

LABOR TRANSFORMATION IN BRAZIL AND IN CWU LEADERS' PROFILE*

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ABSTRACT

The 2000s are defined by consolidation of a new Central Workers Union - CWU (Central Única dos Trabalhadores - CWU) notion of representativeness, or abandon of traditional unionism concept of representation. This new conjuncture is developed in parallel with consolidation of a new CWU union leader's profile, started in the 1990s. CWU would no longer be an industrial workers organization. By adapting to this new reality, where service sector is predominant, CWU added new strategies to bring together more working class heterogeneous sectors in more unstable conditions. This is what this paper presents starting from data of questionnaires applied in CWU congresses, in different times and with information about CWU's leading group.

Keywords: CWU, work, profile, leaders

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Introduction

Along CWU existence, the Union changed its interest representation understanding. By following transformations in strategy actions that replaced the logic of conflict by negotiation, CWU gradually absorbed a broader notion of representativeness beyond conceptual limits of the working class¹.

From years 2000, after Workers Party election victory, CWU won intervention space on public policies. Therefore board participation, debates for approval of projects of law, negotiating tables with government and other institutions became part of daily activities of CWU leaders. For the first time, CWU was integrated with government. In the economic field, there was a switch of labor market mainly industrial to a majority of service activities.

This new conjuncture runs in parallel with consolidation of a new CWU union leader's profile, started in the 1990s. CWU would no longer be an organization composed mainly by industrial workers. By adapting to this new reality, where service sector is predominant, CWU added new strategies to bring together more working class heterogeneous sectors in more unstable conditions. This is what this paper presents starting from data of questionnaires applied in CWU congresses, in different times and with information from CWU's leading group.

We have reasons to believe that concept of representation beyond the working class is based in different factors: *flexibility and deregulation of labor market conditions*, this modified structurally labor relationships in a way that most of Brazilian workers remained out of the formal market; *a new political-institutional conjuncture*, where federal government facilitates CWU proactive intervention in various spaces; and *a change in CWU unionism conception*, who starts adopting an inclusive action for most disadvantaged sections of population.

CWU in the years 2000

Decade of 2000 is defined by consolidation of a new CWU notion of representativeness, or abandon of traditional unionism concept of representation. At the 10th CWU Congress, held in 2009, CWU unionism turned towards growth of its representativeness through the enlargement of its base representation. Approved documents indicate that CWU leaders would recognize unionism as an organizational practice going beyond formal workers.

Plan of Struggle elected as a priority included formal workers rights defense in labor market, but widened action base including other issues not being exclusively linked to the class concept. Among approved activities were communication actions, women policies, fight against racism, freedom of sexual orientation, inclusion of disabled, youth organization, policies for retirees

1. For the sense of the working class, we have considered Antunes (2006) studies. He starts from an updated analysis of Marx's class concept, including unproductive labor; those that do not have a direct participation in capital appreciation process. We include in this consideration Thompson (1987a) studies, stating that formation of the class happens by the stepping of a process of awareness historically built from certain specific moments. For an analysis of theoretical approaches between the two surveyed, see Aquiles (2011).

and pensioners, support to solidarity economy and defense of human rights. During years 1980 or 1990, when these questions aroused in thesis of congresses, they were linked to labor market. For example: policies against racism in work, in defense of working women, among others. The change in CWU union action pattern included:

The construction of a project being an alternative to neoliberalism implying in democratization of social and political life, with the strengthening and creation of institutional spaces for the participation of society, like Public Policies Councils and Forums. These spaces allow explaining conflicts and disputes with industrial, trade, financial system and agriculture elites that historically struggled in search of a wide negotiation space, especially guided by transparency. Besides, it is essential advancing in the creation of political spaces of popular and direct democracy participation beyond institutional representation of organized sectors. This demands a strong will to modify currently valid standards of mass communication².

Santana & Ramalho (2003) mention resurgence of workers organizational movement as a way of overcoming crisis due to unfavorable unionism conjuncture that overthrew Brazil in the 1990s. This resurgence would be result of integrating already previously existing activities with participation. This new orientation would modify trade union's pattern of action, placing social question in the heart of worries, coupled with the increase of economic and social vulnerability, driving stable workers representation acts to be combined with instable groups.

From years 2000, an important part of trade union conception - strongly emerging in CWU, is based in new political conjuncture in the country; and certainly it meant a new perspective for CWU unionism. The idea of this conception was to allow reversing government institutional trend to delegitimize CWU, due to the proximity between CWU and Workers Party, who took office in 2003. The enthusiasm with new government permitted CWU to invest decisively in the participative project managed in the 1990s, as may be seen down here:

New government proposes to create different spaces of participation in society for handling state policies such as councils and forums, among others. In this way, CWU and sectors in it included must strongly boost increase of transparency in public affairs and social controls on policies and government programs, assuming the role of a relevant and main actor to represent women and men workers, to grant and extend its rights. CWU must intensify its actions regarding State, government and civil society, to deepen democracy in Brazil through effective democratization of the State and participation of society and workers in definition, management and social control of public policies. A radical, socialist, and economic and social democracy³.

2. Resolutions from the 8th CWU Congress, 2010.

3. Resolutions of 8th CWU Congress, 2010.

CWU incorporates the notion of institutionalized representation through councils, forums, chambers and other tripartite mechanisms, intrinsically linked to the concept of participative democracy. This is imperative for CWU; being allowed to participate in public policies, in order to deepen democracy. In other terms, to broaden CWU representativeness the Union must be institutionally recognized as interlocutor of a social group including not only the working class, but society as a whole.

CWU's president expressed in the following way this conceptual re-orientation:

[...] when talking about democracy or state democratization, we are talking of need to create increasingly bigger instruments and spaces of participation for workers and social movements in what regards main decisions taken in the country. This must be done through direct democracy, expanding such mechanisms as plebiscites and referendums, or by institutionalizing workers' decision and participation spaces. And also granting that these participation spaces created in several instances during Lula's government is accomplished as State policy and not only as government policy. Therefore to grant institutionalization of a set of spaces allowing workers participation in companies' decisions regarding public policies, in budget democratization, independently of who is in the government.⁴

This declaration reveals more than defense of democracy, as CWU has resolved to do since its foundation. It is about demanding a space of participation where to intervene to transform reality and at the same to allow the organization exercise influence on social groups. And it is exactly this permanence what CWU wants to get, to consolidate institutionally as an organization parallel to republican power, able to interpose between this institutional power and society .

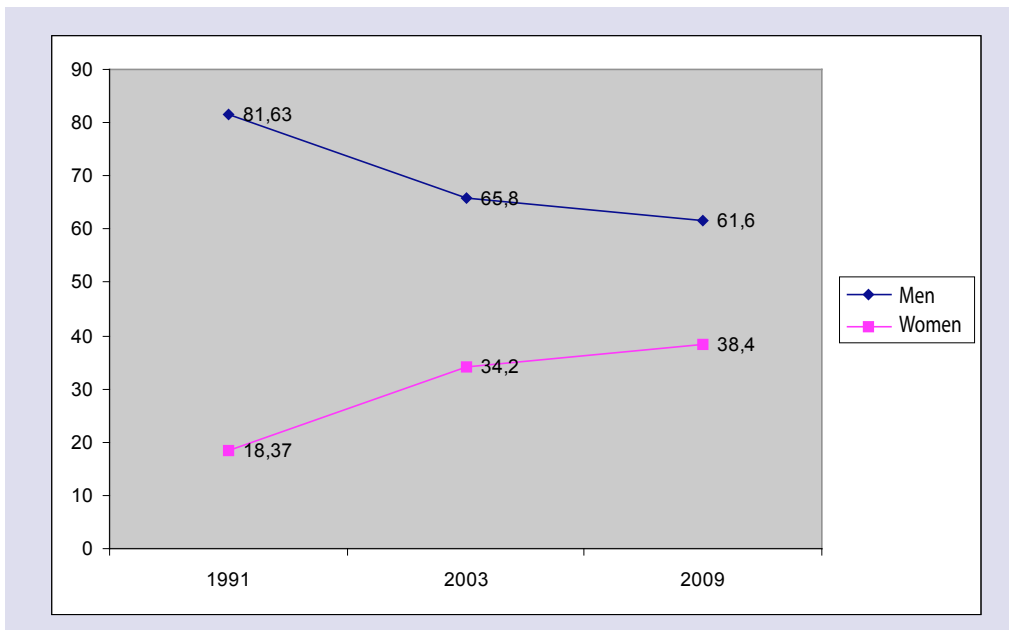
Changes in CWU unionism profile

In this chapter we will analyze profile of people being part of the body of CWU unionism: delegates of congresses that were researched. We will do this based in data obtained by the Central in these events and in the study published by Jácome Rodrigues (2011). We want to compare information to evaluate CWU behavior, participation of delegates and verify changes in its patterns of representation.

Our objective is to show changes in the profile of CWU leaders along the years in a way that data may contribute to reaffirm CWU process of institutionalization da CWU and its new pattern of representation. We will use these data as sample of total CWU data.

First chart we are presenting refers to the quantity of men and women at CWU congresses. It can be observed a significant change between genders, showing increase of women at CWU. Their participation went from 18.37% to 38.4%. However, this representativeness is not yet similar to Brazilian labor market reality, already paralleled in quantitative aspect. Nevertheless it is an approach to reality, considering beginning of the 1990's. Besides increase in number of women in formal labor market, contributing to increase of women in unionism, it also must be stressed advance of trade union's actions on this issue. In last congresses, CWU has spotlighted specific activities for this audience, including orientation to elect at least 30% of women delegates to CWU's congresses and creation of a Secretary of Women's Affairs. For instance, CWU's National Executive Board - elected in 2009, has 29% of women. In first CWU congress just one woman was part of the Executive Board, accounting for 5.5% of total.

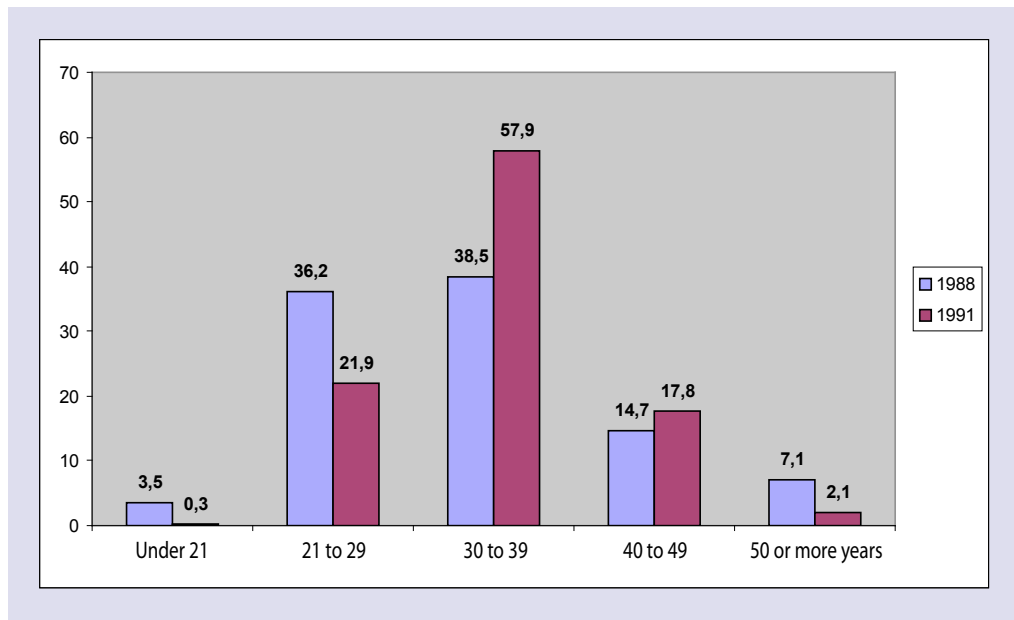
CHART 1
Percentage of men and women present at CWU congresses



Source: Jácome Rodrigues (2011), Who they are (2006), Profile (2010)

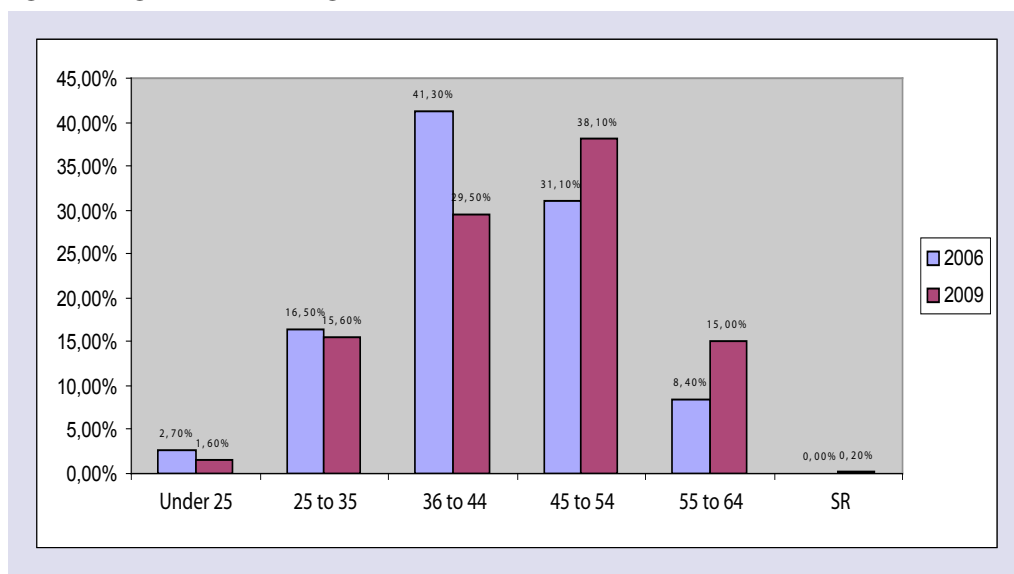
Chart 2 shows age of delegates, displaying aging of the Central. Down here we have two charts due to a difference in not compatible data collection, however allowing a comparative assessment. If in the 1980's most of delegates were in the 30-39 year old age group, in the 2000's they were in the group nearly to 50 years. Therefore we could affirm that CWU unionism became older after Lula winning the election, because leaders participating at congresses had a higher average age.

CHART 2
Age of delegates at CWU congresses (1988 and 1991)



Source: Jácome Rodrigues (2011)

CHART 3
Age of delegates at CWU congresses (2006 and 2009)

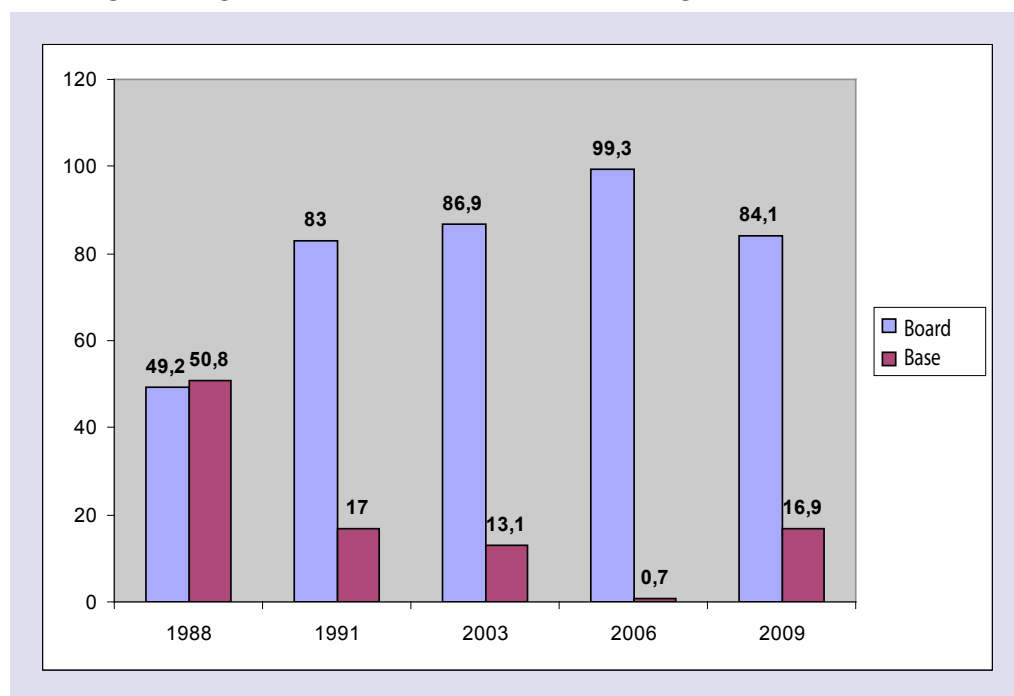


Source: Who they are (2006), Profile (2010)

Along the years, CWU also shows that renovation of trade union directors and in the own CWU is reduced. Except Third CWU Congress held in 1988, other congresses are characterized by predominance of trade union's directors as congress delegates. One change in this chart refers to election rules for delegates that came into force in 1991. According to Jácome Rodrigues (2011), base workers leaders became more restricted since total of delegates by trade union was significantly reduced due to statutory changes. It is in 2009 Congress when reversal of trend occurs at CWU party leadership - a reduction in percentage of leader's delegates. Previous remarkable fact is partial disaffiliation of trade unions influenced by the Brazilian Communist Party, being around 25% of people in CWU. This suggests that this political current had a high degree of concentration of delegates' posts in hands of trade unions boards.

It is a common practice that base delegates, when going back to their workplace, be named as part of trade unions boards. In the case of CWU after 1991, due to new rules candidate list options may have been reduced. Besides, there is also a high chance that debates to be presented in congresses be restricted to trade unions boards, therefore making difficult the disclosure of congress deliberations.

CHART 4
Percentage of Delegates linked to Trade Unions in CWU's Congresses (1988-2009)

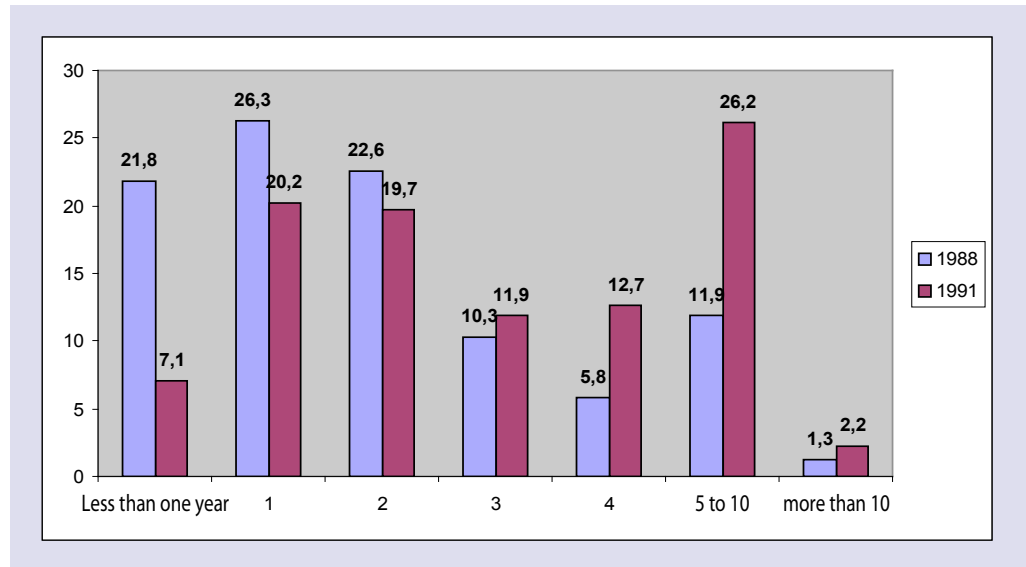


Source: Jácome Rodrigues (2011), Who they are (2006), Profile (2010)

Both next charts strengthen hypothesis that delegates being CWU union leaders are remaining longer time in bodies' boards. This evidence has considerably reduced CWU renewal board capacity. We must consider that Third CWU Congress is being held in a period where CWU unionism is raising, after

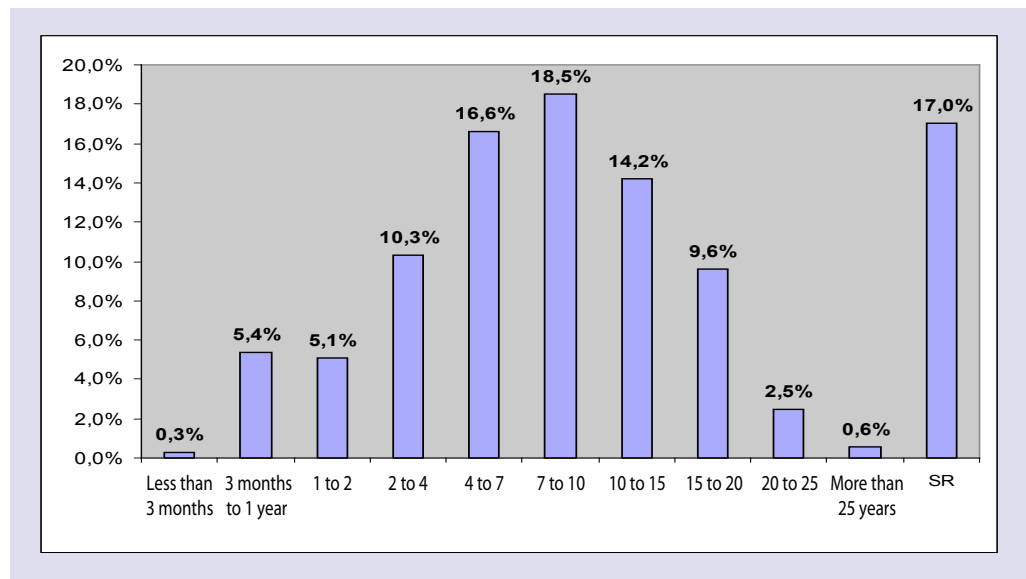
electoral successes in several bodies, besides legalization of civil service trade unions, therefore explaining high number of delegates that less than a year before were in trade union boards. In return, there are a high number of leaders that were over seven years in Boards of leading positions of the 10th CWU Congress, corresponding to 47.3% of total.

CHART 5
Time Delegates spent acting as Directors in Trade Unions at CWU's Congresses 1988 and 1991 (in years)



Source: Jácome Rodrigues (2011)

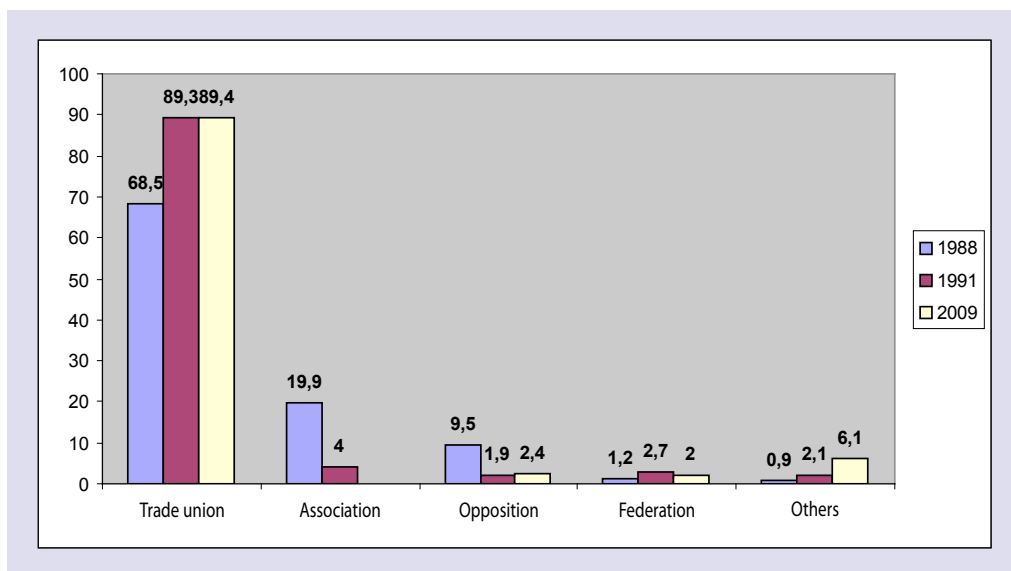
CHART 6
Time Delegates spent acting as Directors in Trade Unions at CWU's Congresses 2009 (in years)



Source: Quem São (2006), Profile (2010)

Next Chart information shows little variation in nature of bodies integrating CWU. Sole relevant data facts are referring to decrease of associations and increase of trade unions from 1991. The change is linked to legalization of civil service trade unions, formerly organized as associations, and due to ban imposed on these workers to have trade union rights. It is also verified a reduction of trade union opposition from 1991. Two issues are relevant for this – in first place changes in criteria for election of delegates, reducing chances for the opposition and in second CWU victories that increased in the 1990s, through rising affiliation rates to CWU in first half of this decade; and the victory of the opposition, thus making many of oppositionists become trade union directors.

CHART 7
Delegates per represented bodies at CWU's congresses of 1988, 1991 and 2009



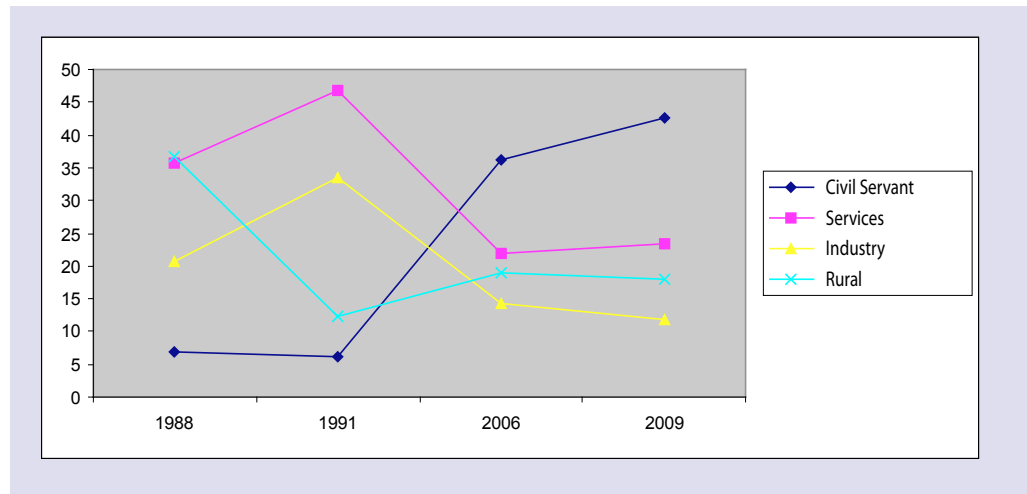
Source: Jácome Rodrigues (2011), Who they are (2006), Profile (2010)

Changes in Brazilian economy deeply impacted in working class profile, with effects on the profile of delegates participating at congresses. It must be stressed a difference in the presence of civil servants, that topped the list of delegates, while rural workers, most in the 1980s, became minority in 2009. And there was also a drop in industrial and services delegates. Surprisingly, service sectors being most part of the professions profile in the country decreased its representativeness within the CWU. One of the hypotheses to explain it is the fact that in spite of job growth in this area to the detriment of others, service sector is also the one accumulating most part of informal work. This would explain contrast between delegates and Brazilian labor market situation. It is sufficient to note that in 1991 there is a increase of delegates coming from this sector, but is drastically reduced in 2006 CWU congress, thus showing labor market transformation impact.

In following Chart, we presume that a good number of delegates registered as participants coming from associations are civil servants. It is interes-

ting to see that workers were largely rural in the first CWU congress, followed by industrial workers. Currently these are the two groups proportionally being minority within the Central, in spite of its heavy political weight. Among the 24 CWU executive directors' positions, 10 of them are from industrial and rural workers. On the other side, CWU became a Central mainly integrated by civil service workers⁵.

CHART 8
Delegates according to the economic sector *



Source: Jácome Rodrigues (2011), Who they are (2006), Profile (2010).

*For clarification, sources of research from 9th and 10th CWU congresses did not separate delegates by economic sector, but for business activity, as per Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) classification. To make a comparative analysis, we have used Jácome Rodrigues classification (2011).

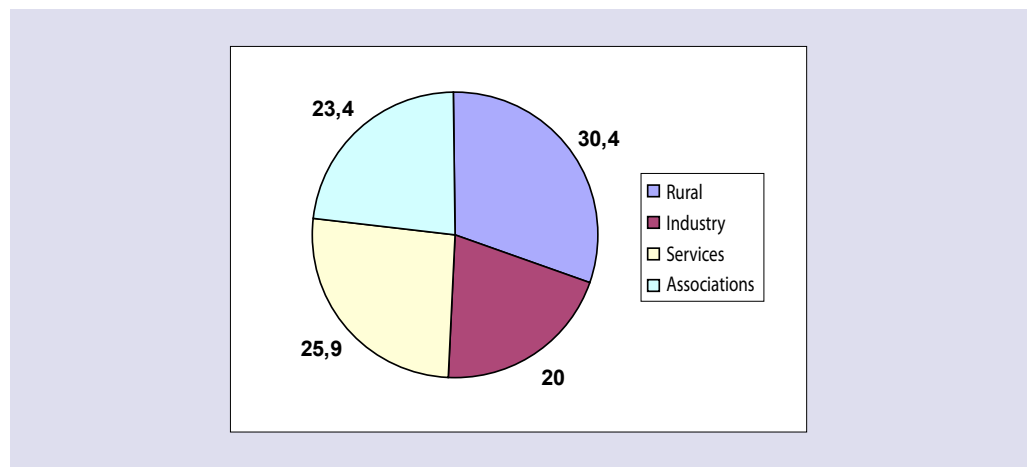
We consider civil servants people working at: administration and public service, education, health and social and municipal security.

We consider services: communication and information, financial, transport, urban services, liberal professions, watchers, service providers and trade and services.

We consider industry: mining, chemicals, metallurgy, foods, construction and timber, and clothing.

We consider rural: rural

CHART 9
Delegates per economic sector at the First CWU Congress (1984)

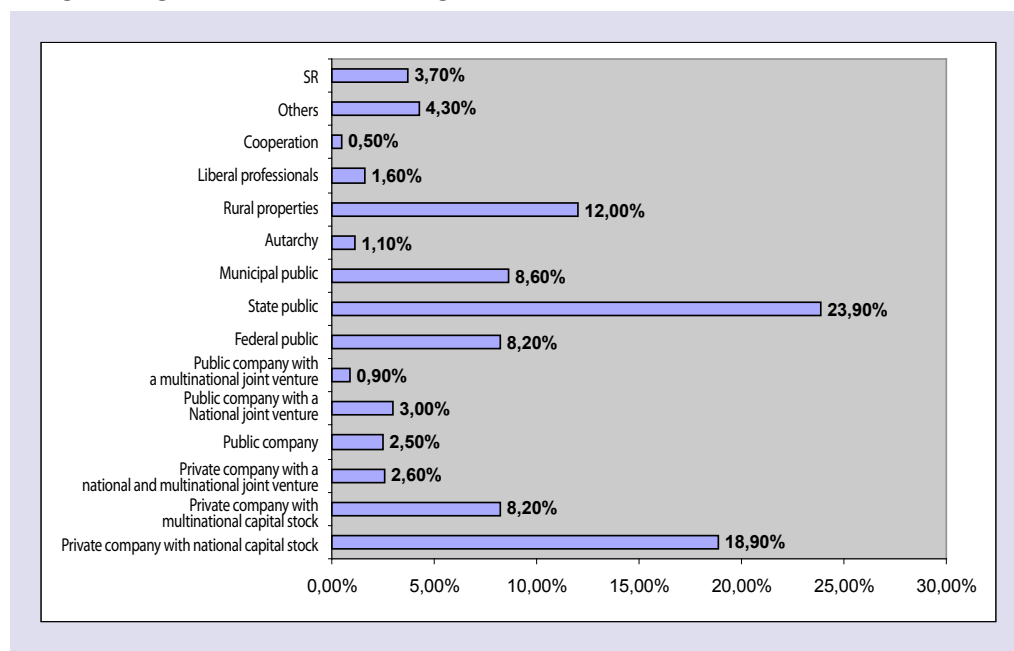


Source: Jácome Rodrigues (2011)

5. We have separated data of 1st CWU Congress from others; due to incompatibility of methodological bases to classify workers. First CWU Congress was composed by 23.4% of delegates from associations, presuming they are civil servants. And because of this supposition we believe data may be used for comparison.

In following Chart we present data reinforcing available information of previous Charts. We can see how CWU transformed from an organization mostly representing industrial workers, to one Central mainly representing service workers. We observe that 40.7% of delegates are civil servants' representatives, 29.7%, come from private service, 12% rural, and only 6.4% public companies workers. It is surprising to see such a small number of public companies representatives since, in general, companies as Petrobrás, the Post and most part of utilities (water and electricity) generally concentrate unions with a high number of associates and enormous representation bases, fact that should grant a higher number of delegates. However data show that most of CWU unionism is concentrated in workers of municipalities, and state and federal governments. This is also an indication that CWU intervention in public policies generated a growth of representativeness in these means.

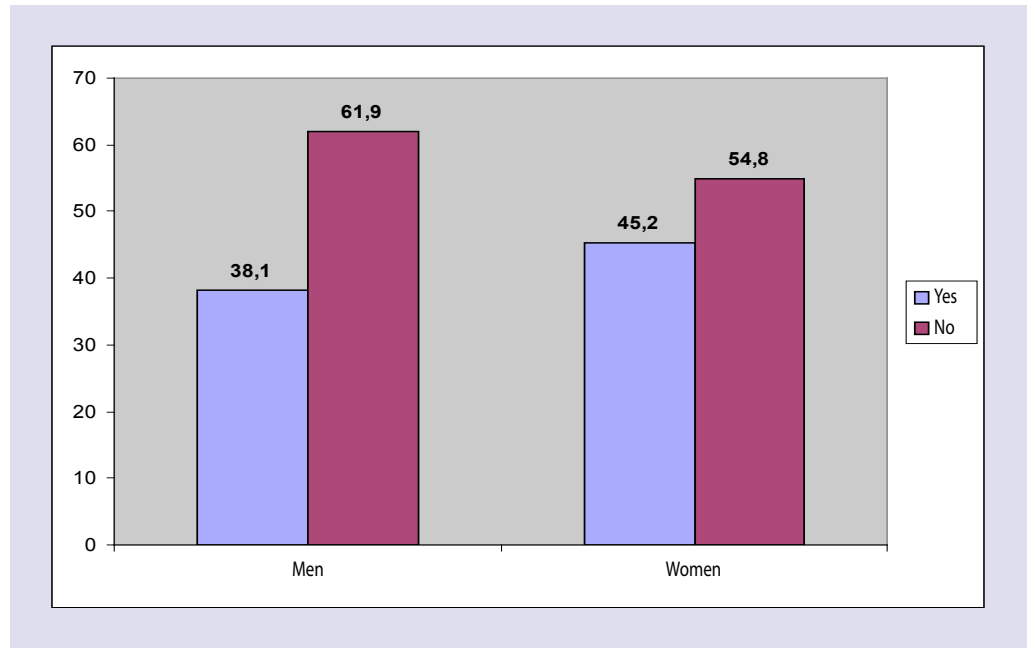
CHART 10
Delegates origins at the 10th CWU Congress – 2009



Source: Who they are (2006), Profile (2010)

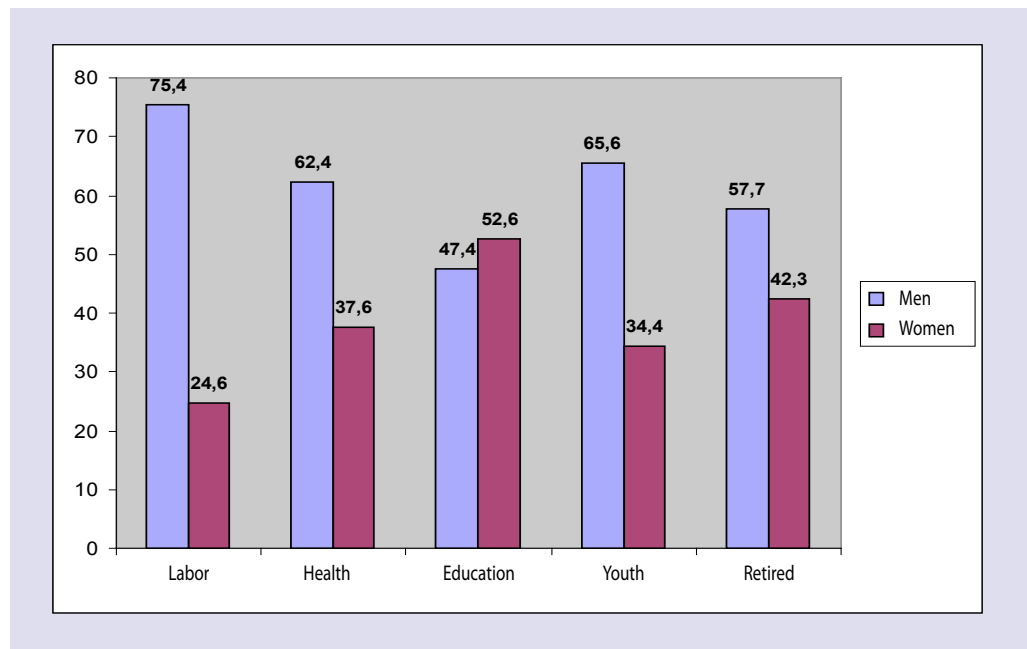
Following Charts display high level of participation of delegates of 9th CWU Congress in state and municipal public policies councils. Data shows that women are more likely to participate in councils than men. In exchange, they continue being the majority in councils, especially in labor councils. The exceptions are education councils, where in general women are the majority. Anyway, it may be seen a higher commitment of men with work related issues, while women assume responsibilities for other areas. This increase in gender may show a CWU increase in intervention in other areas as result of feminization of the Central or that work as one of main issues for unionism, keeps predominantly being concentrated in male colleagues.

CHART 11
Members of state or municipal public policies councils (2006)



Source: Who they are (2006)

CHART 12
Delegates per type of council where they participate (2006)



Source: Who they are (2006)

Average profile of delegates at the 10th CWU Congress includes leaders being more than seven 7 years in trade unions, in state public service bodies. Among most representative groups of this category are high school professors, showing this is currently most organic and representative category within CWU. It is the case of CWU executive board, term 2009-2012, where four direc-

tors fill this profile. They are: João Antonio Felício, former CWU president in two previous administrations and Secretary of International Affairs, José Celestino, Professional Training Department Secretary, Júlio Turra, executive director and Antonio Lisboa Amâncio do Vale, executive director. They also are main professional group within CWU executive board, ahead of Bank representatives, with three members. The most important fact is the change in profile of directors, ratifying transformation in the CWU unionism, formerly industrial and rural, to a unionism mainly devoted to public service.

This profile change must be observed as the effect of two significant phenomenons. First and already mentioned is the opportunity of civil servants joining a trade union, and allow them to organize its trade unions, having CWU as a referential Central. The second regards Brazilian industrial jobs reduction of quality on account of productive restructuring; this implies in a workforce reduction in the sector. Differently from industrial sector, in services there is higher heterogeneity in working conditions. Therefore guidelines are more diversified, and demands to trade unions become different. Among several studies of Labor Sociology, we may highlight one from Offe (1989) where these new relations are well defined when questioning if work could continue to be seen as a main category for the society.

CWU was affected by these conjuncture changes, also influencing in 2003, with Workers Party election victory. But to continue being main Brazilian trade union, CWU was forced to adapt to a new reality. Its representativeness should since then get a new aspect, broadening for a new line of action. Proof of adaptation is the strategic content being adopted as political CWU action, beginning to participate in CWU congresses

CWU leaders Profile

The impact on labor market changes had fewer incidences on CWU boards, but on the other way it strengthened changes in CWU profile. Information regarding elected boards shows a difference in leadership origins over the past 30 years.

In following Charts, we will see a decrease of participation of leaders coming from processing industry, where metallurgical workers belong. On the other side, it may be observed an increase of participation of other economic sectors, including rural. Other significant fact is the increase of participation of leaders coming from services areas, becoming a majority at CWU from the years 1990. Part of this change is due to the arise of trade unions in the sector, banned up to 1988, and economic changes in the country reducing significance of industry, when compared to services.

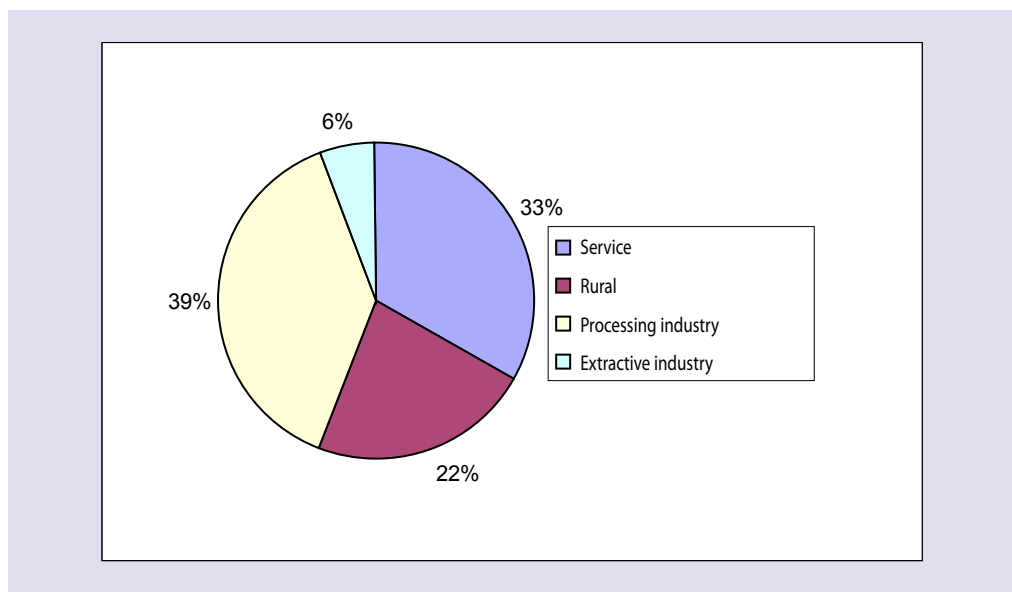
The financial sector development, where better profit opportunities broadened, was necessarily based in "flexibilization of working processes, labor markets, products and consumption patterns"⁶. It was mainly in western

6. Harvey, 1989, p.140.

countries where deindustrialization process caused it, being substituted by services sector activities. This accumulation pattern was modified in the 1970's, reversing labor markets standards. In Brazil, impact arrived during the 1990's: decrease of industrial jobs and growth in services⁷ therefore modifying ways of hiring, type of work and worker's profile. Most part of Brazilian labor force was concentrated in production work, represented by industrial workers. However this changed, and since then, turned into unproductive ways of work, where are located rendering services jobs.⁸

Determined to set Brazil in a new framework within global economy, the federal government promoted changes to modify domestic market structure and labor relationships. This labor market reconfiguration brought a decrease of formal jobs and an increase of self-employed persons, as it is the case of independent workers, allied to structural increase of unemployment and workers with precarious contracts, such as part time or outsourced among others, diversified even more workers needs and interests. The change influenced way or organizing trade unions. And leaders would not be immune to these market changes, as may be seen in following Chart:

CHART 13
CWU board, elected in 1984/1986 (per economy sector, in percentage)

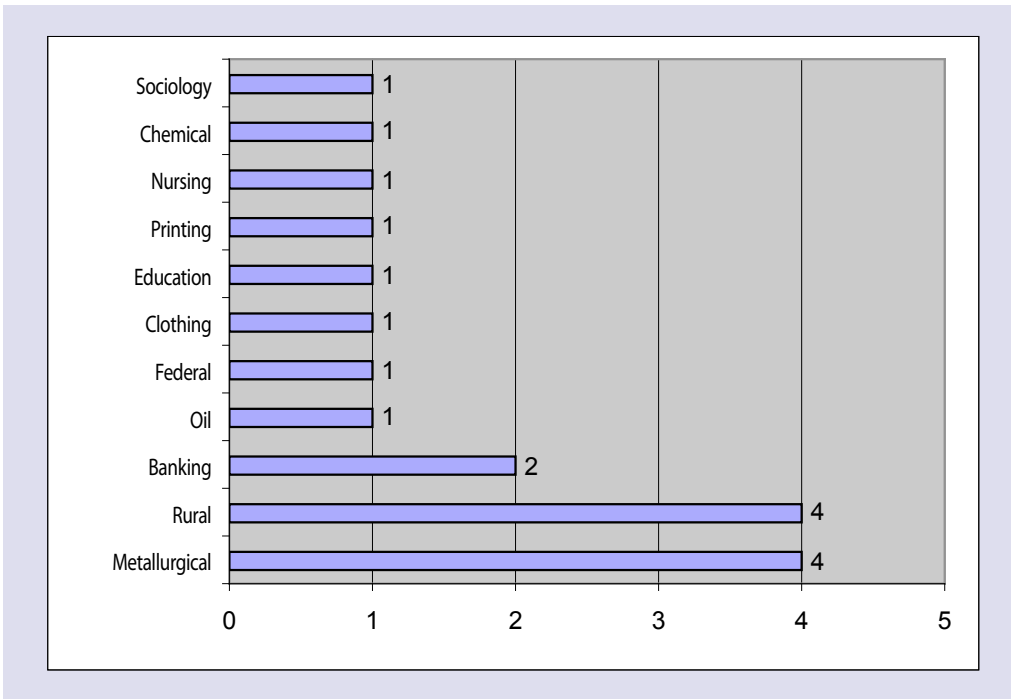


Elaborated by the author

7. Pochmann, 2001.

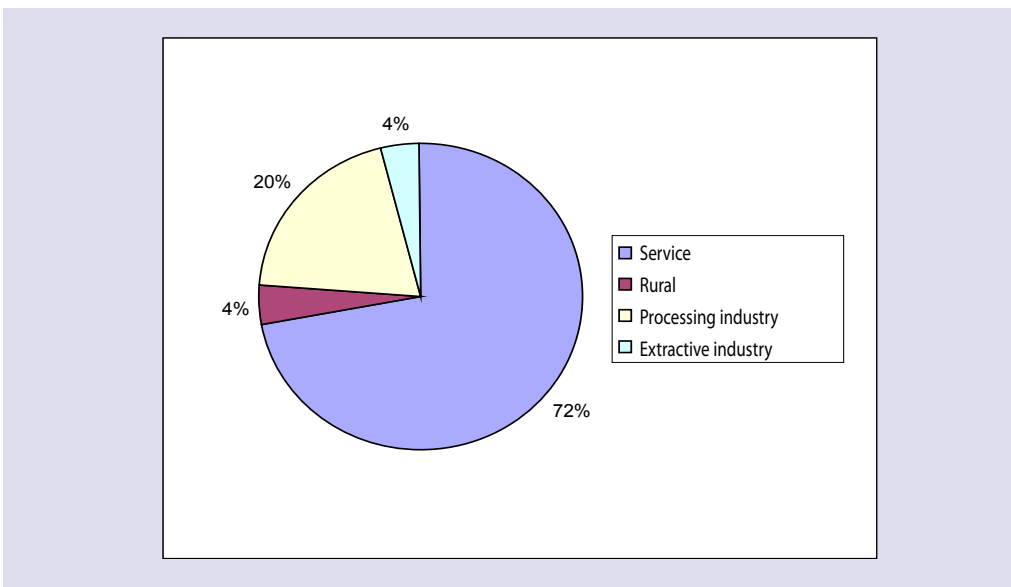
8. Braverman (1987) explains in a whole chapter the debate on productive and unproductive work. The concept is based in a Marx revision (1987) that did not see transformation of unproductive work into employment.

CHART 14
CWU board, elected in 1984/1986 (by sectors of activity)



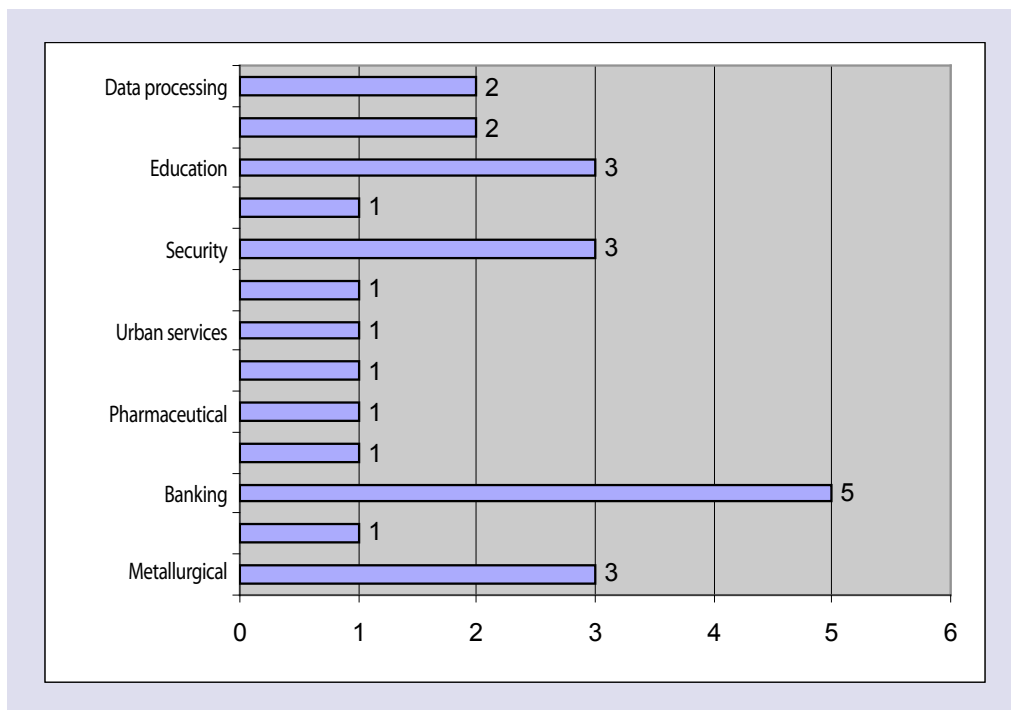
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CHART 15
CWU board, elected in 1994/1997 (by economic sector – in %)



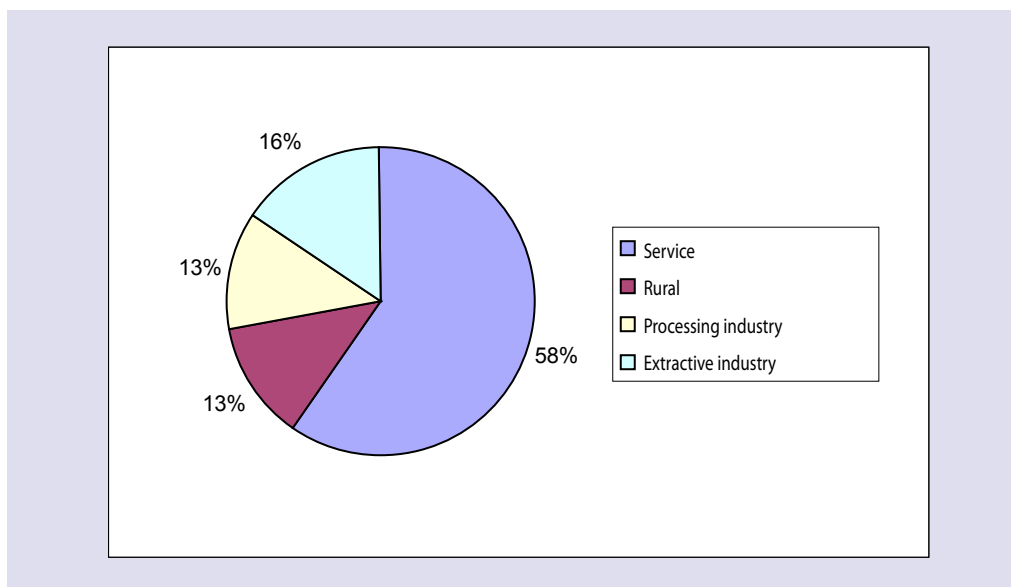
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CHART 16
CWU board, elected in 1994/1997 (by sector of activity)



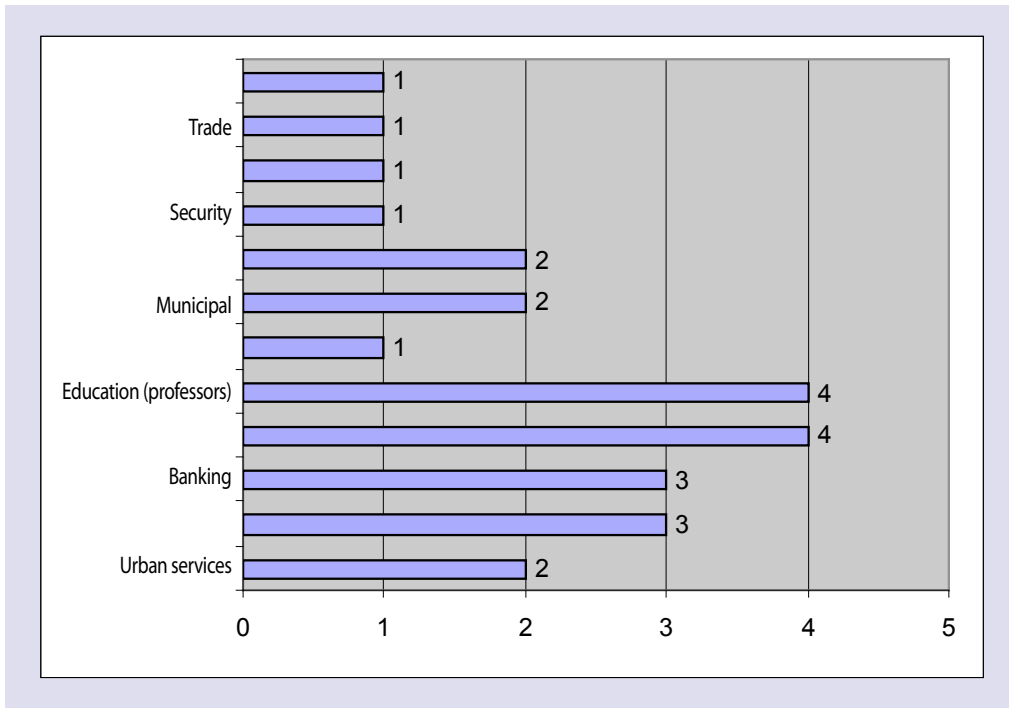
Elaborated by the author

CHART 17
CWU board, elected in 2009/2012 (by economic sector – in %)



Elaborated by the author

CHART 18
CWU board, elected in 2009/2012 (by sector of activity)



Elaborated by the author

Charts show a change of profile of the CWU leaders, following Brazilian labor market trend, as a change in delegates elected at congresses. A board composed by a majority of workers coming from services sectors brings more heterogeneity, and this demands drawing up a wider scope of strategies. This new leaders' profile provides a new relationship between CWU and workers, and ratifies CWU ability to adapt to reality. This is what is expressed in approved contents in congresses, and will be defining CWU action limits.

Final Considerations

Along last three decades, CWU unionism underwent important transformations transcending political field. It is about the change of profile of its leaders, previously related to industry and rural areas, and currently much more related to labor performed in the services sector, particularly civil service. If we consider the profile of trade union leaders as reflection of reality in working places, then we can state that CWU unionism now represents workers in different conditions than those of the 1980's, when Central was founded.

In other words, we could say that there was a change in its representative base. On the other side, it is not possible to state if this change also implies in redefining the wide scope of this representativeness. Participative strategies developed in recent years makes reasonable to expect CWU has been searching this objective.

Furthermore, it must be stressed CWU's ability to adapt to Brazilian labor market reality. CWU demonstrates alignment with Brazilian worker's profile, in a way to keep its representativeness. In this leaders' process of change of Profile, we also may see a transformation in CWU strategies, currently having a wider scope of representation.

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