

# The Reconstruction Program of the French Syndicalists

Translated by Andre Courland

**A**t the threshold of Peace, the C. G. T., in the name of organized labor, renews its adherence to the 14 points of President Wilson, proclaiming that the basis of a "People's Peace" depends on the following principles:

1st. Constitution of a "League of Nations" through the free co-operation of all the people, having for its principle aim the disappearance of all causes of future wars and the establishment of international justice.

2nd. No economic war, which starting in one country will inevitably compel the nation in question to rely on reciprocal measures in the desperation of self-defense. The principle mercantile waterways should be free to the merchantmen of all countries under the protection of the League of Nations. No economic protectionism, which finally leads to the spoliation of the working class.

3rd. Every section applying a specialization of its forces of production through wise selection, conforming to its material and physical resources. The release of its products throughout the world should be made on a scale of free and rapid exchanges without interference to others. For this an International Bureau of Transportation and Repartition of Raw Material should be created, and the internationalization of the Colonial Domain should be affected, with a view to the best utilization of all the resources of the soil and under-soil for the general welfare of humanity at large, and for the purpose of relieving the moral and material needs of nations.

4th. No repressions, based on revengeful intentions but material reparation of the damages done to the invaded regions. No territorial annexations and the acceptance of the rights of all people to self-determination.

5th. The League of Nations, bringing forth a new constitutional jurisdiction, shall begin at once a general disarmament and bring it to a complete end. Thus only will militarism, all shades of militarism, be defeated and international democracy shall triumph.

## Syndical Rights

The C. G. T. for the above reasons and in order to defend the labor clauses that will be included in the peace treaty, demands an official place at the Peace Table and demands that the peace covenants shall be open and public. It also declares the necessity of an international labor congress.

Greeting the Russian, Austrian, Hungarian, German Revolutions the C. G. T. claims that the French democracy must not be inferior in its social realizations. Consequently it demands the re-establishment of constitutional freedom of speech and assemblage, the suppression of the censor, a complete and general amnesty for all civil and military war prisoners.

Considering that labor shall no longer be accented as a commodity to be handled at its mercy by capital, and that industrial slavery must disappear the C. G. T. demands the National recognition of syndical rights for all workers and for all employees of departments, cities, communes and municipalities and for all the state and administration employees. It insists on the acceptance and regulation of an international Seamen's Act and the freedom of seamen to leave their ships at every stop. The right of the syndicates to intervene in all labor questions must be recognized. The application of a national industrial scale of wages shall be generalized to all forms of industry, by collective agreements under the supervision and control of the syndical organizations.

Believing that the development of industrial progress will result in perfecting and modifying the tools and methods of production, the C. G. T. proclaims that the working day in industry, commerce and agriculture shall be not more than eight hours, that night work shall be forbidden to women and adolescents under 18 years of age. Compulsory education must be extended to 14 years of age.

## Economic Reconstruction

In application of the above principles the C. G. T. demands, so far as the general demobilization and also the rapid readjustment of war productions into peace production are concerned, the institution of a National Economic Council, co-operating with regional councils in which the syndicalist organizations shall have their direct representatives, who, in harmony with the working class, shall determine the general rules governing the demobilization and the return to normal

economic conditions. That funds for idle periods and unemployment should be created under the care of labor organizations. For the reconstruction of the invaded regions the French labor movement energetically opposes the accumulation of new fortunes made out of public misery and demands that these works should, to the largest possible extent be effected by the organized "collective" bodies, including in their administration and technical staffs qualified representatives of the producers and consumers.

The principal of employment being assured, it is advisable that the cities, consumers, and plants rearrange themselves to suit the latest formulas of progress, applying also the highest principles of hygiene, sanitation and aesthetics, including workmen's habitations and open spaces for public health and the physical development of children.

## Future National Efforts

As for the future, the C. G. T. claims for organized labor its due place in the direction and control of national production.

The economic reorganization must be based on the ever-increasing development of national industrial tools and machinery, the unlimited spreading of general and technical free education, and to that end the employment of old talents, the utilization of material resources, and the application of the best and latest inventions and improvements. The stimulus of private initiative must not be made an excuse for the voluntary restriction of production, and the overwork of the producers, the consequences of which are harmful to production itself.

*The working class, therefore, shall direct the national effort towards this end.*

The nation cannot, without compromising the collective right of which she is the sole guardian, abandon her social right to the control of her economic organizations, which were created by the labor of past generations, maintained and developed by the common effort. In order to secure the permanent exercise of this social right the nation must have complete control of all branches of production, which from their inception to their fullest development profit by the protection and help of the state.

The nation shall maintain under the strictest dependency all private enterprises which in addition to the advantages already named profit by certain powers delegated to them by the state, county or commune.

## The State Rights

If it is objectionable to have the state control applied to everything without the active and healthy assistance of individual initiative, it is not less essential to see that all the necessities of life, whether personal or national, should be handed over to private interest without then being required to direct their efforts toward conformity with the interest of the people.

This control, exercised in the name of the state for the producers and consumers, should be exerted in the most active and practical way and not in the passive and retrospective form that is actually in use.

It must be vigorous enough to keep the mastery of production and its values of technical developments and conditions of labor, of wages and various insurances, also of the just repartition of profits above normal interest in limited dividends, including loss insurance.

Thus established this control will insure the functioning of a regime of association between the state and industry and those instances where private initiative and free competition is still permitted.

But if at any time through the concentration of capitalist agreements in the field of raw materials, essential organs of production, or any necessary product, market values are in danger of being manipulated, government control should be imposed as a means of equilibrium between values and production. In this an excessive fiscal taxation on monopolized products should not aggravate the perils and abuses of private industry making these products a menace to the national industries.

The economic reorganization will not produce any effect if the nation does not take over, maintain and establish her social right over property, over collective riches and the means to produce and exchange them and if she does not give more and more power to the various departments, communes, co-operatives and new collective organizations to conduct their business in co-operation with the civil administration, where qualified representatives of the producers and consumers should sit.

But it is highly essential that at first strict measures regarding education, prevention of disease and insurance should be provided.

The security of the individual is of more importance than the security of property.

In consequence nothing should be neglected to see that society allows to everyone the full development of his intellectual faculties, that it prevents the spread of alcoholism, that by social insurance it sets a guarantee against unemployment, sickness and old age for all members of the producing class so that it should constantly maintain an equilibrium between their resources and their means, particularly so when they assume a larger charge by an extension of their families to the social profit.

## Foreign Help

For all the above reasons, the C. G. T. proclaims that every worker, no matter what his nationality may be, has the right to work where he can best occupy his activities. That every worker shall enjoy the privileges and guarantees of syndicates, and also have the right to participate personally in an official capacity in the country where he exercises his activities.

No worker shall be expelled for his syndical or co-operative activities.

No foreign worker shall receive lower wages or be submitted to inferior working conditions than the current and normal conditions prevailing in the same town or region and in the same occupation or specialty.

That these conditions and wages should be specified in contracts between workers' syndicates and employers' associations, that the immigration of workers shall be organized and placed under the control of organizations comprising representatives of national workers' organizations as well as employers associations.

The recruiting of workers in foreign lands is not to be permitted, unless submitted to commissions of the lands in question, who will have to take into consideration the real need of the industry or the region and that the contracts of employment should clearly define the salaries and working conditions which must be in conformity with the above prescription. The recruiting of immigrants is to be placed under control of the working organization in the emigrating countries, the contract execution shall be under the same control.

In case it will be necessary to call upon colored help the recruiting should fall under the same ruling as that affecting European workers and they shall enjoy the same rights and privileges.

Furthermore, the industries employing colored help must organize, at their own expense and under the control of the public service, the necessary schools where they shall be taught to speak, read and write the language of the country.

## Labor Legislation

That the workers, injured in their work, should receive their full salaries during their incapacity. This to be also applied to foreign labor. That occupational sickness should be considered as accident and come under the above conditions.

That every worker has a right to old age and invalid pension enough to allow him to live normally. To this end pensions, having their base on sickness, shall be instituted.

## Against the High Cost of Living

To obviate the difficulties of the high cost of living on the working class the C. G. T. declares that all tariffs and taxes on foodstuffs, on all heating and lighting materials should be abolished.

That a public service, national, communal and co-operative, of foodstuffs shall be organized: this office will furnish its products without profit, thus establishing a minimum price of production equivalent to the sale price, thus regulating the market price.

This office will be placed under the supervision of the delegates of organized workers and consumers.

The C. G. T. declared that this is its minimum program and shall be immediately put into practice. For this it asks the syndicalist organizations to make this the basis of their action until complete satisfaction is obtained.

For the C. G. T. Federal Committee, Toutiaux Section,