

CARNETS

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fneeq
Fédération nationale
des enseignantes et
des enseignants
du Québec



What is Success?

Welcome to the Executive Committee
Education International Congress
Health, Security and Environment Lunch Meeting

WOMEN'S FILE

Bad Funding in Universities

Unionizing Course Lecturers at McGill University:

Regroupement cégep: We Have Our Work Cut Out

Regroupement privé: A Busy Year-End

Education Beyond Borders

Anticipating FNEEQ's 30th Congress

An End To Political Cynicism!



PHOTO: MATHIE

In the context of preparing for FNEEQ's 30th Congress that will take place in Granby at the end of May 2012, members of the coordinating committee have begun consulting with member unions. At the time of writing, our tour had barely begun.

Clearly, the exchanges that will take place with union members will be conducted against a backdrop of political dependency.

It's no surprise. For months, we were bombarded with discourse on the state of public finances post-economic crisis. The same economic crisis was used to justify poor pay increases in the public sector. Meanwhile, billions have been disappearing, every year, from the Quebec treasury due to well-documented collusion in public works, frequently criticized by CSN.

Quebec's political landscape is distressing. The Charest government, whose lack of popularity cannot be denied, continues to undermine the role of the state, thumbing their noses at critics, hoping to stay under the radar. The ADQ is barely surviving, the PQ is mired in a never-ending internal crisis, entangled in strategic debates on nationalism. The PQ has long turned its back on its social democratic roots. The *Coalition avenir Québec* is taking advantage of its position (they are newly founded political party) to hurl incoherent but chilling political insults, particularly in the field of education. *Québec solidaire* is busy developing a very democratic political agenda but is slow in affirming itself a player on the political scene. We wish them well; if nothing else, they are sure to contribute to the quality of future political debate in Quebec.

Recent events have been particularly deplorable, showing governments surrendering, more and more, their role of social regulators and seeming incapable of putting forward credible political projects that people can get behind.

Given this political landscape, we have had some fears about rising cynicism within unions as well. If we can rely on preliminary meetings of our pre-congress tour that have taken place to date, that is not the case!

We question ourselves, as we should. We question union activities and approaches we can use to better influence the course of events. We discuss the democratic deficit in modern societies, the dominance of right-wing media and consequently, the difficulty of sensitizing society to alternatives.

The tone has been reflective but in a very encouraging way. There is a healthy lack of bitterness and our unions are fully committed.

This bodes well for the upcoming congress. We must channel any dissatisfaction that might be brewing toward active renewal of our movement. We must fully assert what we are: an insurmountable force of social progressivism.

Jean Trudelle
FNEEQ President

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What is Success?

Face to face contact with activists is, without a doubt, the best way to get an understanding of what is happening in the field and to properly identify the key issues. Working toward preparing a report on success rates in schools, the *Comité école et société* has organized six on-site meetings, including 4 in various regions, with the goal of collecting opinions and comments on the issue from our union members.

Jean Trudelle

*FNEEQ President
Responsible for the School
and Society Committee*

To open the discussion, we sent a document stating that, as the federation uniting teachers, we understand the need to increase success rates. The question that triggered the meetings is "What is the best way to proceed?" In one of the discussion groups, the first

answer that came up set the tone for the meeting: "Increase success rates?" Said a teacher from CEGEP Édouard-Montpetit. "Too many students are succeeding as it is!" This blunt statement brought up a very sensitive issue that seemed to send a little shock wave throughout the room. He was referring, of course, to a decrease in academic standards, to the widely held perception that it has become too easy to get by in

the school system without ever dealing with failure. It was a heartfelt plea, one that we heard repeated several times throughout these sessions.

Similarly, a few weeks later a group of teachers at Saint-Hyacinthe published a piece on the same issue in the form of a manifesto. The tone of the piece might have, unfortunately, buried part of the message but the document expresses a malaise that is very real.

Success, but at What Price?

Schools in general, including institutions of higher education have been dealing with increasing pressure to succeed. Some reasons for these mounting expectations are the urgent need for a skilled labour force and increasingly market-driven attitudes toward education that engender a demand for quick results. There is also increasing public perception that specialized training is the new normal in today's academic landscape.

Whether it's the job market's immediate need for more specialized workers or society's focus on wasting human resources by way of scholastic failure and high drop out rates, the conclusion is the always same: our school system should be "producing" more.

We put it all under the microscope, examining schools, CEGEPs, universities and professors. Where has the school system failed? Diagnoses abound. Solutions are scattered and sometimes contradictory. The government has discretely abandoned whole sections



PHOTO: ALAIN CHAGNON



of projected reforms to primary and secondary schools. The reforms have yielded zero results for the weakest students, those they were supposed to help. With the goal of increasing accessibility to a college education, the ministry lowered admission criteria to CEGEPs.

There has been no follow-up, but it's clear that a majority of students admitted on that basis fail. In the meantime, pressure to succeed is passed on to teaching institutions, sometimes through stimulating projects and other times in clumsy or shocking ways such as advertising success rates in courses known for high rates of failure, or singling out a teacher who is deemed to not have passed enough students.

The further ahead teachers get in the school system, the more isolated they feel in negotiating the impossible dilemma brought on by this issue. A teacher at a CEGEP had this to say during one of our discussions: "To apply the official criteria for success in my class with any kind of rigour would mean that I would have to fail quite a few more students. But what to do?"

Should students be made to pay for the laxity of a system that has let them come this far without adequate preparation? If I took this course of action, management would come down on me and ask what my problem was. On the other hand, if I were to lower my standards to adapt to the situation, I'd feel like I'm betraying my profession.

A Complicated Dilemma

We would be wrong to reduce this problem to the eternal teachers' complaint that their students don't work hard enough. When it comes to success, there is a "new deal" that must be considered. In any school system, there is a tense relationship between access to education, quality of training and success rates. To try and improve one of these aspects of the system means to increase pressure on the others. This dynamic is, historically speaking, new. Barely fifty years ago, the possibility of leading all young people through years of training resulting in tangible qualifications would have been unthinkable.

Today, we wonder if we have a choice and in the absence of a strong political

will to recognize modern challenges in education and to find appropriate solutions, we should anticipate some major problems. We only need to glance south of the border for a reason to improve the situation. The United States has standardized learning to an excessive degree in an attempt to quantify education.

They have implemented a plethora of evaluation methods for schools, teachers and management, creating an environment akin to that of a witch-hunt. Of course, these measures, like reforms in Quebec, have been handed down from on high without consulting educators on what the best approach might be. With drastic cuts imposed on budgets for education, the situation has simply gotten worse.

What is Success?

After our regional sessions this past spring, the *Comité école et société* submitted a report on success rates to the Federal Council. The report contains an overview of the situation, raising questions on the meaning of success in education and laying a foundation for union principles and actions on the question of success rates. This document, easy to access on the FNEEQ Website, under the *Comité école et société* tab, is greatly appreciated by delegates who found the time allotted for these discussions too short. It has become very clear that we need to probe further into this matter. Naturally, the question of success rates in schools will come up again, in some form, at FNEEQ meetings this year. ■



PHOTO: ALAIN CHANDON

Welcome to the Executive Committee

The *Comité sur la précarité, la relève et la vie syndicale* has developed a guide to union activity for new arrivals to executive committees. The guide, *Welcome to the Executive Committee*, looks at one year inside the union, outlining the main tasks of an executive committee (fostering union activity, defending members, negotiating the collective agreement and building solidarity). In the last section, we highlight our achievements in social and labour struggles, achievements that we must watch over and protect. The following is a brief outline of the spirit and values that informed the creation of this guide.



PHOTO: MATHIE

Marie Blais

FNEEQ Vice-President
Responsible for the comité fédéral de la précarité,
la relève et la vie syndicale

Fostering Union Activity

Information is central to union activity. *Welcome to the Executive Committee* draws attention to the importance of keeping people informed and in doing so, to vary modes of communication (social networking, e-mail, magazine articles, etc.). Informed members are better prepared to participate in debates and to mobilize during labour activities.

General assemblies are a place to exercise democracy and bolster solidarity between members. The guide emphasizes that executive committees should be a motivating force, ensuring democratic functioning, as participation is a major indicator of the health of a local union.



ILLUSTRATION : ÉMILIE TREMBLAY

Another motivator that brings a union closer to its members is the labour council that meets between general assemblies. When such is the case, executive committees can keep abreast of the concerns of their members, expand union membership and validate decisions before they are presented to the general assembly.

When there is staff turnover, orientation of new members is key. Whether it's a dinner or a *cinq-à-sept*, the executive committee can convey crucial information to new members. For new members, it's also an opportunity to meet their peers and expand their network.

If members can come and have a coffee, read the paper or just chat, a union hall could be a good meeting place for union activity. The guide also cites parties as a fun and less formal way to facilitate meaningful communication. The con-

nections made during these activities will be of great value when it comes time to mobilize.

Protecting Members

The guide outlines that labour laws give the union exclusive representation of all employees in the bargaining unit. The labour code in Quebec, however, stipulates that a certified organization must not act in bad faith, in an arbitrary or discriminatory fashion or demonstrate gross negligence toward a salaried employee in its bargaining unit. It's about fair representation.

To fully cover the subject of fair representation, the guide reiterates that a union must be serious in its conduct when it comes to addressing personal problems and launch a thorough investigation before deciding whether to file a grievance.

Renewing a collective agreement is a major event for unions. Several forms of bargaining coexist at FNEEQ. Despite major differences between bargaining methods in the public sector and those that happen directly with employers that are not the Government, the issues around bargaining are the same.

The guide takes us through different aspects of bargaining. Herein, we will focus on only one: the symbiotic relationship between information, mobilization and bargaining.

If a course of action is based on discussions at the bargaining table, they will have more of an impact. The employer must feel that members are squarely behind their bargaining committee.

Building Solidarity

The guide insists on the union's political role. A union is a group of workers that band together to assert their rights and to improve their working conditions. It is also concerned with promoting joint solutions and defending social progressivism. Building solidarity is essential, whether it's in the workplace, in the community, or even on an international level.

Battles and Wins

The strides we have made have not come easily. We have fought some very tough fights but now enjoy the right to form unions, the right to strike, the benefits of the Rand formula and the anti-scab law.

Politically, the labour movement has contributed to the adoption of many labour rights, some of which affect all workers in Quebec.

Employment Insurance, for example, the law on health and safety in the workplace, the pay equity law and the Quebec Parental Insurance Plan.

These benefits and achievements are sometimes called into question by the employer or even by the government.

It is important to know what they are and to be familiar with their history in order to keep defending them and to win others. Labour rights are not a given! ■



Education International Congress

The Education International Congress takes place every 4 years. The 2011 congress was held in South Africa last July.



PHOTO: MICHEL CIRIOUX

Micheline Thibodeau

FNEEQ Vice-President
Responsible for the International Action Committee

It was my first time participating in the Education International Congress. What struck me upon arriving at the Convention Centre was the size of the event, reflecting the numbers of delegates from various organizations affiliated with EI. Throughout the workshops, plenary sessions and conferences, the seriousness and attentiveness of the participants was clear and the relevance of the lectures, from 170 countries, was impressive.

It is not easy to arrive at consensus on policies surrounding the future of education with representatives from 170 countries. Harder still is to ensure that the policies we arrive at are not just pipe dreams but concrete measures that can be implemented worldwide.

What we are doing is essential. We will persevere and get to where we need to be.



PHOTO: BEA UHART (IE)

Opening Remarks

In her opening remarks at the 6th World Congress, Education International President Susan Hopgood, drew attention to the global economic crisis and the effect it has had on education. The emphasis was on access to public education, the only means of universal access to schooling for everyone on the planet, a goal that we are still far from achieving. Hopgood emphasized the importance of continuing the Education for All campaign and asked that the action plan be implemented all over the world.

“Who better to demand free access to quality public education than the labour movement?”

Her opening remarks set the tone for the Congress.

Financing Education

Financing for education was a key theme throughout this congress. In this market-driven climate of increasingly reduced state involvement throughout the world, education has been put through the wringer of the 3 Ds: division, dehumanization and delegitimization of teachers.

This discourse is used to convince populations of the “obligation” to reduce teachers’ salaries and cut the number of teachers. In too many countries, education is an opportunity for private investment and a very lucrative business, namely in the United States.

This issue is most evident in the poorest countries where governments are incapable, powerless or do not have the will to implement a system of public education. There is cause for despair.

Building Better Unions Together

A possible approach to counter this phenomenon is the launch of the Building Better Unions campaign. Hard-hitting discussions caught the attention of delegates. The representative of the *Confédération nationale des éducatrices et éducateurs Haïtiens (CNEH)* appealed to all unions to lobby their governments to ensure that the money sent to Haiti for education finds its way to the public system to help the process of restructuring that hasn't yet begun. Other discussions centred on unions in the Caribbean coming together to increase their effectiveness. Others reported on the lack of training and union expertise in their countries. EI must work to establish a basic training program for union officials.

About EI

Education International is the voice of teachers and other education employees across the globe. A global federation of about 400 unions in more than 170 countries and territories, it represents 30 million teachers and education employees in education institutions from early childhood to university.

Toward Quality Education

There was clear consensus on the following principles:

- education is a human right and a public good
- teacher training must be of the highest quality
- teachers should enjoy good social standing through high salaries
- higher education should be accessible to everyone; it should be free
- teachers must form unions that are independent, democratic and represent their communities

FNEEQ's Commitment in Quebec

FNEEQ has a serious commitment to take steps toward the principles outlined above. We are currently involved in the *Semaine pour l'école publique* and we are absolutely committed to supporting the student movement for tuition freezes at universities as part of the action plan toward the right to free education. Among other positions outlined by EI, FNEEQ, of course, is committed to education on environmental responsibility.

It should be noted that the upcoming Congress in 2015 would probably take place in Canada, very likely in Quebec. If that is the case, we eagerly ask you to come out in large numbers.

It is important to get an overview of education throughout the world in order to evaluate the impact of our actions here in Quebec and also to show solidarity with unionized teachers across the globe. It would be a great opportunity and we encourage members of FNEEQ to participate in large numbers. ■



PHOTO : FRANCE DESAULNIERS

Lunch Meeting



Marie Blais

*FNEEQ Vice-president
Responsible for the Health, Safety
and Environment Committee*

At the last Federal Council on June 2, 2011, the Health, Safety and Environment Committee held a lunch on health and safety in the workplace. The problems discussed included safety, mental health and psychological harassment. Attendees suggested several avenues to explore.

Safety

The safe handling of tools and machinery is a problem that requires urgent attention. We received a clear message: anyone can use bad tools poorly. The age of the machinery being used and lockout procedures are also issues. Management of hazardous materials in laboratories is inadequate.

These issues become even more pressing in a secondary school setting where young people use dangerous tools or products with little caution. Last spring, a youth was killed at a high school in

Ottawa. Several members called for a committee tour promoting better safety measures.

Safety in schools came up several times, as emergency procedures become null and void in cases involving student violence.

Mental Health: a Priority

Several issues regarding mental health were discussed. Can prevention and workload management be dealt with in-house, with the help of internal guidelines? Mental health, exhaustion, harassment: which comes first? We would like to reiterate our request to have mental health issues in the workplace recognized by the CSST.

Psychological harassment is considered to be an extremely complex issue for unions. Many have asked for a review of the policies on psychological harassment. The policies are difficult to implement. The complexity of the procedure is discouraging and some employers are not even familiar with the terms.

Certification

Administrators at some CEGEPs and universities are looking to acquire a Healthy Workplace certificate. According to members, FNEEQ should take initiative, look into the implications of such a measure and create Healthy Teaching FNEEQ certification!

Many members have asked for a list of what to look out for in schools, what to do in case of emergency and when to call the CSST. The committee reminded them that workplace inspection training has identified factors to look out for. A protocol to follow in case of emergency should be included, as well as a list of key contacts at FNEEQ and CSN.

At this first lunch meeting, members participated actively in debates and several of the suggestions offered at the meeting will allow members of the Health, Safety and Environment Committee to work toward better management of health and safety at FNEEQ. ■

Long Live the Women's Movement!

Sitting down with Alexa Conradi, president of the *Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)* since September 2009, is always an inspiration. The woman we got to know is not afraid of a challenge! Caroline Senneville, FNEEQ's Secretary General and Vice President of FFQ, was also present.



PHOTO: JULIA DAUS

France Désaulniers
Communications Advisor

Alexa Conradi's career path would certainly qualify as atypical. Born in the United Kingdom, the child of Anglophone Canadian immigrants, she has spent most of her life in Quebec. She became involved with a women's centre in Verdun to try and escape the isolation of early motherhood and has been a woman's rights activist for many years. The organization, which became central to Alexa's life, is concerned with increasing the participation of women in society and politics. Alexa got her first job at the centre, started studying and becoming involved in the working-class and feminist movements. In 1995, she was a central figure in organizing the Marche du pain et des roses in the Estrie region and coordinated the march in Quebec City, networking with organizations all across Canada. When she was elected FFQ president in 2009, she was a young feminist as well as a seasoned feminist,

convinced that she could build bridges between the women who had shaped the identity of the women's movement in Quebec and a new generation of feminists. Fully integrated into Quebec society, Alexa shares our values on issues surrounding identity and the new generation of feminists. In this society of ever-increasing neo-liberal politics, the rise of anti-feminism is also a topic of interest. It is time to take stock, to take a step back in order to figure out how to move ahead.

Feminism is Humanism

Alexa Conradi: FFQ is a meeting point for women's issues for the regions across Quebec. It plays a major role in creating spaces where women and women's groups, including union committees on the status of women, can get together and explore avenues for social change. FFQ has been in existence for 45 years. It has a long history of participating in public debates, of contributing to struggles that have led to victories, including child support, the legal status of women, pay equity, the fight against poverty, access to work for women who have been excluded from the workforce, parental rights, maternity leave and access to day-care. We are also concerned with sexist advertising, gender stereotyping, pornography, and violence against women. We organize days of action, namely for December 6, the commemoration of the Polytechnique Massacre. Our victories seem to have stalled and we must continue to fight against setbacks. Take abortion as an example: we thought that, from a legal standpoint at least, that battle had been won.

Caroline Senneville: If someone would have told me that I would have to go

out and march to protect my right to an abortion, I would never have believed it! That is, to me, a concrete example of the setbacks that are possible.

Moving Forward

AC: This year, we noticed a certain lag in our capacity to effect change, despite the number of strong, positive and interesting proposals, whether in education, work, economy or fiscal policy. We decided to hold a convention in order to begin an in-depth analysis. We need to hear from women with a varied range of experience.

There is less job security, an absence of government intervention to stabilize the situation, just look at employment agencies. How do we put a stop to religious conservatism? What is the role of family? When the government decides to take a step back on these issues, the family becomes the central economic avenue. What that means, most often, is that women will stay in the home. There are questions that we would like to raise on this matter.

A meeting in May 2011 marks the starting point for identifying the issues in terms of work, politics, political representation for women, our views on the economy, and on development in the various regions. We have formed a steering committee of women of all ages, from all backgrounds, a cross-section of today's feminists. We want to spark debate and identify future strategies. We want to do a tour throughout Quebec to meet with women who are involved in all levels of the women's movement who are committed to gender equality. We want to know what they think and where they're headed. The tour will end with

a women's forum in 2013 with women from all over Quebec to decide, together, on future issues.

We conducted a similar experiment almost 20 years ago and it led to the *Marche du pain et des roses*, to the World March of Women and to an ambitious project to end women's poverty. Using a similar approach, we hope to come away with an idea of where we will be in 20 years. We would, of course, like to spark debate in social media, traditional media, forums, etc.



PHOTO: FFQ

Empowering Feminist Actions

Union committees on the status of women can become members, they can use FFQ actions as inspiration and they can inspire action. The solidarity between these autonomous groups of women and the union committees is vital to the work we do.

With conservative values on the rise, the working conditions of women, the problems of trying to balance work and family, the statistics on women's psychological stress, it's clear that our work is neither linear nor done. When we look at various spheres of influence in society, what we notice is an absence of women. In spite of the progress made over the past 40 years, the reality is that, in political and economic spheres, women are in

the minority. There are still obstacles to women's participation in these areas.

CS: Concrete decisions made by the conservative government have already affected the women's movement. The closing of the Status of Women Canada offices comes to mind, as do the budget cuts to organizations cooperating internationally for abortion rights. The cuts don't just affect feminist organizations, the cultural sector was also hit. These cuts have taken their toll on the FFQ.

AC: Yes, and that means that we have to work on projects that are in line with the government's funding criteria, but defending our rights does not correspond to that criteria! We have spent the last 10 months going back and forth with government officials to see if an idea that we had for a project meets their criteria! It's a lot of work for very little. As we speak, we still don't know if we have the go-ahead and that money represents almost one third of the federation's budget.

This implies that the women's movement and all organizations involved must increase the number of dues-paying members as well as the number of donations to the FFQ. We have to revise our funding strategies. We must continue to insist that government has a democratic responsibility to support

organizations such as ours, but if that fails, our members, such as FNEEQ can play a fundamental role in helping us to continue our work.

Fighting Tuition Fee Increases

AC: We might think that access to post-secondary education is an issue best left to the student movement and those working in the field. Education, however, is a key issue, crucial in helping to empower women. When a woman is educated, she can take control of her life. At the FFQ, we feel that the upcoming tuition fee increases are a threat to access to equal opportunity and a step backwards.

Jobs are Still Gendered!

Despite all the work that has been done over the years to keep women from being confined to specific types of jobs, we have noticed that, post economic globalization, work has become more and more gender-specific. This is especially true of women who emigrate, whose diplomas are not recognized. These women often find themselves working in more traditionally female fields.

CS: In terms of pay equity, out of about 640 job categories, nearly 600 were gender-specific. The largest mixed category is that of CEGEP teachers.

AC: Pay equity is one of the most important issues in the women's movement because we have confronted the issues of the division of labour and the non-recognition of women's work head-on. We believe that the role of government is to encourage economic self-sufficiency for women, not dependency.

The key is to reduce inequalities between men and women, between youth and the elderly, between the rich and the poor and between people of different backgrounds. We want to ensure that there is a public health care system, that our children can study without going into too much debt. Is that too much to ask? *We don't think so, madame president!* ■

Strengthening Women's Status Committees



PHOTO: FRANCE DESAUNIER

Carole Morache

FNEEQ Women's Committee

Many of our unions do not have a women's committee and others, who do have one, sometimes find themselves wondering how to make their work more relevant and more visible. During the mini-tour of unions that the FNEEQ Women's Committee went on to learn about obstacles and good practices in women's activism, the committee met many activists who are concerned with issues surrounding the status of women every day.

Today, we have a women's committee that is particularly active and creative. The hope is that others will take a similar approach. Over the years, activists in the *Comité femmes du Syndicat des professeurs du cégep du Vieux Montréal* have put on an array of varied and in-

spiring events. They have given us a summary of events held between 1998 and 2011, ranging from political activities, awareness raising activities, support for international movements, etc. Without providing a complete list, here are some of the many ways in which the *Comité femmes du SPCVM*, backed by their union, has shown its support for the feminist cause.

For December 6

- A minute of silence in memory of the 14 women killed at the *École Polytechnique de Montréal* announced in all classes
- Outreach booths and showcases
- Wall posters (message of peace)

World March of Women

- Hosting the international meeting in preparation for the WMW and holding a promotional showcase
- Presenting the film on the WMW with the director, Françoise David, in attendance
- Booth to raise awareness for the Women's Global Charter for Humanity (WMW 2005)

International Women's Day

- Booths on various themes depending on the year

- Organizing a conference between a Jewish woman and a Palestinian woman (Women in Black)
- Making peace mandalas with Helga Schel for e Full Circle Project
- Giving a mandala to Godeliève Mukasarsi, a Rwandan who received the John Humphrey Freedom award
- Display case in the library with documents on the status of women
- Link on the library's Website to a selection of 50 books on feminism

And...

- Publishing 3 issues of "*Pédagogie entre' elles*"
- Melissa Blais talk on "Masculinism" during a union meeting

That's not all. Work is always being carried out on the subjects of politics, sexual harassment, balancing work and family and, of course, showing solidarity toward local and international movements.

Bravo to all these women who have been holding the torch up high through all these initiatives! It is now our turn to keep it going in our unions, each in her own way.

If the Women's Committee at the *Cégep du Vieux Montréal* has become a statutory committee with a budget for their local activities, it is due to the fact that, at various times, members of the executive committee have also been members of the Women's Committee. An activist who is both on the executive and in the Women's Committee will usually be the one to bring up the concerns and activities of the Women's Committee in executive committee meetings. When it's time to organize activities around key issues, a well-informed executive committee that is conscious of the issues at hand is a great asset.

That said, the actions taken by a committee affect its members' capacity for mobilization as well as their commit-

ment. Women's Committee activists at the *Cégep du Vieux Montréal* have been extremely devoted. Many teachers have been involved in the Women's Committee since its inception, becoming involved in various activities such as setting up booths to mark International Women's day, actively participating in the World March of Women and publishing special issues of the local union paper.

Some teachers have been involved for a very long time and it's thanks to these women that the *Comité femmes* is thriving today.

Danielle Carboneau
Cégep du Vieux Montréal Teachers' Union

Activism Within the Women's Committee



Flavie Trudel

Cégep régional de Lanaudière, Joliette

To establish a Women's Committee at the Joliette CEGEP, an established, conservative college, was quite a feat! It took ardent feminists, one day in June of 1985, to get the idea of a committee that would fight for women's issues accepted by a general assembly composed mainly of men. Resolution 2342 of the teachers' union at the Joliette CEGEP sanctioned the establishment of the Women's Committee, specifying that "only women can be part of the committee". Teachers, but also support staff, sometimes administration and students have taken part in the Women's Committee.

It was in 1989, the year of the Polytechnique Massacre that I was hired as a sociology teacher at the Joliette CEGEP. That's when I started becoming politically active in the Women's Committee. It was a significant year for women, reminding us that we were still not equal to men. The Women's Committee was very active, fighting for a variety of issues such as sexual harassment (a policy was adopted in 1993), violence, sexism in all its forms, (school manu-

als, pedagogy, advertising), adding the feminine gender in our documents and equality in the workplace. I remember in those days constantly having to provide proof of discrimination against women, record everything, write reports, provide proof and present arguments to not only CEGEP administration, but to our own department and our own union leadership. In 1991, one of these conflicts led to the creation of an Equal Access Program that would "force" the college to hire 50% women. Today, twenty years later, when I run into these women on the stairs in the CEGEP, I wonder if they're conscious of all the battles that we had to fight to give them access to the positions they hold today.



In the 1990s, the women on the Women's Committee had to be everywhere. Locally, we were active in assemblies, selection committees, college committees and in the media. Hoping at the centre of the action, I became president of the union in 1994, sitting on a joint executive committee. We also had to expand our horizons and work on a regional and national scale. The Women's Committee had a delegation at the *Table de concertation des groupes de femmes*

de Lanaudière (coordinating committee of women's groups of Lanaudière), other members participated in sessions on women at FNEEQ, others assisted at assemblies of the *Fédération des femmes du Québec (FFQ)* whose committee became a member of FNEEQ. We even participated in the *Marche du pain et des roses* in the summer of 1995 to fight against women's poverty and for better living conditions. Our convictions led us to New York to the world March of Women in 2000 and to Rimouski in 2010. These moments are milestones in the history of our organization.

The Women's Committee contributed to the day care program at the CEGEP that thousands of children and parents have benefited from. We worked to have parental rights recognized and to make information available on the subject. We have helped women with requests for preventive leave during pregnancy, maternity leave, adoption leave and with find ways of balancing work and family life.

We may not have won all of our battles and there is still work to be done to achieve equality between the sexes, but it is always rewarding to be an activist in the Women's Committee. We are committed to the cause, of course, but also to friendship, lunch meetings, fairs, International Women's Day, laughter, bus rides and to sharing all that with Rita, Cécile, Claire, Manon, Francine, Louise, Suzanne, Normande, Mireille, Andrée, Marie-Claude, Marie-Alice, Johanne, Denise, Marianne, Françoise, Colette, Carole, Charlène, Cynthia, Céline, Valérie, Suzie, Diane, Amélie, Yolande and all the others. ■



Making Things Change



PHOTO: FRANCE DESAUNIERES

Nicole Marsolais

FNEEQ Women's Committee

FNEEQ's Women's Committee would like to introduce a few women who have made an outstanding contribution to the union. Women have an important role to play in the labour movement but they often hesitate to get involved. With these interviews, we hope to provide an accurate portrait of who these women are and to understand what drives them to get involved and to make a difference.

This year, I am the new recruit in the Women's Committee. My colleagues asked me to share the story of how I recently became active in the union. I hope that I can encourage other women to put their fears aside and get involved in the union and to believe in their ability to make a difference.

I have been a teacher at the *Collège Esther-Blondin* in the Lanaudière region for over 20 years. Balancing work and family has always been an important issue for me and for many women in my field.

My union experience is rather recent; there has been a union at the school where I teach since 2004. Before deciding to participate in union life at the college, I had no experience with unions. At first, I chose the position of secretary because I liked the duties but, truth be told, I was reluctant to take on a

job with more responsibility. The position of secretary helped me to become comfortable within the executive committee and to learn the ropes. I ended up getting more and more involved. My concerns as a member of the executive lead me to consider the challenges faced, every day, by women in my field.

challenge to get women colleagues involved in the union. I, myself, in "typically female" fashion, am feeling hesitant at this point, at the beginning of my union career. When I was asked to become a part of the Women's Committee, I immediately asked myself "Can I do it?" and "What do I have to offer?"



I am a member of the CRT in my college and I have worked on bargaining for our collective agreement. I participated in a few meetings with the Regroupement privé, which is an experience I enjoyed very much. Eventually, I wanted to go further with my activism and take it beyond my union by running for FNEEQ Women's Committee. It is always a

I am happy to be a part of a women's committee that wants to encourage people to think about the role of women within the labour movement. I will most certainly learn a lot and I will be able to put my personal experience to good use in promoting women's causes. ■

ALAIN MASSICOTTE'S ILLUSTRATION IS TAKEN FROM THE CSN DOCUMENT OSER LA CONCILIATION FAMILLE-TRAVAIL, AU QUOTIDIEN

It's Possible!



Raymonde Simard

FNEEQ Women's Committee

Isabelle Morasse is a course lecturer at the *Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue*, president of the course lecturers union and one of the youngest representatives in the *FNEEQ Regroupement université*.

When they asked me to contact Isabelle to get her point of view on balancing family, work and union activism, I accepted without hesitation. I got to know Isabelle at meeting of the *Regroupement université*. Her drive, her commitment and her authenticity are what make her unique. Her lectures often deal with the reality of today's young families.

Balancing family, work and union activism has had an effect on her union

career. She is proud that her relationship with her three boys and her partner was always a priority because the relationship they have today is her greatest joy. I hope that you are inspired by the journey of this inspired colleague!

The following interview with Isabelle will, I hope, encourage you to express yourself loud and clear within your union on the issue of balancing family, work and union activism in your everyday life.

What made you get involved?

I did not know much about unions when a course lecturer colleague invited me to run for my union's executive committee. I began my involvement having everything to learn.

What are your first observations in terms of balancing family, work and union activism?

I quickly noticed that my left-wing values had finally found a good outlet and a great organization (FNEEQ/CSN). It was not always easy to persevere, given the need to work in different places to be able to cobble together a living wage. I left my position at the union after 2 years, not able to find a balance between family, work and union activism.

A few years later, you returned to the executive committee after renewed demands from the president who was looking for a replacement. What is it that you did differently that allowed you to come back to the union and successfully balance family, work and union activism?

I told her that I was dissatisfied with the way the executive committee functioned, with the irregular hours in particular. We discussed the problem and in a few meetings, we were able to plan meetings over the long term, taking into account the school calendar and class schedules. We also negotiated more leaves to better remunerate members of the executive committee and recognize the value of their work. This allowed me to concentrate on my new position as president and to refuse smaller contracts. I also learned, over time, to clearly express my limits and priorities and not to shoulder everything. When you have a lot of energy, you often find yourself much in demand!

What motivates you to be a union activist today?

I find great motivation in my work, namely in the possibility to improve my colleagues' working conditions. I am also inspired by the variety of training we need to manage all our files. Meetings of the *FNEEQ Regroupement université* are also a great source of inspiration. I am one of the youngest participants at these meetings and my colleagues' experience is often very useful to me.

A Parting Wish

I wish that my involvement serves as an example for my children and as proof that a woman can have a successful career without being Superwoman!

How about you? How do you manage to balance family, work and union activism? ■



Isabelle Morasse is a course lecturer at the *Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue*, president of the course lecturers union and one of the youngest representatives in the *FNEEQ Regroupement université*.

Giving Meaning to Gender Equality

At the last congress, women's rights activists at CSN had a chance to assess the work that had been done to date and to present their perspectives for the next few years. This is a brief summary of the main themes that will be broached, the perspectives that will be identified and the actions that we plan to take in the next while.



PHOTO: FRANCE BÉAULNIERS

Marie-France Benoit

CSN Women's Committee Advisor

For women's rights activists, the main goal of the work is the battle for gender equality, within CSN and within society. Toward this goal, CSN's *Comité national de la condition féminine* will lead an awareness campaign to familiarize people with the new *Programme pour l'accès à une représentation équitable des femmes*, PAREF, (a program working toward equal representation) and to implement it. The goal of this program is to achieve equal representation of men and women within our political structure. Thus, beginning in the fall of 2011, we are going on a tour of CSN central councils and federations to present and debate principals and goals set by PAREF. It will also be a good venue to assess the status of women elected to positions at CSN, to look at the obstacles they encounter as activists within the union and mainly, to talk about implementing concrete measures to improve the representation of women in leadership positions.

Finding mechanisms that reconcile work and family, from a gender equality perspective, is also at the heart of our work. In general, despite their participation in the workforce en masse, women still bear a more significant part of the family burden. Finding ways, together,

to move away from these old patterns seems essential to us. We hope to familiarize people with the tools made available through CSN and to encourage their use. We also want to call attention to good practices, interesting breakthroughs and innovative initiatives that improve the daily lives of workers.

On the same topic, we are organizing a conference with the *Comité des jeunes de la CSN*, CSN's Youth Committee. The results of the most recent studies on the subject will be presented to at the conference with an eye toward tracking international trends and new experiences so that these initiatives may inspire us as we work toward developing bargaining policies that centre on balancing work and family life.

World March of Women

The World March of Women is dear to women's activists at CSN. They will share the report produced by CSN, participate in discussions and ensure that the objectives of the World March of Women are followed up on, on an international level, as well as at home. We will obviously continue to uphold and defend our primary demands that we marched for in 2010, especially increasing the minimum wage and putting an end to discriminatory categorization in the welfare system, demands that affect the poorest women in society.

The fight for gender equality is also concerned with giving women access to jobs in all areas of social activity. We would like to show our support by organizing discussions between women working in a predominantly male environment in central councils. Better yet, we would like to support initiatives developed by unions to that end, whether it be a mentoring program for new arrivals or

a welcoming committee that would inform women of their rights and the importance of their role in the workplace.

The quest for equality is still concerned with fighting prejudice and sexism in the workplace. It is thus important for us to respond to the discourse of today's male-dominated and antifeminist right-wing think tanks. A very important event in terms of the women's movement in Quebec will give us the opportunity to do just that. We plan to actively participate in discussions and in the organization of the *États généraux sur le féminisme au Québec*.

Our involvement in the *États généraux sur le féminisme au Québec* should allow us to reply to the popular but misleading rhetoric currently in vogue that takes gender equality for granted. When they are not denying the existence of discrimination against women in society, they are busy pronouncing that women have too important a role in society or hurling the ridiculous and slanderous accusations that women are responsible for the high school drop out rate or worse still, for the high suicide rate among young boys! We are preparing a paper that will allow us to update and develop our vision of a modern feminism at CSN, one that is rooted in the social interactions present in today's Quebec.

As you can see, we face some clear challenges and the task before us is considerable. We are, nevertheless, very enthusiastic about meeting with activists to share our concerns and our ideas. We are especially enthusiastic about hearing comments and suggestions that would contribute in no small way to fuelling our discussions and helping to define our work.

This is our way of giving true meaning to gender equality. ■

Women and the Education International Congress

The fight for gender equality has always been an important part of Education International. EI continues to take a stand for women by holding a women's caucus before each world congress to work out their policies and by reserving positions for women in their union structure.



Caroline Senneville

*FNEEQ General Secretary
Responsible for the Women's Committee*

The last world congress, held in Cape Town, South Africa continued in the same tradition. The women's caucus met, as usual, on the eve of the congress. The 300 or so activists who participated heard a presentation by Lulama Xingwana, South African Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities.

Mrs Xingwana wanted to call attention to progress that had been made in South Africa. Along with progress in terms of political representation (44% of Members of Parliament and 43% of cabinet members are women) there has been progress in the field of education, specifically regarding the struggle against gender stereotypes. A program called Techno Girls was used as an example of a way of encouraging girls to go into male-dominate professions such as engineering and mining.

The caucus gained knowledge of the works of various international organizations working toward gender equality. UN Women released their first report focusing on 5 priorities: increasing the number of women in decision-making roles, fighting violence, getting women involved in the peace process, improv-



ing the economic situation of women and including the status of women in all issues of economic development. UNESCO's priority is equality in education while the International Labor Organization proceeds with its decent work agenda.

As for unions, the caucus wishes to underline the importance of progress in the fight for gender equality within unions. Several measures were put forth such as the inclusion of a declaration of gender equality in union statutes and

regulations, increased representation of women in unions, political support and financing women's committees, promoting women's rights at the bargaining table, but also on subjects that are not specifically union or labour related such as fighting poverty or violence.

The congress also wanted to take a stand for gender equality by voting on several resolutions. It was decided that for 2011, the theme of World Teachers' Day will be "Teachers for gender equality". EI and their affiliates will thus be emphasizing





PHOTOS: BEA UHART (IE)

their commitment to gender equality on an international scale. The congress also allocated a budget for a second Women's Conference to take place within the current mandate (2011-2015).

A large study was conducted among EI affiliates during the first EI Women's Conference that took place in January 2011, reporting on the status of women in unions, education and society. The report clearly indicated that a gap exists between legislation and the mediocre implementation thereof. One of the main problems is that family responsibilities continue to be a greater burden for women. This reality as well as cultural barriers and lack of confidence to run for

a position lead to under-representation of women in the most important roles. Lastly, the political document on education "*Une éducation pour bâtir l'avenir*" includes a clear statement on equality (see text box).

Elections to EI's executive office have demonstrated the will to make room for female candidates and recognized the difficulty of that goal. The executive office of EI is comprised of 26 individuals. The steering committee, includes the president, Susan Hopgood, a secretary general, Fred Van Leuwan and 5 vice-presidents; there are 10 regional vice-presidents, and 9 "open seats". In terms of elected positions, EI reserves half of

their regional vice-president positions for women. Thus, every continent is represented by two people of the opposite sex. Unfortunately, out of 13 candidates who presented themselves for the 9 "open seats", only one was a woman! Luckily, she was elected. The final count: out of 26 positions in the executive office, ten are held by women. Five of those women hold reserved positions. Clearly, there is room for improvement.

Hence the importance for EI and their affiliates to keep on working toward gender equality in schools, unions and society in general. ■

About EI

EI considers gender issues to be key issues in education as they affect all participants in the field. At the earliest possible stage, all gender stereotypes must be challenged and eliminated from the field of education. Public authorities must promote full participation of girls, women, boys and men in all levels of education. They

should also be sensitive to questions of gender as they relate to success, the job market, recruitment and governance in the education sector. Institutions and education unions must promote comprehensive strategies to integrate gender mainstreaming.

The Bad Funding of Universities

Marie Blais

FNEEQ Vice-President

The question of university financing is at the heart of the debate on rising tuition fees. For an accurate understanding of the issues, it is important to remember the facts and to question the rectors' rhetoric.

Let's look at the facts. In the mid 1990s, the Federal Government made cuts to federal transfers and Quebec hastily slashed 25% off university budgets.

If universities were under-funded in the 1990s, the tide has certainly turned since 2003. Annual operating grants from the government of Québec went from 1.9 billion to 2.9 billion dollars. How can we talk about under-funding now, with an extra billion dollars?

Rectors justify their demands for tuition fee increases by comparing the financing of university operating funds in Quebec to that of the rest of Canada. Let's remember that this operating fund finances activities related to teaching and non-sponsored research. They rightly

call attention to the fact that the Quebec government spends less on the operating fund than the rest of Canada but they forget to point out that the Province of Quebec allocates more to sponsored research and capital. Actually, it appears that the government of Quebec spends more per student at \$29, 242 than the rest of Canada at \$28, 735. (Following Graph).

More and more, the university community has shifted their attention from the problem of under-funding to that of bad funding. We must question the Quebec government's priorities that support funding for sponsored research and capital at the expense of the operating fund.

We also have to keep an eye on the priorities of some rectors who tap into this fund, that is less well endowed, in order to invest more in sponsored research and capital. We must reiterate the demand for public financing for basic operations at universities and to strive toward a better balance between teaching and research. ■

Overall Expenditures per Student at Universities

difference between Quebec and Canada, 2008-2009

| | Quebec | Rest of Canada | Difference per student |
|--------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Operations | 18 162 | 19 931 | -1 769 |
| Sponsored research | 7 878 | 6 225 | 1 653 |
| Capital | 3 202 | 2 579 | 623 |
| | 29 242 | 28 735 | 507 |

Source: *Rencontres des partenaires en éducation, Document d'appui à la réflexion*, Décembre 2010, page 23.

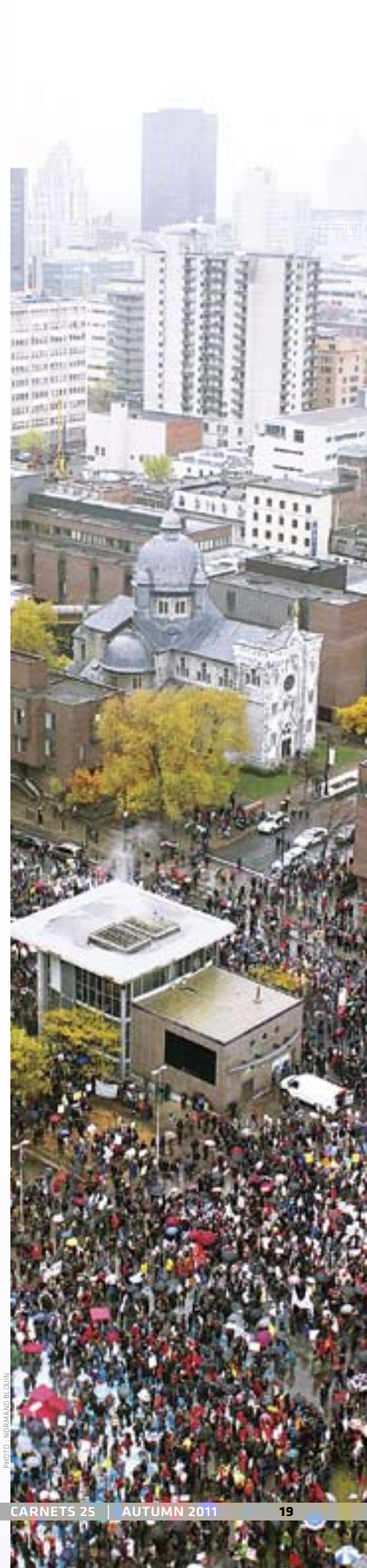


PHOTO: NORMAND BLOUIN

Winning at Last!

“On August 30, 2011,” says Marie Blais, Vice President, “AGSEM was accredited by the *Commission des relations du travail (Labour Relations Board)* to represent all course lecturers and instructors. AGSEM has represented teaching assistants since 1993 and invigilators since 2010.”



Richard Hink
AGSEM Vice-president

Course lecturers returning to McGill University in September met with new students and a new union! The Commission des relations du travail (CRT) has accredited the Association of Graduate Students Employed at McGill (AGSEM), the union already representing teaching assistants and exam invigilators,

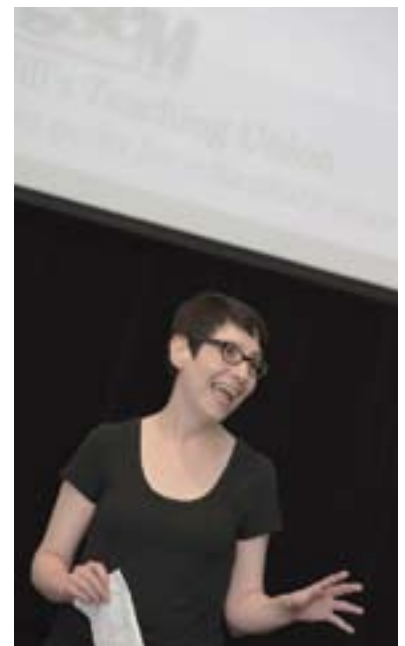
to represent all course lecturers and instructors within a new bargaining unit. The union filed a request for accreditation in April 2011, after a campaign that lasted for over a year. The need to unionize course lecturers became obvious after the teaching assistants' strike in 2008. The university dismissed many course lecturers and others in different job categories who were also members of the striking unit.

As a consequence, course lecturers decided that they would benefit from the protection of a union to safeguard their jobs. The union anticipated a long legal battle after the pre-hearing conference with the employer at the beginning of the summer. There was disagreement on the make-up of the bargaining unit and the university stated their intention to contest the exclusions proposed by the union. Later, the union submit-

ted a list of people wrongly identified as course lecturers by the university. Surprisingly, the university admitted their error and took half of the names in question off the list.

After the error had been corrected, the CRT confirmed that the union had received signed membership cards from 50% of course lecturers and this within the very broad definition of course lecturer proposed by the employer. Thus, a clear majority of course lecturers had chosen to unionize with FNEEQ-CSN.

Since then, the union has been working hard on integrating the new unit into AGSEM. At the unit's first general assembly, on September 28, course lecturers approved an interim set of bylaws and began the process of electing members of the executive committee and negotiating committee.



PHOTOS: AGSE

AGSEM-AEDEM Actively Participates in CGEU 2011

Annick Lavogiez

*Member of the TA Bargaining Committee
AAEDEM-AGSEM*

With a contract only a few lines long, offering hardly any protection or benefit, course lecturers at McGill University remain the worst paid and the most vulnerable in Québec.

They will arrive at the negotiating table this winter determined to arrive at a collective agreement that offers the same level of protection as those enjoyed by course lecturers at other universities in Québec. ■



From September 11 to 14, Sheldon Brandt, Vice-President External and I, member of the TA Bargaining Committee, attended the Coalition of Graduate Employees Unions at New York University. The following are our observations on the event:

These four days allowed us to reflect on problems we face, find solutions to these problems and prepare projects to make our actions and our union team more effective.

The workshops were a good place to meet and connect with North American union members and more specifically with our Canadian colleagues with whom we discussed communication strategies in order to create more solidarity between unions, to promote collective action and present a united front to our respective employers.

Students' strike experience in Puerto Rico and Wisconsin helped us to understand the importance of communication between unions. We find inspiration from actions taken by other unions and learn from mistakes so as not to repeat them.

This need to have more regular contact with other unions is proving to be an important asset from an international perspective as more and more universities are trying to create campuses on a global scale, such as the Yale project in Singapore and New York University in Abu Dhabi. Such projects require a stronger alliance between unions and students in North America and eventually, internationally.

Moreover, workshops like "Using Media/Film" and "Strategic Research" led us to think about our use of different media such as our Website or Facebook.

The discussions that focus on the need to have a user-friendly Website for its creators and its administrators (members of the executive committee) will help to make us more efficient.

A Website should be one way of communicating with union members, but not the only way. An effective and legal way to collect information on our employer will be useful to us in this round of negotiations with McGill University.

Several workshops concluded with the importance of getting more activists involved to avoid overburdening the executive committee. This applies directly to our union in these times of expansion. We have been given much advice as to how to include activists in subcommittees in order to be more effective in our daily activities. In doing so, we will also be training AGSEM's future leaders.

Despite the fact that the focus was on problems at US universities, this conference was of great use to AGSEM. We gathered pertinent information and made important contacts. We noticed that in the collective imagination of the American union activist, Canadian student unions have good relationships with their employers.

We were careful to remind them that we face many difficulties and that we need their attention and their support in our struggles. ■

We Have Our Work Cut Out for Us!

The unions that make up the *Regroupement cégep* are lucky to have a tireless group of elected activists and union consultants working with them. Thank goodness for that, because the 2011-2012 school year started with a bang and there is no lack of work piling up on desks! The following report is an overview of the unions that make up the *Regroupement cégep*.



PHOTO: MATHIE

Yves de Repentigny

Delegate to coordination
to the regroupement cégep

François Legault and the Future of CEGEPs

At a meeting in Longueuil in the last week of September during the Coalition pour l'avenir du Québec tour, their spokesperson, pequiste ex-minister, François Legault declared that, according to him, CEGEPs should be abolished and replaced with a grade 13 and an extra year of university. The reason cited is that CEGEPs are "A great place to learn to smoke drugs and drop out". FNEEQ, following the example of many others in the milieu quickly published a press release (available on our Website's homepage) denouncing Mr Legault's comments for what they are: inept, insulting and deeply biased.

Negotiating the Collective Agreement: The Report

One hundred and fifty participants were in attendance at the Regroupement meeting that took place last September 8 and 9. The *Comité du bilan de la négociation* presented their report be-

fore new CSN Vice-President, Jacques Létourneau, responsible for the public sector along with others representatives of the *Comité de coordination des secteurs public et parapublic (CCSPP)*¹ and delegates, who adopted their recommendations with some amendments.

Reaffirming the importance of a strong united front during collective bargaining for the public sector and broader public sector, the report proposed further mutual support through better political cooperation between member organizations when it comes to mobilization, communication strategies, and cooperation between sectoral tables themselves and between sectoral tables and the central table.

The Regroupement also invited members of the Front commun to contribute long term to the report on salary increases.

Curricula Analysed, Curricula Criticised

Last year, the administration of Vocational and Technical Training (*Direction générale de la formation professionnelle et technique, DGFPT*) at the Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports (MELS) announced a plan to optimize vocational and technical training programs (*Plan d'optimisation des programmes d'études professionnelles et techniques*) intended to "adapt training to suit the needs of various sectors of economic activity and to meet regional needs".

With this goal in mind, the DGFPT proposed a study of similar targeted programs to make way for "generic pro-

grams that encourage greater flexibility for graduates [...]". In other words, several similar programs would be grouped together into one generic program leading to the same jobs.

Concerned about an approach that could have huge consequences on the quality of training and on jobs, the *Regroupement cégep* asked all of its unions to urge teachers of the programs in question to demand to be formally consulted on the issue by administration.

For each program, the outcome of these consultations will be passed on to the coordinator of the Regroupement Cégep who will see to it that the right person, the chair of the *Comité national des programmes d'études de la formation professionnelle et technique (CNPEPT)* receives the information. The *Comité national des programmes d'études de la formation professionnelle et technique (CNPEPT)* is, for us, the official forum for this consultation.

OTHER FILES

Student Retention in Technical Schools

During the forum on the relationship between education and labour market needs that took place in June, participants concentrated on ideas brought up during prior regional meetings, identifying 13 courses of action.

One of them was the creation of a task force on student retention in technical schools. MELS invited FNEEQ to join in. Micheline Thibodeau, Second Vice-



PHOTO: FRANCE DESAULNIERS

President of the federation will be representing FNEEQ. The committee began work in October and should file a report by March.

Pay Equity

The good news is that works on the pay equity report have resumed. It is a joint inter-union venture, bringing together FTQ, CSQ, APTS, FIQ and CSN. For now, the focus will be on identifying job categories rather than gender predominance, and on the method in which the surveys will be conducted. Surveys were conducted for CEGEP teachers in 2001; the document *Enseigner au collégial...*

Portrait de la profession will complete the picture that will be drawn up by the new surveys.

Students with Special Needs

Work has begun with the employer regarding the impact related to the types of accommodations needed for the integration of students with learning disabilities, mental health problems and Attention Deficit Disorder with or without hyperactivity in colleges. Although the disorders are well documented, their impact on teachers' work is not. The joint committee is considering the best way to collect information. A large coalition

of all the college unions and student associations had their first meeting about the FNEEQ report on October 17.

This time, the coalition gave itself the objective of better integration of special needs students into the college system. One of the demands will surely be better financing of services adapted to special needs students; the Minister only allocates 4 million dollars due to budget cuts. ■

¹ Body responsible for convening representatives of CSN federations that have members in the public sector and broader public sector.



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Firm in Damage Insurance

A Busy Year-End

Last spring was rife with signatures on collective agreements. The *Collège Esther-Blondin*, the *Séminaire de Chicoutimi*, the *Centre d'intégration scolaire (CIS)* and the *Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf secondaire* all renewed their collective agreements. The lab technicians at the *Collège Regina Assumpta* signed their first collective agreement.



PHOTO: FNEEQ

Alexandre Coudé

Delegate to the coordination
of the FNEEQ Regroupement privé

At *Collège Esther-Blondin*, after long and difficult negotiations, members voted on an agreement in principle last June.

The following is a list of main improvements: more union leaves, abolition of some supervision in non-teaching tasks, sick leaves that are easier to calculate and abolition of the two day limit on personal days within the sick leave bank. The new RQAP rules have been updated and it is now possible to take an unpaid leave of absence for family reasons.

In the secondary section at the *Collège Brébeuf*, negotiations were equally long and arduous. The teachers' union has nevertheless succeeded in countering the employer's demands for a workload increase.

During negotiations, the parties came to an understanding to offer better support for new teachers by recognizing the need for mentoring. Other improvements include improvements in parental leave and family leave according to standards in the public sector, approval of

two periods of supervision per week for the union president, the cost of which would be split by the college and the union, one period per week for teachers for mentoring a new teacher and approval of a maximum of 11 professional development days with mandatory attendance by teachers at the college out of a total of 20 days.

With this collective agreement, the *Séminaire* will benefit from improved family or parental leave, increased security funds, establishment of a grievance mediation process, creation of a deferred salary leave program (6 months/1 year), extension of employment contract (for 3 to 5 years) for people on extended leave or who have



PHOTO: FRANCE DESAULNIERS

On June 27, 2010, teachers and non-teaching staff at the *Séminaire de Chicoutimi* signed their work contract. It was a first collective agreement for the non-teaching staff.

It is important to note that the bargaining took place after a merger between the *Séminaire de Chicoutimi* and the *Lycée Saguenay*. For teachers, the goal of the union was to hold on to the better collective agreement of the two.

been laid off and most importantly, the reinstatement of a full salary after two years of salary cuts.

For the non-teaching staff, the new collective agreement combines the best of the working conditions existing at both schools.

The main benefits are the creation of a security fund, lump sum severance for employees who get laid off, as well as standardized vacations. The non-

teaching staff's collective agreement is effective for a three-year period and that of the teaching staff, for a five-year period.

The *Centre d'intégration scolaire* also signed a new agreement at the end of the school year. The integration centre welcomes boys and girls ages 8 to 16 with behavioural problems with the goal of academic recovery and social and emotional rehabilitation.

The new collective agreement includes amendments to parental leave for teachers (clause from the cegep agreement), family leave (adjusted to Quebec labour laws) and two teachers responsible for pedagogy and special education on site instead of hiring externally.

In terms of evaluation, the *Centre d'intégration scolaire* has something new to offer: the union and the employer are preparing a confidential teacher evaluation system that is constructive and not designed to penalize teachers. The guidelines for teacher assessment will be established with the CRT. The new collective agreement will also update job titles.



PHOTO: FNEEQ

It was also a first collective agreement for the lab technicians at the *Collège Regina Assumpta*. The stakes were high. With the new employment contract, the lab technicians' hours will be within the norm. The work week is now 35 to 40 hours and the work schedule now allows them to have enough hours to qualify for full-time status (1820 hours

per year). The other benefits are accrual of seniority during any leave negotiated in the collective agreement, increases in vacation time and vacation pay. The pay scale has also been revised.

Congratulations to the unions for their signatures and for their excellent work. ■

Follow-Up on Joint Demands

As announced in the *Carnet du privé*, the *Regroupement privé* is continuing work on their joint demands. At the *Regroupement privé* meeting in April 2011, a resolution on parental leave was proposed and passed. The resolution stipulated that members of the *Regroupement privé* mandated the joint committee to pursue common goals in bargaining for parental leave, to follow up and to put together a report on the following issues:

- duration of maternity leave of at least 20 weeks;
- all vacation weeks postponed until after maternity leave or payment for maternity leave
- paternity leave and adoption leave of 5 full weeks
- the same rules apply regardless of the date of delivery

Last June, the joint committee of the *Regroupement privé* met with Paul Boisvenu and Guy Forgues, executive directors of the federation of private schools (*Fédération des établissements d'enseignement privés*), and of the associations of private colleges in Quebec (*Association des collèges privés du Québec*) to discuss joint demands and parental leave.

The associations were open to discussions. They appreciated hearing about the joint demands and having contact with FNEEQ. They've reasserted the importance of their members' autonomy.

A large part of the *Regroupement's* work in 2011-2012 will be follow-up work. The *Regroupement* will be looking at their files on family or parental leaves in order to prepare a joint demand on the issue. Lastly, they will prepare a report on the question of parental leave for various bargaining situations.

Solidarity in Action

My journey to Kenya this summer has been an extraordinary experience of professional collaboration and personal discovery. I have met wonderful people and glimpsed a breathtakingly beautiful country; I have seen stunning and sometimes sobering contrasts; I have witnessed incredible sights and sounds; I have listened and learned, shared and reflected; and I have renewed my conviction, developed during equally enriching experiences of collaboration with teachers in Senegal, that we can all contribute to change in some small way.

Maureen Hillman

Retired teacher, Sherbrooke, Quebec

In this third year of the project in Laikipia, thirteen Kenyan teachers worked with a team of seven Canadians to organize and prepare a week-long conference on student-centred methodologies for over sixty local teachers. They gave workshops on collaborative learning, inquiry, project-based learning and reflection. In addition, they dealt with conference logistics and started work on programme evaluation. During the coming year, professional learning clusters in each zone will meet to organise further professional development opportunities and reach out to other teachers in their schools. Next year, Kenyan teacher-facilitators, with the collaboration of Canadians, will train new facilitators to give workshops at the teacher conference. I believe that this focus on empowering teachers to take ownership of their own professional development is why EBB's work has real long-term value.

It was an incredible learning experience to work with colleagues from Kenya and from all across Canada. I was fascinated to see how people with such different personalities, ages and backgrounds could work so hard together, get along so well and have so much fun when they are all committed to a common goal! That sense of commitment was remarkable: Kenyan teacher-facilitators devoted two weeks of their holiday to preparing and giving workshops while local teachers attended the five day conference, in many cases either travelling quite some way, night and morning, or boarding in the pupils' dormitory; and it



PHOTO: EDUCATION BEYOND BORDERS

was also vacation time for most of the Canadian teachers. A great team spirit quickly emerged and we have all come home richer for our new friendships.

I was also struck by the level of engagement of the pupils we met during school visits or saw daily at Loise School where the conference was hosted. They talked of their great dreams and ambitions for the future, and demonstrated their endless curiosity about us and about the world around them. Several teenagers explained they would take part in holiday 'tuition' - extra guided study to prepare for the November national exams. The girls at Loise studied diligently, often without supervision, and they also tended their school garden, prepared their own meals, did endless laundry, cleared the flood waters after a torrential storm - and just loved chatting with any of us or sharing movie night!

One of the enduring pictures in my mind is that of a little boy reading to us clearly in English after only a few months in school. He was standing on the reddish earthen floor, in an overcrowded classroom where benches and books are shared, where light pours through cracks between the wooden planks, and a cool wind blows through partially shuttered windows with no glass. If ongoing professional development for teachers can contribute to the academic achievement of such boys and girls and to their hopes of a better future, then the work of EBB is truly worthwhile.

The contrasts between such school buildings and resources on the one hand and pupils' ambitions and hopes on the other are great; so, too, is the gap between the beauty of this country and the heart-wrenching poverty and suffering we also witnessed; and so, too, is the

contrast between the atmosphere of trust and sincere friendship with which we were constantly greeted and the occasional security concerns or the media references to corruption.

But, however many problems and issues our different countries face (and recent riots in the UK, my own birthplace, demonstrate that they are numerous), the place we Canadians discovered this summer is a country of exquisite beauty - from the steep escarpments plunging down to the Rift Valley, to the endless grasslands, rugged hills and amazing wildlife. Every day at registration, we saw the snow-capped, hazy outline of Mount Kenya looming majestically in the distance, bathed in the soft early morning light. On a weekend bush walk, we

moved quietly, in single file, listening to the whistling sounds of the breeze in the thorn trees, until we came across gazelle or zebra grazing on the vast tracts of open land which stretched to the far-off hills and beyond. As dusk fell, the clouds darkened on the horizon and the sun's last golden rays filtered through, turning the acacia trees into lonely black silhouettes against the sky.

Beyond the beauty of the landscapes and the elephants, giraffes, black rhinos and impala that inhabit the area, the beauty of the people we met in Laikipia will remain with me: the wonderful wide smiles and happy-sounding Swahili expressions that greeted us each morning, the vigorous handshakes, the pleasant comments, the constant appreciation

and encouragement, the shared laughter, as well as the dances, photos, quotations, prayers, songs and poems....

The conviction, dynamism and commitment of the Kenyan and Canadian teachers with whom I had the privilege to work this summer augur well for the future. That several of them were young teachers was a particular joy to me - as I watched them work, share and build this summer, I felt that our world was in good hands. ■

***"Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much"***

Helen Keller

For more details

www.educationbeyondborders.org/

FNEEQqueries

Pre-Convention Tour

FNEEQ's 30th convention will be taking place next May 29 until June 1, 2012, in Granby. The FNEEQ co-ordinating committee is resolutely committed to ensuring that this key federation event truly reflects and projects the image of our Unions and their members. We would like to hear the members in our affiliated Unions directly express their thoughts to us about, amongst other things, the future of trade unionism, the major challenges and issues facing the world of education and the renewal of trade unionism as we know it. These themes are not at all restrictive. Everything that you wish to articulate, debate or discuss is of utmost interest to us, particularly what you expect from your federation, for example, in terms of services or communications.

This pre-convention tour, that is going on now, represents a special and unique opportunity for us to exchange ideas and hear from the members in our Unions.

Looking forward to meeting with you.

FNEEQ is still active in Social Media!



Recognizing the immense potential of social networks, the Federation has decided to be present on Facebook. The page that has been created is not intended to replace our other information tools, but rather to offer new, more timely and current information, from here and elsewhere. If you already use Facebook, please add the page FNEEQ to the list of those you «love»! If you do not, this is a good opportunity to get started!

www.facebook.com/FneeqCSN



We're also on Twitter. This medium allows the rapid dissemination of timely information in 140 characters.

www.twitter.com/FneeqCSN

My mom
says she
cannot
afford to
send me to
University.



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