

CNT on the re-foundation of the IWA

CNT-E's XI Congress agreements on internationalism

Confederación Nacional del Trabajo

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The CNT would like to announce and explain the agreements made during our December 2015 Congress with regards to the current International Workers' Association (IWA). We believe that it is necessary to explain our position on the drift of our international, so that this internal situation can be made publically known in order to openly and quickly begin the process of its re-foundation.

In the CNT we consider international solidarity to be critical in this historical moment, marked by the global organization of capitalism. As expected, the economic crisis has served as an excuse to accelerate the process of dismantling the past achievements of the working class. While this phenomenon is not new, it has sped up and intensified in recent years. We understand that a global intervention is required to defend our interests, as workers, against this offensive of capitalism, a world-wide extension of the class struggle following the parameters of anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary unionism. However, we also believe that this global effort needs to be built upon the work of organization and struggle at the local level, carried out by organizations grounded and present in their own territory. International solidarity flows as an extension of these local struggles. To do the opposite would be putting the cart before the horse.

Sadly, we have found sections in the current IWA to have very little commitment to union work in their local context. Rather, they exert enormous efforts to monitor the activities of other sections, larger or smaller, that do make this area a priority. Consequently, over the past few years, the IWA has become inoperative as a vehicle to promote anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary unionism at an international level.

We insist, so that it can be clear, that this is not an issue of the size of the sections. All of us are far smaller than we would like to be and than we should be. But there is an enormous difference between the sections that dedicate their efforts to increase their presence or relevance in their regions, experiment with new strategies, initiate and develop labor conflicts, and have an impact, small as it may be, in their immediate context, and those that go for years without union activities yet inquisitorially monitor and criticize the activities of others, lest in their eagerness to build a viable anarcho-syndicalist alternative commit some sin against the purity of the IWA.

For some time, due to these contradictions, the IWA has experienced a considerable internal crisis that erupted with the expulsion of the German section, the FAU. This decision, made unilaterally by the current general secretary on completely unjustifiable motives, was ratified later in a special Congress in Oporto in 2014. At this congress it became clear that due to the peculiar structure of the decision-making within the IWA, a small group of sections, despite their scant presence in their own territories and total lack of orientation towards union activity, could impose their criteria upon the rest of the international. Since this congress, all attempts to address the situation have failed, due to the unwillingness of the current secretary to engage in dialogue (a basic duty of the office) and the complicity of a number of sections that only exist on the internet.

It is therefore evident that this IWA is unable to progress beyond offering the most basic kind of solidarity in the occasional labor conflict. As valuable as this form of international solidarity can be, and as much as we can appreciate it, the truth is that it is ultimately always organized (as there is really no other way) at the local level. Thus the current structure of the IWA is rendered effectively redundant. The contrast between this reality of the IWA and its bureaucracy and infrastructure has reinforced the internal conflicts and attempts at ideological control which we referred to previously. This is far from the objectives we should aspire for in an international

coordinating body. As a result of these factors, we have reached the point where the internal situation prevents any attempts to correct this drift, which makes it urgent that we reconsider both the internal operation and the working program of the IWA.

To bring about concrete solutions to these questions, the CNT proposes to begin a process for the re-founding of an anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary unionist international. To this end we are preparing a series of conferences and contacts with those sections of the IWA interested in a process of re-founding the International, and with other organizations that, while not currently members of the IWA, are interested in participating in the construction of a model for revolutionary unionism at the global level. These conferences and contacts will have as their aim the organization of a congress to re-found a radical unionist international.

As a first step for these conferences, the CNT makes the following proposals as an organizational basis for the new IWA:

Composition

The sections of the IWA will be those groups that have at least 100 people affiliated and request to be considered as such in a Congress of the IWA.

The Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiatives will be those groups that, while wanting to become sections of the IWA, do not have a sufficient number of members. These groups will have a voice but no vote, and they may become sections when they certify that they meet the minimum membership and begin paying dues to the International. This step does not require an agreement in a Congress, but must be reported in an organic assembly of the IWA.

“Friends of the IWA” are those groups that, regardless of their number of members, ask for the status to be “Friends of the IWA.” Their status will remain the same as it is currently and to become sections or anarcho-syndicalist initiatives they must submit a subsequent request to a Congress.

Dues

Dues paid by member of Chapters of the IWA will be an amount no greater than 0.10 Euros per member per month.

Voting System

Votes weighted according to membership.

100 to 500 1 vote

From 501–1000 2 votes

From 1001–5000 3 votes

From 5001–10000 4 votes

Above 10,000 5 votes

Legalization

Legalization of the International is necessary to defend against wrongful use of the acronym by non-member unions attempting to benefit from the historic name of the IWA without practicing anarcho-syndicalism or revolutionary unionism. The financial accounts of the organization should no longer be in the name of individuals and should be in the name of the IWA itself, avoiding the need to rely blindly on the moral integrity of each secretary that manages these funds.

Autonomy, openness, and dynamism

We believe that it is urgent to reverse the exclusionary dynamics of the IWA and the politics of internal control between the sections and to work towards much more open and flexible politics. Basing ourselves always in direct action as our means of struggle, we must give ourselves the capacity to develop a wide range of international contacts with workers organized in different sectors and struggles, which can only result in strengthening our capacity for the international work of anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary unionism.

While it is often important to have more tightly focused international campaigns limited to organizations in the International, it is essential to also have the ability to perform open campaigns at the international level, which can engage with a diversity of organizations and workers' initiatives. This can only help strengthen the IWA.

The sections have the autonomy to have temporary relationships in the course of their labor conflicts.

In international work we should always use the name of the Chapter next to the acronym for the International (IWA-AIT). In this way we can limit the self-interested use of a section's name by outside groups. Any kind of external contact will be made with good faith and maximum transparency.

Union Organizer Training

It is essential we work to develop plans and concrete materials for union organizer trainings that can be shared between sections, taking into account the diversity of labor laws and socio-economic realities in the world.

Trainings and exchanges of experiences

The CNT will promote the organization of conferences for active members about union activity in the IWA, to be proposed in the appropriate assembly. These conferences will be biannual based on discussion points submitted by the sections and will aim to discuss different experiences of union activity in the workplace. Members of the IWA and any other groups deemed appropriate will be invited. Apart from this, making use of their autonomy, the CNT will promote such conferences openly when it seems appropriate.

The CNT will promote within the IWA the implementation of open action workshops based on previous experiences, so that the IWA and its sections can be a driving force in the global response against capitalism.

International expansion project

Along with maintaining the current strategies of contact with existing labor or social organizations interested in belonging to the International, we propose to use the larger union sections of the CNT active in international corporations as a means to expand our conflicts on an international level. We suggest that other sections of the IWA can do the same to the extent of their organizing capacity.

This entails coordination between the delegate of the union section of the CNT, the secretariat of union activity, the secretariat of legal affairs, and the secretariat of external affairs to initiate contact with workers in the same company in other countries. In this way they can encourage processes of organization and struggle that depart from specific cases or objectives, and that with time can go beyond the limits of the company and consolidate broader organizations that develop anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary unionism in all of their aspects.

Simplifying internal processes

It has become necessary to simplify our internal processes in order to make them clear and unambiguous. The CNT is working on various concrete proposals in order to clarify the functions and methodologies within the IWA.

The CNT will immediately begin reaching out to organize the conference that we have announced, whose objective will be the preparation of a congress to re-found the IWA. During this process of re-founding, and until it has gone into effect, the CNT will cease to pay dues to the current IWA.

To conclude, all of the current sections of the IWA that wish to participate in this project of re-founding are invited to be a part of it. We also welcome those anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary unions and organizations that wish to join towards the construction of an alternative that contributes, through international solidarity, to the growth and the implementation of strong local initiatives committed to practical and concrete union activity, who stand against the most recent offensives of capitalism in their regions. This process of re-founding the IWA will be open and transparent. We will periodically provide information about the steps that are being taken, and we hope that we will be joined by organizations from all over the world with whom we share the libertarian spirit of anarcho-syndicalism and revolutionary unionism.

Long Live the IWA! Long Live Anarcho-syndicalism!

Long live the global struggle of the working class!

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