

CARNETS

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Sharing Wealth



PHOTO: NATHIE

Something strikes us as a little bit indecent when we hear, or read certain editorialists who proclaim that there's an urgent need to "create more wealth" in the Province of Québec. Clearly, more jobs should be created, and we're not against sustainable development, and growth does have its virtues. But we're already one of the wealthiest societies on the planet. Should our primary concern really be how to become even wealthier, or rather should we be re-examining how we share what we already have?

What yardstick should be used to measure the quality or extent of civilization of any given society, across any and all historical epochs? If I had to restrict myself to choosing only one single criterion, it would be that of the disparity of wealth in any given society, between the most disadvantaged and the most privileged segments. Indeed, this is a quantifiable measurement, whose value unequivocally mirrors a society's capacity to have all its members benefit from the wealth it produces, in the best possible fashion.

Striving to more equitably share the wealth in a society is unquestionably the common denominator that guides the actions of most social, community and union organizations. Rooted in modern times, in today's knowledge society, this quest directly invokes education, in general, and higher education, in particular. A society that seeks equity cannot skimp on providing its citizens with universal access to education and knowledge.

This preoccupation is what should be at the very heart of the Forum on universities recently announced by the Government; and we're convinced that this is the angle from which the whole question of tuition should be approached.

Because the existence and amount of the latter will necessarily play a role in a kind of social segregation. It's all well and good to invoke, in the case of increased tuition, a parallel increase in the assistance provided to needy students, but no backup system will ever match the social integration generated by tuition-free higher education. In addition, in the pursuit of a clear conscience by providing somewhat less stingy assistance to needier students, a contorted kind of reasoning is fashioned: why do the latter deserve access to higher education without having to endure any financial hardship?

Most of the arguments going around in favour of unfreezing tuition fees are based upon a user-payer rationale and this, in turn, is built upon a rate-setting philosophy, which is at odds with a progressive tax system. Given that the well to do can currently go to university at a bargain price, it's been argued that low tuition fees wrongly benefit them more, seeing that they could afford to pay much more. A twisted kind of argument, if there ever was one!

Our Unions have always considered the issue of tuition-free education as a fundamental concern. Notwithstanding their very modest format and approach that very much targets the whole, FNEEQ plans to actively participate in the forum on universities set up by Minister Beauchamp. The future of Québec's universities is an important dimension in the vision that we embrace for our society, and our approach to tuition, in this regard, is much much more than a simple tangential debate.

Jean Trudelle, President

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A New Collective Agreement

Last September, the members of the CEGEP *regroupement*, after votes held in their respective general meetings, accepted the agreements in principle reached at the sector-based and central bargaining tables, thereby authorizing their representatives to sign the collective agreement.



PHOTO - MICHEL BIRoux

Micheline Thibodeau
FNEEQ Vice-President



PHOTO - NATHI

Yves de Repentigny
CEGEP Regroupement Coordination Delegate

A Brief Look Back

In Spring 2009, in the midst of the financial crisis, the CEGEP *regroupement* joined in a strategic bargaining initiative that was elaborated along with the other union organizations that made up the Common Front, which counted some 475,000 trade unionists, a historic high. The unionized public and parapublic sector workers were proposing to the Government an expeditious round of bargaining to be completed before the summer 2010. To do this, each party under-



PHOTO - BRUCE TOOMBS

took to formulate clear-cut bargaining proposals.

On October 30, 2009, we tabled our sector-based bargaining proposals to the college management bargaining committee (CPNC) and the Common Front tabled its central bargaining table proposals to the Treasury Board. The CPNC responded to us on December 17, 2009, and we reached an agreement on June 13, 2010. The Treasury Board responded to the central bargaining table proposals on November 30, 2009, and we accepted the agreement in principle on June 24, 2010. We can thus describe this round of bargaining as relatively swift.

The Sector-Based Table Agreement

Negotiations at the sector-based tables address the working conditions that are characteristic of each

job category and exclude issues related to salaries, pension plans and parental rights.

Without enumerating an exhaustive list of the many elements in the new agreement, it's important to note that the latter includes 403 new teachers (calculated as full-time equivalents or FTE) in the system, for the most part to perform teaching tasks. Furthermore, these additions translate into new positions, thereby significantly increasing the number of regular professors. Meanwhile, new resources were also added for departmental coordination, which represents some 30 new positions. We also won faster advancement up through the first four echelons of the salary structure, which translates into significant monetary gains and alleviates the problem of very low salaries early on in one's teaching career. In addition, committees will be set up to identify solutions to a



PHOTO: FRANCE DESAUNIERES

certain number of key problems that we had raised, but that were incompatible to be discussed in the context of an accelerated bargaining process. Let's mention, amongst other things, difficulties regarding clinical teaching in nursing, in acute health care technician apprenticeships, as well as in the working and salary conditions of sessional lecturers in continuing education. On the other hand, we did accept to incorporate several tasks performed by department coordinators into the collective agreement.

Our primary objective was to substantially increase the number of positions dedicated to teaching activities; and in this regard, we achieved our goal, although not to the levels that we had originally hoped for. These new resources will nonetheless help re-establish some equity vis-à-vis the college teachers who work in the technical, pre-university, and general training sector, as well as in certain programs with low enrolment. From this angle, our discussions have definitely enhanced and strengthened our college system.

The Central Bargaining Table Settlement

Negotiations at the central bargaining table deal essentially with salaries, pension plans and parental rights. The agreement in principle this time around covers all public and parapublic sector employees, regardless of the positions they hold.

An update of the parental rights clauses in our agreements was necessary following several amendments to legislation in this area. Meanwhile, almost all our demands were granted in terms of our

after 38 years of service, which helps counter staff shortages, and finally, the introduction of a indexation formula for the period from 1982-1999, an indexation that was eliminated by the 1982 decree.

Finally, the agreement in principle regarding our salaries was rather off target from what we had anticipated. Everyone would have liked to receive some catch-up compensation, which we did not get. It should be recalled that during the period covered by the previous agreement, our salaries were frozen for two years.

This time, there was no such thing, but we were unable to safeguard our purchasing power, at least not for the first two years, as the Government had set itself the goal of returning to a balanced budget in 2013. Meanwhile, in addition to the flat increases of 0.5%, 0.75%, 1%, 1.75% and 2% per year over the 5-year contract, there will also be adjustment formulas linked to increases in the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and inflation: a consolation prize. This is where the central bargaining table settlement has appeared the most disappointing to us.

As we write these lines, the CSN has announced that after several weeks of consultations in Union general meetings, the four CSN public sector federations, e.g. Fédération de

la santé et des services sociaux (FSSS), Fédération des employées et employés de services publics (FEESP), Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ) and Fédération des professionnelles (FP)s have already reached the required majority to approve the agreements in principle negotiated in early summer. ■



PHOTO: CSN

pension plan. Here are some of the key elements contained in the agreement: changes in the calculation of the contribution rate that eliminate major fluctuations, a very worthwhile adjustment especially in the context of the recent financial crisis and market instability, the option of receiving 76% of one's salary as a pension annuity

Private Sector *Regroupement*

Common bargaining goals

The most recent meeting of the private sector *regroupement* can surely be described as historic! Indeed, the Unions in attendance adopted a resolution that will greatly change the face of how we negotiate collective agreements in this sector.



PHOTO: NATHÉ

Caroline Senneville

FNEEQ General Secretary

It should be recalled that the private sector *regroupement* together 34 Unions, and hence, 34 local bargaining committees that negotiate their collective agreement in each of their respective institutions. Of course, the coordinators of the *regroupement* prepare and help each of them by organizing training sessions, exchanging information on gains made elsewhere, as well as by drafting various comprehensive arguments and guides. Without forgetting the union staff representatives that provide the Unions with valuable professional support.

We believe however that the solidarity that unites us will help us take another big step forward in better synchronizing these diverse negotiations, and accordingly, to win better working conditions for one and all. In practical terms, the *regroupement* is planning to draft and negotiate common proposals that each Union will undertake to include in their overall bargaining proposals and to defend at their respective bargaining tables.



PHOTO: FOTOLIA

We all know that each school, each college is unique. For example, some of them count a huge number of students, while others are smaller, some are experiencing financial difficulties, others not, some are located in an urban milieu, others are outside the metropolitan areas. We plan to take all these various local cultures into account, and thus, at the outset, this synchronization of our demands will focus on more technical issues or subjects that have been discussed at length during our meetings and that have given rise to a consensus. Accordingly, it was decided that clauses on parental rights, union rights, including time off for union business, and various types of leaves would be the first ones to be the subject of identical demands.

The ultimate goal is thus to establish a threshold, a minimum standard, regarding these matters to even-

tually ensure that Union members in the private sector *regroupement* enjoy analogous basic working conditions. In addition, if we formulate and negotiate common demands, it will also be possible to develop and use similar information and mobilization instruments, thereby enhancing our bargaining clout all around.

It's worth underlining that such a process will require a greater commitment from our Unions. This will be a joint exercise in coordination to which our Unions and union staff representatives are invited to work together to achieve these goals. We believe that the *regroupement*, and the Unions that make it up, are ready to take up this new challenge, and that they will become all the stronger because of it, and more important still, that the members in our local Unions will assuredly enjoy better collective agreements. ■

Three New Unions Join the *regroupement*

inevitably impact upon their ability to improve working conditions, deal with management high-handedness, or stimulate union activism in the case of an affiliation to a major union organization.

In this regard, the spring 2010 has been a fruitful one in terms of unionization for the private sector *regroupement*: three new Unions have joined forces with the 31 Unions that already make up the *regroupement*. They are the: Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy, Collège Mont Saint-Louis and Queen of Angels Academy.



PHOTO: NATHB

Odette Lefrançois

Private Sector *Regroupement* Coordination
Delegate

The Campus Notre-Dame-de-Foy, located in St-Augustin-de-Desmaures, is a private college institution. Previously affiliated to the former Fédération autonome du collégial (FAC), the 160 teachers chose to join FNEEQ in March 2010. The delegates from this Union will be able to share many of their problems with their colleagues in the *regroupement*. In addition, they'll be invited to participate in meetings of the CEGEP *regroupement*, which represents more than 85% of CEGEP teaching staff.

Collège Mont Saint-Louis, located on Henri-Bourassa Boulevard, close to the Papineau-Leblanc bridge, is a private high school. Formerly affiliated to the CSQ, the Union disaffiliated from them and remained autonomous. In the winter 2010, the executive, wishing to join a central

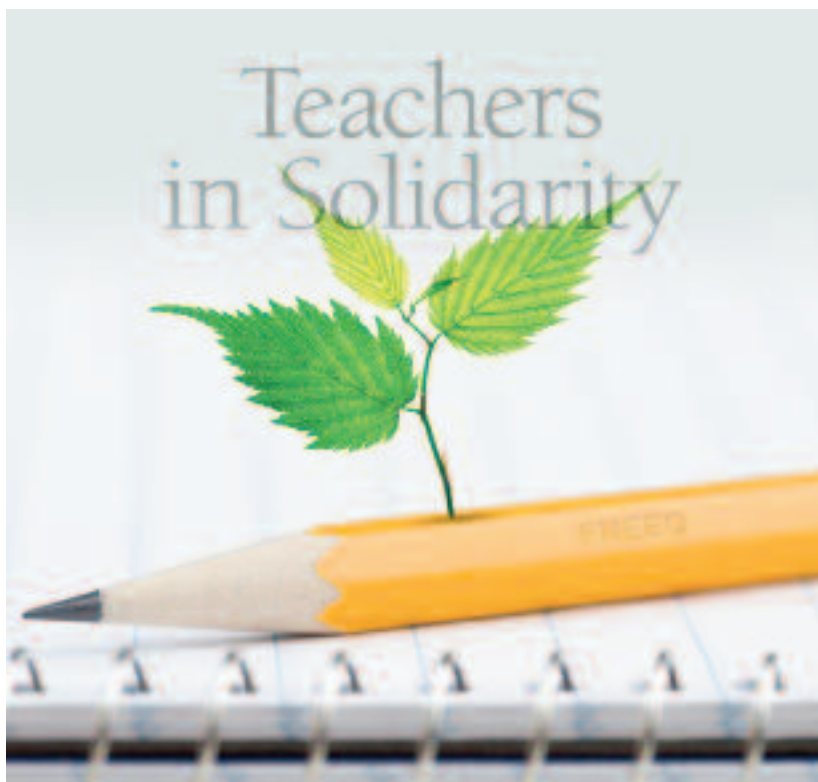


PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

labour organization, asked to first meet with representatives from FNEEQ and then from the CSQ. In the spring 2010, all the college's personnel, namely, some 120 members, opted for an affiliation to FNEEQ. Queen of Angels Academy is a private anglophone high school, with some 40 teachers and about 20 non-teaching support staff. This is a first union experience for the personnel. The primary motivation of the members was to enjoy a col-

lective agreement to put an end to management high-handedness in their institution.

All the members of the private sector *regroupement* wish a warm welcome to these three new Unions, convinced that they will find all the support necessary at the Federation to help them improve their working conditions and stimulate vitality and dynamism in their Unions. ■

Accountability, You Say?

From August 16 to September 7, 2010, the Culture and Education Commission held hearings as required under the Act respecting educational institutions at the university level, which stipulates hearing from university officials every three years.



PHOTO: MICHEL GIROUX

Claire Tremblay

University Regroupement Coordination Delegate

During this exercise, the universities are required to report on their performance, as well as on their perspectives for development. By performance, the Act means data on pass-rates, the average length of a student's studies, student mentorship activities, as well as research activities. The Commission gives each university three hours to make its presentation.

The FNEEQ university *regroupement* always monitors these hearings very closely. Again this year, the University *Regroupement* Coordination delegate was present in Quebec City, often accompanied by other Union representatives. In addition to keeping us abreast of the orientations taken by these exchanges in real time, this presence enables us to defend our own interests and to talk with the various representatives from the institutions.

No one would be surprised to learn that all the universities addressed the issue of underfunding. However, even though they all agree on the sorry state of affairs, the consensus breaks down when it comes to the solutions put forward! Of course, increased tuition, a simplistic solution if there ever was one, appears to receive unanimous support from the institutions, but the amounts, terms and conditions are poles apart. Paradoxically, all the institutions, even prestigious McGill University that offers an MBA program for \$32,000, have solemnly reaffirmed the importance of maintaining accessibility to a university education for

2014. As a counter proposal, they recommended one-on-one agreements be made with the Government.

The university institutions also insisted a lot upon the different partnerships that they cultivate, particularly in the area of research, but also in teaching, with other universities – in the Province of Quebec and abroad – as well as with different stakeholders in the milieu, including business companies. Attention was drawn to key research niches, as well as to the importance of the regional universities being present all over their territory, and this, in both research and in teach-



PHOTO: ISTOCKPHOTO

everyone. It thus appears that the financial assistance programs to further one's education, which are inadequate today, are seen as the miracle solution to all that is wrong! With regard to financing, most of the universities also denounced the uniform across-the-board cutbacks imposed indiscriminately by the Act to implement certain provisions of the Budget Speech of 30 March 2010, reduce the debt and return to a balanced budget in 2013-

ing. The contribution of foreign students on Quebec campuses was also underlined.

The parliamentarians raised very few substantive questions. The subjects of distance training (practically presented as a miracle solution to marry resources and accessibility), financing formulas related to the numbers of part-time students, the geographic dispersal of some institutions, as well as student debt were

repeatedly addressed. Meanwhile, the presence of sessional lecturers was once again tied to the underfunding issue, which once again proves that we have to continue our information campaigns regarding the role of sessional lecturers in the pursuit of the universities' mission. In a more general perspective, the role of the State and the university of tomorrow were briefly mentioned.

Generally speaking, the exchanges that we witnessed reminded us more of an exercise in public relations than a genuine exercise in taking stock of the situation, and this, in contrast to the 2006-2007 hearings. Of course, the universities had done their homework, tabling and presenting well-prepared reports to the hearings. Naturally, the parliamentarians also did their job (when they bothered to attend...) wisely listening to the presentations and questioning the representatives from the institutions. But one had the unfortunate impression of attending a pre-scripted dialogue...

Notwithstanding these shortcomings and in conclusion, it's important to underline that these Culture

and Education Commission hearings constitute a valuable information instrument for the Government and for the population, and that we don't intend to oppose this exercise. But we do believe that on the heels of the Government's resolve, expressed over the past few months, to require greater transparency from university institutions – Bill 38 – it would be worthwhile to examine how this exercise

could be conducted in a more efficient fashion.

In conclusion, any readers who are so interested can view the documents tabled by the universities, as well as the transcription of the hearings on the National Assembly's Web site, under the tab Travaux parlementaires: <<http://www.assnat.qc.ca/fr/travaux-parlementaires/index.html>> ■

The Université de Montréal Sessional Lecturers: Going Out on Strike Was the Right Thing to Do

In the spring issue of *Carnets*, we told you, as we were going to press, about an agreement in principle that had been accepted on April 11 by the members of the Université de Montréal sessional lecturers union.



PHOTO: ALAIN CHAGNON

The seven-week strike gave rise to some noteworthy achievements with regard to several key issues, but also in terms of successfully countering the employer's attacks, notably the eventual termination of the employment relationship following an abandonment. The settlement includes a 6.55% salary increase, to which the parameters negotiated in the public sector will be added, and this, for the four year term of the collective agreement.

In a more particular dossier, the solidarity manifested during the strike towards the voice mentors and coaches at the Faculty of Music helped the latter conserve their working conditions, notwithstanding a full-scale attack that was mounted by said Faculty. However, it now appears that the university is continuing its offensive by reducing the work being offered to these coaches and mentors, thereby running the risk of adversely affecting the students in the singing program. The SCCUM is closely monitoring the situation, and will not sit idly by as this group is emasculated.

Coordinated Bargaining

The university *regroupement* currently counts some four Unions who are in negotiations: they are the sessional lecturers Unions at UQAR, UQO, Université Laval, as well as those at the Concordia University department of continuing and adult education. In order to support these negotiations and to lay the groundwork for upcoming negotiations, the *regroupement* will be launching an innovative visibility campaign on November 22, that will draw attention to the various roles played by sessional lecturers, tutors, as well as apprenticeship training supervisors in fulfilling the university's mission, in addition to underlining their crucial role, namely, that of the teaching. Watch out for it...

The McGill Association of graduate students is currently engaged in a campaign to organize the University's sessional lecturers. Please talk this up with everyone around you and if you know anyone who teaches part-time at McGill University, please tell them about the campaign and please tell us about them.



Strongly in Favour of a Charter of Secularism!

The CSN is campaigning for Québec to adopt a Charter of Secularism. We believe that it is time for Québec to undertake an official debate on this, in which we plan to participate. Below are some ideas taken from an article written by Claudette Carbonneau which will be published in *Nouvelles pratiques sociales**.

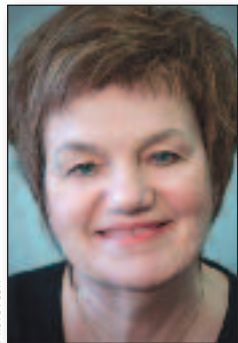


PHOTO: CSN

Claudette Carbonneau
CSN President

Québec has been moving towards secularism for a very long time. All of its institutions were deconfessionalized in the past 40 years, but no official document so far has openly proclaimed Québec's secularism. Since the publication of the report of the Consultation Commission on Accommodation Practices Related to Cultural Differences (the Bouchard-Taylor Commission) over two years ago, the place of religion in the public arena has not been made a priority issue by the government; however, the debate regularly resurfaces. One might suggest that this is due to, on the one hand, the difficulty of reconciling freedom of religion and equality between men and women, and on the other hand, the secularism and neutrality of the State.

For the CSN, a Charter, in addition to affirming the secular nature of the state, should also include some general principles of the application of secularism. This would have the advantage of avoiding an anarchic, unequal and piecemeal development of responses to demands for accommodations or adjustments for religious reasons, while at the same time setting at the outset many of the ground rules.

In addition, to proceed by adopting a law would also allow a broad and democratic discussion of the issues,

and would ensure that an eventual legal challenge not be played out only at the individual level of reasonable accommodation, but would instead be the object of an analysis that takes into account social issues, the public interest of society as a whole and its democratic decisions.

"We believe that such discussions will allow two large misapprehensions to be cleared up. The first, and the most unfortunate, is to blame only immigrants for the uneasiness engendered by requests for accommodations or adjustments for religious reasons. The second is the belief that our obligation to integrate, in this case with regard to immigrants, is limited to reasonable accommodations, when in reality our collective approach and our programs for welcoming and integrating immigrants need to be greatly improved. Dialogue, respect, raised awareness, information, and struggles against prejudice must be placed high on the agenda for everyone, no matter what their origins, cultural background or religious beliefs."

In addition to making secularism official in Québec, the Charter must define how as a result neutrality is expressed in the state apparatus, its institutions, its representatives and the services offered to its citizens. The Charter must therefore set out the measures by which neutrality is to be guaranteed. This is not to move away from the model of reasonable accommodations, which will continue to exist, but to define collectively what will be seen on certain issues the limit of the reasonable in a secular society such as ours.

As a player within our society, the CSN works actively with its unions to struggle against prejudices and to support the welcoming of immi-

grants in order to better integrate them and to support them in the long run in employment.

The Essential Equality Between Men and Women

Québec is one of the societies in the world that is most advanced in terms of equality between men and women. Our legal system guarantees this. We wish to respect freedom of religion, as we respect freedom of conscience or freedom of expression, but what should we do when it comes directly into conflict with the equality of men and women? Secularism is based on three indivisible values: freedom of conscience, non-discrimination with regard to an individual's spiritual or religious choices and the neutrality of the state. The Charter must clearly establish the unacceptable nature of a request for public services which refuses service from a member of the opposite sex for religious reasons. It must equally affirm that any request based on religious motivations that leads to the establishment of separate public services for women and men or for particular religious groups is unacceptable.

For our part, we believe that there are circumstances and places where an uncovered face is essential. The Charter must therefore oblige the identification of a citizen where it is required for everyone (e.g. voting, identity cards with photographs, etc.). It must equally forbid the wearing of full veils in educational institutions. In summary, putting in place a Charter of Secularism in Québec is a necessity. ■

* The original article can be accessed at CARBONNEAU, Claudette (2010 – à paraître). « La conciliation des droits dans une société laïque », *Nouvelles pratiques sociales*, vol. 23, n° 1, automne.

Haiti

A Relentless Mobilization Against a Never Ending Catastrophe

On January 12, 2010, a devastatingly powerful earthquake struck Haiti, reducing Port-au-Prince (the capital) to a pile of ruin. 230,000 people died. More than two million people were left homeless. This catastrophe struck us very close to home, owing to the historic relationship that exists between Haiti and Quebec, and that then gave rise to a large-scale mobilization. Unprecedented in the history of the Province of Quebec, all the same rich in international solidarity.



A young "refugee" transporting drinking water provided by Oxfam Quebec at the Benediction camp in Port au Prince. This site houses over 700 refugee families. Photo: © Éric St-Pierre/Oxfam Québec

By Pierre Beaudet

Professor at the School of International Development and Globalization, at the University of Ottawa

Ten Months Later

Today Port-au-Prince, renamed "Port-aux-camps", is still brimming with rubble where a million and a half people are squeezed all together. People live in their tents as best they can, with torrential downpours and improvised facilities (one latrine per 100 people). In this chaos, the most vulnerable, women and children above all, have become the prey of gangs and traffickers who take ad-

vantage of the State's abandonment to set up shop in the camps and shantytowns. Several of the casualties, already very poor, have lost the very little they had. Others, like teachers, white-collar workers, small merchants, had a small home, sometimes some savings in the bank: and they've ended up like everyone else, homeless, at the mercy of the international aid organizations. The "lucky" ones have taken refuge in the villages, or have gone off to join the million Haitians who live in the Dominican Republic, the United States or Canada, where there are scores and scores of professionals, teachers and university

students, in a country where the lack of managers and executives is so sorely endured. This earthquake struck a country, where already prior to January 12, 2010, 70-80 % of the population was already living in dire poverty.

International Aid

Meeting together at the UN to take stock of the situation, donor countries such as Canada promised some \$10 billion in emergency and reconstruction aid. A committee was set up to oversee this aid, under the leadership of former US President Bill Clinton. The UN, in principle re-



Merchants from Port au Prince rebuilding, after having lost everything during the January 12th earthquake, their small shops with the support of Oxfam Québec. Photo: © Éric St-Pierre/Oxfam Québec

sponsible for coordinating this intervention, is totally overwhelmed. In reality, there still isn't a coherent plan to rebuild the country. The most visible evidence of this incoherence are the mountains of debris that still obstruct the streets and that prevent the reconstruction of homes, which means that "Port-aux-camps" appears destined to live a long life. Faced with such a mess, international aid is dispensed at a snail's pace. The donors affirm that work is almost impossible, that the ports and roads are paralysed, that the infrastructure provided by the Haitian State is inadequate, and many many other reasons. But this is far from the whole story.

Obstacles that Come from Afar

If the country is facing a black hole today, it's because numerous fundamental problems have been accumulating over the years. Many Haitians feel that their country's fragility dates back to 1804, when Haiti achieved independence and was encircled and isolated by the major powers who feared the "contamination" of the anti-slavery insurgency. Later, Haiti was invaded, notably by the United States that oc-

cupied the country for 20 years. The dictators who seized power spilling the blood of their people received support, François Duvalier and his son "Baby Doc", for example, who formed part of the security perimeter against "communist subversion." The 1980-90s were just as chaotic: popular upheavals, the election of a left-wing priest, Jean-Bertrand Aristide (1990) overturned by the army shortly thereafter, increased political and social polarization, etc. After Aristide's return (1994), President Clinton made Haiti align itself with the so called "Washington consensus" that imposed trade liberalization, the privatization of public sector services and a host of other neoliberal measures.

Governing Under Influence

Since 2006, under the administration of René Préval, little has been done to alter the fundamental structures that are the source of a virtually permanent crisis situation in Haiti. The political class, with few exceptions, lacks credibility, all the more so given that the biggest part of the State's budget comes from donors. Meanwhile, one cannot minimize the responsibility of this political elite, scattered about in countless minuscule political parties that are just so many "boutiques" that amass funds. President Préval's image has been badly tarnished since the earthquake due to his absence and apparent lack of compassion. The coming residential

FNEEQ and CSN Committed to Building Teacher Unionism in Haiti

In April 2010, Louis Hallé, from the FNEEQ international action committee and Jean Lacharité from the CSN international collective participated in a union deliberation forum to build a dialogue on reconstruction in Haiti and a conference organized by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA). They submitted a report on their experience to the Federal Council in June. Here follows a short summary of their activities.

Union Summit on the Reconstruction of Haïti (ITUC/TUCA)



ITUC and TUCA's goal was to unite the different Haitian Unions, not in terms of a structural unity, but at least in terms of their acting in a unified fashion. After two days of discussion and reflection, the Haitian Unions agreed upon a "roadmap." Amongst the commitments and plans, there was the creation of a task force whose mandate was to produce a "Charter" to help in the implementation of said roadmap.

The following three dimensions were identified:

- 1- Secure decent jobs
- 2- Reinforce the rule of law
- 3- Secure social protection

Likewise, to meet all these challenges, the Haitian Union sector:

- makes this historic commitment to work on unifying its actions by creating a permanent space for dialogue around a Charter that will help implement this roadmap and will shape all its future actions;
- will continue to develop alliances with other sectors, such as progressive political parties, churches and organizations in civil society (human rights groups, women's collectives, small farmers, amongst others)..

Meanwhile, ITUC undertook to open an office in Port-au-Prince to support the process and to monitor its progress. We know that this office is now open and there is someone presently occupying the position of coordinator there.



Building toilet facilities. Photo: © Éric St-Pierre/Oxfam Québec

election (November) is way off course (all kinds of manoeuvring). The left and centre-left opposition has wisely refused to participate in this masquerade by calling for the immediate constitution of wide-ranging unity and national emergency Government.

Social Movements that Never Say Die

In this contrasting portrait, social movements remain the repositories of hope. Small farmer associations like Mouvement Paysan Papaye are fighting to restore small-scale agriculture that has potential, if and only if some basic investments are made (road construction, technical assistance, etc.). Last summer, these

small farmers showed their determination by demonstrating against American "aid" under the form of genetically-modified seeds from the multinational MONSANTO. Camille Chalmers, who heads the PAPDA coalition, believes that the current Government and its supporters do not really want to deal with the countryside, because that would require going against the policies designed to turn Haiti into an export zone founded upon cheap labour. The leaders of the small farmers believe that Haiti could not only feed itself, but do even more, as the restoration of the countryside could create jobs, give Port-au-Prince more breathing room and one day break the vicious cycle of dependency. ■

Forum for Reflection

Already in 2009, thanks to Louis Hallé and Michèle St-Denis, FNEEQ had established links with the Union des Normaliens et Normaliennes de Haïti (UNNOH). Since then, the number of members in this Union has increased and at its convention in the summer 2010, it incorporated the Syndicat des professionnels enseignants, hence, its new name UNNOHPE. The mandate of the delegation that went to Haiti in 2010 was to see how the CSN and FNEEQ, notably through the offices of the Alliance Syndicats et Tiers-Monde (ASTM), could support the work of this organization. Let's recall here that although international aid to Haiti seems to be considerable, assistance to its trade unions is non-existent. The agreements that we made with this organization can be divided into three parts:

- 1- help the union relocate its offices that were destroyed by the earthquake;
- 2- emergency assistance to restore the union's operations;
- 3- support in the development of the union's organization.

In this third part, the Regroupement des Organismes Canado-Haïtiens pour le Développement (ROCHAD) will become a special partner. The projects that ROCHAD submits to the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) stipulate the financial participation of the recipient body, in this case UNNOHPE, for one-third of the costs. This third is what will be financed by ASTM, while the remainder will be covered by CIDA, via ROCHAD.

Santa Domingo, April 10, 11 and 12, 2010

For More Social Justice

Like more than 100 other popular, community and union organizations, FNEEQ is a member of the Coalition against raising fees and privatizing public services. Thwarting the Charest Government and its neoliberal agenda is the core mission of this coalition.

Jean Trudelle

FNEEQ President

We were nearly 15,000 strong this past spring shouting loud and clear in the streets of Montreal our opposition to the regressive measures contained in the Bachand budget. A spontaneous demonstration, organized at the last minute, but whose success clearly showed that the population does not endorse the orientations taken by the current Government.

The coalition to which FNEEQ belongs, following a mandate given at its 29th Convention, is made up of a host of organizations that are all actively fighting in one way or another for more social justice, in other words, for a more equitable distribution of society's wealth. Whether their actions are focused upon housing problems like FRAPRU, community group networking like MÉPACQ, or if they're part of the trade union movement like FNEEQ (CSN), FSSS (CSN), or FAE, etc. or if their mission is to advocate major social issues like the Fédération des femmes du Québec or the Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté, they are all progressive groups who believe that that the erosion of public services gives rise to an erosion of social equity.

Seeing how the Bachand budget infuriated the population in 2010, the coalition will not be caught off guard next time. It has implemented an action plan that is designed to raise the level of political pressure, throughout the months leading up to the Liberal Government's introduction of the 2011

edition of the Province's budget. The overall objective is to stop the introduction of regressive measures, such as the health care tax or health care deductibles, the latter having been abandoned on Sep-



tember 22, 2010, and to develop more widespread popular support for progressive fiscal measures.

Raising Public Awareness Will Be Necessary

At the heart of this action plan is a core objective to which the coalition is dedicated, namely, raising the population's awareness regarding fiscal alternatives.

For several years now, the Government's official line, directly inspired by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and extensively regurgitated by the media, hammers away at the State's precarious financial situation. In a nutshell: health care expenses are exploding, needs in education are increasing, but the State's coffers are empty and the solution to restoring balance to every country's budget lies in aus-

terity measures, along with tax increases.

This official line, spouted by right wing economists, clothes itself in objective neutrality, but is in fact a profoundly ideological take on the situation. The State's finances are in such a condition, because the Government refuses to consider the whole question of its own revenue, from the perspective of a more just distribution of society's wealth. But with the help of the so-called "lucid" clique of ideologues, whose ideas receive far more media coverage than their vis-à-vis on the left, the neoliberal Jean Charest Government has had a good deal of success in making people believe that their room to manoeuvre is indeed quite slim. Countering these shenanigans is a necessary, but far from easy task. We must assert, repeat and demonstrate that alternatives do exist. Let the people judge.

A Socially Equitable Approach to the State's Revenues

The Alternatives fiscales document, produced by the coalition, describes five major avenues that could be taken, according to its initial evaluations, which could generate additional annual revenue of some \$6 to \$7 billion into the State's coffers. Enough to revamp our health care system, massively invest in education and, at the same time, pay public sector employees a decent wage!

The first of these avenues, and the one most often mentioned, involves introducing a more progres-

sive tax system. Over the past decade, our Province has short-changed itself to the tune of several billion dollars owing to reductions in income tax, which is already very controversial in a period of growing social needs. Meanwhile, Quebec's fiscal structure has also been profoundly modified. There were once 16 taxation levels in Québec: while today, only three are

Québec forego annually by way of its generous (and secret) hydro-electricity sales contracts?

A beefed-up struggle against tax evasion and fraud could also recuperate substantial amounts for the State, as would terminating the use of private companies to deliver public services. That practice alone has been estimated, in the case of

A Concerted Approach with the Central Labour Organizations

This campaign goes exactly in the same direction as that undertaken by the CSN last year, with the widespread distribution of its document *Se donner le Québec qu'on veut* that takes, it too, a different approach to public finance. Other analyses moreover have echoed such critiques: we might mention here the recent publication of *L'heure juste sur la dette du Québec*, by Louis Gill or the most recent research paper released by the Institut de recherche et d'information socio-économique (IRIS), namely, *La révolution tarifaire au Québec*.

As we write these lines, the coalition and the major central labour organizations are trying to join forces in their respective campaigns to denounce the neoliberal approach to public finance. This convergence is indispensable. The Coalition is characterized by its rich diversity and dynamism, but its means are limited and it has to deal with the vagaries of this diversity. Meanwhile, the central labour organizations undoubtedly have more considerable means at their disposal, but also more complex obligations in terms of representation, which likewise imposes different obligations and routines.

But things are moving along. During the fall, several events will lay the foundation for a massive demonstration, scheduled for this winter, which will be focused upon demands directly linked to the budget choices that the Liberal Government should favour. Accordingly, the World March of Women, the demonstration of the Collectif pour un Québec sans pauvreté, and various actions linked to Minister Beauchamp's forums on education, will set the table for what could become a major rendez-vous for all of Québec's progressive popular movements. ■



left. By going back to 10 levels and increasing – even modestly! – the tax rate at the higher levels, the Government could annually recuperate an initial billion dollars.

It would also be possible and very legitimate to revise business' contribution to the State's tax base. Several tax exemptions and deferrals are simply unwarranted, if the Government needs the money so badly. What sense does it make, in this connection, to have mining companies not pay two cents in fees between 2002 and 2008, thereby depriving the Québec Treasury of \$300 million per year? The free market cheerleaders would object here that such an approach might harm investment and thus Québec's development.

We could comment such an argument at length and compare various Quebec measures to those that exist elsewhere. Let's simply point out that our alternative doesn't seek to sabotage investment incentives, but rather calls for companies to be more socially responsible. How many millions does

nursing agencies, to represent an annual sum of \$62 million! Several other avenues are examined in the Coalition's document, a document that will serve as a reference for a national tour that will take place throughout all the regions across Québec during November, December and January, around the theme *Restoring an equitable tax system*.

A Few Acronyms and Translations

A few acronyms and translations:

FRAPRU - Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (*Popular Front for Action in Civic Redevelopment*);

MÉPACQ - Mouvement d'éducation populaire autonome et d'action communautaire du Québec (*Quebec Popular Self-Education and Community Action Movement*);

FSSS - Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux (CSN) (*Health and Social Services Federation*);

FAE - Fédération autonome de l'enseignement (*Teachers Independent Federation*).

Towards a Unified Strategy in North America!



PHOTO: SCCUL



PHOTO: NATHB

Marie Blais
FNEEQ Vice-President

The 9th international conference of the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour (COCAL) was held in Quebec City from August 13-15, 2010. This coalition, made up of union activists from the United States, Canada, Québec and Mexico, contends with the issues related to the growing number of contingent teachers in higher education.

Some 200 participants discussed the current situation, the state of the profession and took stock of the many union struggles engaged since the last COCAL conference, held in San Diego, in 2008. One observation stands out: the various levels of Government across North America are taking advantage of the economic crisis to reduce public fund-

ing to colleges and universities. These cutbacks are translating into increased tuition that consequently chips away at accessibility to higher education.

In various workshops, we examined and analyzed numerous key issues and challenges, notably recognizing the contribution of contingent labour to the missions of the institutions, the fragmentation of the teaching task and distance training. Stable jobs, access to professorships and research funding, as well as pay and fringe benefits equity were also dealt with. Other workshops explored how to better equip Unions in negotiating, communications and mobilization strategies vis-à-vis their increasingly hard-nosed employers.

Whether it was during the plenary sessions or the workshops, the same message kept coming across: the necessity of building solidarity between the teaching staff and students on the campus, but also on the regional level and especially across the continent. The post-war globalization has been carried out by private corporations and Governments. Our Unions must take note: they must respond by taking action and thinking globally.

In North America, Unions share similar challenges and environments, and their struggles are thus analogous. Solidarity must be built between our comrades from Québec, Canada, the United States and Mexico. With this in mind, the next COCAL meeting, taking place in Mexico in 2012, will be an opportunity for everyone to show their support in a practical fashion for the actions of our Mexican colleagues, who are embroiled in a situation that is far more precarious than ours.

In conclusion, we'd like to thank those groups who made this convention possible. The CSN and FNEEQ financed the services of simultaneous translation into three languages. The Québec-Chaudières-Appalaches Central Council provided the logistics for the various activities. The FNEEQ sessional lecturers Unions contributed financially to this conference. Particular mention should be made of the contribution of the Université Laval sessional lecturers Union that took charge of the organization of this conference, and this, right before their negotiations were scheduled to begin. A special thank you to Nicole Blouin, who coordinated and steered the project from its very beginning until its very successful conclusion. ■

Towards Quebec People's Summit Against War and Militarism

The *Collectif Échec à la guerre* is organizing a People's Summit Against War and Militarism, to be held in Montréal from November 19-21, 2010. We met with Raymond Legault, one of the *Collectif's* spokespersons, to learn more about this event, which is an extension of its work to make the voices of the majority who are opposed to war heard.

Raymond, why are you holding the People's Summit Against War and Militarism?

Raymond Legault: Our goal is to strengthen the Québec movement that opposes war and militarism. While the Canadian government has announced the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan in July 2011, we have our doubts that this will take place! And even if the withdrawal does happen, there could quickly be a new commitment. We therefore want to deepen and improve our understanding of the issues linked to the war in Afghanistan and of the decisions Canada made to participate in it. In particular, the opening session of the conference and a special panel session will allow us to examine in depth important subjects to which people generally have access to little information: issues such as war and peace in our time and the roles of NATO and the United Nations Security Council.



PHOTO: FRANCE DESAULNIERS

through workshops that will be led by different groups already involved in its actions. In addition, there will be a workshop to discuss the struggle against military recruitment in Québec's educational establishments; the Comité femmes et mondialisation of the Fédération des femmes du Québec is organizing a workshop on the harmful effects of war and militarism on women; environmental groups will focus their attention on "wars that

contaminate us"; the Comité de solidarité de Trois-Rivières will address the need to eliminate military expenditures in order to reinvest in social spending; international cooperation groups are organizing a workshop on the militarization of Canadian foreign aid; and anti-nuclear groups will expose the numerous links between nuclear energy and militarism. In plenary sessions, discussions will be held on the orientations for action that arise from these workshops.

What is the target audience of this Summit?

R. L. We hope for broad participation by youth, union members, members of civil society organizations as well as any citizens who are concerned and interested in these issues and who are ready to get involved. It will be an occasion for networking and for defining actions to be taken in the future.

In your opinion, why has Canada taken this militaristic turn?

R. L. First of all, no public consultation ever took place on this issue. These decisions were made by the business and military elites -- selected corporations, because they have a military sector. More generally, Canada decided to respond when George Bush said "You are either with us or you are with the terrorists!" by adopting a much closer military partnership in order to preserve a very important economic relationship.

When Canada made the decision to go to Kandahar, it was in order to tighten its links

The *Collectif Échec à la guerre*

Established in the fall of 2002, when preparations for the invasion of Iraq were underway, the *Collectif Échec à la guerre* organized mass demonstrations in Montréal during the winter of 2003. For many years it has led the campaign for the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan and, more generally, to denounce the militaristic turn of Canada's foreign policy in a partnership more and more aligned with the United States. The *Collectif* brings together union, women's, community, religious, student, international solidarity and development, peace and other groups. It organizes many different kinds of activities -- demonstrations, conferences, press conferences, collective appeals in newspapers, public hearings for the withdrawal of troops -- and publishes information materials.

We are convinced that a common understanding of these larger issues has become a necessity for the citizen's movement opposed to war, as it must be up to the task of contributing to changing the majority of the public's opinion against the war into a force capable of obtaining the withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan and calling into question the alignment of Canadian foreign policy with that of the United States.

The Summit also seeks to have a structuring effect on our movement by consolidating its organization, in particular

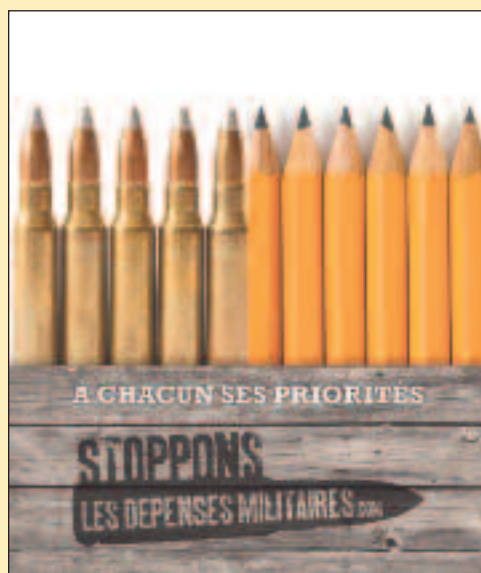
with the United States! As you may know, in 2005 and without a public debate, a new Canadian foreign policy statement was presented by the Liberal minority government under Paul Martin; it has been followed since and includes: a combat role for Canadian troops in southern Afghanistan; a dramatic increase in military spending; and the largest public relations and Canadian Forces recruitment campaigns since the Second World War...

Since then, under the two minority governments of Stephen Harper, this orientation has been followed, and even increased. Other worrying developments include the announcement of \$490 billion of military spending over the next 20 years and the attempt to hide the torture inflicted on Afghan prisoners!

We find therefore that not only has the government ignored the desire of the majority of our population, which is against the war (in June 2010, 59 % of Canadians and 72 % of Quebecers were opposed according to public opinion polls), but also that this desire is poorly reflected in the positions taken by the opposition parties.

The participation of the Canadian army has led to a great deal of debate. The Collectif has always opposed this engagement, despite the presence of the Taliban.

R. L. We want Canadian participation in the war in Afghanistan to end and a real public debate be held on Canada's foreign policy, on the role of the Canadian army and on the budgets that are allocated to them. The Afghan government that foreign intervention supports is just as reactionary as the Taliban! According to the organization Womankind Worldwide, Afghanistan is the worst country in the world for a woman to live, and according to UNICEF, it is the worst country for a child to be born... and this af-



CONCEPTION GRAPHIQUE: MATHIEU PELLETIER / OUBIE BLEU ATELIER CREATIF

ter nine years of war to supposedly "help" them... The West often tries to save the world. And yet, we have played a role in creating these problems! For example, in Afghanistan, the United States contributed to bringing the Taliban to power... and they financed them in Pakistan. And after, we pretend to be the protectors of women!

You question the role of NATO and denounce the organization as being a pawn of the United States.

R. L. NATO is an alliance that sought to counter the expansion of communism... we have seen the dismantling of the Soviet Union, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and yet NATO still exists! The Americans have found a new vocation for it, to serve as its proxy in their military adventures! They have convinced NATO countries to intervene in Iraq, in Afghanistan, but the decision was made primarily by the United States. NATO is an organization that is answerable to no one. But once NATO has decided something, it puts pressure on governments and parliaments to make the same decisions! For example, most of the Western countries that are involved in Afghanistan are doing so against the will of their population! In France, England, Germany, Italy, and in many other member countries of NATO, the population is opposed and yet the parliaments vote extensions. NATO is accountable to no one. What's

more, there's the whole nuclear policy aspect of NATO. In its official documents, it affirms that nuclear weapons are of primary importance, having an extraordinary deterrence effect... Every five years, the Nuclear Arms Non-Proliferation Treaty is reconsidered in the United Nations General Assembly. In the treaty, it is stipulated that the countries that possess nuclear weapons must have a plan for eliminating them. In practice however, this is never discussed!

Non-proliferation must also target those who possess nuclear weapons and keep them... And most countries other than France, the United States, and the United Kingdom, hope that this will be on the agenda, but in reality, it is never discussed. We wish therefore for Canada to withdraw from NATO.

How do you hope to change the role of the Canadian army?

R. L. There are many different positions within the Collectif on this topic. Some argue in favour of the abolition of the army, others believe that there may be a role for an army under certain circumstances.

Our joint demands target the reduction of the budget for military expenditures and the need for a broad-based debate on Canada's foreign policy. If we look at what the Canadian army accomplished in Haiti, we can see that a civil corps could have accomplished the same results!

What results do you foresee from this Summit?

R. L. We will adopt and make public a joint declaration. We want it to be endorsed by the largest possible number of organizations. This declaration will provide a concrete framework for debate within these organizations, based on the reflection documents. And of course, we hope that the media will disseminate these discussions! ■

Mission Accomplished!

Organized jointly by the FNEEQ-CSN and CSQ, the 9th Tri-national Conference in Defence and for the Promotion of Public Education was held in Montreal last May. In every way, this gathering lived up to expectations: FNEEQ can be very proud of a job well done in hosting its many colleagues from the United States, Mexico and the rest of Canada.

Jean Trudelle
FNEEQ President

For three days, numerous workshops and conferences enabled the activists who participated in this event to take stock of the state of public education across North America. Despite understandable differences from one country to the next, the situation unfortunately appears to be deteriorating as the years go by.

In Mexico, we can all recall the Oaxaca movement, which was started by teachers seeking to win decent working conditions, and that ended with a blood-soaked repression, in 2007. Other setbacks likewise followed suit, and the Mexican Government recently implemented a Quality in Education program that, under an official cover to ensure more efficiency in the educational system, in reality imposes numerous measures to increase control over the professors. We should recall that our Mexican colleagues, in addition to having to resist Government ambitions, have to deal with a particularly corrupt official National Union, the SNTE, which was moreover recently expelled from Education International. Our Mexican colleagues who participated in the tri-national conference belong to a so-called “democratic” movement, which has been trying for several years to restore genuine union values and solidarity into several of the Union’s national sections.

However, the United States is where we witness the most striking examples of deterioration in the public system. Julie Washington, Vice-President of the United Teachers of Los



PHOTO: MICHEL GIBOUX

Angeles (UTLA), described the crisis sweeping across Los Angeles, where the California State Government is planning to impose the transition from public to private management in some 250 schools. This change is dramatic. In principle, the charter schools that receive public funding and are responsible for managing these schools are nonprofit companies. But they are nonetheless entitled to make a profit! Overnight, in some places, all the personnel is flat out fired, the collective agreement torn to shreds, and if an individual wants to be rehired, they will work under totally new conditions dictated by the private corporation that has taken over management of the school. The recourse to private management of the schools and divestment is accompanied by an overwhelming trend to make use of standardized tests to measure what children are learning. The production, administration and compilation of the results of these tests already represent a richly lucrative market for the private sector. Needless to say with the omnipresent pressure towards higher success rates (that are also used to evaluate the “performance” of the managers),

these new school managers put huge pressure upon the faculty, imposing a teaching approach that in effect is totally oriented towards successfully passing these standardized tests... a genuine travesty of the pedagogical relationship.

Public schools may be faring somewhat better in Canada and Québec, although in many respects, budget cutbacks in the public sector and the migration of a segment of the work force towards the private school sector is a matter of great concern. The situation in Ontario, Manitoba and British Columbia, largely mirrors what’s going on in the Province of Quebec.

All the participants from outside Québec were delighted with Montreal’s hospitality; besides a trip to the Old Port, a guided tour of the CEGEP du Vieux-Montréal was also organized. The next get together is scheduled for 2012 in Mexico. Between now and then, FNEEQ delegates will have the opportunity, at the December Federal Council meeting, to ratify the final declaration discussed by the participants at the end of this event. ■

A Global Tax to Finance Public Goods Around the World

Education International (EI) is advocating the creation of a tax on financial transactions. The June issue of *Worlds of Education*, a magazine published by EI to which FNEEQ is affiliated, describes this proposal.

The tax on financial transactions, also known as the Tobin Tax, because it was first proposed by the Nobel Prize in Economics winner, James Tobin, would be applied to cross-border transactions in the financial sector. The amount of money that such a tax could raise, evaluated at more than \$500 billion annually, would, according to the author, reduce the volume of trading and hence of speculation, on the one hand, while generating revenue to finance public goods around the world, on the other.

When it was first articulated, this idea had very few supporters. But today, as we have discovered the en-

ormous destructive potential of the unregulated financial sector, a number of Governments and institutions view this tax as a serious option.

Could this tax be of help to the education sector? Neoliberal policies around the globe are pursuing the



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

same goal, namely, the reduction of public services in a context where the OECD forecasts major increases in public debt in many countries. During periods of financial crisis, the countries with low revenues are the ones that are most affected and that chip away the most at their public services, including those involving education. The Unions affiliated to EI are working together to increase pressure on Governments everywhere to commit to working

for the implementation of Tobin's sensible proposal.

In Canada, Stephen Harper's Conservative Government is fiercely opposed to this tax. On the other hand, the CSN belongs to organizations that are inviting their members to put pressure on their Governments. We thus invite you to sign the declaration that will be transmitted to the G20 meeting in Seoul, next November. The whole can be accessed on the CSN's Web site: disponible sur le site de la CSN:

<http://atable2010.org/agir/courriel>

It's a small gesture, but one that could become huge, if it were to be repeated all over the world. ■

¹ EI groups together 30 million teachers and education sector personnel who are members of 402 organizations in 173 countries and territories.

² Geven, Koen, *Education International, Mondes de l'éducation*, no. 34 June 2010, page 12.

fneeqqueries



PHOTO: FRANCE DESAULNIERS

Compañera Christiane, ¡presente!

In a world governed by irresponsible individualism, where our solidarity is harshly tested every day, we must strive to prevent the drying-up of our hearts and our hopes. Such resistance and struggle were manifest throughout the life of our comrade, loyal activist and woman of heart, Christiane Malet. In addition to her union involvement, as a lecturer at UQAM, Christiane contributed to setting up the FNEEQ International Action Committee and contributed uniquely to its overall direction for more than 25 years. Compañera Christiane, ¡presente!

Put an End to War

People's Summit against War and Militarism

Montréal, November 19 - 21, 2010



For program:

www.echecalaguerre.org

To register:

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