

What's CNT?

CNT-ES

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<https://www.cnt.es/whats-cnt/>

Warning: It is a spanish view. It has not to be confused with french one. It is similar, but not the same. Revolutionary unionism (that is *not* an anarchism's branch) of the early CGT (Confédération Générale du Travail) and of the CSR (Comités Syndicalistes Révolutionnaires), with historical figures like Fernand Pelloutier, Emile Pouget, Victor Griffuelhes, Pierre Monatte and Marie Guillot, has influence on CNT in France.

It is an unofficial adaptation of the webpage in booklet. No right is claimed for the specific work needed for it. It was made in 2021, but we don't know for the text it-self.

The original text can be found online:
<https://www.cnt.es/whats-cnt/>

You can find more booklets made by us online as at:
<https://tarage.noblogs.org/>

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Founded in 1910 in Barcelona, from the union of workers' societies not linked to social democratic currents, the CNT – called Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labor) – remains faithful to anarcho-syndicalist principles, and is the only heir in the Spanish State of the spirit of the First International.

The CNT is, today, the only union in the Spanish State totally independent of political guidelines, in which those who decide are affiliated workers and not a committee of trade unionists, who renounces State and Employer financing to maintain its economic independence, and that does not leave negotiations in the hands of intermediaries.

What is a union?

A union is an association of workers who seek improvements in their living conditions, both material and cultural. If you are a worker (active, unemployed, retired . . .) and you think that this life does not give you everything you deserve, that your work does not allow you to develop as a person, your place of action as a worker is a union.

CNT, a class union

The National Confederation of Labor (CNT) is a confederation of class unions, which group workers from all trades without distinction in their branch unions.

CNT is a fighting tool for the entire working class.

Who can belong to CNT?

Any worker can join the union, regardless of their political ideas or religious beliefs. It is enough to commit to accept our associative pact, and to respect the decisions taken in assembly.

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CNT is an independent organization that unites workers without nuances. To preserve that independence, members of political parties or religious organizations cannot use the union as a propaganda forum or hold charges.

On the other hand, people who cannot be considered workers, such as businessmen, renters, large property owners, executives, and senior executives, political positions of the administration, etc., do not fit in CNT. Police and repressive bodies in general cannot be affiliated with the CNT.

Finally, for consistency, we neither admit the double militancy of workers affiliated with other trade union centers.

Is CNT yet another union?

CNT is different. We make direct democracy our hallmark. This type of democracy is that decisions are always made by those who are affected by them. Our statutes guarantee that in the union, it is the assembly that commands. And in the assembly, all words have the same weight. If you have your reasons, you will be able to decide the path you are going to take. CNT is a trade union center that has many years of experience, and has distinguished itself throughout its history as an organization in which decisions are made from the base, in which people participate, in which there are no leaders and there is full freedom and equality in the exchange of ideas, opinions and initiatives. In CNT we are all the same and nobody gets a salary for representing the workers.

CNT was founded in 1910, and its achievements are the struggles that led to the eight-hour day, the Sabbath rest, paid holidays, health insurance, retirement and unemployment, compulsory re-employment of unemployed. He promoted rent strikes. It founded schools, libraries, publishers. It fought against fascism. Finally, it collectivized land and industry in 1936, leading to the deepest social transformation in the history of Europe in the twentieth century.

What kind of world do we want?

That's fine – you're thinking – but what do we really want? We want what they say at all hours: we want peace; we want freedom; we want the fruit of our work, we want whoever does not work being able to do so, does not eat; we want that in any part of the world anyone can be useful working, living in a house, going to a school, having their seat at the banquet of life . . .

But for that to come, we must end the causes of inequality. Nothing is worth the charity. Centuries of alms have not served to bring justice, because the cause of the evils of the world, of violence, of enormous wealth in the hands of bankers and businessmen, is the State.

We want a society without a State, in which there is no power, violence or exploitation of some people over others.

What are we?

We don't fool anyone: we are what we want to be, and not what they want us to be.

And this is what we are: wage earners, retirees, homemakers, unemployed, students, immigrants . . . Men and women – above ideological, racial, gender, age, professional category differences . . . – who join forces to face our adversaries.

We are the organized Working Class. Our most precious assets are Freedom and Dignity. We are not afraid of anything. Let's change the world.

We are the CNT

An Anarcho-syndicalist Union, where we organize workers as equals, to defend ourselves against labor and social aggressions; in which we are ourselves, without executive committees, liberators, or leaders, who decide on our own problems and aspirations.

The principles of CNT

The union is governed in its operation by the principles of revolutionary unionism.

- a) The principle of Self-Management: We think that those who must decide on the problems that concern them are those affected by those problems. If nobody works for you, nobody should decide for you. That is why the CNT is an assembly union: within it, who always decides is the assembly of affiliates.
- b) The principle of Federalism: Each union of the CNT has autonomy to act within its scope and at the same time will be confederated with the rest of the unions to act together in the circumstances they face.
- c) The principle of Solidarity and Mutual Support: Every union of the CNT establishes a solidarity pact with the rest of the confederation, which makes each aggression that one of its parties receives be answered by the totality. The same can be said among the affiliates of each union.

Proletarian internationalism

The workers are associated in unions, these are federated at the local, regional and national levels in the CNT and in turn this will be federated with unions from all over the world. Because we know that we depend on others internationally. Facing globalizing neoliberalism, we oppose proletarian internationalism.

CNT's tactic: Direct Action

The CNT's tactic is Direct Action, which means that the solution of the conflicts that arise must be achieved by the affected individuals without intermediaries. We believe that this way of

- We want a country where almost sixty thousand prisoners are not held in prisons because of a system that first creates the crime and then makes the criminal
- We intend a libertarian education in which children are educated in a value system far from competitiveness and consumerism
- We fight religious manipulations and superstitions
- We are supporters of everything that enhances the freedom of people, of everything that sweeps the inequalities that exist, of everything that unites us fraternally.

But that is not enough

Earn more money, have a stable contract and have good services in the neighborhood, that's fine. But, if you look, you can see that this world is poorly distributed.

We have some resources like never before in the history of Humanity: knowledge, energy, media . . . And yet we are surrounded by plagues: famines, wars, racism, unemployment, walls, terrorism, abuse of power. That happens here next door, right here.

And the causes are known: privileges in the hands of a few individuals, who use violence in the most unpunished way, backed by the state apparatus and its means of repression.

The cruelest gangster is an angel compared to the group of plutocrats and leaders who organize wars, live in luxury and receive the papal blessing at the Vatican audiences.

Think of the so-called work accidents, which leave more than a thousand deaths a year in Spain. Who are responsible, but unscrupulous industrialists and rulers interested more in money than in life?

That is why the CNT not only struggles to win a misery more, which ultimately eats inflation, but for another type of world.

acting allows us to learn to act on what affects us and thus assume responsibilities. Being an anarcho-syndicalist means making decisions, and deciding is very difficult: it means having problems. Because once you agree on something and you are going to put it into practice, you will find that your natural enemies are going to oppose you: the businessmen. They are interested in making you work as much as possible for the lowest salary payable. Your interest is opposed to them. You want to work less, live better, and that clashes frontally with their plans.

The basis of CNT's philosophy: anarchism

All these assembly ideas are inspired by anarchist ideas. Anarchism is a political philosophy that affirms that society can be organized without power, without coercion and without violence. We deny that we need trained political specialists to decide on behalf of other people. Each individual is sovereign to decide on what affects him. These ideas are being adopted by a multitude of groups that are fed up with classical organizations based on the principle of hierarchy. Alternative ideas of self-management, participation, decentralization . . . are anarchist ideas. There is a negative, erroneous idea of anarchy as a synonym for chaos and violence. We consider anarchy as a synonym for non-imposed order, freedom and absence of coercion.

We want the radical transformation of society, the suppression of wage labor, the social revolution. Our purpose is Libertarian Communism, a socio-economic system that makes freedom and equality its fundamental values. And we think that to achieve our goals we must use means consistent with them. Not everything goes. The end never justifies the means. If we want a free, egalitarian and fraternal society, our organization and our action must be free, egalitarian and fraternal.

But we also think that every state or employer aggression must have an answer. We do not turn the other cheek or resign ourselves to injustice. This principle of self-defense implies confrontation

we want linear salary increases that benefit the lowest wages; we want the increases to be made on the base salary and not on the supplements; we refuse to perform overtime and piecework; we are against the new work systems that imply job disengagement, versatility and functional and geographical mobility; We strive to break the chain that binds us to the business machine, reducing the working day, increasing vacation and leisure time, advancing retirement to 55 years; We try to ensure that the union controls what the worker produces, denying his guarantee seal when the product is harmful or of poor quality; we encourage that workers, their assemblies and their trade union sections have the right to negotiation; We ask for an authentic freedom of association, which involves the elimination of subsidies to trade union centers, and which allows union activity within companies without any limitation . . .

Our social demands

Not only do we act in the workplace, since the social place is also part of our life:

- We advocate full equality between men and women
- We want an economic development that did not devastate the planet and deplete its resources by promoting ecology
- We are antimilitarists because there is no just war, because all wars cause pain and death to the weak while enriching the powerful
- We reject discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, appearance, race
- We oppose large and small nationalisms, so many times used to confront workers in the name of abstractions such as the nation and the homeland

with employers and institutions. For all this, CNT is an anarcho-syndicalist union.

From the confluence of revolutionary unionism, which advocates the emancipation of workers themselves and the abolition of class society, and anarchism, with their ideas of non-hierarchical or authoritarian organization, of coherence of ends and means, of establishing the libertarian communism, anarcho-syndicalism arises.

How is CNT organized in a company?

Through a Trade Union Section, which is the group of workers affiliated with CNT in that specific company. If the company is one of those who employ repression immediately, the section works in hiding. If it complies with current legislation, the trade union section acts openly.

All sections of CNT work by assembly. That assembly appoints a delegate who becomes spokesperson for the companions in the company. A spokesperson who only issues the assembly mandate of his union section.

Industrial Unions and General Unions

The different sections of the CNT of the same branch of production form a Trade Union Branch (Metal, Construction, Commerce ...). But if they do not have the sufficient number for this, sections and affiliates of various branches are grouped into a General union, called Varios Professions Union (Sindicato de Oficios Varios, SOV).

How does the union work?

Through its assembly of affiliates. Each time the assembly is convened, the members discuss the agenda and take their agreements.

they are no longer interested by your problems. The electoral programs are forgotten and you better shut up and be submissive, maybe you get some favor (instead of respecting your rights). They just want your vote and don't give trouble.

The union elections and the company committees benefit the companies and the Administration, which in the end are the ones who finance them. With the union elections, whose origin is in the elections of the Franco vertical union, companies and administration get interlocutors so as not to have to deal directly with the workers. These legal partners keep workers at bay, submissive and demobilized, because they are the first ones interested in maintaining their position and depend directly on subsidies and releases.

CNT, a representative union

You may think that if you do not appear for those elections, you will never be representative. It's false. You and only you are representative. When you take your problems into your hands, you acquire representativeness. You have the right to negotiate, to fight, to decide on what affects you. Do not believe in that history of electoral representativeness.

CNT is representative because its affiliates grant it representativeness, because when it fights its struggle it is fair, because its claims are those of the workers. That is to be representative, that is to have weight, that is to have dignity. The other, about the elections, is nothing more than a masquerade ball in which some of the creepers who appear on TV signing, smiling, lectured and shaking hands with businessmen and rulers, are distributed grants.

Our labor demands

And when we negotiate, what do we do about it? We have minimum demands that we bring to all our conflicts. For example:

There is no directive that can decide between assemblies. We only have one committee without executive power.

What is the union committee?

The union assembly appoints some people to open the premises, maintain relations with the other unions, receive and send the correspondence, raise funds . . . Tasks that generally do not require the meeting of the assembly to be carried out. These people form what is called the union committee. The CNT committee has a number of limitations to prevent it from becoming a group of leaders.

The limitations of the committees in CNT

1. The members of the union committee, and by extension, of all the CNT committees, cannot receive a salary for their membership.

2. All committees are management and coordination mechanisms, so they cannot make agreements. They can only develop the decisions of the union assemblies and their assignments. In the event that due to urgency or necessity they should decide something, they will have to give an account of the management to the assembly, which will decide whether or not their attitude was correct.

3. All charges are revocable at any time. The assembly is free to force its representatives to resign if it deems appropriate. The charges are intended to be rotatory.

4. The committee cannot make proposals to the union assembly.
5. Every committee has to be endorsed in another assembly after its election. All positions are always available to the assembly.

The three NO

The CNT, on the other hand, says NO to elections, NO to those released and NO to subsidies. We do not want professionals paid by the company. We do not want intermediaries. We do not want more resources than ours, those that leave our quotas and our collective will. Let's see why.

Union elections and works councils

The law in Spain stipulates that in order to be a "representative" union, it is necessary to stand for union elections in which union delegates and company committees are elected. CNT does not participate in these elections and proposes its boycott for the following reasons:

- If you are precarious or work in a small business, you cannot even participate. Only a minority of workers have union elections.
- Through the elections you give your "representatives" the power to decide, sign and negotiate for you and impose their will and remain for 4 years out of your control. On the other hand, they are controlled by the domes of the trade union organizations to which they belong.
- With the elections, trade union organizations obtain releases and subsidies with which they remain. Basically, it is a matter of economic interests.
- The liberated people at trade unions have less and less in common with the workers, they tend to professionalize or live off the story and are only interested in staying, defend their own interests and not yours.
- Once you have snatched the "representativeness" and have gotten free and subsidies and a certain margin of influence,

6. The members of political parties cannot hold appointments in CNT.
7. In every assembly the committees have to explain the arrangements made by the different secretariats.
8. CNT's committees have no opinions of their own. When they speak they do it in the name of the entire organization and its agreements.

The committee at CNT is just a relationship and administration mechanism, not a power group.

Our union action

In conflicts, workers use our weapons:

- Complaint procedures, through demonstrations, rallies, acts of protest, leaflets, press releases, etc. that inform the public about the conflict, while making the company lose its good image.
- Boycott procedures, whereby the consumer or the user of a company is tried to stop consuming the product.
- Sabotage, which claims that the product offered by the company does not exist.
- The strike in its multiple variants, which interrupts the production of the company.
- Cultural procedures, very important, through excursions, co-existence, cultural days, representation of plays, literary editions, concerts, poetry recitals, artistic exhibitions, that sensitize us, that take us out of the tavern and television, that make us aware in the reality of the world.

Any conflict in which the CNT participates, is staggered out of the scope of the company, to become a local, regional, national and even international problem. Through Solidarity and Mutual Support the conflict leaves its narrow scope, many more people intervene in it, and thus we manage to succeed in large, medium and small companies.

We have achieved successes where lawyers and unions with hundreds of thousands of euros in the budget have failed. This is because in our claims we are not guided by what is legal, but by what is fair. A problem assumed by the CNT continues to be exposed until a satisfactory agreement is reached, whether the judges give us the reason or not. We do not stop pressing until our forces are exhausted, and that takes time to happen.

By not having to pay salaries to leaders, all our resources are used in union action. Thanks to this an economically modest union like ours enjoys a bigger budget when a claim is put on the table. In the submerged economy, in the precarious sector, in small, medium and large companies, in Multinationals, in Public Administration, our union action has shown its effectiveness. ASTILLEROS, FERROVIAL, CLECE, AVE, CODEX and hundreds of companies have been forced to negotiate and give in to the push of the workers.

CNT union framework

It is formed by the union sections and by the trade unions or various trades unions, all of them of assembly operation. These organizations act before companies or institutions using direct action, without intermediaries, and pressure measures of all kinds are used with a view to obtaining a series of claims, but with the aim, at last, on transforming the society.

This union framework is totally different from the rest of the trade union organizations, since all of them take trade union elections and the company committee system as a reference.