

'Society is moving and politics, too'

The economist still demands a **better financing deal** between Spain and Catalonia and is convinced that if political parties don't move forward they will lose popular support

O.A.-ETXEARTE

Why have you decided to go into politics?

– We academics live in ivory towers and from there it is very easy to pontificate, give our opinions and criticise. I've been writing books and articles for some time now in an attempt to influence debate and offer my own ideas. Issues I was unhappy about helped me make up my mind: Catalonia's budget arrangements with Madrid, which mean money is sent to central government [see page 21] while we still need improved infrastructures in Catalonia. My candidature is not that much of a risk. It will be trial and error and if I don't like it, I'll go back to the economics faculty.

– Artur Mas supported your election partly because you are an independent candidate. However, you were active in CiU for 17 years.

– Yes.

– And why did you stop being an active member?

– For a mixture of reasons. It's a bit like when you join a gym and never go. A year later you are still paying the membership fee. When you've been doing that for ten years it doesn't make any sense. I hadn't been actively involved in the party for a long time, even though I was still a card-carrying member. However, in 2002 when José María Aznar was in full swing I decided the moment was right to resign, especially with the finance deal and fiscal deficit being the way they were, too. At that stage I had my job at the university and I had planned an academic life ahead and independence for me was important. I never imagined that I would end up as a candidate for CiU.

– Does your election sym-



Ramon Tremosa, Professor of Economic Theory at Barcelona University / ANDREU PUIG

Against the Estatut

Ramon Tremosa has a doctorate in economics and is professor of theoretical economics at the University of Barcelona. Tremosa is a supporter of economic agreements and a firm defender of making the fiscal balance public knowledge. In fact, it was Tremosa who brought together the group of experts who calculated the current balance estimates between Catalonia and the Spanish state at the request of the Generalitat's economics department. Tremosa has also publicly opposed to the new finance deal included in the Estatut.

bolise a new interest in sovereignty in CDC?

– There is a growing consciousness in Catalonia among employers and trade unionists that the current financial arrangements are unfair and that infrastructures need urgent updating. Entrepreneurs talk about fiscal exploitation. Sorting this out is a necessity, not the whim of a naughty child. We have one million more immigrants putting pressure on our education and medical services. People are living longer and that puts pressure on our social services. We have it all to do and the budget arrangement has not been changed for seven years. The Generalitat will hand over four billion euros this year and

Zapatero will instantly retain a surplus that puts the Generalitat into deficit. CDC can't stay the same as it was 15 years ago and when the fiscal deficit was three times smaller. Society is changing and the parties that don't change too will lose support.

– Will you focus on the economy then?

– The current economic situation is very delicate and we are going to Brussels to defend Catalonia's interests. For example, we need a freight train to link Catalan and Valencian ports to the European market. The Spanish government is not in a hurry to sort it out and it is very important: it could save our industry. That is why it is worth going to Brussels.