

A Revolutionary Unionist Program for Catalonia

CNT

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Introduction

We have translated this program that the CNT (a revolutionary union in Spain) is putting forward as a solution for the current political and economic crisis in Catalonia. We think this program is important for revolutionaries in other countries to engage with because of the unique situation in Catalonia, and of the CNT and the other radical unions there. The problems in Catalonia are different in many ways from the ones we see in North America, and not everything can (or should) be copied over without context. Several of the proposals, in fact, may not make sense for North America. This is appropriate – when revolutionaries are in a position to actually influence the course of events, they need to know how to make their principles present “in the workplaces and the streets”, as this program attempts to. That will always look different based on the local context.

Twice in the last year, the CNT (along with other radical unions) has led general strikes which had a massive following, despite the abstention or active sabotage of the Spanish business unions: the Catalan general strike against state repression in October 2017, and then the Feminist General Strike on March 8 of this year. The radical unions, the CNT and CGT in particular, are successfully becoming a major point of reference for the working class in Spain, especially the most combative sections of it.¹ This program isn't just words on a screen – it is meant to be a weapon, and there is a real chance it could actually be taken up by workers in large numbers to mobilize and unite their struggles.

The political crisis in Catalonia would make it very easy for revolutionaries to be disoriented by a wave of nationalism, and either stay silent, or speak without saying anything useful. This program from the Catalan CNT is a very concrete attempt to propose a path forward that is based on common class interests rather than nationalism. It contains specific proposals that can mobilize multiple distinct sections of the working class that have their own distinct challenges, such as working women or agrarian workers, and lead to a unity in struggle that recognizes and addresses those unique challenges.

It's also important to remember that the CNT operates from the bottom-up, without any experts planning out their strategy from above. This program was developed and proposed by rank-and-file members in one branch, and was then discussed and modified by all of the other members in Catalonia through their branches before being collectively adopted. This is exactly how revolutionary unions should develop their programs, rather than (for example) endless debates on social media that lead nowhere.

– Wobblies for a Revolutionary Union Movement

Faced with the current political situation in Catalonia and everything that has happened recently, the union branches of the CNT in Catalonia and the Balearic Islands understand that:

- We are currently being told that the political situation in Catalonia has created a supposed coalition between all classes. Faced with this, we should reflect deeply. True to our princi-

¹ The CNT and CGT both lay reference to the historical anarchosindicalist (revolutionary unionist) movement in Spain. They have different approaches to Spanish labor law, and did not work closely together for a long time, but since the economic crisis hit Spain in 2008, they have begun to forge a working unity in struggle, most recently exemplified during the Catalan General Strike in 2017 and then the Feminist General Strike in 2018.

ples, we understand that our highest priority now is to help the working class understand the power that we have as a class. This will help us seize consciousness of ourselves as a decisive and principal factor. Once again, we need to demonstrate that we have to solve these problems ourselves, or else nobody will.

- We need to make sure that our anarcho-sindicalist principles are present in the street, so that they give us credibility and legitimacy among our class, the working class. That is why we won't let any political parties make decisions for us, nor will we let them cover the struggle of the Catalan people in their flags. If we want to be taken seriously, we need to put forward proposals which are credible, possible, and above all useful – in the street, and in the workplaces.
- The problems that we, the people of Catalonia, are facing today must be fought and dealt with by us, without anybody else telling us what to do. We have to make it clear for the people in Catalonia that the Catalan problem requires an internationalist and anti-statist solution. We can't fall into xenophobia, or into promises of better states within the capitalist regime.
- The “Catalan problem” is actually all of Spain's problem. It's a unique opportunity to overturn the “Regime of '78”²; we are the only ones that have the legitimacy to speak against this regime. We were the only ones who didn't sign their conciliation treaties, and we are the only ones who never stopped denouncing the pseudo-democratic mafia which has been governing us for the last 40 years.
- For us, workplace organizing is a means, not an end. Our goal is the social revolution which will completely overturn the current socioeconomic order. We support the Catalan population in its current demands as a population and a society, insofar as we form a part of this population and this society. Once these goals have been achieved, we will continue working for our ultimate objectives.

With this understood, we declare that:

We only want a republic if it is social and anarchist, based in the self-management of the means of production, distribution, and consumption. The Catalan population's aspiration towards self-determination and social justice is only possible if we have a class perspective, and a focus on creating the structures of self-management that help prepare the working classes to construct the society we desire.

The union branches of the CNT of Catalonia want to make very clear that we remain firm in our commitment to the work that we consider essential to progress, the defense of the rights and freedoms of the working class, and the Social Revolution. Therefore, we are publicizing a 10-point program, which we will continue to develop from our union branches. We will also work to create public platforms to support the achievement of this program. This is the only way we will win improvements for the working classes.

² The “Regime of '78” refers to the system that was set up after the death of the dictator, Francisco Franco. From the perspective of the CNT and other revolutionaries, the so-called ‘transición’ (transition to democracy) was really just a ‘traición’ (betrayal).

1. Direct development of permanent jobs

In private enterprises and public administrations, as a general rule, all contracts will be indefinite and full-time. In cases where a business wants to contract workers in another way, this will be discussed and agreed to with the union representations (Union Sections) which are present in the workplace. The unitary representations (works councils or staff delegates) will be excluded from these negotiations.³

2. Development of a regular work day

Complete elimination of extra hours. Complete elimination of the irregular distribution of the workday. If a business or public administration claims the need to restructure from a normal workday, they will have to discuss it with the union branches which have a presence in the workplace. The state-sponsored representations (works councils and staff delegates) will be excluded from these negotiations.

3. New general minimum wage

Establishment of a new minimum wage of 1,200 Euros per month for all workers in public administrations or private companies.

4. Action Plan for Equality

Elimination of all categories in collective bargaining agreements which cover up offering working women positions with worse salary conditions than their male colleagues. All working women will immediately be transferred to the appropriate salary category.

5. Factory closures

Faced with factory closures: recovery, transformation, and worker's self-management.

6. Confederal Employment Plans

Out of the union branches, we envision the creation of:

- Cooperative projects of production and consumption, in the city as well as the country.
- Hiring halls for people without work, in the city as well as the country.

We will tend to their promotion and creation, as well as establishing contact with other cooperative projects that share interests. This will help towards the creation of a united platform for mobilization, oriented towards relieving the situation of people without work.

7. Comprehensive health reform

We propose: Establishment of technical associations to manage the health centers (hospitals and primary care) with the participation of members of the Popular Assembly, in the city as well as the country. These Popular Assemblies might already exist, they might be

³ In Spain, each worker has a contract (or is supposed to) which regulates their work. "Union sections" are branches of workers at a particular workplace, and form the basis of the CNT's strategy for dealing with Spanish labor law. "Works councils" are government-supported and -financed bodies at large workplaces based on voting for representatives every 4 years – the CNT rejects these bodies and calls on all workers to organize without them.

Associations of Neighbors, they might be created by the unions to fill this role, or they might be a fusion of all of these, resulting from the unitary platforms for mobilization which were mentioned earlier.⁴

8. Comprehensive Educational Reform

We propose: Defense of the linguistic immersion model which is the current norm in Catalonia, which we consider unifying and progressive. Creation and promotion of free school projects by any means which are available (renting, buying, occupying...), on the part of the unitary platforms of mobilization (popular assemblies) in the city as well as the country. Active participation by the popular assemblies in the development of blueprints for turning the current public schools into truly free schools.

9. Comprehensive Agrarian Reform

We propose: Abolition of the special Social Security system in the country; all workers are equal. Immediate affirmative action in health and education with the cities. Promotion of cooperative work. Promotion of a change in the structure of farming, to adapt it to high quality and agro-ecological forms. Promotion of distribution and exchange networks.

10. Structures of Self-Management

The unitary platforms of mobilization (or the union branches of the CNT in areas where these platforms don't yet exist) which have already taken up education and health as areas of work according to the above proposals, should also become involved in housing and energy poverty. This is how we will continue to prepare and ready ourselves to take on ever more issues which put us on the road to self-management, which is exactly the type of society which we wish to live in.

Adopted in Olot, Catalonia, April 11, 2018

⁴ Popular Assemblies became very popular in Spain after the M15 movement in 2011. Similar to General Assemblies in North America, they are mass meetings which allow everyone present to speak. Associations of Neighbors are legacies of neighborhood-level mobilizations from the 60s and 70s.

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