

Topic 5 «Democracy within the CGT »

326. No need to define democracy here. On a dictionary, « Democracy is the political regime in which the people are sovereign. » With this famous quote from Nelson Mandela:

« I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for [...]»

327. Democracy has equality as a principle, everyone has the same rights and each can take part to decisions and be entrusted with responsibilities.

328. Our statutes and orientations, voted in congress, have this requirement of democracy for all union members.

329. In CGT everyone counts for one.

330. The requirement for democracy has been a redundant theme in CGT, especially those past months.

331. The activists are generally convinced, but each of us questions him or herself: how to achieve it?

332. Fundamental values, objects of struggles

333. Respect for others, regardless of their social, professional status, their nationality, political, philosophical, religious opinions, is one of the CGT's fundamentals.

334. In these times of economic, social, environmental recession kept going by austerity policies, CGT must constantly remind its engagement for peace, internationalism and its struggle against sexism, racism, anti-Semitism, islamophobia and xenophobia.

335. These values are our essence. Ceaselessly reasserting them, we must keep them alive and thriving.

336. CGT has written in its statutes, the struggle against all discriminations.

337. CGT has always claimed equal rights for all workers and this battle must flare up in order to actually succeed.

338. It is a fact that the struggle for gender equality is an imperative to impose social justice; there cannot be progress when half of mankind has no access to fundamental rights.

339. CGT's engagement against homophobia is also an essential part of our demands, if CGT is to be the trade union of all.

340. In these areas, the *collectif* Femmes-Mixité and the *collectif* against homophobia, for equality and non-discrimination of lesbians, gays, bi and trans (LGBT) are major assets.

341. CGT, trade union for all

342. To be a union for all appears an essential priority for the future of the CGT.

343. To be this union, it takes knowing, and speaking to, the whole workforce as it is today, where workers actually live and work. It takes seeing the workforce reality as it is, not as we would like it to be.

344. It takes welcoming the youth.

345. It takes speaking to engineers, executives and technicians, a steadily growing proportion in the workforce; being a CGT which best represents their interests. Even in historical unions formerly known as CGT « bastions », votes appear to drop in the professional elections, in spite of a still strong unionisation of blue collars and employees, caused by the growing numbers of engineers,

executives and technicians who readily turn to other organisations.

- 346. It takes reaching the different workplaces, especially the very small enterprises and craftsmanship.
- 347. It takes better addressing and better welcoming employees without a full time permanent contract: diverse forms of insecure contracts, temp workers, those with atypical working hours, imposed part-timers, teleworkers...
- 348. It takes turning to the jobless workers, over six millions today.
- 349. It takes welcoming in CGT the migrant workers, the most vulnerable and insecure of workers.
- 350. It takes better integrating retired workers, steadily growing in numbers to reach nearly fourteen millions, to date.
- 351. Every one of these workers, with or without a job, active or retired, with or without papers, is a person to speak to, to unionise and organise, as CGT's mission has it.
- 352. It's truly a matter of union approach, but it is also about democracy, about us challenging our capacity to welcome all workers; about true will, as much as organisation skills.
- 353. It's also about representativeness for the whole CGT; about CGT representing the whole workforce.

354. To inform, to train, to communicate

- 355. Knowledge is power. The same level of information and training for everyone is necessary to make truly collective decisions.
- 356. During the field visits to local unions, the comment that ranks first is access to information.
- 357. Many members, despite receiving *Ensemble* newspaper, feel they are not sufficiently informed, either because they have too much information or because the information given is too technical, theoretical, not enough connected to the field realities.
- 358. Too few local unions subscribed to *NVO*, our journal, too few use it. We have to turn this corner.
- 359. With our union ambition, our knowledge, our will for democracy to live within the CGT, we have the assets to grow stronger in the relations of power.
- 360. To reinforce and develop union training is a way to succeed, in compliance with the confederal curriculum. To do this we must conquer new rights allowing each willing member to receive union training.
- 361. Democracy isn't « everyone says and does what they want » in the name of our organisation. It is truer than ever with the up-rise of new communication forms and technologies, especially the social networks.
- 362. Democracy requires expressing oneself, listening to others, respecting collective opinions. The individual voice is not the collective voice.
- 363. Communication is a political act conveying collective decisions, taking its roots from union life and union demands.

364. Union members, actors and decision-makers

- 365. The question of being actors, decision-making members, arises. To associate union members is more than ever indispensable, but it is a permanent fight. Fight in the workplace, with the barriers of restructuring and new labour methods. But the fight is also within the union organisation, where

we need to constantly challenge ourselves and find how we will meet, and bring together, the workers.

366. The need to respect the diversity of the workforce is crucial. This is another meaning of being everyone's union.
367. Gathering the workforce also brings the union in contact with workers' realities. Too often, company-based unions do not turn to subcontractors' employees and temp workers. Obviously, in this case, whenever mobilisation is called, a whole part of workers does not have any saying; in terms of equality this is not only unfair, but also inefficient if we are to build the test of strength. So everywhere, whenever possible, we need to invite our members to extend the perimeter of union branches; de facto, they will become out-reaching, site-branches.
368. A congress does not cancel the previous ones. Voted resolutions and decisions made, remain true. This is the case for resolutions 4, 5 and 6 adopted during the 49^e congress.
369. The need is growing, to build our union actions in close collaboration with our territorial bodies, to for more efficient, comprehensive work, on all the stakes, across all the levels of the concerned geographic area.
370. However, acting and decision-making by union members must follow the CGT orientations, values and fundamentals. Indeed, CGT acts in favour of a democratic society, to free it from capitalistic exploitation and all other forms of domination.
371. So with the debate of ideas to be conducted with union members, and the propositions put forth, unionists must become aware of the importance and stakes of *building in common*.
372. Unionism must always remain a propositional, driving force in terms of contents, modes and forms of action, as well as in collective bargaining, always mindful of keeping our ties with employees.
373. As for consultation: should we consult union members only, or spread it to all employees? We are elected by all employees to fight for the interests of all. In the end, what particular role do we give union members?
374. Democracy is not just voting even though voting is important. It's a process leading to make decisions, collectively and respectful of the group.
375. Too many unions figure out their demands between activists, without involving union members' participation. Too much ideology infuses the process of demands. In some companies, CGT lost the elections because the elected unionists were too far from employees' expectations. Even though the political intent is fair and in line with CGT values, as long as employees feel the demands are not theirs, not only will they not take any part in the mobilisation, but more, they will turn away from the union thinking their needs are ignored.
376. New forms of salaried jobs, often insecure, within one same company, involve several federal perimeters. Every federal union body organises internally the consultation of its union members to designate, for instance, a central union delegate; this fosters competition between federal perimeters. Sometimes conflicts go as far as being taken up to court; this is a disastrous situation for CGT and will sap the test of strength we're trying to build. This cannot go on. With every new lawsuit CGT loses strength.

377. Nowadays, labour organisations within companies, and the institutional mechanism take apart the union members and their union representatives, especially the central delegates.
378. When employees want to organise, if conflict breaks in a company, when a situation requires outside support, it is difficult for employees, even unionised to find the right available help. In the absence of a professional outlet on the premises, active in the given territory, very often they turn to the closest geographic outlets, i.e. the *Département*, (District) Trades Council, or the Local Trades Council which will operate, often creating the company-based union, and keeping contact on a regular basis.
379. Too often, the concerns brought up to workplace representatives, Works Councils, or other bodies where activists serve, never reach the phase of collective construction. The meeting minutes are not always fed back to the unionised workers. We must recognise that it is difficult to implement the Charter for Elected members and delegates. Rules of conduct and a better consideration are indispensable.
380. A living democracy is a permanent back-and-fro exchange with elected members, unionists and employees. It is a balance between union democracy and workplace democracy.
381. There isn't, in the CGT, on one hand *those who know*, the responsible leaders within union branches, and on the other, unionists without credentials.
382. Now how are credentials granted? Is there debate among all unionists, or are the future responsibilities debated by a happy few?
383. For thriving democracy and to encourage people to take responsibilities, a better dispatch of credentials is a must, i.e. fighting against the holding of multiple credentials and figuring a distribution of credentials to produce a truly collective outcome.
384. At the CGT, we must become aware of the major turnover in the teams of activists. For the transition, hand-over periods must be operated now, not in a spirit of repeat, but to help the young take up positions in the union.
385. Allow democracy in life, means gain new rights for activism. Employers manoeuvre to sap union rights and their lobbying on the government bears fruit: in the name of business competitiveness they seek to gag trade unions (Rebsamen Act, Financing and training Act...). The consequence is often a shrinking of union rights in both public and private sectors. For the CGT, democracy cannot exist in the absence of social democracy. We need new rights to be citizens at the workplace, in order to meet with unionists, employees, and influence the running strategy of companies.
386. Representativeness: new rules from the August 20th 2008 Act on union representativeness and the validity of agreements, are strong pillars for democracy to live. They are an available tool for employees to choose representatives who will sit at the negotiation tables. They are in line with the CGT approach of permanent employees' consultation which encourages their leverage on the contents of their work, and its social, economic usefulness.
387. CGT operates to make work a source of fulfilment and empowerment. This is our ambition: transforming work in order to gain social transformation.
388. The quality of our union life as a driver of unionisation, a frame in which the diversity of new

unionists will be respected, is an asset for CGT to rank first among trade unions, using representativeness rules as tools for democracy, to serve the workers.

389. Bringing our tools to life

390. Cogitiel, a knowledge and information sharing tool for our unionists, allows participation to the CGT's democratic life.

391. To design this tool was a collective decision but unions do not use it much and many unionists haven't logged in yet.

392. Besides, the tool must be customised for new unionists with new types of salaried work, i.e. fragmented, mobile workforce, which sometimes overlaps several federal parameters and yet, is invisible.

393. Consequently they do not receive union press or any other information. Obviously this doesn't help democratic life.

394. Its functionalities must be upgraded so that this tool becomes fully useful to union branches.

395. The period, up to six months in some cases, to log on new members through the Internet, has to be shortened.

396. Democracy and union bodies

397. Union branches, National Sector Unions, Local Trades Councils, District Trades Councils, Regional Committees and Confederations lack cross collaboration and joint implementation of decisions which are made together, whatever the subject. This prevents to permanently feed our organisation with alternative propositions against liberal policies, and this input would be consistent for the whole CGT.

398. The pillars of CGT are union branches, themselves connected to federations and district unions. Sadly, too many unionists are still so-called individual, and de facto, isolated and without possibility to express themselves in the CGT. Their union is yet to be built, as provisioned in resolutions 4, 5 and 6. Every union body has their steering organs which initiate and coordinate union action and unionisation policies...

399. Yet today private or public companies hire employees from third parts or temp work who work there all year long. To increase the efficacy of our demands, some company-based or cross-industry unions are created. They overlap several federal perimeters, each deciding of its own mobilisation date, its own set of demands and sometimes its own alternative propositions at the risk of fuelling competition between workers.

400. Some unions say that the big number of federations may dilute a wilful, collective and coherent construction of union demands in the CGT. So the question today is: what common space can we set up to foster convergent work and to make the voice of CGT unionists a confederate expression?

401. The branch field visits were appreciated, but it appeared that the role of the confederation was mostly unknown. The branches pointed out they didn't know their federation, their District or Local Trades Council, any better. Of course union training is scarce and these are times of withdrawal. But the visibility of confederal action is essential as it is what unionists have been fighting for, for one hundred and twenty years: create convergence between workers in order to be a social

transformation union.

402. Territories and federations often strive to set up an efficient election campaign, to help set up a union branch or fight a battle.
403. Democracy is also feeding and preserving the lifeblood of both our historical ties: professional and territorial, or cross-industry. Whereas rights exist in companies and industries, there are still no cross-industry rights; from the living and working spaces, to regional level: how do both sides of the coin, i.e. federations and territorial bodies really and concretely operate together to build our propositions, union claims and actions *with unionists*? Each part must have an equal role.

404. CGT rules for living

405. CGT has just been through difficult times. These hardships mirror the demands and turmoil of society as a whole, in its serious democratic crisis.
406. We must meet the demands expressed; otherwise this would be bread-and-butter for our enemies who can't wait to lump us together with the wrongdoers.
407. Despite CGT's resolve to nurture democracy within, we can see that those collectively designed governance rules have to be updated on a regular basis.
408. To check they are appropriate and implemented is to enable ourselves to be moving along a dynamic CGT.
409. Trust does not rule out controls!
410. It will reassure unionists and they will feel closer to CGT life.
411. Governing rules, financial rules designed by all unionists for all CGT bodies, must be implemented in full transparency. This is a democratic act with an especially strong meaning in these times of such harmful globalised capitalism, against which the greatest numbers must stand.
412. To apply decisions voted during congress is one way to nurture democracy. For instance, why isn't the whole CGT applying the « 1 % » fees over salaries, as was voted many years ago?
413. There will be no effective democracy if we don't apply what we've collectively decided.
414. Successive mobilisations in federal perimeters are not opposing each other. But how can each organisation democratically respect collective decisions from the National Consultation Committee (CCN), decisions that we must implement? If they are not in coherence, the claim campaigns will fail to power up the test of strength. Democracy also, is to respect and carry out our statutory memorandum, charters, governing rules and all the decisions voted in congress and in the CCN: otherwise a confederation, we'll be no more.

415. RESOLUTION 5

416. Democracy in the CGT

417. For trained and informed unionists, CGT and its unions commit:
418. – to promote the circulation of union press: *NVO*, *Options* and *Vie nouvelle*;
419. – to conduct a political campaign and conquer subscriptions to *NVO*;
420. – to present and read *NVO* during all CGT training;
421. – to initiate and develop the use of new technologies.

422. To promote gender equality, an essential democratic stake, CGT and its unions commit:

- 423. – to include professional equality in each bargaining, each action undertaken;
- 424. – to set up curricula for gender equality at work;
- 425. – to promote unionisation of women and their engagement as activist;
- 426. – to respect parity in all CGT bodies with responsibilities (Executive Committee, each branch bureau, credentials to congresses, participation to delegations...);
- 427. – In CGT as in society, to fight against sexism and violence against women;
- 428. – to promote the Charter for Gender Equality.

429. To confederate and implement all collective decisions which compose the CGT's inner democracy, CGT and its unions commit:

- 430. – to implement cross-action schedules between industry and territorial levels;
- 431. – to apply, in the unionists' daily reality, the collective decisions made at all levels of the organisation, from national to local;
- 432. – to work in cross collaboration so that campaigns are rooted in the workplaces (cost of capital, working time reduction, salaries...)

433. To apply collectively-decided governing rules, CGT and its unions commit:

- 434. – to make decisions in utmost transparency;
- 435. – to make the Charter of elected and mandated members live;
- 436. – to make the confederation rules of life and financial procedures alive and thriving.

437. For unionists to be actors/decision makers, CGT and its unions commit:

- 438. – to implement, at all levels, CGT decisions;
- 439. – to fight the battle of ideas;
- 440. – to gather unionists on a regular basis;
- 441. – to hold general assemblies for the decision-making;
- 442. – to collectively decide of credentials (staff representative bodies, congress, responsibilities in various bodies...);
- 443. – to collectively decide of demands and courses of actions;
- 444. – to hold congresses, in compliance with the statuses;
- 445. – to disseminate all CGT tools and resources, to log on all unionists into Cogitiel, to feed it with unionists' professional life details so as not to lose them anymore because of mobility;
- 446. To pay all union dues into Cogetise.