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The Employer, His Spiritual Advisor and the Section: The French Center for Christian Employers (CFPC) (1926-1976)

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On Monday, June 14, 1976, a dozen employers met in Lille, in the Nord of France, at the home of one of the assembled men.[1] A spiritual advisor, a Catholic abbé, also took part in the get-together. All of these men were members of a section of the French Center for Christian Employers (*Centre Français du Patronat Chrétien* or CFPC), a national organization that existed under this name since 1948. This day, to honor and welcome some new members, a tour of the table was organized, "where each espressed his reasons for belonging to the CFPC, and what they were committed to accomplishing." Many spoke of "social problems" with which they were confronted in their businesses, and evoked both the difficulty and the solitude involved in being an employer trying to act "as a Christian."[2] They explained that they came to this group in search of answers, and to exchange experiences. Some of the men were already members of other employer organizations, like

[1] I would like to thank Patrick Castel, Patrick Fridenson et Sheryl Kroen for their comments on an early version of this text.

the Center of Young Directors (*Centre des Jeunes Dirigeants* or CJD). In different parts of France the approximately 300 members of this organization were meeting, like these men in Lille, in small "sections," adhering to the same protocol: they followed an agenda, they worked together on a "program of study" and they prepared a written summary of their activities. These documents were not destined to be made public, nor were they private like ccorrespondence; but for the historian they offer an interesting glimpse of the way in which these employers conceived of their profession and their role in society.

These "sections" and the minutes of their meetings form the basis for this study of a movement of Christian employers that evolved and took various organizational forms across the twentieth century. Its first incarnation was The French Confederation of Professionals (*Confédération française des professions* or CFP), founded in 1926 by an active militant of social Catholicism, Joseph Zamanski (1874-1962). In 1936, this was a federation of 26 Christian professional unions, grouping notaries and shopkeepers, insurance agents and pharmacists. At this time the movement was comprised of approximately 12 000 members. Remaining active under Vichy, it was transformed after the war, becoming in 1948 the French Center of Christian Employers. The transformation was twofold: first, the CFPC renounced its syndicalist activity, becoming instead an intellectual movement; second, it brought together business leaders, less numerous than the professions that defined the organization before the war. In 1948 the CFPC had only 6000 members. By the 1960s membership fell to 3000. In 2000, the movement again changed its name, becoming Christian Entrepreneurs and Leaders (*Entrepreneurs et Dirigeants Chrétiens* or EDC). At present it boasts 2500 members.[3]

Situated at the intersection between the world of business and Christian movements, the CFPC attracted individual employers who shared a desire to affirm their responsibility as employers publicly, to act outside their business, and to get involved in questions of

[2] Archives des Entrepreneurs et Dirigeants Chrétiens (EDC), Lille, Lille 2e, Compte rendu de la réunion du lundi 14 juin s.d. [1976].

[3] Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, Nicolas de Bremond d'Ars, Hélène Frouard, André Grelon, *Origines et histoire du Centre français du patronat chrétien (1920-2000). Rapport final de recherche*, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS)/Les Entrepreneurs et Dirigeants Chrétiens (Les EDC), 2016, 506 p.

professional development. Officially they did not try to defend the interests of their own businesses or markets. One member, Yvon Chotard (1921-1998), a founder of the publishing house, France Empire, and president of the CFPC from 1965 to 1970, was, for example, the author of many talks given at the end of the 1960s around topics such as "The Ethics of the CEO" or "The Function of Employers in the Profession." Active in the public sphere, he was the founder and president of Chambers of Commerce for Youth (which promoted civic and public engagement of employers), a member of the Social and Economic Council (between 1969 and 1984), president of the Professional Development Commission of the CNPF (*Centre national du patronat français*) (in 1971-1972) and vice president of the CNPF (in 1981-1986).[4]

Since the 1960s employers and employer organizations have been the object of a great deal of research,[5] but the members of this movement have received very little attention.[6] Today, historians and other scholars in the social sciences are familiar with employer organizations at the local, national, and international levels.[7] But owners of small- and medium-sized establishments are less well known than those of larger businesses, and intellectual movements connected to these groups are less well known than their syndicalist

[4] Archives Nationales (AN), 617 AP 4, Papiers Yvon Chotard, « Réflexions manuscrites sur l'éthique du chef d'enteprise », s.d. (vers 1968) ; AN, 617 AP 11, Papiers Yvon Chotard, « Notes manuscrites sur la fonction patronale au-delà de la profession », s.d. (années 1960) ; « L'entreprise dans la cité », 1969.

[5] See the recent works of Hervé Joly, *Diriger une grande entreprise au XX^e siècle. L'élite industrielle française*, Tours, Presses universitaires François-Rabelais, 2013 and Jean-Claude Daumas, Alain Chatriot, Danièle Fraboulet, Patrick Fridenson, Hervé Joly (dir.), *Dictionnaire historique des patrons français*, Paris, Flammarion, 2010.

[6] An exception is: Constance Georgi, *Contribution à l'étude du patronat français: enquête auprès de ces entrepreneurs qui cherchent à se rendre "agréables à Dieu" au sein du mouvement des Entrepreneurs et Dirigeants Chrétiens*, mémoire de master 2 en sociologie, EHESS-ENS, 2010.

[7] The principle researchers in this domain are Hartmut Kaelble, Werner Plumpe, Piero Craveri, Howell John Harris, Haruhito Takeda, Alastair Reid and Jonathan Zeitlin. Cf. Patrick Fridenson, « Préface », in Danièle Fraboulet, *Quand les patrons s'organisent. Stratégies et pratiques de l'Union des industries métallurgiques et minières 1901-1950*, Lille, Presses Universitaires du Septentrion, 2007, p. 9 ; Luca Lanzalaco, « Business Interest Associations », in Geoffrey Jones et Jonathan Zeitlin (dir.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. See also Yohann Morival, *Les Europes du Patronat. L'enjeu "Europe" dans les organisations patronales depuis 1948*, thèse de doctorat en science politique, EHESS, 2015 and Danièle Fraboulet, Michel Margairaz et Pierre Vernus (dir.), *Réguler l'économie. L'apport des organisations patronales. Europe, XIX^e-XX^e siècles,* Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016.

and professional activities.[8] More generally, the collective actions organized by so-called "dominant" social groups are less well-known than those of the groups they "dominated."[9]

Research exists on the connection between religion and business, in the tradition of Max Weber.[10] These works have explored the complex relationship between protestantism and capitalism, for example, in the British context.[11] In contrast, very little work has been done on the relationship between Catholicism and capitalism in France.[12] Bonnie Smith's suggestive work on the development of a Catholic bourgeois culture in the Nord in the nineteenth century stands as an exception; however, her sharply gendered portrait of a world where women take care of religion, and men, business, deserves to be reconsidered, at least for the twentieth century. The male employers at the heart of this study were certainly concerned with religion as well as business; it is precisely because they found it difficult to balance these two realms that they became involved in the sections of the CFPC.[13]

This article comes out of a broader collective project on Catholic employers from which a number of articles have already appeared.[14] Here, however, I present my own

[8] An exception is Mickaël Ciccotelli, « Socialisation au rôle patronal et mobilisation collective du groupe des chefs d'entreprise. L'engagement au Centre des jeunes dirigeants (CJD) », *Sociétés contemporaines*, n° 98, 2015, p. 49-78, Florent Le Bot, « La naissance du Centre des jeunes patrons (1938-1944). Entre réaction et relève », *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, n° 114, 2012, p. 99-116.

[9] Eric Agrikoliansky et Annie Collovald, « Mobilisations conservatrices : comment les dominants contestent », *Politix*, n° 106, 2014, p. 7-29.

[10] Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel et Denis Pelletier, « L'entreprise et les religions. Max Weber, Baby Lou et le bricolage », *Entreprises et histoire. Entreprises et religions*, n° 81, décembre 2015 ; Geoffrey Jones et R. Daniel Wadhwani, « Entrepreneurship », in Geoffrey Jones et Jonathan Zeitlin (dir.), *The Oxford Handbook of Business History,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 501-528, p. 507-509.

[11] David J. Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians. Business Leaders and the Churches in Britain, 1900-1960*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1990 ; Leonore Davidoff, Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, Routledge, 2nd ed., 2002.

[12] An exception is: *Les chrétiens et l'économie. Colloque de l'Association française d'histoire religieuse contemporaine*, Paris, Centurion, 1991.

[13] Denis Pelletier, « Etre patron : l'ardente obligation », *Notre histoire*, n° 187, 2001, p. 60-63.

[14] Chessel *et al., Origines et histoire, Rapport final de recherche, op. cit.* See also: André Grelon, « L'ingénieur catholique et son rôle social », in Yves Cohen et Rémi Baudouï (dir.), *Les chantiers de la paix sociale 1900-1940,* Fontenay-aux-Roses, ENS, 1995, p. 167-184, André Grelon, « Patrons et cadres catholiques », in Bruno Duriez, Etienne Fouilloux, Denis Pelletier et Nathalie Viet-Depaule (dir.), *Les catholiques dans la République 1905-2005,* Paris, Les Editions de l'Atelier, 2005, p. 81-90, André Grelon, « Le patronat chrétien », in Jean-Claude Daumas, Alain Chatriot, Danièle Fraboulet, Patrick Fridenson et Hervé Joly (dir.), *Dictionnaire historique des patrons français,* Paris, Flammarion, 2010, p. 1055-1060, André

research, focused around the local section. The section is treated as the cornerstone, or basic unit of a movement, the CFPC, which operated at many levels.[15] Starting in the 1950s the sections organized themselves regionally. The national headquarters of the organization, meanwhile, coordinated activities at all levels: starting in 1956 a large number of members were assembled every two years for a national convention. These national meetings were held in different cities, as was the practice for the "Semaines sociales," the mobile Catholic university of the interwar period.[16] These national meetings were held precisely to favor the integration of local sections into a national movement. Finally, an international level of organization existed from the interwar period on, in the form of conferences. Starting in 1949 it was an international federation, UNIAPAC, that brought together christian employer organizations from various countries.[17]

This study focuses on "the section" of the CFPC and the intellectual activites in which its members engaged. Where did this organizational structure come from? Did it have the same function in the 1930s as it did in the 1950s? If not, how did it change over time? How, starting from "the section," and, in particular, from its meeting summaries (the "comptes rendus"), can we learn about this movement and the engagement of its members, in particular in relation to other related organizations and movements? In essence this study looks at this movement of employers from the bottom up, borrowing the concept of a "repertoire of organizational forms" as it was used by Elisabeth S. Clemens in her study of women's associations in the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century.[18]

Grelon, « La naissance des instituts industriels catholiques : le rôle pionnier du Nord de la France (1885-1914) », in Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel et Bruno Dumons (dir.), *Catholicisme et modernisation de la société française (1890-1960),* Lyon, Cahiers du Centre Pierre Léon, 2, 2003, p. 87-114, André Grelon et Françoise Subileau, « Le Mouvement des cadres chrétiens et la Vie nouvelle : des cadres catholiques militants », *Revue française de science politique*, vol. 39, n° 3, 1989, p. 314-340. Finally, see Nicolas Bremond d'Ars, « La conscience éthique restaurée des Entrepreneurs et Dirigeants Chrétiens », *Social Compass*, vol. 59, n° 2, 2012, p. 159-172 ; Nicolas Bremond d'Ars, « Subordination croyante et autonomie du sujet chez les Entrepreneurs et Dirigeants Chrétiens », in Jean-Philippe Bouilloud et Nathalie Luca (dir.), *Croyance et persuasion. Nouvelle revue de psychosociologie,* 16, 2013, p. 155-170.

[15] *La section, pierre angulaire du mouvement, Professions et entreprises*, n° 849, février 1997.

[16] Jean-Dominique Durand (dir.), *Les Semaines Sociales de France. Cent ans d'engagement social des Catholiques français (1904-2004),* Paris, Editions Paroles et Silence, 2006.

[17] Joseph B. Gremillon, *The Catholic Movement of Employers and Managers*, Rome, Gregorian University Press, 1961.

[18] Thank you to Patrick Castel for his suggestions on this point.

Clemens showed that the repertoire of organizational forms available varied according to the actors and their experiences, that actors rarely *invented* organizational forms, but rather transformed existing forms, contributing to the legitimacy of their actions. It is in this way that she explains why the women she studied tended to act on the basis of their associational biases rather than adopt mainstream political practices and tools.[19] This study seeks to explore how and why Christian employers chose one organizational structure over another. This question is central because it allows us to appreciate the specificity of the CFPC in relation to other employer and Christian movements of the period. It also makes it possible to situate the CFPC in relation to other modes of organization of employers and elites more generally: social clubs, political parties, professional organizations, etc.

I. From the French Confederation of Professions to the French Center of Christian Employers: two repertoires of organizational forms

A. Catholic Study circles: a dormant practice

One of the most prolific writers on social Catholicism and the founder of the French Confederation of Professions (CFP), Joseph Zamanski, presented his organization as the culmination of a rich tradition that dated back to the nineteenth century and developed over the twentieth century in the context of the different Catholic organizations in which he participated—the ACJF (Catholic Action of French Youth), the Semaines Sociales (the Social weeks), and the "secrétariat social"--part library, part research institute. The CFP was, hence, the last of a long line of initiatives, although this one belonged to the employers.[20] If Zamanski's *Nous, catholiques sociaux* represents a reconstruction after the

[19] Elisabeth S. Clemens, *The People's Lobby. Organizational Innovation and the Rise of Interest Group Politics in the United States, 1890-1925*, Chicago-Londres, The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

[20] Joseph Zamanski, *Nous, catholiques sociaux : histoire et histoires*, Paris, Etudes, Publications, Editions, Enseignement, 1947. He does not say but he was also member of the Ligue Sociale d'Acheteurs

fact, creating a genealogy which legitimized and valorized the creation of the CFP, his account does identify certain historical continuities which are very interesting, first on the level of personnel, and second on the level of practices. Zamanski presented the founders of the CFP as prior members of the ACJF. This was actually the case for Joseph Zamanski, who was part of the team animating the l'ACJF; he remained close to other founding members throughout his life.[21] Eugène Delcourt-Haillot, another founder of the CFP, was also once a member of the ACJF.

Even more importantly, Zamanski identifies pratices borrowed from earlier movements. In a number of lay Catholic organizations dating from the beginning of the twentieth century, the basic unit of the organization was the "study circle." Groups met in circles of this sort and submitted themselves to the "spiritual guidance" of priests and to the leadership of a lay president.[22] During the 1920s one of the first manuals for these study circles included a description of practices which would later characterize the "section" of the employers' movement: an exercise in collective reflection, that took place in the context of the circle, prayer (if the meeting was not preceded by a mass), a diversity of methods (exposés, the discussion of pre-ordained topics and readings), and finally, the necessity of writing a "compte rendu," or written report at the end of the meeting.[23]

In addition to this first source of inspiration (the study circles), we have a second source--that of the "Catholic Action," organized directly by the hierarchy of the Catholic Church.[24] In this targeted Catholic activism-- marked by the method of the Belgian Abbot

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avant la Première Guerre mondiale. See : Marie-Emmanuelle Chessel, *Consommateurs engagés à la Belle Epoque. La Ligue sociale d'acheteurs*, Paris, Presses de Sciences-Po, 2012.

[21] Personal archives of Pierre Richard (grandson of Joseph Zamanski), Dossier Zamanski, Charles Flory, « Un pionnier du catholicisme social : Joseph Zamanski », *La Croix*, 31 mars 1962 ; note on Joseph Zamanski du cardinal Gerlier, who was also a member of the governing board of the ACJF ; testimonies from Henri Boissard and Charles Flory in « Quelques témoignages », *Documents et commentaires. Professions*, mai-juin 1962. Joseph Zamanski, *Henri Bazire*, Paris, P. Lethielleux, 1945, p. 7, note 1.

[22] Pierre Pierrard, *Les laïcs dans l'Eglise de France (XIX^{e}-XX^{e} siècle)*, Paris, Les Editions ouvrières, 1988, p. 125-130.

[23] Maurice Eblé, *Manuel des cercles d'études*, Paris, Aux bureaux de l'ACJF, 1922, cited by Alain-René Michel, *Catholiques en démocratie*, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 2006, p. 32-34.

[24] Denis Pelletier, « Le catholicisme social en France (XIX^{e}-XX^{e} siècles). Une modernité paradoxale », in Benoît Pellistrandi (dir.), *L'histoire religieuse en France et en Espagne,* Madrid, Casa de Velázquez, 2004, p. 371-387

Cardin ("see-judge-act")--the basic unit of organization of the "section" was central.[25] The creation of the CFP was parallel to that of the Christian Workers Youth Organization (*Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne* or JOC), the first to use surveys as the primary means of getting its members to think about various subjects under the tutelage of a chaplain (1925 in Belgium and 1927 in France). The same practice found its way into a wide range of "specialized" movements organized by the Catholic Action in different areas: Christian Student Youth (JEC), Catholic agricultural youth (JAC), Worker Catholic Action (ACO), Catholic Action for Independents (a word used to signify « for the bourgeoisie », generally, ACI). In all of these movements, the basic unit was the "section," which organized a study circle around a small group of active militants and a chaplain. These sections produced both surveys and reports (compte-rendus).[26]

Paradoxically, although Joseph Zamanski was familiar with these practices, he did not use them right away when, along with others, he founded the Confederation of Professions. In effect, in the 1920s and 1930s, the "sections" of the CFP were not--or were not yet--spaces for work and reflection comparable to the study circles. The sections of the 1920s and 1930s were instead more like unions, centered around services they could offer to their members.

B. The employer union, a repertory of practices in use

The employer union offered the second set of practices available to the founders of the CPF; its influence is especially clear in the 1920s when the CFP was itself a mixture of already existing organizations. Before 1936, "employers" was not yet a category used by business leaders. Joseph Zamanski and those around him acted and spoke on behalf of a heterogeneous group of "professions" that included shopkeepers, manufacturers, artisans, and farmers, but also members of the liberal professions (doctors, notaries, lawyers, etc.).

[25] Gérard Cholvy, Bernard Comte et Vincent Feroldi (dir.), *Jeunesses chrétiennes au XX^e siècle,* Paris, Les Editions ouvrières, 1991, p. 73 et 119-120 ; Antony Favier, *Egalité, mixité, sexualité : le genre et l'intime chez de jeunes catholiques du mouvement de la Jeunesse ouvrière chrétienne (JOC-F), dans les années 68 (1954-1986)*, thèse de doctorat d'histoire, Université Lyon II, 2015.

[26] Archives départementales des Hauts-de-Seine, 46J193, JOC, *Comment lancer une section*, 2^e édition, 1938.

The name, "French Confederation of Professions," corresponded to the tendency in this moment to speak not of "employers", but of "professional unions," in both the Catholic world and beyond.

When it was created in 1926, the CFP was part of an older tradition of organizations whose objective was to bring together and assist Christian employers. For example, The Fraternal Union of Commerce and Industry (1891) offered services to businessmen, printed a directory, and published a bulletin. In 1926, this organization, under the leadership of Eugène Delcourt-Haillot, fused with the Professional Unions of Catholics, led by Joseph Zamanski, to give birth to the "French Confederation of Commercial, Industrial, and Liberal Professionals." Founded in 1901, this association brought together 25 professional unions at the national level. It published a journal, *L'Efficience*, and had 3000 members. The union itself--or the Federation of Unions--was the basic unit of the CFP : there was no mention of local "sections" in the bylaws of the CFP in 1931.[27]

The founders of the CFP obviously knew the organizations they were bringing together, but they were also familiar with the Christian unions of other professional groups: The Social Union of Catholic Engineers (USIC) founded in 1906 and the (Christian) Union of Employees in Commerce and Industry, which formed the core of the French Confederation of Christian Workers (CFTC), established in 1919. The founders of the CFP knew the CFTC, which in the interwar period was, on paper, a Catholic organization; but its priority was always to defend employees. The CFP was in constant contact with the CFTC. It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that the CFTC-CFDT proclaimed itself to be both secular and a workers' organization.[28]

The CFTC did not provide a model for the "section" adopted by the CFP. The local branch was a basic organizing structure of the CFTC: it assembled dues-paying members, but the section was not considered the driving force behind the organization. The activities

[27] Confédération française des professions commerciales, industrielles et libérales. Union économique des catholiques, *Annuaire 1931-1932*, p. 8-10.

[28] Michel Launay, *La CFTC : origines et développement, 1919-1940*, Paris, Publications de la Sorbonne, 1986.

at the local level were centered around practical actions--defending one or another member against being fired, demanding improved working conditions, negotiating raises. The work of "reflection" took place at the level of the union, at the departmental or regional level of the Federation, at the departmental, regional, or national level within the professions. Because unions did not have the legal right to organize within companies before the law of 7 December 1968, the section met outside the workplace for most of its existence.[29]

Finally, the founders of the CFP were also partly inspired by the diverse employer and professional organizations recognized throughout the country after the law of 1884. As a result of recent scholarship we are beginning to know something of these organizations.[30] We know that they existed even before the passage of this law, and that they served in the nineteenth century to regulate markets, to establish moral standards of behavior in professions, and to prevent fraud and unfair competition.[31] They also had other functions: they encouraged sociability, they created the foundations of professional solidarity, and they compiled economic and social data. In the twentieth century, these organizations developed at different levels, and increasingly positioned themselves against labor unions and the State.[32] However, it is difficult to know what they did, concretely, at the level of the sections, or if the sections existed at all; we have too little information about the structures or daily activities of these organizations to say for certain.

What we can say, however, is that from the 1930s on, the local sections of the CFP were not modeled after the study circles inherited from the first, "dormant" repertory of practices connected with Catholic action; rather they descended from this second repertory

[29] Antoine Bevort, *La syndicalisation et l'action collective. Le cas de la CFTC-CFDT 1945-1990*, thèse de doctorat de sociologie, Institut d'études politiques de Paris, 1993.

[30] Danièle Fraboulet, Michel Margairaz et Pierre Vernus, « Conclusion », in Danièle Fraboulet, Michel Margairaz et Pierre Vernus (dir.), *Réguler l'économie. L'apport des organisations patronales. Europe, XIX^e^-XX^e^ siècles,* Rennes, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2016, p. 331-340.

[31] Jean-Pierre Hirsch, *Les deux rêves du commerce. Entreprise et institution dans la région lilloise, 1780-1860*, Paris, Editions de l'EHESS, 1991 ; Claire Lemercier, *Un si discret pouvoir. Aux origines de la Chambre de commerce de Paris, 1803-1853*, Paris, La Découverte, 2003.

[32] Fraboulet, Margairaz et Vernus, « Conclusion », art. cit.

of practices devoted instead to syndicalist activity on behalf of business leaders.[33] In the 1930s the "local section" became more and more the basic unit of the CFP, and it retained this commitment to "service" on behalf of its members. To the section devolved the dual responsibility of acting as a liaison between the general leadership and its members, and of enabling close involvement in local economic life.[34] In 1938 the CFP boasted "256 sections et 12 000 dues-paying individuals".[35] The "sections" of the CFP varied from region to region. Some incorporated organizations that existed before the birth of the CFP, possessed a meeting place, a local staff, a placement bureau, night courses and other services.[36] In other cases sections were created from scratch with the birth of the CFP. In Nantes, for example, the section was founded in 1929-1930 at the home of Emile Decré, and over time developed a business center with a paid staff providing social services to its members. Around a governing committee of 10 to 25 elected members, the section brought together up to 300 people by 1934. The members assembled for lectures and benefited from the services provided by superintendents, also called "inter-company social services."[37] At the CFP in Paris in 1937, the steering committee received correspondence from the sections of Saint Etienne and Dijon that indicated there was only one local section per city. The sections were most often seen as the "social service secteur" of the employers' association. They hired social workers or health professionals for their members. They had an office, and a staff.[38] From this sampling it is clear that the sections as they were developed by the CFP in the 1930s bore no resemblance to the study circles. Its members were not committed to the sections: they met to hear lectures or to benefit from the services offered by this local

[33] In the following pages I rely upon the work of André Grelon (André Grelon, « Entre profession et patronat : un premier mouvement catholique (1926-1948) », in *Origines et histoire du CFPC, op. cit.,* p. 72-86). I also thank him for his help in thinking about these questions.

[34] *Revue des professions*, mai 1934 ; statuts de la CFP (1934).

[35] EDC, I-2, comité directeur du 22 juin 1938.

[36] EDC, I-2, comité directeur du 17 mars 1937.

[37] Christophe Bourgoin, *Le patronat chrétien de Nantes de 1930 à 1989*, DES, Histoire, Université de Nantes, 1990, p. 12-13. See also Marcel Launay, « Le patronat chrétien à Nantes de 1945 au début des années 80 », in Alain Croix (dir.), *Du sentiment de l'histoire dans une ville d'eau*, Nantes/Thonon-les-Bains, 1992, p. 331-342 and Marcel Launay, « Mouvement social catholique et milieu patronal : la naissance de la section nantaise de la Confédération française des professions 1930-1939 », *Bulletin de la Société archéologique de Nantes et de Loire-Atlantique*, vol. 133, 1998, p. 271-278.

[38] EDC, I-2, comité directeur du 17 mars et 26 mai 1937 ; 18 novembre 1948.

administrative unit of a national syndicate. It was only in the 1940s that the repertory of practices connected to the Catholic study circles was reactivated.

C. The 1940s: The Re-activation of dormant practices

WWII and the Occupation constituted a *de* facto transition between two types of activities in the sections of the CFP: on the one hand, social and trade union activities, and on the other, more spiritual activities. This transition--at both the national and local levels--was complex, and for a long time the sections were characterized by a hybrid of these activities.[39] In 1939-40 some sections maintained the same staff, along with their social services, while in others one sees a diminution of activity owing to a lack of leadership. Whether in the free or occupied zones, however, meetings and "lunch-discussions" continued to be organized.[40]

In 1942, in the context of the discussion of the Labor Code (*Charte du travail*), which they viewed favorably, the directors of the CFP decided to redefine themselves as "a center of study and moral formation" in order not to be dissolved as an employers union.[41] In fact, this was not necessary; the organization was protected by the statute of the law of 1901 and a number of employer organizations survived. That said, their interpretation of the text and the historical conjuncture incited them to put their syndicalist activity to the side and focus instead on educational activities.[42]

In January of 1945, in liberated France, the CFP decided not to present itself as a union (and not to "maintain the syndicalist form of its professional groups"), but instead "to restructure its organization around sections designed to study questions specific to professions."[43] The CFP abandoned its syndicalist form and announced itself to be an

[39] On this period see André Grelon, « Entre profession et patronat : un premier mouvement catholique (1926-1948) », in *Origines et histoire du CFPC, op. cit.,* p. 72-86.
[40] EDC, I-2, Comités directeurs des 10 mars, 18 avril, 19 décembre 1940, 16 janvier 1941, 15 janvier 1942.
[41] EDC, I-2, Comité directeur du 22 octobre 1942.
[42] EDC, I-2, Comité directeur du 16 avril 1943.
[43] EDC, I-2, Comité directeur du 11 janvier 1945.

"intellectual center for employers."[44] The section from Nantes affirmed in September of 1942: "It is incontestable at the present time, in light of the formidable evolution in the economic sphere, that the CFP must play a new and different role, becoming more a spiritual than a commercial and industrial mutual aid association. "[45]

A report from the first meeting of the Paris section in November of 1943 demonstrates a number of initiatives in this new direction. It seems that ecclesiatical advisors--a part of the CFP since its foundation in 1926-- played an important role in this evolution. In the Paris section Father André Arnou (1886-1955), a Jesuit priest serving the organization as a spiritual advisor at the national level since the 1930s, was officially put in charge of a national education project.[46] The section in Paris furthermore created a "commission" to study and propose solutions regarding the question of the middle class. While this question had been posed for many decades, and particularly preoccupied elites in the 1930s,[47] this is the first time that the section began to reorganize and reconceive of ititself as a space of reflection of this and other problems. In 1948 this same section discussed the preparation of a "programme de travail," a program of study, that would enable its members to discuss and develop social action to be pursued within companies. [48]

In Nantes, the section was transformed in similar ways under the stewardship of the Abbé Joseph Larue (1892-1978), a founder and chaplain for the Center for Catholic Students since 1928, and an advisor to the section of the CFP since 1934.[49] He incarnated a *de facto* connection between Catholic movements: certain members of the section had been members of the Christian Student Youth or the Center for Catholic Students recruited by

[44] EDC, I-2, Comité directeur du 14 mai 1945.
[45] ADN, CFPC, CFP, Conseil directeur du 28 septembre 1942.
[46] EDC, I-2, Comité directeur du 11 novembre 1943.
[47] Klaus-Peter Sick, « Le concept de classes moyennes. Notion sociologique ou slogan politique », *Vingtième siècle. Revue d'histoire*, n° 37, 1993, p. 13-34.
[48] EDC, I-2, Comité directeur du 11 novembre 1943 et 14 mai 1945.
[49] Laure Adam, *Un aumônier nantais: le chanoine Joseph Larue (1892-1978),* mémoire de maitrise d'histoire, Université de Nantes, 1994 ; Jean Garaud, « Larue Joseph Marie Léon », in Jean-Marie Mayeur et Yves-Marie Hilaire (dir.), *Dictionnaire du monde religieux dans la France contemporaine*, Paris, Beauchesne, 1990.

Larue.[50] The report from the meeting of the section in Nantes on 27th of May, 1942 demonstrates a direct appropriation of the practices of Catholic Action within the CFP: "it was agreed to create a team of 10 who would follow the example of other movements within Catholic Action in studying the program for the year, 'Jésus shapes his apostles'. Thereafter, if this plan works well for us, we can repeat it." At the end of the discussion, a first group of ten was constituted around the Abbé Joseph Larue, who was also the chaplain of teams from the MICIAC et de l'ACI.[51]

Another very important factor in the specific transformation of the section in the 1940s was the creation of a movement of Catholic Action for the so-called "independents," which is to say, neither workers, peasants, nor students. The Catholic Action for Independents (ACI) was officially recognized by cardinals and archibishops in 1941 (the Women's Catholic Action for Independents having already been created in 1939). Like other movements connected to Catholic Action, the ACI was structured around local teams, groups of between 6 and 8 members who met once or twice a month and produced written reports.[52] The practices of this movement, which attracted the same types of people as the CPF, was much more likely to be reappropriated by employers than the Action Catholic of workers or students. This overlap is essential for understanding how the CFP transformed itself into the CFPC, and more importantly for explaining how the first, dormant repertoire of practices associated with Catholic study groups came to be reactivated and thereby change the nature of the section within this organization in this moment.

The 1940s represents a critical turning point for the CFP and its structure. In the very peculiar context of the 1940s, its founders and leaders chose to transform this syndicalist organization into the means of spearheading an intellectual movement. This transformation, which had real organizational consequences, was facilitated by the existence of a repertoire of practices, born in Catholic milieux in the nineteenth century, and updated with the genesis of the ACI in the 1940s. In 1948, the CFP transformed itself

[50] Bourgoin, *Le patronat chrétien nantais, op. cit.*, p. 129-131.
[51] ADN, CFPC, CFP, Conseil directeur du 27 mai 1942.
[52] Jean Delmarle, *Crise religieuse et contestation sociale (1950-1975)*, Paris, Les Editions ouvrières, 1978.

into the CFPC. What then became of the "sections"? Did they transform themselves as well?

II. The "Work" in the Section (1950-1970)

At the beginning of the 1960s there was enormous regional variation in the CFPC. The Nord Pas-de-Calais had the largest local chapter (with 372 members), seconded by the sections in the west around Nantes (327 members) and the region around Lyon (206 members). There were more than 150 members in Paris and its surroundings (159), in Haute-Normandy (193), and in the Southwest (186). In other regions membership was smaller.[53] The focus of this study is the sections in the two regions where the organization seemed to be most dynamic: in the west, around Nantes, and in the North, around Lille.

A. Local sections in the 1950s: a diverse reality

On the ground this movement varied quite a bit depending upon the region. Yet, in these two cases at least, one can speak of a clear evolution in the « section » from the late 1940s on.

In Nantes, where the section existed since the interwar period, the transformations that began in the 1940s continued apace. In 1955-56 meetings took place between the members of the CFPC and those of the ACI. In 1955 the governing council decided to bring together the active members every three weeks according to the formula established by the ACI, which is to say in a smaller grouping of a dozen people with the goal of studying

[53] These are the figures proposed by the EDC themselves. They must, therefore, be treated with a certain degree of caution; other sources suggest that they give an accurate indication of membership in this period: AN, 617AP23, Nombre de membres par département en 1962 (tableau daté de 1964) ; AN, 617AP21, CPFC, Programme de travail, 1959-60 ; AN, 617AP18, Conseil national de Paris, 1962, liste régionale des participants.

passages from the gospel under the spiritual director, Joseph Larue.[54] This decision was made following a meeting of several chaplains and representatives of sections of the ACI: after a moment of prayer, the organizers hinted at this spiritual collective enterprise: « Instead of the usual survey of the ACI, those present discussed the program of the CFPC 1955-1956 'For activist employers!"[55] This was the second "programme de travail" or study program developed by the national movement, the first having been devoted in 1955 to "prefecting the personnel around the CEO." These kinds of initiatives within the sections corresponded perfectly to the activist vision of employers embraced most notably by Yvon Chotard, the important leader of Catholic Action, although the longstanding practice of using surveys to instruct and mobilize its members was replaced in the CFPC by a study program. This shift in practices would continue over the coming decades.

The first meeting following this new protocol took place among 13 participants in the city of Nantes on the 21st of December in 1955.[56] The report of the meeting spoke of what they were doing as an "experiment" of a "new formula" destined to "bring to this old and important section--one of the most beautiful in France, a new flexibility in its activities." This practice was described as the culmination of many meetings between members of the local section and the directors and chaplains of the ACI, "as much at the national as the local level." More precise still, the report explained that the team running the local section "avoided joining with existing ACI teams," and "proposed instead to adopt the methods of the ACI which favored personal meditation on a particular subject within the gospel, and the synthesis of these reflections with regard to our own lives and social condition." The bi-monthly rythm of the ACI was thought to be impossible. Another more important difference between the CFPC and the ACI was the role that would be played by the spiritual advisors, now called "counselors:" Our priests are not chaplains, but counsellors. We-ourselves must reflect more. The goal of the CFPC is as least as much to think methodically as to send our

[54] Bourgoin, *Le patronat chrétien nantais, op. cit.*, p. 146-148. See also ADN, CPFC, Réunion restreinte du conseil du mardi 13 décembre 1955.

[55] ADN, CPFC, Réunion restreinte du conseil du mardi 13 décembre 1955.ADN, CPFC, Réunion restreinte du conseil du mardi 13 décembre 1955.

[56] ADN, CFPC, Première réunion, mercredi 21 décembre 1955.

summaries to Paris." One of the two chaplains from this section got his training in the ACI.[57]

This experimentation with a "new formula" does not mean that the section in Nantes completely changed its nature. Between 1946 and 1947 their activities straddled the new and the old: "Monthly reunions" were organized around "lunch-lectures" or "meeting-lectures" around an invited speaker; the topics included local social service initiatives, such as (among others) an employment bureau and a house for children in the mountains. This kind of mixture persisted for quite a while.[58] In 1960, the section organized itself into six "study groups" convened to work through the program of study proposed by the center of the CFPC at the national level in Paris. But these groups continued to organize either lectures or meetings where they invited outsiders to come in a speak to them.[59]

The situation was somewhat different in Lille, where the CFPC experienced a veritable rebirth. The CFP existed before WWII in the Nord, as we can see from the directories of the CFP from 1930 and 1936-37.[60] But in the 1950s the organization was revamped, based on sections whose practices were very close to those of the ACI. Before WWII, the Cardinal Achille Liénart, the bishop of Lille, who supported the local movement of the Christian bourgeoisie, showed no interest in launching a new movement among employers.[61] But in 1957, when the Christian bourgeoisie became involved in the ACI, Liénart changed his position, and gave a green light to the CFPC, although he did ask that the organization not compete with the ACI.[62] This shift corresponded to an evolution at the national level, where the Assembly of Cardinals and Bishops, after Rome's 1954

[57] ADN, CFPC, Première réunion, mercredi 21 décembre 1955. This is the only compte-rendu from this section.

[58] ADN, CFPC, Lettre circulaire aux nouveaux adhérents, 28 avril 1955 ; A. Garnier, « Réflexion sur notre section », 22 novembre 1956.

[59] ADN, CFPC, Conseil du 28 octobre 1960.

[60] EDC, I-5, Confédération française des professions, *Annuaire 1936-1937. Liste professionnelle arrêtée en novembre 1935.*

[61] Pierre Trimouille, « La Bourgeoisie chrétienne du Nord (1930-1950) », *Revue du Nord*, n° 290-291, 1991, p. 417-427.

[62] Archives diocésaines de Lille (ADL), 4Z Archives Jacques Verscheure, « Rencontre avec Mgr Gand, Vendredi 29 janvier 1965, 17h ». See also P. Wauquier, « Note à son Eminence. Sur la CFPC (Confédération

condemnation of worker-priests: at this point the hierarchy of the Catholic Church recognized the need for employers who would cooperate with the Catholic Action of workers. In 1956 this Assembly declared that they "wished to see at the heart of employer groups, militants of Catholic Action who took to heart [the need for a veritable revalorization of its professional organization in a Christian spirit]." The Assembly encouraged, "in particular, the Center for Christian Employers to develop among its members a desire to collaborate with all those hoping to create a more just social order.[63] The sections of the CFPC in Lille that were created in this new context (like those in Nantes) relied upon the practices developed in the ACI even as they worked to develop their own identity. It also seems that these new sections completely replaced the older sections, all traces of which disappear in the archive.

The first section based on the "new formula" in Lille took its inspiration directly from a group from the ACI animated by Henri Mathias, who became the regional treasurer of the Regional Union.[64] The first traces of this study group date from the 24th of Octobre 1952. Entitled "Catholic and Social Action," this group had as its chaplain--not its advisor--the Abbé Wauquier until June of 1953. It usually met either at the convent, the Dames Franciscaines de Marie, rue du Faubourg de Roubaix, or at the home of one of the participants at 6:45 in the evening. The meetings generally began with a prayer, offered by a chaplain, and was followed--after a meal--by the study of a question. Some of the problems considered include: wealth and misery, unemployment, munipal elections, family leave for families of the working class and managment, and simply, lifestyle. The priest Jacques Verscheure became the advisor to this group in June of 1953. Entitled from this point forward "the Saint Raymond Circle of the ACI," brought together 15 or so participants, some of whom some were also members of the CFPC. In 1954, the group studied "feudalism," and the nature of pre-revolutionary society. In August of 1954 Henri Mathias

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française du patronat chrétien) [sic], 15 mai 1956. I would like to thank Frédéric Vienne for his help at the ADL.

[63] ADL, Assemblée des cardinaux et archevêques de France, 2B1, 1954-56, séance du 20 février, 1er et 2 mars 1956, p. 34.

[64] The paragraphs which follow are based upon a dossier of convocations and comptes rendus assembled by Jacques Verscheure. ADL, 4Z Archives Jacques Verscheure.

wrote to each member: "We have worked together in 1954/55 as much using surveys (the official program of the ACI) as by studying current problems" and asked for the advice of the members about his idea of pursing this work twice per month in the coming years. The meetings proceeded in just this fashion, demonstrating the effort to translate the kinds of activites that defined the "social weeks" of the ACI into action. Between 1955 and 1957 the evenings began with a mass at 7 o'clock in the evening, followed by a meal and a meeting.

By the 24th of November, 1958, the group had changed its name; now it called itself the CFPC. Henri Mathias wrote to its members: "At the first meeting, called in October to discuss the future of our group, we came to the conclusion that it was necessary to make some changes and follow a new direction." But the group continued to meet as it had before, at the convent of the Fransiscan Nuns, at 7 in the evening after a mass and a dinner. The topics considered in the study groups had, however, changed: in 1960, for example, they discussed the tricky question of unionizing within companies, the most important issue for the Christian Workers' Union.[65] Many meetings were devoted to discussing this critical question. [66] Their opinions were mixed about the « *section syndicale* ». The members unanimously recognized the need for worker unions "some by profound conviction, and others in deference to the fact of their existence or the Social Doctrine" of the Catholic Church. That said, "the section as a whole appeared to be against the recognition of such unions." However the group agreed to examine propositions of the Christian Workers Union on a case by case basis. [67]

The Abbé Jacques Verscheure carried out the transition between the ACI group and that of the CFPC. In the context of a meeting organized on the 10th of Octover, 1956, the employers who, with him, created the first sections of Lille, put into place a new hybrid formula, inherited partially from the ACI. The Catholic Action offered a clear model for a "program of study" in opposition to the "dinner-debate." Marcel Le Blan, the president of

[65] ADL, 4Z Archives Jacques Verscheure, Convocation d'Henri Mathias, 21 octobre 1960 ; Compte rendu de la réunion du CFPC du 27 septembre 1960.

[66] Frank Georgi, *L'invention de la CFDT, 1957-1970. Syndicalisme, catholicisme et politique dans la France de l'expansion*, Paris, Les Editions de l'Atelier, 1995.

[67] ADL, 4Z Archives Jacques Verscheure, 1ère section de Lille, 14 décembre 1960.

the first section of Lille, explained that "the dinner-debate was flawed, and did not lend itself to serious work." The Abbé Verscheure mentioned Mathias's group and the formula it had adopted (mass at 7 o'clock, meeting from 7:30 to 10:00, a quick dinner after the meeting at the convent of the Fransiscan Nuns). This formula was deemed "excellent" and adopted by the others. But what distinguished the sections of the CFPC from the sections of the ACI was the choice of subject for the "program of study" proposed at the national level of CFPC at the rue Hamelin in Paris entitled, "Business leaders in the service of the nation." One of the proposed themes of this program was adopted by this first section of Lille.[68] By 1962 this group from Lille became dormant, mostly because of the advanced age of its participants.[69]

So we see in both Nantes and Lille, two different contexts, that the Catholic Action constituted a concrete model for the sections of the CFPC created at the end of the 1950s. Whether this formula co-existed with the old one (that of the lecture-debate), or completely replaced it, the model of the "study circle" progressively won out. The "program of study" replaced the "annual survey" of the Catholic Action. How exactly did ideas and practices circulate within the context of the CFPC?

B. The Circulation of ideas within the CFPC

At the moment that the sections reorganized themselves, the "center" of the CFPC in Paris--at the national level--created a "commission of study," charged to produce documents that would be discussed in the new sections. Between 1958 and 1962 this commission was led by a member of the movement, Raymond Dreux, along with a dominican ecclesiastical advisor, Father Robert Boyer. This commission produced a large number of documents, most notably the voluminous "programs of study" distributed among the sections. They treated themes such as "The Personal Development of the Business Leader," (1955), "The Conquering Management," (1956) and the "Responsabilities of Business Leaders." (1957)

[68] ADL, 4Z, Archives Jacques Verscheure, Compte rendu de la réunion du mercredi 10 octobre 1956. A cette réunion participent l'abbé Verscheure, l'abbé Suty, Pierre Garcette, et plusieurs patrons des premières sections de Lille 1, Roubaix-Tourcoing et Armentière (Paul Le Blan, Marcel Lepoutre, Jean Dufour, etc.).

In 1962 the CFPC separated from Father Robert Boyer; a (lay) member of the organization, Serge Guibert, took over its education section.

From 1960 onward the education section became more of a collective operation: the writing of the program of study for 1966-1967 was decentralized: it was no longer produced solely in Paris, but was the result of a back and forth between the national and local levels.[70] The voluminous programs of study produced in the 1960s suggest a flow of knowledge from the top down; but at least until the end of the 1960s one can see a clear effort, on the part of the headquarters, to allow a flow of information from the bottom up, and to ensure that the members thought for themselves rather than passively accept a doctrine. They instituted two tools to accomplish this goal: questionaires and case studies.

The programs of study contained questionaires that the sections were supposed to fill out and attach to the meetings' compte-rendus.[71] The national office in charge of education made an effort to respond to the materials sent in by the sections.[72] The questionaire was also used to pass information up to the national level about the state of the movement from the sections and the regions: this was the case in 1964, in the context of a big debate on the role of the movement.[73] In 1965 a questionaire was distributed about "participation in the life of the company."[74] In 1967, in the context of the reform of social security, a questionnaire interrograted members of the movement who had responsibilities on the boards of directors of social security funds, family allowances, and retirement.[75]

Coordination between the local and the national level took place at the organization's conventions that were held every two years starting in 1956. Here we see in miniature the "co-production" of knowedge within the CFPC: from below, from above, revolving around certain set themes. The section was the hub of this operation.

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[69] ADL, 4Z Archives Jacques Verscheure, Courrier circulaire d'Emile Becquart, 25 octobre 1962.

[70] AN, 617 AP 18, Compte rendu de la réunion de bureau des 2 juin 1966, 17 juin 1967, 11 et 12 juillet 1967.

[71] AN, 617 AP 18, CFPC. Programme de travail 1964-65, p. 3.

[72] AN, 617 AP 18, Compte rendu de la réunion spéciale du bureau tenue au Touquet les 21-22 septembre 1969, document dactylographié, 29 septembre 1969, p. 21.

[73] AN, 617AP18, Réponse au questionnaire « Rôle du CFPC », 4 mars 1964.

[74] ADN, 5K3-3, « Questionnaire du 22 mars 1965 sur la participation à la vie de l'entreprise », avril 1965.

[75] AN, 617 AP 18, Compte rendu du bureau du 19 octobre 1967.

C. The *compte rendu* of the section

What defined the "new formula" of the sections was the fact that they produced "compte rendus," according to the model of the Catholic Action. The compte rendu appeared to serve a variety of purposes. First, it was read by members who occasionally shared their reactions and suggested that the compte rendus be "live" testimony to the life and thought of the sections.[76] Second, the compte rendu was used by regional leaders in the organization to learn about the sections' activities. In the Nord, the delegate to the regional union between 1959 and 1967, Pierre Garcette, regularly used compte rendus in this way.[77] Third, at the national level, those in charge of the educational initiatives of the CFPC in Paris read and studied the compte rendus from the sections.[78] Finally, according to the leaders of the organization, the compte rendus served one last, critical function: favoring links between the sections, at the regional and national level, they were also the means of "producing a movement".[79]

In his capacity as Committee Director of the Regional Union of Pas-de-Calais, Pierre Garcette underscored this idea in a report written on the potential expansion of the movement in October of 1965: "as bizarre as this might seem I am convinced that the writing of the compte rendus is an important factor in our expansion. We must leave traces of our work, emphasize it. It is essential that he or they who go to one of our meetings for the first time find evidence of what was accomplished in the following one. From month to month memories fade. One could almost say that a meeting without a compte rendu rapidly becomes a useless meeting. It would be useless, in any case, for the Regional Union or the National Center. "[80]

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[76] EDC, Lille 4e, Compte rendu du 5 novembre 1970.

[77] EDC, Lille 2e, courrier de Pierre Garcette à Jacques Crepelle, 23 décembre 1963.

[78] EDC, Roubaix-Tourcoing 5e, courrier de Serge Guibert à Michel Segard, 7 décembre 1966 ; courrier de Hippolyte Bérenguier à Michel Segard, 20 mars 1967.

[79] EDC, Roubaix Tourcoing 5e, réunion du 5 septembre 1966 ; 9 janvier et 6 mars 1967.

[80] ADL, Fonds Verscheure, 4Z, CFPC, Union régionale Nord Pas-de-Calais, comité directeur du 4 octobre 1965, Rapport présenté par Pierre Garcette, délégué régional, p. 4.

For the historian the compte rendu is a priceless source on the activities of members in the section. Studying comptes rendus from the Nord we can assert certain basic facts. The sections generally had 15 members, of whom 7 or 8 were present at meetings.[81] All the meetings took place monthly, but there was great variety in the format chosen. First, in four out of 14 sections in 1966 the group met in a space linked to the Catholic Church (secrétariat social, presbytery, the convent of the Fransiscan nuns).[82] A mass preceded a meal, after which the meeting took place. Second, the rendez-vous took place in the home of one of the members, with or without a dinner. This was the case in 9 out of 14 of the sections in 1966. This arrangement allowed "wives to be associated with the movement," mostly because it was they who prepared the dinner.[83] Finally, the third variation involved a noon meeting: only one section in the Nord out of 14 chose this approach in 1966. The lunch of this section took place at a restaurant in the train station of Tourcoing ; at the beginning of the 1970s another noon meeting took place at a training center, the CEPI (Center for the Perfection of workers and directors in industry and commerce).[84]

These three formulas--a meeting preceded by a mass in a site connected to the Church, a meeting at the home of a member, and a meeting at lunchtime in a professional venue--bear witness to different conceptions of the work of this movement: they emphasize more or less its spiritual dimension, its commitment to sociability (including the participation of spouses) and its strictly professional dimension. The first format comes closest to that favored by organizations connected to Catholic Action, while the other two formats resemble a employers' movement. The first insists on the "austere" character of these meetings, as distinguished from clubs designed for sociability. But the choice of this format ran the risk of losing prospective members. As Pierre Garcette wrote in a letter to a member from Roubaix in 1965 : "In our region in particular, and especially in the winter, getting people to come to meetings in the evening requires an effort. It is perhaps

[81] This section is based on a preliminary reading of the comptes rendus assembled from the archives of the EDC du Nord.

[82] ADL, 4Z Verscheure, Pierre Garcette, « Réflexions sur l'Union régionale du CFPC du Nord et du Pas-de-Calais », juillet 1966.

[83] EDC, Groupe d'Arras, réunion de démarrage, le 5 octobre 1966.

[84] EDC, Lille 4e, Réunions du 30 mai 1969 et 4 juin 1970.

imprudent--especially for the new members--to add to that difficulty the requirement to spend time in an uncomfortable venue. It is certain that for the CJP (the Center for Young Employers), such a choice would be unthinkable. I often asked myself whether or not the CFPC wasn't too austere."[85] Sometime later he elaborated that the formula "mass-dinner-meeting" was "too demanding" and insisted instead on the other two formulas.[86] This corresponded to a de facto evolution that took place in many sections, for example, in Seclin, where two sections changed the format of their meetings in the 1970s.

The organization of the work of the section was not left to chance. Rather it was directed either by the advice of Pierre Garcette or the principles announced in the sections themselves.[87] Even if there was diversity among the sections, they shared a clear commitment to study "concrete" cases, corresponding to the "lived" experience of its members. [88] They presented this insistence on the concrete as that which distinguised them from the ACI: "the CFPC must stay in the concrete realm of the life of the enterprise." [89]

In the context of these local meetings, did the groups follow a predefined program, and if so, was it the one set in Paris, or did they exercise autonomy? The analysis of the "program of study" was officially requested by the national organization as of 1956.[90] The program--along with recommended readings--was disseminated to the sections throughout the 1960s and 1970s.[91] In 1965 about 200 programs were sent to members at the request of presidents of the sections.[92] All the sections examined the study programs and responded to

[85] EDC, Roubaix-Tourcoing 3e, Lettre de Pierre Garcette à Jean Bayard-Sion, 24 novembre 1965. On CJP, see Philippe Bernoux, *Les nouveaux patrons. Le Centre des Jeunes Dirigeants d'entreprise*, Paris, Les Editions ouvrières, 1974 ; Le Bot, « La naissance du Centre des jeunes patrons », art. cit. et Ciccotelli, « Socialisation au rôle patronal », art. cit. See also new results in André Grelon, « Entre profession et patronat : un premier mouvement catholique (1926-1948) », in *Origines et histoire du CFPC, op. cit.*

[86] EDC, Lille 2e, Courrier de Pierre Garcette à Paul Bernard, 12 juin 1967.

[87] EDC, Roubaix-Tourcoing 3e, Courrier de Pierre Garcette à Jean Bayart, 10 janvier 1966 ; Roubaix-Tourcoing 5e, réunion du 6 novembre 1974 ; Lille 4e, réunion du 10 septembre 1970.

[88] EDC, Lille 4e, réunion du 4 décembre 1969 ; Saint-Omer, réunion du 1er octobre s.d. (1972 ou 1973) ; Seclin 2e, Convocation pour le 19 novembre 1975.

[89] EDC, Roubaix-Tourcoing 5e, réunion du 6 janvier 1975.

[90] ADL, 4Z, Archives Jacques Verscheure, réunion du 10 octobre 1956.

[91] ADL, Archives Jacques Verscheure, Courrier de Pierre Garcette à Jacques Verscheure, 19 décembre 1961.

[92] ADL, Archives Jacques Verscheure, CFPC Union régionale Nord Pas-de-Calais, Comité directeur du 4 octobre 1965, Rapport présenté par Pierre Garcette, p. 2.

the questionaires sent from the Rue Hamelin; they were presented with a range of themes such as Propriety within the Enterprise (1966), the role of syndicalism and human relations within the company (1972), boards of directors and participation in the life of the company (1974), etc. The comptes rendus show a certain local appropriation of the program, in the choice of the chapters within the readings, in the choice of more precise topics, in the texts studied, occasionally at the recommendation of a local ecclesiastic. Some members were not at all interested in the program of study; some sections invited lecturers. Finally, certain groups organized reading groups completely autonomously. This was the case in a section in Roubaix-Tourcoing, which, in 1967, read the 1965 work of Octave Gélinier, the director of Cegos. The members of this section subsequently sent a note to the center in Paris, on the occasion of meeting featuring this author which they were unable to attend.[93]

Conclusion : the CFPC, beyond sociability

The CFP, a federation of professional unions, created "professional sections" in the first instance to offer services to employers (around a staff and lecture-dinners where employers were there to listen). When the organization transformed itself in the 1940s, it drew upon a different repertoire of practices, with the support of ecclesiastical advisors, in Paris (the Father André Arnou) and in the provinces (l'Abbé Joseph Larue and the Abbé Jacques Verscheure). In this period, therefore, we see a hybridization of practice. The new sections took inspiration from the "study circles" or the basic units of Catholic Action, where its members were encouraged to "think together." Instead of relying upon surveys, they leaned upon the "program of study," established by the department of education of the CFPC. But these "new" practices, appropriated from the Catholic movement, did not replace the longstanding practices that characterized the older "professional" sections, more numerous, in terms of members. These two types of sections coexisted until fairly late into the 20th century. Certain sections had large memberships and met around dinner-debates, which were less moments of intense, participatory study than of sociability. Other sections were closer to the study circles characteristic of the Catholic Action; their objective was to

[93] Octave Gélinier, *Morale de l'entreprise et destin de la nation*, Paris, Plon, 1965 ; EDC, Roubaix-

inspire a collective intellectual project that would transform its members by virtue of their participation in the group.

Our analysis of the comptes rendus of the section of the Nord, while partial and incomplete, does allow us to make some generalizations about the "work" accomplished by its members in the context of their sections. Our emphasis on the material practices hinted at in the comptes rendus allows us to see a serious effort to create a new kind of organization through the management of these small groups. The section was like a living organism, which lived, died, and flourished depending on the efforts of its members. The contents of the comptes rendus, meanwhile, revealed a different kind of work--intellectual this time--organized around the "study programs" of the CFPC. This intellectual work, however, was not abstract, but always linked to the concrete problems its members encountered in the world of business; it allowed members to speak of the difficulties so many of them experienced reconciling their professional life with their faith. While the imprint of spiritual advisors is discernible in these documents, their ideas had already been appropriated, and translated by the businessmen who actually wrote the comptes rendus. The compte rendu played many functions: it connected the local section to the regional union and the CFPC in Paris, it served to advance a collective conversation, and it turned the members of this organization into a real group. But the compte-rendu also produced a new language among employers, nourished by the language of spiritual advisors; it showed how the work these members did in common transformed them from individuals into part of a collective of Christian employers.

This "work" can be seen as a response to needs articulated by the members themselves in the sections. In the section meeting with which this article opened, when the members presented introduced themselves, they explained that they were there because they sought a place they could meet and discuss "professional" questions in a cordial atmosphere. The language of this compte rendu from 1976 reveals the diffcult situation in which employers found themselves: the report spoke of "paralyzed employers," "anxiety,"

Tourcoing 5^{e}, courrier de Michel Segard à Serge Guibert, 12 janvier 1967.

"solitude", the need for "something to grab onto," "feelings of insecurity and pessimism," "multiple difficulties," of living in a difficult period." The existence of this group is represented as a response to the feelings of insecurity, solitude and malaise experienced by business leaders in the context of an economic crisis. Among the many difficulties they cited, the social question, or in the words of the ecclesiatical advisor of the section, the "climate of struggle between the classes," was the most absorbing.[94] The question of the compatability between the role of employer and a good Christian appeared many times in the testimony: they reported coming to the section "to see what it was possible for a boss and a Christian to do," to discuss how "the more one becomes a boss of men, the less one feels a Christian," to consider "how as Christians it was necessary to love their employees," to "receive lessons from the Gospel on how to conduct oneself as an employer of men." This specific text hence illustrates what we can say of the comptes rendus more generally: employers living in a tense social environment, confronted daily with the "struggle between the classes," sought solutions through the "work" they did in the section. The section, above all, allowed its members to be, at the same time "christians" and "employers."[95]

This work distinguished the CFPC from other groups with which it was in competition. In 1987, in the context of a national meeting, the group produced a table in which the CFPC was represented precisely in relation to such organizations. Here we find Christian movements (the Movement of Christian Managers, the Catholic Action of Independents, the Charismatics, the Catholic Family Association); intellectual movements among employers (the Center for Young Directors, Ethics); and circles of bourgeois sociability (See Document 1). This table, like its authors, puts together organizations that scholars have, for too long, studied separately. This table also shows the conclusion that they drew about their movement: "narrow opening for the CFPC. Important potential for

[94] On this context of social violence around 1968, see Xavier Vigna, *L'insubordination ouvrière dans les années 68. Essai d'histoire politique des usines*, Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2007.

[95] In Boston in the 1990s Indian businessmen and Israeli and Latin American engineers also met on a monthly basis to reinforce their sense of belonging to a group, and to affirm their mixed identity. Michael Piore et Sean Safford, « Preliminary Thoughts on Identity and Segmentation in Primary Sector Labor Markets », *Socio-Economie du travail*, n° 28, 2007.

growth. No direct competition." In other words, the movement affirmed its specificity, between an employers' movement, a Christian movement, and a movement of sociability.

One might expect that the circles or "clubs--borne of the male "circles" which formed the foundation of bourgeois sociability in the nineteenth century--constituted constitute a third organizational reportoire; but this was really not the case. [96] A perfect example of this type of organization would be the American born Rotary Club, which was somewhere between circles of sociability and interest groups.[97] We know that at the moment that the CFPC was transforming itself, the Rotary Club--which came to Europe from the US in the interwar period--was structured around pretty big groups, who met at lunchtime, and where women were officially excluded (although present as "wives" like the spouses of the CFPC members). Their philosophy, deriving from American protestantism, was one of "service," an idea that took on different forms as the organization spread to different countries. Condemned by the Catholic Church because of its religious pluralism, the Rotary was not only composed of "circles of sociability;" it also permitted members--especially Germans who were banned after WWI--to be a part of an international community of businessmen. Eventually, and paradoxically, it gave Europeans the opportunity to affirm their own identity vis à vis American businessmen. Participation in these groups was demanding, much like the CFPC: members had to participate often in activites and justify themselves when they were absent; they had to prepare presentations on their jobs.[98] The organization demanded a financial investment, as well as philanthropic activities. The Rotary also allowed new wealthy members of the middle class to acquire a kind of symbolic capital that they lacked. The club hence provided social mobility and respectability to its members.

The Rotary was occasionally cited by the members of the CFPC, but rather as a counter-example than an example. In September of 1962 monthly lunch meetings "typical

[96] Maurice Agulhon, *Le cercle dans la France bourgeoise*, Paris, Armand Colin, 1977; Cyril Grange, *Les gens du Bottin mondain. Y être, c'est en être*, Paris, Fayard, 1996.

[97] Sandrine Gousset, *Sociabilités bourgeoises et investissements "philanthropiques" : une approche par les clubs rotary,* thèse de doctorat de science politique, Université Lille II, 2004.

[98] Victoria De Grazia, *Irresistible Empire. America's Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe*, Cambridge (Mass.), The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005, p. 15-74.

of the Rotary" were evoked by the director of the Regional Union of the Nord as he sought new formats that might "attract more members" and "give a less severe aspect" to our organization."[99] The regional delegate, Pierre Garcette, wanted his organization to adopt a "more attractive and dynamic aspect;" however, he added, that we must not create, for all that a "Christian Rotary."[100]

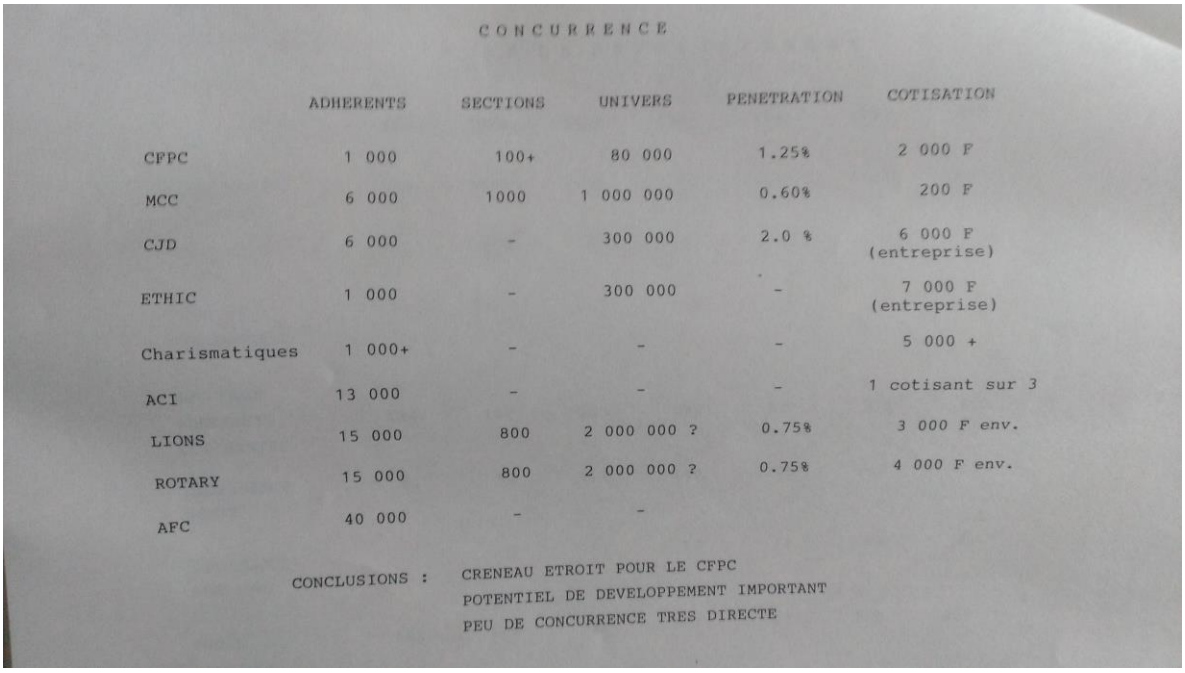
The organizational form and the type of activity pursued within the basic unit--the sections--help us to differentiate these various movements. Rotary Club members did not seem to do the same intellectual "work" that one finds in the sections of the CFPC. Groups brought together a minimum of 20 members; meetings were short, centered around social occasions (cocktails, or dinner); meeting notes were likewise brief. [101] In the CFPC, it was by the work that they did in their section, with their spiritual advisor and with the other members of the group, that they managed to bring into harmony their religious and professional identities. It was by their common readings, their conversations, their self-presentations at their small meetings that they constructed and reinforced their sense of belonging to a Christian community at once local, national, and international.

[99] ADL, 4Z Archives Jacques Verscheure, Union régionale du CFPC. CPFC. Union régionale Nord Pas-de-Calais, comité directeur du 29 septembre 1962.

[100] EDC Lille, Pierre Garcette, « Réflexions sur l'Union régionale du CFPC du Nord et du Pas de Calais », juillet 1966.

[101] Sandrine Gousset, *Sociabilités bourgeoises et investissements "philanthropiques", op. cit*., p. 235, 710-712, 747-751.

Document 1. Organizations competing with the CFPC en 1988. From the Native Point of View



CONCURRENCE

	ADHERENTS	SECTIONS	UNIVERS	PENETRATION	COTISATION
CFPC	1 000	100+	80 000	1.25%	2 000 F
MCC	6 000	1000	1 000 000	0.60%	200 F
CJD	6 000	-	300 000	2.0 %	6 000 F (entreprise)
ETHIC	1 000	-	300 000	-	7 000 F (entreprise)
Charismatiques	1 000+	-	-	-	5 000 +
ACI	13 000	-	-	-	1 cotisant sur 3
LIONS	15 000	800	2 000 000 ?	0.75%	3 000 F env.
ROTARY	15 000	800	2 000 000 ?	0.75%	4 000 F env.
AFC	40 000	-	-		

CONCLUSIONS : CRENEAU ETROIT POUR LE CFPC
POTENTIEL DE DEVELOPPEMENT IMPORTANT
PEU DE CONCURRENCE TRES DIRECTE

Source : CFPC, Bureau d'été, 7-8 juillet 1988, Abbaye de Saint-Wandrille, document interne, 1988.