



# Special ADR Edition

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## I'D LIKE TO STAY!

*by: Janet Wyman (Biology)*

To begin I must say that Pat Romano summed-up many of my own feelings very clearly in her contribution last week. I feel somewhat ambiguous about disaffiliation. Perhaps it may be the best for us, however I have been disappointed by our discussion thus far. I don't believe that insurance (although important) is the main reason we should either stay or leave. To judge from what has been written so far, it takes a disproportionate place in our debate.

I am also disturbed by the impression I have gotten that we would be better off in a federation that has fewer small regional colleges, and that somehow being with other larger urban CEGEPs we will be better served. I am aware that we have different problems, however I feel very strongly that we share many more. I do not want to be part of a system that is not universally accessible. When a small regional college closes programs we are all affected. Should we not all stand together and demand that the government take the actions necessary to protect our system so that all students have access to quality education no matter where they live? It is the responsibility of all of us to protect and defend the students who will suffer if regional colleges close. I like that FAC has always stood by this principle.

I know we can't solve the problem of diminishing population in the regions and the consequent decrease in student numbers. It is a reflection of many other difficulties faced by those living in the regions. I do however feel strongly that by saying, that it is "their problem" and they might be better off working on by themselves, that we are shirking a social and political responsibility to at least try and address the problems.

There are those that say these smaller regional colleges should join FNEEQ that united we will be stronger. This may be true but it is odd that in the same debate we hear that Dawson will have a much stronger voice and we will avoid the problem of smaller colleges having a disproportionate voice.

# LET'S KEEP THE CHOICE FOR AN INDEPENDENT VOICE!

*by: Gleema Nambiar (Sociology)*

I do not claim to be experienced in either FAC or FNEEQ politics. Although I have worked with the CSN on two union organizing campaigns, it is only this year that I have had the privilege of serving a local union membership on a day-to-day basis. From this limited perspective, I would humbly like to offer my personal angle on the ADR debate. I hasten to qualify that I am not speaking on behalf of the DTU Executive, except in the sense that I feel it to be my duty as an elected representative, to make known my perspective, however "green" it may be due to lack of experience.

The DTU, as you know, often needs to call the labor relations experts at FAC for support on dicey issues involving the interpretation of the collective agreement and occasionally on legal matters outside the purview of our contract. The help that FAC has offered us has been timely, attentive to detail, well-researched, and personable. The labor relations officers can always be reached and can be counted on to show up at our doorstep in a pinch, upon request. Would we get better labor relations services were we to reaffiliate? I am not convinced that we will. FNEEQ may have more resources, but those resources get spread out over many more teachers and teaching assistants in different types of educational institutions (private schools, C.E.G.E.P. s, and universities).

I have also been very impressed by the level of respect and maturity shown by the FAC's Executive. For example, on the reflection we are currently undertaking on union affiliation, although FAC has been aware of the active involvement of FNEEQ on our campus, they have viewed it as part of the ADR process. Given the stringent disaffiliation rules at FNEEQ-CSN, I am not sure how such a soft raiding process would be viewed by the CSN had we been affiliated to FNEEQ. Although I was not there when Dawson teachers disaffiliated from FNEEQ, I believe the CSN's heavy-handedness was a concern.

Upon perusal of the ADR report, as far as I can see, the contracts enjoyed by FAC and FNEEQ colleges are, indeed, "six of one, half a dozen of the other". It is my impression that at least as far as college teachers are concerned, federations representing us tend to "free-ride" on the gains made by other federations, resulting in all of us benefiting from a leveling of the playing field of the clauses in the various collective agreements. Unions representing college teachers in Quebec (FAC, FNEEQ and FEC), are, after all is said and done, sister organizations on the same side of the fence in defending our rights.

Even the insurance packages are similar, and those, I believe, can be negotiated with the insurance companies as our needs for different types of health services and medications change with the shifting demography. Costs could conceivably, regardless of affiliation, become relatively lower as a whole

new generation of C.E.G.E.P. teachers becomes more aware of disease prevention. As the insurance brokers have told us, costs depend on the use patterns of the insured members.

One slight change, were we to join FNEEQ, would be an increase in our union dues to presumably cover the greater overhead at the CSN. Depending on the salary bracket, Dawson teachers would probably have to pay an extra \$100 to \$200 per year for the opportunity to be affiliated to FNEEQ-CSN (based, as it stands now, on an extra 0.28% approximately that FNEEQ-CSN would charge for dues).

Twenty years ago, a group of C.E.G.E.P. teachers decided to leave FNEEQ to start their own organization, FAC, one that would be democratic and that would prioritize the political, economic and pedagogical issues of concern specifically to college teachers. From my short experience attending the pedagogical committee sessions at FAC's Federative Assemblies, great importance has always been placed on investigating and monitoring the impact on college teaching, of the Quebec government's educational reform [for example, of RAC (reconnaissance des acquis et des compétences) and of the AEC's (attestation d'études collégiales), etc.]. The testimonies we heard at FAC of how the smaller regional colleges have been affected by these reforms, highlights for me, what the worst-case scenario might look like, and can serve as an early warning signal to larger urban colleges, of future developments. The concern for pedagogy and FAC's insistence on stimulating continued inter-federative work on pedagogical issues (consistently convening meetings of all 59 colleges), has convinced me that the education dossier still defines FAC's character as an autonomous federation.

A real concern for me as a sociologist, is that a large majority of C.E.G.E.P. teachers affiliating to one big union, the CSN, gives the CSN's bureaucracy too much power in the social environment of Quebec unionism. My fear is that if the CSN gets too cozy with our employer (in our case, the Quebec government, which also happens to be our legislator), it could compromise the interests of the workers that it represents, be it on the issue of nationalism or modifications to the Quebec Colleges Act, or whatever. When there are only a few powerful players in any game, these big players tend to hobnob with each other and conform to each other's needs and expectations. Group conformity studies (see, for example, Milgram & Janis's work, or the Stanford Prison Guard or Stockholm syndrome studies) caution and lead us to conclude that it is always important for there to be an outlet for alternative perspectives to be expressed.

Another concern is that within the CSN, the FSSS (the Health and Social Services Federation) has an inordinate amount of clout within the central due to its large size. FNEEQ tends to get drowned out. I think that a union federation like FAC, representing the interests of college teachers outside the CSN, might actually play a very useful role. It can voice college teachers' demands about working conditions to the public (via the media and other avenues), independently of the CSN, without fear of being muzzled by the

interests of other federations within the central. In this way, FAC could hypothetically also support the interests of college teachers already within FNEEQ by giving them a second wind, another chance to express the college teachers' perspective, one that may have gotten diluted within the CSN.

Since our colleagues two decades ago took the decision to create a new organization, I certainly do not want to be responsible for limiting future generations' choice of adhering to a federation that reflects the independent voice of C.E.G.E.P. teachers. Keeping that choice available in the panoply of Quebec unions is important. As we have witnessed in the financial sector of our economy, the big players may make terrible, self-interested decisions. It is important that there always be those organized autonomous voices on the outside of the big game, to shout, if need be: "the Emperor has no clothes!"

I do not see the choice between FAC and FNEEQ as one being one based on political principle. They are sister union organizations, and insofar as unions are set up to defend bread-and-butter issues, they both get the job done. The question for me is: do we really need to leave FAC? It defends college teachers specifically and gets us more-or-less the same set of benefits as other union federations for less overhead cost. Moreover, my main concern about leadership was allayed this past weekend when FAC's present Executive who are very experienced at what they do, put forward their candidacy in full force to carry FAC members through the upcoming contract negotiations.

Whatever decision you might take about affiliation, please avail yourself of the tools that the DTU has made available (the Advantages/ Disadvantages document, the ADR report, and the Owl Hoots Special ADR editions to which the DTU also encourages you to contribute), and come to the General Assemblies to get informed and make your point of view heard.