of multinationals. Also, the ITUC, though a little too shyly we think, is setting its teeth against the logic underlying free trade agreements.

301. Since 2012, the ITUC has engaged on the ILO scene, into trench warfare against employers who now challenge the agreements securing the right to strike.

302. At last, the ITUC engaged into an intense dialog not only with the Chinese ACFTU union federation, but also with Cuba CTC and Vietnam CGT, some branch federations of which now consider joining the worldwide ITUC federations. Within the ITUC, the CGT is renowned for its heritage and conception of a fierce and committed unionism.

303. However, the inner functioning of the ITUC needs improving, and some of its strategic choices be discussed. To do so, we are engaged from within, and with many others organisations, to help the ITUC progress in these shortcomings.

304. Despite being the subject of attacks since 2012, the International Labour Organisation is still a valuable asset to roll out our union fights in the world arena. The employers' attempts to undermine the right to strike, and more generally threaten the international labour standards, illustrate the fact that the ILO is regarded as a stronghold of resistance and social counter-attack.

305. Indeed it remains the only leverage point for trade unions in the multilateral system. From the very beginning, and ceaselessly, it has condemned since 2008, the suicidal budget cut policies which dried the wells of many countries, crying out against the « austerity trap » closing on the European Union.
306. Thanks to the ILO, sanctions are possible against member States if they violate international labour rights; it happened to France, with its administrative requisition bylaws which put an end to the strike in oil refineries during the mobilisation against the Sarkozy retirement reforms in 2010 and sentenced by a 2011 decision of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.
307. We will keep watch and will not fail, in the future, to punish possible violations of international conventions by France, be it in terms of migrants' rights, Labour Inspectorates or weekly rest.
308. European or international matters must not be the "domain" in the hands of only the most competent activists; quite the contrary, it should be seized by multitudes as directly tapping into the workers' daily lives, regardless of their branch, company size or administration.
309. Too often, this advocacy is undertaken, as far as local unions are concerned, by an institutional approach, i.e. the EWCs, the European works Forums, etc. This activity is all too often unknown for rank-and-files activists, lacking visibility.
310. All the developments show how imperious the need is to pursue and intensify our ties with other trade unions across the continents. We must gain efficiency, and to build international actions and solidarity, we must seek support from the ITUC and its members in the countries. It is not about forcing our standpoint or our approach onto anyone: it is about debating, exchanging and cooperating, whether bilaterally or multilaterally, in order to share our knowledge, experience and factual data.
311. This is how common bargaining agendas will be co-constructed, and movements elaborated, as well as joint training, actions, or measures, beyond our own continental boundaries. That's how big the benefit is, for every one of us, to embrace this concept of international solidarity and cooperation.

312. Union freedom

313. The struggle takes place across the world, known by too few, too little publicised. Unprecedented strikes regularly happen in Brazil, North America, Iran, South Africa, Asia, whether in textile manufactures or in favour of social security; the same is true in countless other countries and other regions of the world. In most European countries, workers are mobilising to develop public services, transportation, banks, industry, etc.
314. The main subject of the outcry is generally a fairer sharing of the wealth, the struggle against insecure jobs or in favour of decent working conditions.
315. In parallel, there is evidence in every region of the world, of resurging attacks against the workers' essential rights and their exercise of collective action, either by

repression, or by the loss of the unions' right to strike.

316. The international and European activity of the CGT is not limited to the institutional scope within the ETUC and the ITUC. Every year, the CGT meets many different unions in the world. These encounters are important for the CGT to acquire wider knowledge, to secure its international credibility and audience, all of which contribute to the capacity-building of trade unions as a whole.

317. RESOLUTION 4

318. For a transformational unionism to positively change societies in a globalised world, the CGT and its members commit to fight and:

319. – oppose the pitting of employees against each other, the social dumping both at European and the world's scale;

320. – carry on and increase its meeting with the trade unions of Europe and the world, in order to build, or strengthen, concrete cooperation within one same transnational group, branch, or country, in order to identify the backbone of our common protest. From this ground, work together to bring the relation of power higher, leading projects to develop industries, infrastructures, public services and job creation in our countries;

321. – implement union networks in multinationals to create or strengthen the ties between workers employed in contracting groups and sub-contracting companies;

322. – fight to conquer equal treatment between migrant workers and local workers, i.e. obtain the regularisation of undocumented workers, upgrade the working and housing conditions of undocumented workers and posted workers, in compliance with the French social standards;

323. – help employees better understand the world where we work and live, so together we can fight against racism, xenophobia, the rejection of “others”, and instead promote solidarity in a globalised world;

324. – design programmes for days of study to help activists, CGT union members, better understand the CGT's international and European action.