



Decent life and decent work: great expectations for change

Statement by the CGT National Executive Committee

10 May 2007

Nicolas Sarkozy has been elected President of the French Republic. Both employers' organisations, MEDEF and CGPME, are very much looking forward to his term of office and have offered their assistance to implement their sought-after reforms.

Both the President of the Republic and MEDEF have already set deadlines on several issues.

The CGT will be putting forward proposals wherever workers' interests are at stake. With your co-operation, the CGT means to develop convergent and united mobilisations, in order to get immediate and concrete results that will improve everyone's life and work – whether they be workers, unemployed or pensioners.

Throughout election time, you expressed great expectations for change in the following ways:

- A high turnout in the presidential elections, which shows that citizens are highly interested in France's political process. This democratic vitality is a source of hope for the future.
- Many union actions for pay, jobs, health, working conditions, freedoms, respect, dignity, public services, housing, the environment, the future of our planet, and so forth.

These joint, united actions reveal great expectations for the recognition of work and qualifications, through a significant increase in pay and genuine career development.

They also point to the rejection of social inequalities and the uneven distribution of wealth.

This point was notably absent from debates: never has work generated so much wealth, yet this wealth is being monopolised by the ever-increasing profitability demanded by shareholders. The satisfaction of social needs requires a different kind of distribution.

THE CGT MEANS TO TAKE UP THE CHALLENGE OF SOCIAL PROGRESS THROUGH ACTION, so that work, its place in society, its values and content, as well as workers' rights, become a priority capable of pulling the whole economy upwards.

- **To earn more**, the CGT proposes increasing the national minimum wage (SMIC) to 1,500 euros gross as from 1st July 2007, a general pay increase through recognition of qualifications, an overhaul of pay scales and equal pay for men and women.

- **To work better**, the CGT proposes:
 - The right to decent and recognised employment through the reduction of casualisation and unemployment, and the possibility – for those employed on imposed casual or part-time contracts, to secure full-time, permanent contracts.
 - The safeguard and development of industrial employment and public employment, as a prerequisite for growth, full employment and the satisfaction of social needs.

- **To protect workers, ensure the recognition of work and improve health and safety**, the CGT proposes:
 - The establishment of guaranteed social protection throughout working life, via permanent employment contracts, even in cases of redundancy. It would be one of the constituents of a new status governing paid employment, setting up a corpus of collectively-guaranteed rights for individual workers, that are binding on employers and transferable from one job to another.
 - That work – its values, place and role – be recognised as a right in itself and as part of self – and society’s – development. This ambition does not involve working more, but working better and in a different way.
 - Involvement in choices concerning work and its environment, methods of organisation, monitoring and prevention that affect workers’ health and life.
 - The development public services that guarantee fundamental rights in practice (housing, health, education, culture, energy and so forth), as well as equal treatment for users throughout the country, in terms of supply, quality and cost of the services provided.
 - The right to retirement for all at 60 with sufficient resources to live in dignity, as well as the possibility of early retirement – both in the private and public sectors – in order to take account of arduous work and long careers.

- **For genuine social democracy, the CGT proposes five inseparable measures:**
 - Recognition of trade unions as the only organisations able to represent workers in social dialogue with organised employers.
 - The right to elect worker representatives in all companies, regardless of size.
 - Validation of agreements only when they have been signed by unions, which represent the majority of workers concerned.
 - The guaranteed right to strike in big and small, private and public companies as a means of democratic expression.

- New rights for workers and their representatives to intervene in managing and anticipating economic change in big and small companies.

Democracy cannot be restricted merely to voting in political elections. It also implies consultations and negotiations on major economic and social decisions. Trade unions and unity of the union movement need to be reinforced, in order for workers' demands and those of the unemployed and pensioners to be taken into account. This is decisive if expectations are to be met more effectively.

There can be no future without workers, nor without a stronger, recognised and more united movement.

Since the beginning of the year, around 20,000 workers have decided to break away from isolation and chosen to join the CGT. They have decided to give themselves the wherewithal to be a collective and united force to defend their interests and rights, as well as win new ones.

Let us take up the challenge of social progress together!