

Centro Studi Nazionale CISL

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The CISL Pillars

The Original Concept as Trade Union

Ausili didattici per la formazione sindacale



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Foreword

During the over fifty years that the Centro Studi CISL has existed there have been several meetings, courses and seminars where the main characteristics of CISL have been presented to foreign trade union leaders and activists. Now globalization also involves trade unions and such events occur more and more frequently, so we have decided to produce this booklet to help introduce ourselves to foreign guests visiting our Centro Studi, or when we are involved in training activity abroad. This booklet illustrates briefly the CISL concept as trade union and gives some schematic notes about the history and distinctive features of the social and political environment at the time of its birth.

The CISL's characteristics are truly original, in both meanings of the word. Original as initial, because they were expressed at the beginning of the CISL's history, pillars on which the organization is built. Original as creative, because they were very new in the Italian trade union tradition. The time was new, too: the end of the Second World War and of the Fascist regime; the beginning of the republican democratic system after the monarchy; reconstruction and strong industrial development.

We think that a clear and strong vision of one's identity can foster solid and well-balanced relations with interlocutors, both for persons and for organizations. Feeling weak or confused harms relationships. We often see that fanatics are not so much in love with their truth as they are dramatically afraid to lose it.

So, please forgive the author if some words may seem a

little emphatic. I have paid attention to the historical foundation of my statements. This is not the work of a scholar, though. It is the work of a member proud to have the opportunity to operate in this organization.

Acknowledgements

This paper draws mainly on the following texts: Giuseppe Acocella, *Storia della CISL*, Edizioni Lavoro, 2000; Guido Baglioni (editor), *Analisi della CISL*, Edizioni Lavoro, 1981; Sandro Rogari, *Sindacati e imprenditori*, Le Monnier, 2000; Vincenzo Saba, *Il problema storico della CISL*, Edizioni Lavoro, 2000; Sergio Turone, *Storia del sindacato in Italia*, Laterza, 1989; a training paper edited by Modena UST CISL, *Il sindacalismo libero*, 1954; the Piccola Biblioteca Sindacale lecture notes, *La concezione sindacale della Cisl*, and *Sindacato e partiti*, published by Centro Studi CISL during 1960s.

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Introduction

The CISL was founded in 1950. From the very beginning, as one of its main characteristics, it affirmed an original conception of trade unionism at variance with the Italian tradition. The “Unification Democratic Trade Unions Pact”, signed on April 1950, is the final act of the process leading to the CISL’s creation. The Pact is the formal declaration of the CISL constitution, which became the preamble of the Statute of the CISL, declaring the aim and the method of action of the new trade union. It expresses clearly the three “pillars” of this organization, regarding the goal, the nature and the method of the new trade union organization. They are:

Autonomy: express its choice in freedom and independence from all forms of external power, be they economic, political or cultural.

Associationism: be just the union of workers, who are the owners of the organization for the safeguard of their interests.

Collective bargaining: the main method of action, which allows the greatest autonomy of the interested parties.

Furthermore, there is an additional principle, that of non-denomination. Although this principle is not officially declared, it had a relevant role in the building of the organization in the mid-twentieth century in Italy. Non-denomination is a specific expression of autonomy, connected to the strong Catholic cultural matrix of the founders. They wanted to make their religious convictions deeply linked to

their social and political choices as a personal guide and contribution to defining the new trade unions' values, but not as criteria for exclusion or inclusion of members.

The rebirth of trade unions after Fascism

The Italian Fascist regime participated in the Second World War as ally of Germany and Japan. In the spring of 1943, the defeats at Stalingrad, in Africa and in the Pacific island of Guadalcanal represented a turning point in the Second World War. The German Army, like the Japanese and the Italian, were blocked and pushed back. In Italy, the military defeats outside the borders and the heavy bombing of the largest industrial towns showed the unreality of the imperial dreams of Fascist propaganda, making support for the Fascist regime weaker and more and more a mere formality. On 10th July the Anglo-American allied troops landed in Sicily; within a month they had conquered the island. In March there had already been a very strong hint of danger for the regime: the successful strikes in the factories of Northern Italy.

On 25th July, the *Gran Consiglio del Fascismo*, the chief governing organ of the regime, approved a proposal to restore the prerogatives of the monarchy, thereby relieving Mussolini of power. The king designated Marshal Badoglio as chief of the government and put Mussolini under arrest.

The anti-Fascist parties, though not involved in this coup d'état, could now start up their activities once again. The law of 1926, which allowed only Fascist trade unions to be established and operate, was abolished, and the three Fascist confederations of workers (industry, commerce and agriculture) were put under the control of commissioners of the three major anti-Fascist parties: the Christian-Democrats, the Socialists and the Communists.

The fear and uncertainty of the king and of Badoglio made it easy for German troops to occupy Italy. They freed

Mussolini and put him at the head of a new allied Fascist state, the Italian Social Republic, which governed the centre-north part of the country, still controlled by German Army. During the following two years of war the Allied troops went up to the peninsula and the anti-Fascist opposition took up arms against Fascists and Germans in the centre-north regions. On 25th April, 1945 Italy was completely freed from German occupation and its Fascist ally. One year later we had the first general election followed by a referendum to choose between the monarchy and a republic. The monarchy, which had been too involved with Fascism, was rejected.

The struggle against Fascism had led to an agreement to establish one joint trade union confederation. At the beginning of June, 1944, Achille Grandi for the Christian-Democrat Party, Bruno Buozzi for the Socialist Party, and Giuseppe Di Vittorio for the Communist Party, signed the “Patto di Roma”, a pact which established the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro*, the CGIL (General Italian Confederation of Labour). They signed as representatives of the three main anti-Fascist parties, but they had formerly been leaders of the trade union confederations abolished by Fascism, the socialist CGL and the Catholic CIL. Now, after two decades of exile and underground activity, they could once again take up their role as leaders, bringing their experience and the memory of the work in their previous organizations to bear in a very new context. Unfortunately, Buozzi was shot at the very beginning of June.

After the end of the war a rigid division was established in Europe. The cold war between the USSR and the USA was defining a new scenario. The countries of the continent were neatly separated in two areas, the western, democratic and

capitalistic, and the eastern, under the Communist dictatorship. In Italy the general elections of April 1948 marked a turning point. On the one side there was the Democratic Popular Front, composed of the Socialist and the Communist Parties, which had won 20% and 19% of the votes respectively in the 1946 elections. On the other side there was no coalition. The leading party was the Christian-Democrats, the DC, which had had 35% of votes in 1946. The 1948 election took on the significance of a fundamental choice: which side of the world would Italy belong to. The participation was almost total: 92,3 % of the electorate. The answer was clear: the DC reached 48,5 %, while the Socialist-Communist front dropped to 31 %.

In those years the differences within the joint confederation of the CGIL became wider and wider. The Socialist - Communist component had the majority in the confederation and, according to the conception that a trade union must be an instrument of the party, tried to submit it to their parties' choices and strategies. Having lost consensus and with less power in Parliament, they tried to force the government's hand, keeping it under pressure by means of social mobilisation. The breaking point arrived quickly enough: on the 14th July, 1948 an extreme right wing student tried to kill the Communist party general secretary, Palmiro Togliatti, with four pistol shots while he was leaving the Parliament. Immediately strong protest rallies and marches started and the Socialist and Communist components of the CGIL called a general strike, notwithstanding the opposition of the other components. The Christian component of the CGIL decided it was impossible to stay in the same organization any longer. Consequently, they left the CGIL and set up a separate organization, the "Libera CGIL" (Free

CGIL).

The reaction was dramatic. Near Bologna there occurred an extreme episode, the killing of a young Catholic union militant, Giuseppe Fanin. On the night of the 5th November he was attacked by three Communist militants, come “to give him a lesson”. In the fiery atmosphere of those times the Libera CGIL, from the founding leaders to grassroots militants, were accused of operating under the pressure of the Christian-Democratic Party, supported by and supporting the power of the Catholic Church, and answering to the dictates of US imperialism. Such accusations were the mirror of the main limits of the majority component of the CGIL: its strict subjection to Communist Party strategy which attributed the role of world leader to the USSR and its party.

After the Christian component of the CGIL had founded the *Libera CGIL*, the referring components of the social-democratic party and of the republican one also left the CGIL in May 1949, and on 4th June created the FIL, the Italian Federation of Labour. One year later, on 30th April 1950, the Libera CGIL, the FIL and the Union of Autonomous Federations drew up the “Pact of unification of democratic trade unions” that led to the constitution of the CISL. A part of the FIL did not accept the project and set up a new confederation, the UIL, the Italian Union of Labour. Thus, we came to have the three main Italian central confederations of trade unions still in existence: CGIL, CISL and UIL.

The key issue of these conflicts, divisions and unifications is the relation between trade unions and political parties. The alternative proposed by the CISL, in contrast with the Socio-Communist conception of the priority of political

struggle and political party leadership, is not a relationship with a different party, but independence from all parties. However, this central issue was not sufficient to give a proper identity to a trade union, to formulate a strategy or a wage policy, above all in this very difficult situation, where the poverty and destruction left by the war were added to employers' strong opposition to any trade union organization.

During over half a century the CISL has been able to become a protagonist of the Italian trade union experience because it has worked out and affirmed a solid trade union proposal. A special and innovative conception, borrowing from different traditions, like Anglo-Saxon unionism and Christian Social thought, and wed to the Italian trade union situation. As table 1 shows, the country was leaving its traditional development and culture, where agriculture was the dominant sector, to enter fully its era of industrialisation . But even after six decades, in the very different context that has been created, the original conception of the CISL still shows itself to be valid.

The effort to affirm and spread its own fundamental characteristics is the first, essential challenge to the CISL. These main characteristics are briefly explained in the following pages. Like four pillars, they support this organization's building: autonomy, unionism, bargaining, non-denominationalism.

Table 1.
Occupation in Italy: sector percentage of workforce

sector / year	1911	1936	1981	2001
Agriculture	59,1	52,0	11,1	5
Industry	23,6	25,6	41,5	33
Services	17,3	22,4	47,4	62

AUTONOMY

The general meaning of the word «autonomy» is being able to fend for one's own necessity by one's own means; being able to think and act freely, without any compulsory external influence; drawing up and following one's own behaviour rules. The definition helps us to understand that the CISL's choice, to be an organization which wants to be able to decide its goals and rules, meets the first condition: to provide for its own necessity, being economically independent. For a trade union takes its means of sustenance from the enrolment fees of its members, in order not to depend on anybody else but its membership.

In describing the birth of the CISL we dealt with the question of the relation between trade unions and political parties. This is often the first question that we have to think about when somebody talks about union independence. A free relation between trade unions and political parties involves two sides. On the one side there is the absence of control of any party over the trade union; on the other side there is the free evaluation of any party's positions only as they relate to workers' interests and avoiding either subjection or prejudiced antagonism. The relation with parties is still a relevant question for Italian trade unions, and often it is a strong argument in union debates around the world. No national experience has been able to avoid facing it. The CISL decided, from its birth, that its life and decisions must not be subject to any external determination: they must not be "depending variables" of political powers, even when the goal of these powers is a type of society acceptable to the unions, because they have their own separate aims, aims that answer to more

complex and heterogeneous pressures.

But trade unions are first of all organizations of employed workers for safeguarding their interests, so it is from the employers, both private and public, that a trade union must be independent, taking care to avoid all their attempts to bring it into submission. In Italy, after Fascism few employers declared that union should be outlawed, at least openly. But if in their company there was no trade union representative, so much the better. Otherwise, if this was really impossible to avoid, the second best thing is a docile union, one that easily accepts management's decisions. Nowadays this way of thinking has changed in many businesses, but actually not too much. It is the same sort of schizophrenia that employers have about free competition. Every employer asserts that the free market and a high degree of competition is best for development, but they feel much better if their business has a branch monopoly. It is the same towards unions: it is right to allow them, but it is better if there is none, at least in their company.

Trade unions must watch out for a third kind of subject, public institutions. Legal protection means not only to be free, but to have concrete rights to operate. That is of vital importance for trade unions. That means the right to associate without risking any discrimination for members and representatives, to carry on collective bargaining and agreements, to make known union positions and decisions, to organize actions and strikes in which workers have full right to participate.

Anything less than full protection by public institutions of these basic union and workers' rights might represent an attempt to interfere in the process of forming trade union

decisions or rules. This could be done directly or it may occur when the access to some right or resource is not clearly defined, and is subject to the will of some public power. Autonomy is lacking or at risk if the availability of any resources, either a material one like funds or an immaterial one like information and data or the possibility to express opinions in public, is subject to the will of some external power instead of being safe, sure and direct.

It is not enough to declare autonomy once and forever. The capacity to solve political dilemmas is needed each and every day. A trade union is naturally required to take political initiatives and have relations with parties in order to assure broad, effective protection and promotion of workers' interests in society. At the same time, in accordance with its specific function, it must remain independent from parties in defining stances, deciding policies, and freely choosing its leaders at every level.

Trade union action lives in the workplace, in sectors and industries policies, and in society at large, where workers and their families pay taxes, look for employment, need to be educated and find medical treatments, and so on. All these types of issues can not be solved by bargaining with workers' natural counterpart, the employers. It takes to bargain with the Govern, national and local. Thus, two dimensions, influence on politics and autonomy from politics, exist and can never be avoided. A debate has been going on for tens of years over the best balance between these dimensions, with many different solutions. Below we summarize some general statements:

- the dilemma between trade union political independence and the necessity of intervention in politics is frequent, unstable and still alive;

- the problem of the relation with politics is part of all trade union experiences, even when their programmes do not make this explicit;
- trade union movements with strong autonomy, able to interpret workers' needs, avoid both the marshlands of political sophistry and the opposite risk of closing themselves off like corporations;
- in any case a good degree of autonomy from political parties is necessary for trade unions, even when conditions allow making positive links with a party, because trade union organization and action have elements, such as flexibility and practicality, which are impossible to find elsewhere.

There is a simple, obvious consideration that is however useful to point out: it is much easier to be autonomous when one is big and powerful than one is small and poor with a lot of powerful adversaries. Sometimes the trade union condition is the latter, especially at the beginning of its history. Not to give up is necessary, but hard. This is clearly seen in a simple, but vital problem: collecting members' fees. At the beginning of the CISL's history a union activist or officer had to ask each member for them personally each month, waiting for him or her at the office or factory gate or visiting at home; then, through collective bargaining, unions won the right for members to ask to their company to take their union fee from their wages and send it directly to the union. This represented an important victory, achieved first bargaining at company level, then in national sector contracts. It still often faces strong opposition because, it is said, it "makes too easy life for unions", giving them more certain economic resources and more time to look for new members, unionise companies and organise actions.

In Italy the connection between trade union and political parties had a long tradition. The first confederation, the CGL, founded in 1906, had always been linked to the Socialist Party. This relationship found its reason in the common social, economic and political one struggle, when the right to vote was related to the level of wealth and to literacy, thereby excluding the workers' voice from political institutions. Universal suffrage arrived only in 1946; before, at the end of the First World War in 1918, suffrage had been extended to all male adults, but the instauration of Fascism in 1922 had made to vanish this right.

The CISL broke this long tradition, in accordance with the new social, political and economic environment. The context of the new Italian Republic was profoundly different from the former Fascist regime or the previous liberal one at the beginning of twentieth century. The CISL's founding leaders thought that trade unions have to play a specific role in the building of democracy. Democracy gives freedom to expression, but democracy can stay alive if this becomes an active freedom, used by all the self-organized subjects of the society. Political representation is indeed important, but it is neither total nor exclusive. Such an innovative concept was not easily understood or explained to workers. An example of such simplified vision is to classify different competing confederations by linking them to different parties, rather than to compare complex conceptions.

Misunderstanding can arise from a simplified vision of democracy in which party pluralism is enough, without other forms of organization of civil society. Democracy is not just a competition between two political parties. Democracy is the

arena of free collective action around shared interests, purposes and values, it is the expression of different subjects whose existence is allowed by the democratic system and from which a democratic system takes its strength and vitality. Trade unions can be one protagonist of this arena, often the most important, as work is such a widespread experience and so important in everybody's life.

Political autonomy had a particular value in the mid-twentieth century when the working class was divided by deep ideological cleavages. The one proposal potentially recovering workers' and unions' unity is based on political autonomy, speaking to workers only as workers, leaving aside their political orientations, with mutual respect and renunciation of ideological hegemony as the common rule.

Giulio Pastore, first as the Libera CGIL's general secretary and then as the CISL's first secretary, was a protagonist in the battle to affirm the autonomy of the CISL, outside and within the trade union movement. He met strong opposition even among his closest interlocutors. The circles linked to the DC, the Christian Democratic Party, and to the Catholic world conceived of trade union autonomy as conditioned by a clear ideological choice and subject to guided social control on the part of the state (which means the political parties, after all). Pastore broke with this conception. His character is, in fact, surprising. He had deep roots in the Catholic world and was a member of the DC's leading group, but as CISL general secretary he was able to conduct a complex operation, exposing contradictions in the three institutional environments he himself belonged to. The core of his project is the vision of a trade union built without any other force except that of a free association of collective

interests which eschews any external support. A very original approach in the Italian union tradition.

At its first session in June 1950, the CISL General Council adopted a motion entitled “Guidelines and objectives of trade union action” which asserted that “the trade union movement differs from any other organization by its nature, aims and methods of action”. Being autonomous, free from any obedience, makes it able to affirm the priority of labour rights over other economic factors. Work is not just a commodity because it can never be divided from persons and their dignity. This character gives to work the supremacy over capital and the right to conflict, even if its goal is to reach an agreement and cooperate with it.

Employers and their associations expected that hostility toward Communism meant unconditional surrender to capitalism. They realized their mistake quickly and expressed their disappointment by fighting the new union in the workplace and everywhere their lobby could arrive. This brings our attention back to trade union and party relations. There is a pertinent remark on this subject in the vibrant passage of Pastore’s relation introducing the second CISL Congress, held in Rome from 23rd to 27th August 1955: «There has already been an event in Italian democratic life which must put us on our guard. Some have tried to cover the protection of privilege under the guise of the defence of freedom. After the April 18th (1948) elections, some have tried to turn the people’s movement of liberation into an occasion to favour the interests of the privileged few».

In the same speech Pastore emphasized that the notable increase in the GDP had not produced an increase in the

percentage of the national income that went to workers. On the contrary, this percentage had decreased. So Pastore concluded polemically: «Well, who has received the benefits from income and production increases? Clearly not workers. Here, then, is our salary policy at plant level, directed at raising workers' participation in the division of production unity earnings».

These statements did not find strong solidarity in the DC Party, where large sectors had intimate bonds with Confindustria, the Italian private employers' association. A situation that made Pastore insist that a strong trade union was necessary with such an inflexible employers' class, one that was not able to understand the importance of having a legitimate union as counterpart. As another leader in the same Congress said, just as the CISL had proved courageous and able to face the Communist hegemony, so it «would be ready to combat forcefully the corrupting or threatening manoeuvres of every employer and every kind of blackmail».

The problem of political and union office compatibility for leaders both at the national and the local level was posed at the same 1955 Congress. A coherent and audacious question at the same time. Concerning trade union leaders who also had political responsibilities, the Secretary's relation said, «We are doubly worried. First because of our general concern to safeguard our leaders' independence; secondly to avoid the likelihood that competing commitments, time needs, etc. might reduce the efficiency of trade union office». The problem was definitively solved in the sixties, by deciding total political and union office non-compatibility, at any level.

We have said that one aspect of autonomy is vis-à-vis

economic powers, above all company owners, the natural counterpart of trade unions. In this regard, some events that occurred at the FIAT during the second half of the fifties offer an interesting example. FIAT, the main Italian car industry, was then the biggest and most powerful private company in Italy. It is still a giant within the Italian panorama, dominated as it is by small and medium enterprises, but back then its role was huge compared to the present, and its industrial relations had a strong influence all over the country almost until the end of the last century. So the results of the FIAT workers' annual representative elections had enormous importance. In 1955, after a heated campaign held in a climate of fierce competition, the metalworkers' federations FIM-CISL, FIOM-CGIL and UILM-UIL won 39.5%, 39% and 22.5% respectively, with FIOM-CGIL losing its previous pole position and several percentage points. The FIM-CISL company representative, whose leader was Antonio Arrighi, decided to cooperate with FIAT management to reduce as much as possible any possibility of action on the part of the FIOM-CGIL. In 1956 the company workers' response in elections for representatives was 30.5% for the FIOM-CGIL, 45.8% for the FIM CISL and 23.6% for the UILM-UIL. The following year, influenced by the Soviet invasion and the bloody repression of Hungary's revolt, the electoral result brought FIOM-CGIL down to 21.1 and FIM-CISL up to 50%. The CISL triumph, reached through heavy FIAT intimidation of CGIL activists and the suspicion of management support for CISL lists, generated heated debates in the CISL metalworkers' federation and in the confederation itself. The conclusion was clearly expressed by the general secretary Giulio Pastore, who declared that the CISL would not present any list for FIAT workers' next elections of representatives if the company had not stopped all intimidation against the

FIOM-CGIL and all interference in FIM-CISL activity. The CISL company representative leader Arrighi did not accept the decision, which he fiercely opposed. He was expelled and founded a new company trade union, followed by almost all the FIM-CISL workers' representatives at FIAT, a good one hundred when they were 113 in all. In the face of costs for internal unity and hazards for the CISL presence in FIAT, Pastore and the metalworkers' federation FIM chose coherence as a trade union. The following elections confirmed the strength of the secessionists, who reached 31.8%, while FIM-CISL arrived only at 12.9%. FIM-CISL then started a new phase at FIAT with a small group of members and representatives proudly affirming its new conception as a trade union, precisely a trade union and not a company servant. This story has now a happy ending: in the 2006 workers' representatives election, for the first time since then, FIM-CISL won the most votes. The old secessionist organization still exists, but it is far smaller now.

As regards policy making, too, autonomy has never been the easiest choice for the CISL, conscious as it is that it cannot be politically indifferent, as political decisions produce effects on the working conditions and life of workers, but at the same time, or better just for these reasons, it must free to evaluate parties' proposals and behaviours.

The condition of exploitation and the subjection of workers can occur in society both in factories and in offices. Working against this situation necessarily requires reform at the state level. Privileged groups can pressure or even control public institutions, so they are counterparts for workers both in the workplace and in the political sphere, since they influence it to defend their rights and interests.

At the same time a trade union is a very specific kind of social organization. Trade union activities have contents, times and ways to struggle which are very different from political parties. A trade union is and must be the organization of employees per se. Its demands concern first of all wages, workloads, hours, skills and jobs, and workplace health and safety issues, so it has its own peculiar scope which it must not abdicate.

So we have seen that trade union autonomy has two main elements:

- to have sufficient material and immaterial resources and instruments to act;
- to make decisions without any compulsory influence of employers or other economic powers, political parties or public institutions.

A trade union is one of the most important forms of public commitment. If this association loses autonomy, its identity and function as an intermediate body in society is crushed by some other organization or institution. It becomes something else, thereby eliminating a unique way to give voice to a certain category of subjects, and the entire life of a society suffers the loss.

ASSOCIATIONISM

«Association» means an organization of persons having a common interest and acting for a common purpose. We are now dealing with the nature of trade union as organization. The CISL choice about this was as innovative as it was consistent with its other founding principles. The CISL model has two main characteristics:

- the trade union is born and operates because there are some workers who join to build and sustain the organization;
- The CISL is a confederation of sector federations. The sector federations are trade unions organizing all workers of the same sector of the economy (i.e., the public as well as the private sector, production as well as services) such as, for instance, the iron and steel industry or public service, or chemistry, or health care.

First of all, according to this concept, trade unions are organizations made through the will of workers and are composed only of those workers who freely decide to join that organization as members. Trade unions can also bargain on behalf of non-members, and sign valid agreements for all workers of the plant or company or branch concerned, but members are the only ones allowed to define the trade union directives, choose its leaders in periodic congresses, and track organization strategies within the working sessions of its internal organs.

This concept is opposed to the notion of trade unions as public institutions, typical of many authoritarian systems, or

just a mere part of a more general movement whose best expression is a political party. The CISL asserts that trade unions are protagonists per se, and that they have a true and strong presence in that they collect consensus starting from each workplace. People who operate at a workplace as CISL representatives are the most entitled to say: «We make the CISL». Considering this, it is easy to understand the reason why the CISL's main strength is its membership. But why become a member? Workers decide to become members and keep up their membership first of all looking at the way representatives behave. Workers' support arrives if plant representatives are able to win their trust. For representative this means the capacity to face up to company management, to understand and make a synthesis of the diverse needs and complaints of workers, and to pay sincere attention to their questions. To support this difficult activity, which needs both technical and human competences, the CISL has organized huge training campaigns at all levels of the organization from its earliest days.

The CISL organisational model combines industrial unions, according to the relevance of workplace activities, with horizontal unionism. It is a national confederation which co-ordinates the action of sector federations, bargaining with government about general issues on behalf of its members and workers' common interests as a workforce. This model was innovative in respect to the two traditional structures of Italian trade unions of the early twentieth century, which were craft unions and horizontal territorial structures.

As we have seen before, in the fifties Italy still had some 50% of the active population occupied in agriculture, but it was clear that the future development would rapidly changed

the country's production and occupational structure, giving a leading role to large industrial companies with work deeply divided into standard operations of - mainly - unskilled workers. The ground for the choice of the organization model was the comprehension of the features of the coming industrial development, and the decision to accept it as a positive factor to enhance workers' conditions. This vision was simply expressed by a training booklet of that period edited by a local union: «If the working class can go along the first steps of its promotion in the company, if collective bargaining must be at company level, if all this is true, the trade union must organize itself first and above all in the company. Besides the horizontal organization (which maintains its relevance) what is needed is to develop more and more a widespread vertical sector federation as far as strong union's representatives in each workplace. Only if CISL's workplace representatives, expression of union members' will, is able to be effective, it can generate efficiency which passes through the territorial sector federation up to the national level». This concept has lasted up to now. The CISL plant groups, as basic trade union organizational structures, are separate from the workers' council, nowadays called the RSU, *Rappresentanza Sindacale Unitaria*, (United Trade Union Representation) which is elected by all the company workers, whether members of the various unions or not. Only the RSU can bargain, but it is allowed to do so and its agreements are valid if supported by local unions, which are part of the national sector federation that have signed the national sector collective agreement.

This organizational structure calls all workers to commit themselves in the face of many obstacles, today like fifty years ago. On the one hand, hostility is the most common attitude among employers, who are generally looking for total control

and command, consistent with the “philosophy” of a family business, the most common kind of enterprise in Italy. On the other hand, workers’ attitudes have shifted through the decades, from the fear and ignorance of the first period, - related to lack of bargaining power – to the current bureaucratic and opportunistic attitude towards trade unions. Bureaucratic because workers consider trade union offices as a kind of public facility where one can go and check if their labour rights are respected and their wage is regular. Some seem to consider national and company collective bargaining and agreements like a sort of tariff regulations made by some independent public power over the social parties. These people have little or no personal involvement in trade union activity; they seem to feel that union activity concerns other workers, and that they have no obligation towards those who make it and keep it going. This attitude is especially opportunistic it is well-known, especially in the workplace, that trade unions survive thanks to the personal involvement of members and activists. But it is easier to criticize their action, saying it isn’t good, tough, pragmatic, prompt, etc. enough, instead of choosing a union, becoming a member and trying to improve it.

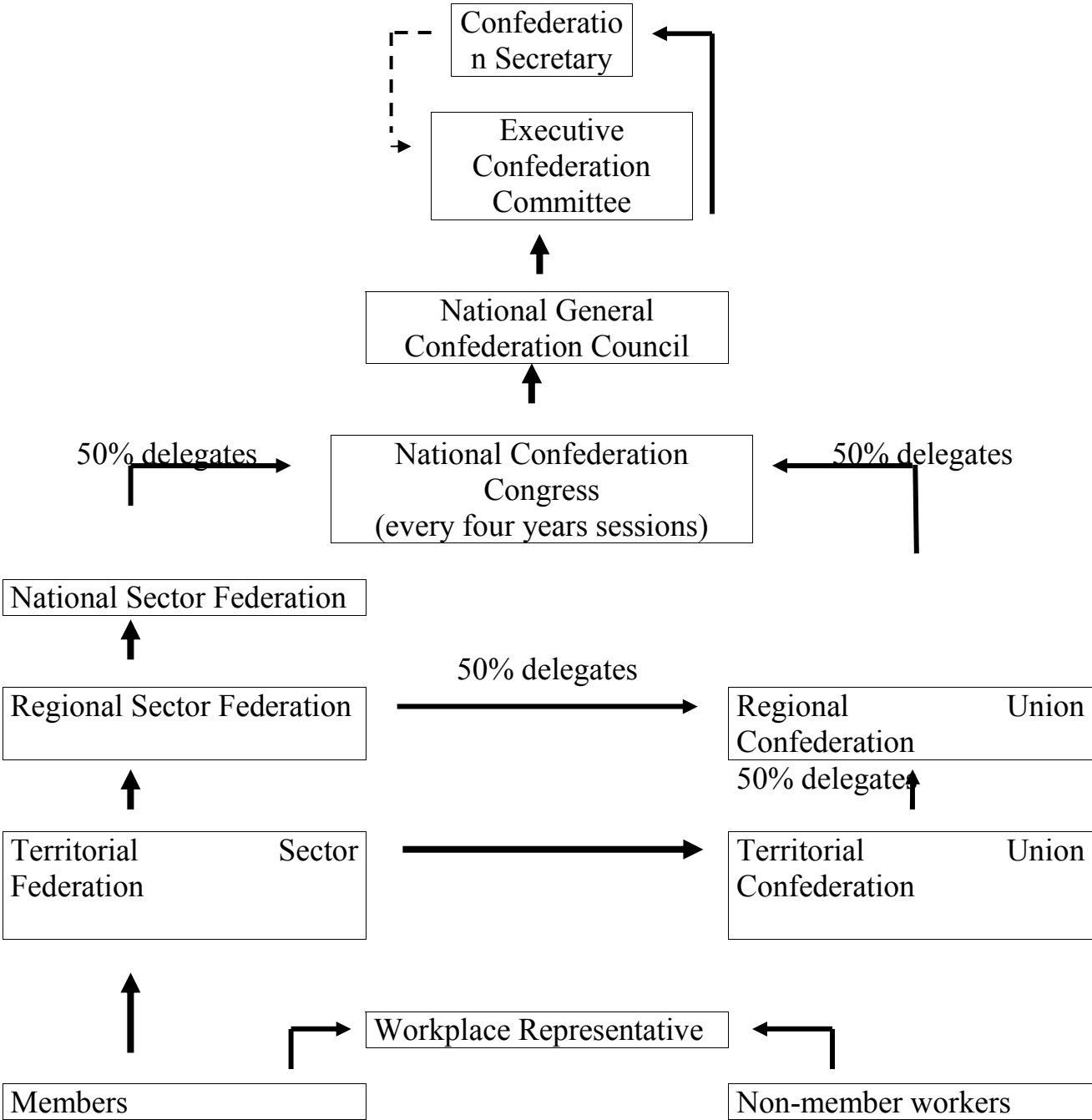
The organizational model was not easily understood or accepted in the CISL, either. It has prevailed because on the one hand it is the most suitable to the development of modern businesses and society, while on the other hand it is the most coherent with the collective bargaining method and the possibility of conducting collective bargaining at various levels. However, its success is also related to generational turnover. Starting in the fifties a large part of the leaders and officers were replaced by younger ones, most of them trained at the Centro Studi of Florence, the school for CISL leaders

and cadres, strongly desired and achieved by Giulio Pastore and directed by professor Mario Romani.

Table n. 2 shows the structure of the organization and the process of constitution of each level of leadership. At the base we have the members, allowed to vote in two different structures, the plant joint union representative and the local CISL federation leaders. Every three years members vote to elect the RSU, the workplace representative, together with non-member workers on lists presented by the different trade unions. Every four year the entire CISL holds a congress, a complex process lasting some months during which every level elects its leading organs (general council and secretarial group, led by a general secretary) and its delegates to the upper level congress session. The process starts at grassroots level with meetings of members in every workplace, or grouped by zones when the companies are small and members are few. Members often know each other quite well, because Italian workers have the right, which was first won through bargaining and then, since 1970, generalized by law, which allows workers to meet inside the workplace during working hours for at least ten paid hours per year. After discussing the basic congress document and putting forward any proposals they would like to make, they elect the delegates to the territorial federation congress. There the debate is much more intense and usually lasts a couple of days, concluding with the election of territorial federation general council members, the secretarial group and the general secretary, delegates to the regional federation congress, which constitutes the following structure in the vertical organization's line, and to the territorial confederation union congress, the so called horizontal structure, joint representation of all local sector federation. So the process follows parallel paths: one involves

the sector federations, which constitutes the so-called vertical line, while the other involves confederation and is called the horizontal line. Therefore the delegates to the regional session of every territorial federation join in the regional federation session to carry out a new phase of the process. At the same time, all delegates elected by every territorial federation join in the confederation session, which is carried out in the same way: discussion and election of its leading organs (Secretary and council) and of delegates to the regional confederation congress. The process is repeated again for the national federation and regional confederation congresses. At this point there is a difference: half of the delegates come from regional federation congresses and the other half from territorial federation ones. The process concludes in the national confederation congress, which is made up of delegates elected both at national federation and regional confederations congresses, with the election of the national general confederation council and the national Secretary. At each congress the number of delegates is proportional to the number of members.

Table 2. CISL organizational and operational structure

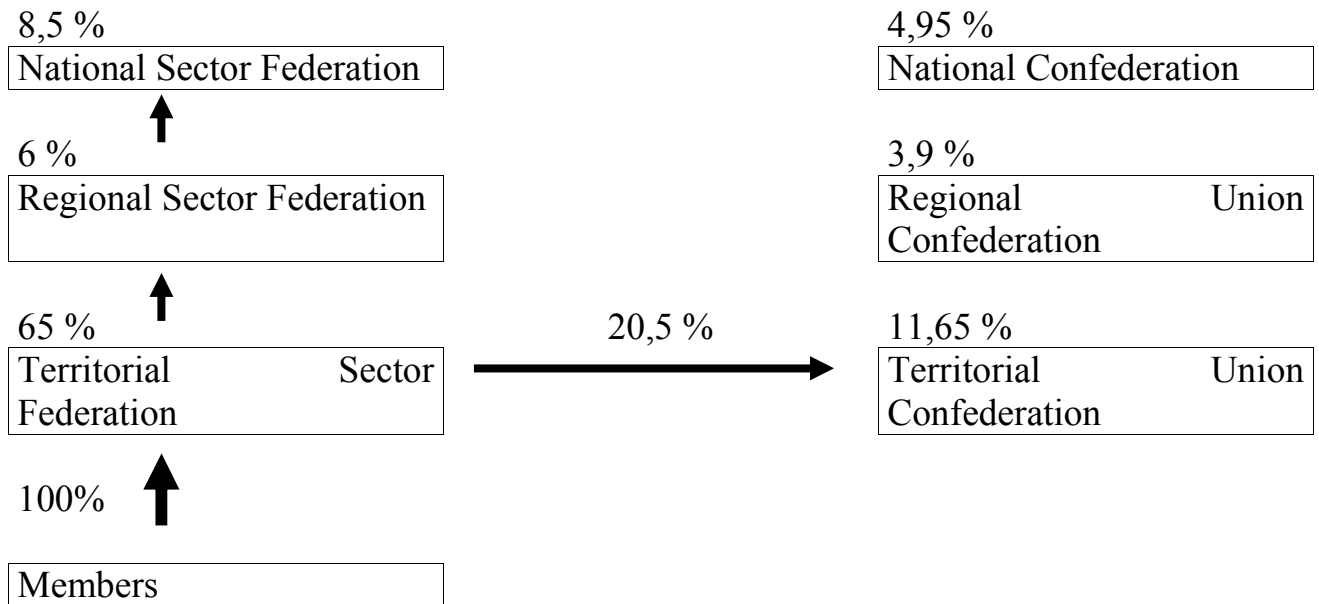


If it wants to be a truly democratic, representative organization, a trade union needs a true leadership selection process going from bottom to top. This is the best guarantee that each specific leadership, whether it be local, company-based or other, is as close as possible to its surrounding

environment, in order to carry out its mission of representation. Of course it is necessary to reach a synthesis of such broad differences in order to arrive at well-defined, incisive decisions and proposals. This is the role of the leadership, too, but its relation with the base, down to the grassroots level, can never be as hierarchical as is that of management in business enterprises. Nobody is paid to be a union member, so there is no possibility for compulsory relations towards any member, freely associated. The union's strength, and primarily its capacity to mobilize the base, comes from members' effort, their commitment, and it depends on their will and free consensus.

The economic resources coming from members' fees move in the same bottom-top direction. Every organizational level with a permanent office needs economic resources to pay officers and operating costs. These organizational structures are legitimated by the congress, whose process we have seen above, and each has its own budget and free use of its own resources, within general CISL rules. This means that the principle of autonomy is also alive inside the CISL. Table n. 3 shows the distribution of funds to the various parts of the organization structure, each one with its own specific accounts. There are small differences among sector federations, which have the autonomy to decide the percentages that will be distributed to their different organizational structures. The example shown below is that of the metalworkers' federation. If we take 100 to represent the members' fees, 79.5% is distributed at the three federation levels: 65% to territorial, 6% to regional and 8.5% to national. The remaining 20.5% is distributed among the three confederation levels: 11.65% to territorial, 3.9% to regional and 4.95% to national.

Table 3. CISL distribution of members' subscription fees (metalworkers fed. case)



By means of the trade union, workers find a way both as individuals and as a community to play a role on the political scene that does beyond the right of being parliamentary electors. In ancient times, politics was thought to express the pursuit of the common good. Then, in the Middle Ages, it changed its meaning and showed itself as the power to impose decisions, passing from the horizontal to the vertical dimension, becoming a hierarchical relation between superior and inferior. The democratic state offers a context within which these two dimensions can be reconciled, thanks to the pluralism that legitimates various social subjects in the decision-making process of the community. Civil society interacts with politics. As has been said above in interpreting the basic principles of the CISL, one guideline is that «the association or the social formation is the main way to achieve this difficult mediation, because it can transform individuals

into persons and society into community, (...) if it is really based on individuals as persons, on their rights, their liberties, their powers, in other words if it accomplishes those democratic ethical values which cannot flourish in society at large if they are not born and do not flourish in the particular society»

This has been the CISL's organizational approach from its very beginning, at which time two kinds of bias could be discerned. The first, limited to the starting decade, was a gap between theory and practice regarding centralization. Indeed, at that time power was held prevalently by the central confederation, in consideration of the surrounding social and political climate and of the necessities of the first phase of building the organization,. The second bias arose from the confluence of different craft unions having rather different conceptions of sector autonomy that needed to be adapted to and harmonized with the CISL's conception.

There is only one way to give employees the possibility to constitute a subject with the roles of protagonist: the joint trade union. All experience world-wide confirms that where collective bargaining exists there is a trade union, without a trade union there is no collective bargaining. The trade union is the only way to pursue values and material interests, and to give individuals a central role as protagonists as workers within the economic, social and political environment. According to the CISL concept, a trade union is the more effective the more it gets members and offers them opportunities to take part in determining their working conditions and pay. This concept leads concretely to sector federations as the base of representation, in line with the characteristics of Italian capitalistic development, in order to

achieve as much as possible for workers from this economic development. A trade union that makes to prevail the confederation level more easily carries out general projects, representing as it does the unification of all the workers, but it limits opportunities for the single sector and the company organizations. It might enforce solidarity by giving support to the weakest workers, but at the same time the smallest profit sector, where there is little to share, or that with the least bargaining power, could limit possible gains for all the other sectors. If we all want to march together, it is the slowest who sets the pace. On the contrary, trying to run alone as individuals thinking they will achieve the greatest advantage that way is, with very few exceptions, a dangerous illusion. Indeed, we unite in trade unions to remedy the huge asymmetry between the bargaining power of the company vis a vis the single worker. Therefore, we have to reach a difficult balance in order to unite effectiveness with solidarity. The best solution is to have several integrated levels for collective bargaining , going from the company to the national, each with its specific subjects and interlocutors. In the last half century of their history Italian trade unions have partially achieved this solution, but it is not yet complete and is always faces the risk of being reduced.

Finally we have shown that the CISL concept of organization affirms that it is not possible to promote workers' power if the workers themselves do not participate personally. Thinking of the trade union as an association leads to understand the relevance of membership size. This is of course correct and always very important, but it is not enough. Even a very large trade union, if badly organized and lacking in proposals, cannot achieve its goals and wastes its potential strength. At the same time an organization can be full of good

ideas, but if it is not able to proselytise effectively it exists in vain..

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The aim of a trade union is the definition of the rules regulating relations between workers and employers. These rules – when they are not left to the complete arbitration of employers – can be defined either by law or through collective bargaining. In the Italian trade union tradition it is the latter of these alternatives that prevails. Collective bargaining is the formula that guarantees the maximum level of autonomy of all the actors involved and – at the same time – a high level of accountability.

Bargaining means two or more parts trying to reach an agreement in which each side promises to do something, connecting obligations and rights of all parties concerned. About industrial relations the two natural parties, management and workers, can decide that reaching agreements is the way to regulate their relations, either generally or about a specific point. Reaching an agreement means that the parties have to satisfy one specific condition: they must reach unanimity. Let's think about this apparently obvious point. Agreements are a very peculiar way to take a binding decision. The parties stipulating an agreement need to agree with everything that is included. The agreement holds because the parties accept the decision as their own. While in politics conflicts are solved through the vote of the majority and majority takes a sort of hierarchical power over the minority, when you carry out bargaining the conclusion is always an agreement expressing the decision of all parties concerned. Quality and quantity of collective agreements between social parties give an important character to an industrial relation systems. That shows the autonomy of the

parties, their capacity in self-regulating and adapting to changing situations. Surely making legal agreements means conforming to the laws in force, but the more the parties involved are able to solve their conflicts by themselves, the fewer laws will be necessary to settle these problems.

The history of industrial trade union relations in Italy is first of all the history of collective bargaining. The success of collective bargaining is a good indicator to measure the relevance of trade union influence in our country. In Italy like elsewhere collective bargaining exists because there are workers associated in trade unions with the power to propose themselves to employers and their associations as interlocutors entitled to conduct bargaining leading to an agreement.

Laws may also originate in trade unions. This occurs when trade unions present and support the passing of a new law through their lobbying power. This has been very rare in the Italian trade union history in recent decades. However, this does not mean that trade unions haven't been involved at all in legislative regulation. On the contrary, nowadays law and collective bargaining are better connected than in the past, and there is an increasing number of laws that incorporate bargaining agreements. The separation between law and collective bargaining is more blurred than in past decades. This means that there are laws where the Parliament accepts as proposals deriving from an agreement between the social partners, which may be the two natural counterparts, trade unions and the employers' association, and/or with the government as third part eventually concerned. Working in the opposite direction, there are laws that leave some aspects open and ask the social parties to define these aspects through an agreement of their representatives.

Nowadays the relation between law and role of social partners is stronger in Europe. According to Art. 138 and 139 of the European Community Treaty the consultation of the social partners may in two ways. The first can occur before the Commission presents proposals regarding social matters, so as to have a “possible orientation” about Community intervention, or after the (possible) decision of the Commission to formulate itself a proposal to be submitted to the social partners. In the latter case, the social partners provide the Commission with their opinions or even with recommendations. The second way is even more important : the social partners may respond to a consultation request by expressing their willingness to try to reach directly, among themselves, an agreement on the subject of the consultation. Therefore, an initiative for an agreement between social partners may supplant a Commission intervention and it has the power to stop the Commission’s initiative for nine months, a period which the parties and the Commission may agree to extend.

Mutual acknowledgment and respect among all parties doesn’t mean renouncing every effort to achieve the best results possible in line with one’s interests. Power relations are crucial for bargaining and for the support of a new law. The quantitative and qualitative aspects of mobilization reveal concretely the degree of workers’ consensus about trade union proposals (that is the reason why a few forms of mobilization are called “demonstrations”). We can’t expect too much from a trade union that doesn’t mobilize and increase its membership.

Of all the various forms of mobilization, the strike is the

most common. A strike has a direct impact, mainly because it visibly shows the commitment of workers and at the same time is costly for employers. Rallies and public demonstrations have the main purpose of letting workers know the goals and features of trade union action. The visibility of trade union activities may change according to circumstances; nowadays visibility is filtered through a very important – but not unique – interlocutor: the media.

To recall the importance of strikes and rallies might seem trivial, but it was less trivial in the mid-twentieth century when power relations were clearly on the side of employers, and putting into practice the right to strike was extremely costly, not only economically but also because of employers' reprisals. Nevertheless, in those years the CISL continued to affirm that the method of bargaining supported by strikes was the main way to foster workers' rights and achieve better conditions for them. A good example is the educational pamphlet published in 1954, entitled "Strike and collective bargaining as fundamental tools for the action of democratic trade unions". The pamphlet is an example of the training material the CISL was publishing in those years, and it maintained that one of the main goals of the trade union was to institute – as a follow up of autonomous action - collective bargaining with the counterparts. This action might require the support of a strike. It is always necessary to be prepared to organize a successful strike, even if it is quite likely that it will be not called.

We can say that strikes and collective bargaining are different aspects or different moments of the overall action of a trade union. They integrate each other. In a word, they are complementary and are both essential. The pamphlet

mentioned above stated that collective bargaining was more effective and dynamic than legislation. Generally laws can't aid workers to achieve new goals because of the limited possibility of trade unions to influence their passage. Moreover, a labour law meets its full and correct application at the workplace, where organised workers enforce it. This seems to confirm the fact that workers can obtain and maintain only those achievements that they can defend with their own organizational force.

The efficacy of collective bargaining doesn't depend only on the relations of power among different social actors. A crucial factor for the development of collective bargaining is the employers' need to have clear rules to establish good labour relations (with the workers) supported by both of the two counterparts. The strength of collective bargaining lies in the reciprocal legitimization of the counterparts, the full recognition of their right to represent different but legitimate interests. So, on the one side there is labour and on the other capital and profit. CISL has always recognised the right of capital and profit to exist: it has never supported the "dictatorship" of capital, or the unlimited increase of profits, but its existence, yes. This was not a simple issue in the period when the model of the USSR hadn't yet completely revealed its internal injustice and its incapacity to of generate wealth and well-being.

The CISL affirmed that capitalism could offer a perspective of improvement for millions of poor Italians. At that time, the confrontation between different models of capitalism was not so evident as it would become by the end of the twentieth century. The CISL didn't support capitalism unconditionally. The model supported up to that time was a

mixed economy where public, private and co-operative enterprises operate within a welfare system, which is not totally funded through public expenses, and defended both the role of the market and that of public economic policies.

In the '50s the CISL strongly affirmed the principle and method of collective bargaining linked to the economic development of the country. That meant having clear in mind “when” and “where” to bargain. On the one hand to bargain when there was a growth in productivity, so that the increase in workers' income would be connected to a real increase in wealth, since otherwise the salary increase would have a negative impact on prices and generate inflation. On the other hand, to bargain where, possibly everywhere, there was be a growth in productivity, since otherwise the increase in wealth would be transferred to profits and thereby decrease the average rise in workers' income.

The CISL decided to carry out not only inter-sector collective bargaining at the national level, but also national collective bargaining by sector and company collective bargaining. To carry out collective bargaining at the different levels in those years seemed impossible, and in fact it would be achieved only in the '60s. Company collective bargaining was also initially opposed by the CGIL, which accused the CISL of dividing workers and weakening the minimum standards of defence of workers' rights. When, thanks to some experiences, it was possible to show that the different levels of collective bargaining were not mutually alternative, this opposition between trade unions was totally overcome.

An industrial relation system with collective bargaining at both national and decentralised (territorial or company)

levels facilitates better labour market governance within a market where workers are subjects with specific competencies and gives them stronger bargaining power. To deny the existence of specific competencies and bargaining power, meaning differences among workers, would be a way to push toward individual bargaining and concentrate power unconditionally in the hands of management. This brings us to point out the never definitively solved problem of linking individual specificity, differences among workers, and solidarity.

Of course, solidarity does not mean egalitarianism. Solidarity means that everyone – irrespective of his or her position – should take care of everyone else. This is easy to declare, but not to be taken for granted. The general improvement of workers' conditions requires particular attention because union members are people with different conditions as regards wages, professional roles, legal protection and bargaining power. And these differences have been increased by recent deregulation and flexibility policies.

Collective bargaining (at the national, sector, territorial or company levels) aims at governing the interests of all counterparts through the mediation of the criteria of equity and solidarity. The formula for equity and solidarity valid at any time and everywhere does not exist. On the one hand it would be absurd to deny the possibility of salary increase for the workers of a specific sector or factory just because the same increase cannot be extended to all workers at the same time. That would represent a negative principle of solidarity. On the other hand the “theory” of the “first category”, according to which categories with a strong organizational framework have the right to achieve any and all union goals without paying

attention to the impact of their action on the other workers, goes against the principle of solidarity. The correct way to operate would be to go ahead only when the analysis of foreseeable consequences shows it is possible to do so without damaging other workers. An example of this is Italy's economic situation, where the issue of unemployment, which in some regions reaches very high levels, must be considered primary. Consequently, trade union action cannot ignore the goal of increasing employment, or at least keeping it at the same level.

The date of the birth of company collective bargaining as trade union policy in Italy can be posed on February 24-26, 1953, during the CISL General Council meeting held in Ladispoli (Rome). This General Council was focused on salary issues and affirmed that company collective bargaining was necessary to achieve the highest result in sharing productivity's increase. The next session of the Council - organized in October of the same year - focused on the factory level of intervention and on labour performance issues. The impact of new technologies on labour cannot be ignored by trade unions, and trade unions should also consider that to give a human face to work they cannot count only on employers' initiatives or the initiatives of the head of personnel.

So began the long road to company collective bargaining that was to get its first recognition at the end of the '60s. A more recent reference point is the agreement signed in July 1993, which established two levels of collective bargaining: the national (by sector) and the company one, with deadlines and fields of intervention regulated by national agreements.

Nonetheless, like everything related to social life, we

cannot think we've put the word END to the discussion among the actors involved in these issues.

NON-DENOMINATION

Non-denomination means independence from all church and religious credos, but it doesn't mean opposition to religious faith at all. Non-denomination is the capacity of an organization to define all activities and policies in a way that is independent and autonomous from religious authorities, in complete freedom for members to profess their religion.

The fundamentals of non-denomination are not usually analysed as an aspect of autonomy, so already included in it. We can say that we are autonomous if we are independent from all external power: political, economical, cultural and religious too. We highlight non-denomination in our presentation of CISL principles because it was not an easy decision; it was discussed at length and was less trouble-free than it seems nowadays to the majority of unionists.

The non-denomination issue was a central theme of debate among the top leadership of CISL for a decade. They had to defend themselves from two opposite accusations; the first of being Catholic or “too” Catholic, and the opposite one of not being truly Catholic or even not Catholic at all. These accusations demonstrate the degree of innovation that the CISL brought to the Italian social and political scenario. The question is not yet completely solved, and the debate on the strength or the lack of influence of the Catholic tradition on CISL strategies is still on the floor.

Before the Fascist dictatorship imposed its one trade union, there were two large Confederations in Italy: the Socialist CGL and the Catholic CIL. As we saw in the

introduction, in 1944, while Centre-North Italy was occupied by German troops, there was created a large anti-Fascist Confederation, called the CGIL, in which the three different ideological streams present among workers -- the Communist, the Socialist and the Christian -- were represented.

As told in the first chapter illustrating the rebirth of trade unions after Fascism, most part the CISL's leaders came from the Christian component of the CGIL, which left it in July 1948. Yet the CISL decided to take on the social Catholic tradition as a fundamental but not unique component and declared clearly its non-denomination. This is a very important step in the Italian trade union history: with the CISL decision the presence of a confessional trade union comes to an end, even though almost the totality of its members were Catholic.

The CISL presented elements of continuity and others of rupture with the Catholic trade union tradition, which had formerly been expressed by the CIL (Italian Confederation of Workers) during its less than ten years of life after the First World War. The mediator between these two experiences was a generation of Catholic trade union leaders (Grandi, Rapelli, Pastore, Cappugi, Morelli, Cuzzaniti, Giannitelli, Pallenzona, Sabatini, Zini, Colasanto). On the one hand they reaffirmed the role of Christian-democratic trade unionism after the Second World War, giving continuity to their experience begun in the CIL and renewed in the CISL. They made possible the action of a trade union which was Catholic but not confessional, conflictive but not Marxist, and moderate but not employer-friendly. On the other hand, the transformation of the social composition of the areas which constitute the core of the trade union experience made innovative organizational and cultural models necessary. The CISL leaders foresaw the

transition from a prevailing agricultural, country, traditional society to a more modern, urban industrialized one. An effective trade union had to live up to the challenge of such change, and to the competition of the Socialist-Communist confederation. The CISL had to face a working force that was largely urban and industrial, very different from the traditional rural Catholic masses. Its choice was that Catholic values should enter a wider movement as an inner force and not as the predominant character of the organization's identity. They wanted to build a trade union that was a union of workers as workers, not as Catholics.

This decision led to a change in relations with traditional Catholic "voices", and in particular with the ACLI (Italian Association of Catholic Workers) and the Christian-Democratic Party, in which many CISL leaders were activists, often deeply involved. The debate was very heated, as the choice of non-denomination choice departed from consolidated traditional positions of the Christian social movements. These movements accused the CISL of embarking on a dangerous path at the risk of serving the most selfish positions of workers if they gave up a clear reference to Christian values for the whole organization, not only as the orientation of individual unionists.

These few elements show that the CISL's choice of non-denomination for the new organization was not a tactical expedient to attract other trade union groups that left the CGIL; rather, it was a complex process that touched the conscious of Catholic trade union leaders and intellectuals, who started to look at trade union action as a part of the industrial economy that could involve and unite all workers, irrespective of their religious credo.

The speech of General Secretary, Giulio Pastore, during the Constituent Assembly in April, 1950 represented a programmatic declaration of the CISL's guiding principles, such as the issue of the relation between salaries and productivity; the search for a new model of industrial relations closely linked to the issue of "economic compatibilities"; and the vocation for social and economic reform. At the same time, it echoed Christian social thought, with the themes of the social illnesses of capitalism; the participation of workers in company outcomes, both as employees and as shareholders; and, above all, an anti-capitalist ethic based on the denial of individualism and economic naturalism in the name of solidarity and social fairness in order to allow workers to develop completely as persons.

Who were the members of the CISL? Briefly, we can say that most of them were Catholic blue collar workers, confirming the original character of this organization, more interested in achieving concrete gains in pay,, work and life conditions than in general prospects of political change. They were sensitive to issues of solidarity and class consciousness, and so open to conflict, but only rarely willing to struggle very hard. They related to Christian social thought, affirming an inter-class vision where every class can give a positive contribution to society. This supported their refusal of Communist ideology, the best known feature of the CISL in that period. This refusal had also another and no less important consequence: opposition to every sort of dictatorship. Indeed, the experience of the Fascist regime, which had represented a brutal defence of the interests of the dominant class (for instance the big land-owners of centre-north Italy), created in large sectors of the population strong feelings against any and

every dictatorship, even one that could express their class interests.

In accordance with his cultural roots, Pastore believed that every class can contribute to making society better and richer materially and ideally, but this process is neither spontaneous nor certain. It is possible, but it takes human action to be organized and directed. First of all, it needs to give workers the possibility to express their interests as strongly as their counterparts. Workers are a weaker and poorer part of society, but they can unite and organize themselves. During the first CISL Congress, he said that the new organization must go on «giving a class consciousness to Italian workers, because if there is no class spirit workers no longer possess the will to struggle: they suffer, but they give up the struggle. This is an outcome of the historic situation caused by capitalism. Well, we have been working so that a large number of these workers gain consciousness of their rights and take part in the struggle involving all of us».

The adoption of the principle of non-denomination pushed the CISL away from the International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CISC), in contrast with contemporary experiences of Christian trade unions in France and Belgium. Quite unexpectedly, the CISL decided to join the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions), where American trade unionism had a great influence, and which was considered to be largely dominated by European Socialist trade unions.

There was no question of embracing the “western” choice represented by the American trade unions (which were clearly anti-Communist, within the context of the Cold War). At the

same time, the clear engagement with issues of social conflict that American trade unions were carrying on, together with their English and German counterparts, could not be forgotten. Indeed, the socialist trade unionism of the latter two countries had great influence on successive development of the main features of the CISL.

Beginning from its first congress, the CISL made clear its intentions of defending the interests of workers and, at the same time, maintaining its independence from any economic power and from political parties. Being anti-Communist had created expectations, first of all among employers, that the CISL would be a comfortable ally. A superficial observer could easily see the CISL's features as being 'non': non-Communist, non-denominational. More deeply and truly its identity as a new trade union was based on the principle we have illustrated above: its goal of giving autonomous expression to workers' interest, its nature as a free association, and its choice of collective bargaining as the main method of action. Such principles were coherent with the development of a truly democratic society, where trade unions were allowed to be a fully recognized actor. "Political democracy without bread or without social policy weighs zero," said Pastore in that first Congress. This meant that it is necessary to achieve concrete benefits and to give the workers the opportunity for involvement, in order to overcome their estrangement from the state and the new Republican institutions. The struggle against vested interests and the tendency to make public institutions the private affair of a restricted elite was, and is still, essential to the creation of a stronger, more vital democracy.

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