



100 ANS
1921-2021



STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

2021 EDITION

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STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES OF THE CSN

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**THIS UPDATED VERSION
OF THE STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES
WAS ADOPTED
AT THE 59TH CONVENTION OF THE CSN,
HELD MAY 16–21, 1999, IN QUEBEC CITY.**

*N.B.: In the event of differences in interpretation,
the French version prevails.*

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The Confédération des syndicats nationaux is a free and democratic union organization. It is dedicated to defending its members and promoting the values it endorses.

The CSN is composed of unions, federations and central councils that are autonomous within their respective jurisdictions. It brings together men and women whose actions and positions are inspired by values of freedom, justice, responsibility and solidarity.

In the pursuit of ever-greater dignity, these men and women struggle to improve their working and living conditions. In doing so, they help improve conditions of life for all workers.

Because of their union action, the society in which they live and develop is transformed.

It is in the struggle, whatever form it takes, that the CSN decides the direction it wants to head in and the demands and issues it wants to fight for. Members of the CSN share the conviction that nothing is gained without effort, that no victory can be won without putting in place the necessary conditions.

The first of these conditions is solidarity: tangible, active solidarity that is constantly nurtured and enriched.

The CSN believes in solidarity among workers of all countries. To make this conviction a tangible reality and turn it into action, the CSN is affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation.

The CSN endorses and is inspired in its action by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the fundamental charters of rights and freedoms.

OUR VALUES

The CSN is an open and democratic union organization. At all levels, important decisions for union life must be the fruit of debate.

The CSN gives free rein to the expression of opinions; it attaches great value to rallying to decisions once the democratic process leading to them has been completed.

AUTONOMY

Affiliated unions are autonomous organizations. This autonomy preserves their ability to define themselves, wage their struggles and make, by and for themselves, the decisions that they deem necessary. This is a guarantee that decision-making power will always remain close to where the decisions are applied. This autonomy is enhanced by a constant concern for organizing solidarity with other components of the movement. Unions that are free and at the same time responsible for their decisions and actions are what this movement's democratic workings and solidarity are founded on.

FREEDOM

By opting for union autonomy ever since its inception, the CSN has banked on freedom: a kind of assumed freedom that transcends corporatist interest groups and cements the bonds of active solidarity.

Out of a desire to base its actions on solidarity, the CSN has adopted original and unique operating principles. Both demanding and stimulating, these principles encourage members and affiliated organizations to ensure that such values are respected and widely shared.

SOLIDARITY

Workers join together in unions that practise solidarity by affiliating with the three levels that lend daily support to their action : the central council, the federation and the confederation giving their action a scope and impact that it otherwise would not have. A Professional Defence Fund, to which all unions contribute, is a tangible expression of solidarity. Thus organized, this solidarity, based on freedom, ensures that each group's struggles are supported by all.

HUMAN BEINGS

Human beings are the CSN's leading concern, in terms of both action and ideology.

DIGNITY

Establishing social relations based on justice and respect for autonomy and freedom is the fundamental and indispensable condition for achieving dignity. There cannot be progress without respect for individuals and their physical and psychological integrity. Liberation must be based on the certitude that before concepts and ideologies, there are men and women who must be the focal point on which economic and social development hinges.

ETHICS

The CSN believes in the need for ethics that nurture the thought and actions of members and activists, to ensure that they are constantly guided by moral values such as the pursuit of the common good.

ORGANIZED LABOUR

The CSN holds that in a democratic society, unions are a tool for workers' liberation.

Organized labour remains one of the main pillars that are vital in ensuring vigorous democracy.

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

In their actions, union members must rely on rights that ensure freedom of union action. These rights, whose implementation helps improve their working and living conditions, entail duties in return: the collective power thus acquired must be used in part to support others who cannot rely directly on such power. Hence the need to expand alliances with all the forces of social progress, so as to constantly expand the camp of freedom.

OPERATING PRINCIPLES

The unionism practised by the CSN has its own operating principles. Debate leads to rallying around the objectives identified. The pursuit of victory over those in our own ranks who do not share the same analysis is foreign to union democracy.

The goal of union democracy is, on the contrary, to persuade and convince, so as to develop policies and actions with the broadest possible support, through a process of thoughtful debate and a good quality of discussion.

WORK

The CSN believes that of all the human activities that help integrate individuals into society, work is still the most important today.

Unions must take action against mind-numbing and dehumanizing work so that men and women can find fulfilment in their work, and have some real control over this crucial aspect of their life in society; so that the organization of work fosters the development of all their creative possibilities; so that workplaces are characterized by harmonious relations which respect natural skills, individual abilities and equity between men and women; and so that protection of their physical and psychological integrity is guaranteed.

The only way to achieve these goals is to make the workplace more truly democratic.

LIFE IN SOCIETY

The CSN believes that only a democratic system can make possible the full development of men and women in all aspects of their lives: social, economic, political and cultural.

GOVERNMENT

In our democracy, it is imperative that government shoulder its responsibilities for establishing measures guaranteeing social solidarity and the best possible sharing of the wealth produced. Government must act, through legislation, agreements, treaties and taxation, doing everything necessary to support public systems of health, education and social services and to ensure income security for all citizens. The tenuous status of Québec's culture and people in North America requires vigorous measures from the sole government whose primary role is to defend all the interests of this people.

For the CSN, the government that is the seat and guardian of all the powers for ensuring the social, economic and cultural development of a people must be the Québec government. French is the language of work, the common language here. Recognizing and respecting the historic rights of the English-speaking minority and the aboriginal

nations, the Québec that we are working to build is a land of solidarity among individuals, groups, communities, regions and generations; a land of solidarity where diversity is respected.

CIVIL SOCIETY

This state, the fundamental tool of the collectivity, must give full leeway to actions by citizens who are active in civil society, encouraging their expression through unbureaucratic and decentralized functioning. The CSN, which practises total independence from political parties, sees this civil society, of which it is an integral part, as the prime focus of its political action.

Civic education is the way to develop and entrench a concept of citizenship which, in establishing fraternal relations among individuals, is likely to ensure that all segments of Québec society will flourish individually and collectively. The CSN works to develop this generous concept.

SOCIAL PURPOSE OF THE ECONOMY

Economic development whose ultimate purpose is something other than social development has lost its meaning. The CSN asserts the primacy of human beings and their full development. In a world in which economic power is increasingly centralized, we hold that development must serve the interests of all, rather than being misappropriated for the benefit of the affluent few. The conditions for sustainable development must be put in place and rigorously applied.

A SOCIETY OF RIGHTS

The CSN struggles in every way to have individual and collective rights fully respected.

It combats all the forms of discrimination identified in the charters, which it supports.

The protection and promotion of rights are vital conditions for developing a decent quality of life in society: the right to health, education, work and housing, which ensure personal dignity; freedom of association, the right to demonstrate and hold meetings, the right to information and freedom of thought and expression, which enrich collective life; and the right to organize, to engage in free collective bargaining and to strike, which guarantee respect for workers.



UNION SOLIDARITY AGAINST DUPLESSIS – The unions united to resist the government's anti-union tactics and prevent it from outlawing the Rand formula. They issued a call to arms to fight Duplessis' plan to decertify unions that went on strike in the public sector or were suspected of harbouring Communists. The campaign culminated with an "interunion march on Québec City" (photo) in January 1954.



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