

108. Topic 2: « Construction of the fights »

109. The intervention of salaried workers is necessary to oppose capitalistic managing choices. Day after day, CGT endeavours to empower employees with the means to take action, improve their working and living conditions.
110. The confederation impulses and runs campaigns, allowing the whole CGT to help salaried workers seize the companies' and administrations' strategy, to ensure that the final purpose of their work meets the social needs.
111. This is what we call the process of struggle construction.
112. Union struggles cannot be decreed, they don't automatically spring from slogans; they are built and organised collectively.
- 113. So how and why?**
114. The purpose is to increase the arm-wrestle, balance of power to meet the needs and will of the workforce, together with unionists and employees. To achieve collective action, the prerequisite is to use salaried workers' needs as starting-blocks.
115. What are the leverages to mobilise the workplace? How to gather the largest crowds of people? With whom shall we gather? How to federate the struggle? Is there a hierarchy of fights? With whom, and how shall we decide whether to pursue or terminate? How to measure their impact?
116. The CEO of a public enterprise once explained to his managers that when a strike ended, winning or losing fights could be measured, not so much by the resulting deal, but by the workers' state of minds and feelings.
117. All this prompts us to question our union practices, the quality of our union life and our unionisation level.
118. Building up struggles we begin with « what the workers have in mind », what their life is on the workplace. What they need. In the same time we must feed CGT back with information, decipher employers' strategies, clear the field and foster perspectives in order to outwit fatalism with propositions which are both social transformation axes and immediate collective actions to improve the workers' daily life at work. This is the high stake in the battle of ideas we have to fight in our process of claims, to take them off management grounds. It is a permanent, background struggle.
119. CGT adds content to the fights with our union goals, and offers a diversity of mobilisation triggers for crowds of people to join into action. All these propositions were born from the collective work of union members, from their knowledge of workers' concerns and union goals. Workers themselves, are at the heart of mobilisations, taking part to the setup of protest, choosing the form of mobilisation and how long it should last until an agreement is reached, or isn't. CGT becomes the spokesperson-organisation of the workers; after having led

and fed the debate with them to bring forth propositions, it then consults the workers and they make choices.

120. Yet consultation is no opinion survey. It requires the capacity to organise the broadest consultation of workers at the workplace; it relies on CGT coverage, unionisation rate, on its capacity to be an all-workers' union; hence the crucial question of how unionised and how representative we are.
121. Even though struggles often spring from industry-level at the workplace itself, we need to add weight and foster converging interests in the test-of-strength. This leads to the federation and confederation of struggles.
122. Federating union actions brings together workers from different companies and professions who share common concerns, and this is adding weight, punch and radiance to our mobilisation. These converging, region-wide, professional mobilisations convey complementary demands.
123. Our union demand process builds on «the two pillars of workers' will: to fight for their immediate interests and to take part to the transformation of society».
124. CGT activity begins with the realities experienced by workers where they work and live. We help them build their set of demands on labour organisation, private or public company strategies, and this extends to bigger societal stakes such as the future of public services or the country's industrial policy connected to environmental issues. Our struggle strategy is plugged into the grounded outlet of a strong societal will for alternative consumption and production, equal treatment, citizenship as a social movement booster, the adding of meaning into people's work, and strong democratic values.
125. It is the confederation's purpose to set the struggle into its greater picture, expose its far-reaching range and how all workers, unionised or not, retired or active, are concerned. In terms of societal stakes, we can list the re-conquest of social security, perennial or new social rights for all, including the shared fair distribution of added value. How we relate to service-users or populations is an essential part in this balance of power that must be taken into account both in the contents of our union claims and in our forms of action. Confederalising the struggles also initiates battles to improve labour as a whole in France, Europe and the world. We need a clearer, broader view on issues of solidarity through social protection for example, and not just for the employed.
126. At the core of the test of power we establish when bargaining, is struggle. A divergent feature that singles CGT out from other unions, it is our different trait. We don't do « cold » negotiation. It requires placing bargaining under worker control and a capacity to inform, analyse, propose, as negotiations go, and offer workers the possibility to be heard and change the course of events.
127. Union unity, rallying the workforce, are pillars to add weight and strength to the struggle. Some industry-centred actions, called "sectoral" actions, are emerging from a certain

number of professional branches. Do they hit converging fights, do they bring workers together? Or should we prefer actions on broader, more general claims? How to avoid the pitfall of corporatism?

128. Resolving to unite does not mean waiting for one another. Branch-level struggles, far from being sectoral, infused with such claims as qualification acknowledgement; social usefulness of the concerned industry; gender equality in wages; even compliance with professional ethics; position and role of the purpose of an entire industry or across different industries. Because we are confederate, we CGT have the means to power up those struggles so they don't engage into a corporatist dead-end and withdrawal, and to give them enough oxygen for proper deployment.
129. Struggles do not oppose each other.
130. With a good quality union life, struggle is an everyday deed because the list of claims is always full and the workers – through the union members' action- are in constant interaction with the list.
131. The purpose of this anchor is to positively weigh in the balance of power we create, and workers will meet their needs. Workplace anchorage should enable to merge local demands with national ones.
132. Local calls for action, with claims closely connected to employees, acquire full legitimacy during major calls for cross-industry protest.
133. Bringing together the workers in the same fights, depends on the form of action, the contents of the demands, the winning possibilities and the appreciation of the CGT propositions.
134. To do so, no stone should be left unturned to bring the salaried workforce together; no uniform, general slogan when calling for strikes; every large group within the workforce will first respond according to its labour experience and constraints; whether they feel directly concerned. Then, we'll look for the most rallying, gathering form of actions.
135. To build up a thriving test-of-strength relation is a permanent endeavour and the lifeblood of this continuous process is the deployment of the unionists. A test of strength isn't just gauged on the CGT capacity for acute mobilisation and the number of strikers. It is equally measured according to the number of people who share CGT values against those of the capital.
136. This is about the unionisation of the biggest possible numbers of employees, regardless of their status, socio-professional category, or enterprise. It is about representativeness gained from the professional elections. Support from the population is another driver for CGT to be a tougher confronter in the balance of power.
137. CGT is to represent the workforce as a whole, head-on into the battle of ideas, a challenger speaking out the workers' voice, their concerns and situation, regardless of status, gender or age.

138. Day after day, activists are to deploy and liaise with CGT outlets, organise the workers and give them the means to take action from barren union-less environment. This undertaking is tried-and-tested, proven efficient in emblematic struggles i.e. undocumented workers actions, even in very small enterprises sometimes.
139. As for engineers, managers and technicians (*ICTs*), we must consider their specific relationships to labour, (autonomy, level of responsibilities, impact on other workers' categories, and a duty of loyalty...) if we are to organise them. They often are – given their role and position in companies –strategic leverages to transform the workplace, the businesses, management modes, and collective guarantees. Involving them in union action may be strategically significant depending on their ability to regroup in large numbers no matter the diversity of proposed actions.
140. If CGT reasserts its independence from politics (government, elected representatives, parties), it denies any neutrality vis-à-vis political actions if those have a direct influence on the living and working conditions of active and retired workers. We want to speak the workers' minds on all the subjects that concern them in order to bear their interests into the confrontation.
141. This is why CGT decisions in struggle have also a political reach, whether we put forth propositions for a draft law or disagree with a reform; whenever we inform, consult workers, create expression platforms, and call for mobilisation. It has nothing to do with union position versus political stand; it has to do with action-based protection and extension of the workers' rights with any appropriate tool: proposing new rights, contributing to law texts, petitioning, street marching, seeking to extend the protest, addressing to the public, interceding with elected representatives...
142. CGT may also call for action with other progressist players (associations, elected representatives, political parties, NGOs), for the balance of power to spread out, especially when the stakes are societal. Marriage for all, migrants' situation, public service protection groups, or citizens' vote for La Poste (the French mail) are some examples.
143. One sine qua non condition, however: decisions must be made in the widest possible debate within CGT, and according to our positions. Under no circumstances should our independence and identity be under threat.

144. RESOLUTION 2

145. For our deployment, CGT and its unions commit:
146. – to invest and engage in the whole labour environment, i.e. to deploy CGT activists outside their work and life place, to outreach workers where CGT is not organised yet. All CGT outlets, particularly the local Trades Councils, support this action;
147. – to present candidates for professional elections in all collegial bodies, particularly executive managers. This is one of the prerequisites if CGT is to be all the workforce union, more and better. This is also a question of CGT representativeness.

148. – to develop specific actions wherever engineers, executives and technicians are. The Ugict-CGT and the specific branch and regional organisations, with the work they made on union demands, are available to the entire CGT to help organise this deployment and reinforcement among engineers, executives and technicians who account for 47 % of the salaried labour.
149. In order to build up a balance of power in favour of salaried workers, CGT and its unions commit:
150. – to meet workers, and from the latter's experience at work, to help them build, collectively, their union demands;
151. – to conduct, in parallel, our CGT campaigns, head-on into the battle of ideas drawn near the salaried workers to give them a chance to collectively embrace and own CGT's ideas and values. This is a crucial brick to erect the balance of power;
152. – to work and anchor CGT on the work-and-life environment. With a permanently updated set of claims, unionism is closest to the workers. It also connects the local realities with cross-industry, national and international stakes.
153. To implement our demands process by and for all, CGT and its unions commit:
154. – to the broadest possible members' participation to decision-making, so they share the spirit of our action: challenging, proposing, rallying, acting, bargaining, and starting all over again;
155. – to keep the employees informed and consult them on a regular basis, so they are able to decide of the actions to undertake, in line with our set of claims.