

Popular Unity Candidacy votes ensure passage of Catalan austerity budget

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The pseudo-left Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) voted in the Catalan regional parliament to ensure the extension of the regional government's 2015 austerity budget. The CUP cast 5 votes in favour and 4 deputies abstained, allowing the budget to pass by 64 votes in favour and 61 against.

This once again exposes the CUP's reactionary role and that of all the parties in Spain and internationally that have supported the CUP and promoted its false "anti-capitalist" pretensions.

Following September's regional election in Catalonia, the CUP with its 10 seats held the balance of power. Last month, its support allowed the Together for Yes coalition—comprising the Catalan Republican Left (ERC) and the Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC)—to form a government pledged to secede from Spain.

As part of the deal, CUP insisted on the replacement of former Catalan President Artur Mas, the figure most closely associated with the previous government's harsh austerity measures, with Carles Puigdemont.

The removal of Mas was however simply a cover for CUP to continue to pose as anti-capitalist, whilst further integrating itself into the corridors of power. It was Puigdemont, hand-picked by Mas, who made world headlines in 2012 when, as mayor of Girona, he ordered locks put on supermarket waste bins to keep the poor from scavenging.

The 2015 budget passed by the CDC with the support of the ERC continues the austerity programme imposed by Mas's government, which came to power in 2010. Catalonia under Mas was dubbed the "laboratory of cuts", with cuts of 20 percent or more (some €8 billion) in budgets for education, health care and other social services.

The CUP posed as opponents of the government and

its austerity policies. Its leader, David Fernández, proclaimed, "we are witnessing the budget of the fanatics of austerity, a real declaration of war on the people". CUP deputy Isabel Vallets condemned the ERC for backing the CDC, asking, "How can you support this?"

Now the CUP has come full circle. For weeks, its leaders raged about their opposition to the budget, with CUP parliamentary leader Ana Gabriel declaring that the CUP "would not support an unjust budget". Now it is supporting the same reactionary budget it claimed to oppose.

In the week before the vote, as it became clear the combined vote of the opposition parties could defeat the budget, another CUP leader, Albert Botran, suddenly said that they would "facilitate" the budget.

CUP deputy Eulàlia Reguant said that it was necessary to support the budget to ensure "the start of the process to create the independent Catalan State in the form of a Republic" and defy the Constitutional Court's decision to suspend it. She blustered that Catalonia should "disobey and stop paying" the region's debt and create a regional infrastructure to "directly collect taxes, solve the monetary question and negotiate one on one with the European Central Bank".

Catalan Vice President Oriol Junqueras, the leader of the ERC, naturally rejected this proposal and declared that "in no case will there be a unilateral debt default". Former premier Mas reminded the CUP of the deal they had made to support the new government, stating that their "word of honour is on the hook".

The daily *El País* asked Ana Gabriel how "can you be anti-capitalist and vote in favour of a budget with a CDC president, and a party immersed in corruption cases and which has imposed numerous cuts". She answered that the CUP's "automatic answer" is no,

“but we are in a democratic anomaly, because the CUP and Together for Yes agreement was the result of them [the Spanish government] not allowing us to hold a referendum [on Catalan independence. ...] there is an agreement between two ideologically opposed parties”.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The CUP poses as anti-capitalist but is a pro-austerity party which articulates the interests of an upper middle class layer aggrieved at their exclusion from the top one percent. This layer is angry at certain problems the economic crisis has caused for its privileged lifestyles, and responds by calling for the carving out of a Catalan mini-state from Spain

This demand, which itself is only a perspective for attracting global corporations through tax cuts and stepped-up exploitation of the working class, is used to posture as “radical”, while supporting reactionary policies against the workers.

The CUP’s pro-austerity vote is a warning to the working class and youth. It is a myth that the forces of Catalan nationalism are a progressive alternative to Madrid’s reactionary policies. As the “laboratory of the cuts” experience proves, an independent Catalan state run by such forces would carry out austerity, participate in imperialist wars and impose authoritarian forms of rule. They are as right-wing as their counterparts in Madrid, and no less hostile to the working class.

The CUP’s pro-austerity vote exposes parties like the Pabloite Anticapitalists (Anticapitalistas), In Struggle (En Lucha), and Red Current (Corriente Roja), which integrated themselves into the CUP, helped build it up, and lauded it as an “anti-capitalist” party.

The Anticapitalists and In Struggle have since left the CUP to promote another pro-austerity party, Podemos, which is now offering itself up as a potential coalition partner for the national government with the pro-austerity Socialist Party (PSOE).

Last week, Red Current also left the CUP. It had members in the CUP’s electoral lists and campaigned for it and the “creation of a Catalan Republic”. It posted a statement declaring, “This puts into question the CUP’s breakaway objective, subjecting it to a government submissive to the EU and the Troika, and thus against the interests of the working people”.

In other words, Red Current recognised that its alliance with the CUP has jeopardized its “anti-capitalist” pretensions, and it is now seeking to

construct a new trap for the working class.



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