



Special ADR Edition

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8 REASONS WHY I'LL BE VOTING TO STAY IN FAC

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* This article reflects my personal viewpoint, but I wish to thank everyone who helped me identify issues of concern to them and who shared their knowledge with me.

1. Is The Grass Really Greener On The Other Side Of The Fence?

The DTU has 20 years of experience of working within FAC. We know its faults and virtues. It is not a perfect organization but it has proven to be:

- Responsive to its members,
- Capable of negotiating good collective agreements,
- Competent at delivering high quality legal and support services &
- Effective at negotiating quality insurance packages.

By contrast, we are being sold a vision of FNEEQ/CSN seen through tinted glasses: the grass is greener on the other side. FNEEQ/CSN, we are told, has no faults; it is large but flexible; it hasn't been concerned with translation or pedagogy in the past, but it will be in the future; it will get us better collective agreements and higher salaries... FNEEQ/CSN has had 20 years to accomplish these goals and has not delivered. The addition of the DTU to its ranks will not change that reality.

2. Close CSN-PQ Links Have Hurt Public Sector Workers

The first duty of any union is to defend its members' interests, and not just in the narrow contractual sense. Over the last 30 years, the CSN has put the needs of the PQ ahead of those of its members and other public sector workers on several occasions:

- In 1982 two weeks into a massive public sector strike the PQ government passed a back-to-work legislation, rolled-back salaries and significantly reduced public sector pension indexation (a price we continue to pay and will continue to pay for years). In the face of this assault the CSN urged capitulation. In contrast, in 1972, the president of the CSN went to jail rather than capitulate to a Liberal government decree.
- In early 2002 the CSN agreed to a PQ government proposal to extend collective agreements for one year (from July 1, 2002 to July 1 2003) in return for a 2% salary increase. The PQ knew it had to have an election during that year and it did not want to fight an election in the midst of negotiations. The election was held in the spring of 2003 and we wound up negotiating with a freshly elected Liberal government, in no hurry to reach a settlement. We could have been negotiating with a PQ

government in the last year of its mandate which clearly would have been preferable for all public sector workers.

- In December 2002 the CSN pressured FNEEQ to accept a 173- hour- per- year workload increase as a quid pro quo for salary restructuring. Again the motivation was to remove any negotiating irritants for the PQ prior to the spring 2003 election.

3. If You Agree In Principle That English Language CEGEPS Should Be Shut Down, Vote FNEEQ/CSN

There is really no beating around the bush on this one. FNEEQ is part of the CSN and the CSN officially supports the extension of Bill 101 to the CEGEP's and the abolition of English post-secondary education in Québec. The president of the CSN, Claudette Carbonneau signed a public letter to that effect in 2006. (Everyone is entitled to their own political views, and it is not surprising that many Francophones in Quebec society feel some attraction to nationalism.) However, for an organization to come out officially supporting the abolition of English language CEGEPs directly threatens our existence.

"The majority of the allophones of Montreal and the anglophones in all of Québec work principally in English. At home the majority of language exchanges take place in this language, contributing to the acceleration of our minority status and reducing our demographic weight. More than half of young allophones choose to attend English Cegeps. Bilingualism is recolonizing public institutions.....

We need a strengthened Law 101 so that Québec can have a coherent institutional structure. This is particularly necessary in the Montreal health system and in the institutions of higher education presently based on a logic of separate development. If French is the official language of Québec, it must be the language of all the national institutions, and these must function in a manner to support and confirm the status of the French language as the normal language of use in our institutions and as an agent of social integration."

(Excerpted and translated from La Charte de la Langue Française:
http://www.mef.qc.ca/30_ans_de_charte_de_la_langue_fr.htm)

4. One Big Union: A Communist Principle; One Big Bureaucracy: The Reality

The communist principle of One Big Union, put forward by the Wobblies (the International Workers of the World) a hundred years ago, is one that animates several of the FNEEQ supporters. But is one big union in reality, only one big, unaccountable bureaucracy? It is important for union organizations to be controlled by their rank and file and for members to be able to check and balance the actions of their leaders. I do not feel comfortable giving the big CSN machine (where CEGEP teachers constitute a small fraction of the membership), the right to override our power to determine our own destiny as CEGEP teachers. I want to be part of an independent, democratic federation of CEGEP teachers where our vote counts. And remember that if we were to vote to re-enter the "One Big Union", its bureaucracy would make it very difficult indeed to leave again (**with half of the teaching body plus one having to vote to disaffiliate in a General Assembly..** although we've been told it has been allowed by referendum in some places).

5. Who's Protecting our Nest Egg?

Claudette Carbonneau, CSN president, sits on the Board of the Caisse de Dépôt et de Placement du Québec, the repository for our CARRA and QPP pension contributions. She is there as a union representative to protect our nest-eggs, yet, she supported the investment

policies of the Caisse which resulted in a \$40 billion loss last year! Other major pension funds in Canada lost money too but only half as much.

6. The Importance of Pay Equity and Relativity

The reality of Quebec’s public sector negotiating process is that salary settlements always consist of the same percentage salary increase for all public sector workers. This process will be further developed as the full implementation of pay equity and relativity comes into play. These concepts, which come out of the movement for pay equity for women, will mean that in the future, all public sector workers in the same job category will, by law, have the same salary. Thus, any promises of major salary increases as FNEEQ/CSN members are simply marketing hype. Quebec public sector teachers, regardless of union affiliation, have had and will continue to have the same salaries.

7. What is the Decree anyway?

The last round of negotiations was concluded in 2006 after a three year marathon. It ended because the government gave all the public sector unions an ultimatum. Sign this agreement or have a worse one imposed on you. FAC and a number of other federations refused to give in to this threat and our salary and working conditions were decreed. FNEEQ and FEC signed the government offer and received an improved decree. Last year FAC reconsidered its position and signed the decree too. Now all three federations have the same agreement.

8. The ADR reflection or Shadow Raiding?

The DTU Executive Council, at the start of the ADR process of reflection, attempted to set some rules that would lead to an open and collegial discussion. Regrettably some FNEEQ supporters could not resist the temptation to organize secret meetings on Tuesdays, to which all faculty were not invited. In my naïveté as a new member on the Executive, I did not immediately catch on to the fact that the active member(s) of the ADR committee were avid FNEEQ supporters and that they would eventually turn to aggressive campaigning on campus. This has considerably darkened the mood of the discussion on affiliation for me, and has led me to write this second, more proactive article (as opposed to my first more reflective one, see Owl Hoots ADR issue #449). In a time of declining unionization, I find the CSN’s propensity to raid already-unionized workplaces as a primary means of membership expansion, to be entirely unethical and unhealthy. For example, the prison guards who recently joined the CSN, were not unorganized, but belonged to the Public Service Alliance of Canada. FNEEQ’s shadow presence on our campus via our local pro-FNEEQ contingent, in my mind, is part of this unhealthy trend. (By the way, according to section 111.4 of the Labor code, the raiding period is supposed to begin only on the 270th day before the expiry of the collective agreement. In our case, that would not be before July 4, 2009.)



Some truths about the CSN and FNEEQ

By Janice Harvey (History)

Following discussions and questions at the General Assembly and elsewhere it seems important to clarify certain things about the CSN’s official position in relation to public education, the French language, English institutions and, in particular, English Cegeps. And for good measure a word on the strike fund.

1. FNEEQ and the CSN Support Public Education

Despite having private colleges and schools as members, both FNEEQ and the CSN favour the integration of private education into the public sector. This is seen by the CSN signature on the Declaration. Making Public Education The Québec Priority, a document you received earlier this year (a signature that represents the CSN, the FNEEQ and the CSN college support staff unions). We should remember that when Education Minister Reid was attacking the Cegeps in 2004, the rally and parallel forum to defend education that was held in Quebec City was mainly organised by FNEEQ, (most of the Quebec City Cegep teacher unions are in FNEEQ), with financial help from the CSN and in cooperation with FAC and FEC. The CSN money for this came from the strike fund. Furthermore, the CSN Conseil Centraux in the various regions organised and paid for the buses that even FAC teachers took to attend the rally. When education is under attack the CSN puts its resources there; when health care is the victim, it does the same!

2. The CSN and FNEEQ Support the Right for English Cegeps to Exist

We can find the official CSN position on language, as established and voted on in their meetings, in the Brief it presented to the Estates General on the future of the French language in March 2001. In this document it confirms the importance of all Quebec citizens working together to build a Quebec where everyone will feel comfortable. Although they defend the primacy of the French language and defend Bill 101, they affirm the right of the English community to its institutions and to services in English, and to develop its language and culture. To this end they call for specific government actions to enable the English community to maintain its vitality. The CSN also calls for the government to improve the teaching of French in English schools and Cegeps to ensure that young Anglophones will not have trouble securing employment.

As well as defending the role of French, the CSN speaks of the importance to improve and expand the teaching of English especially given globalization and the fact that 60% of allophones go to English Cegep. It then presents the CSN position, that remains the same since it was adopted in their meetings in 1995, that it is NOT necessary to apply Law 101 to Cegep. This is because Cegep is post-secondary, the students are adults, and Cegep is not compulsory. Also, it should be assumed that students make the choice to attend English Cegeps to perfect their English skills and to acquire access to better jobs. It is important to facilitate this process by allowing students to attend English colleges and by improving the teaching of English in French schools. This is of course also the official position of FNEEQ and if any attack was ever made on the English Cegeps both FNEEQ and the CSN would stand against it with all of their resources.

3. The CSN Strike Fund can be used by Teachers

The strike fund or Professional Defense Fund is there for all CSN workers who are on strike for more than 2 weeks in a row. That would be highly unlikely for teachers (although the UQAM teachers are doing a pretty good job of it!). However, it is also used to pay for costs connected to the public sector negotiations and to pay for mounting any protest and fighting back whenever workers or their services (like education or health care) are under attack from the government or private enterprise. This would be the case in any marches on Parliament to protest legislation (like that proposed by Minister Reid in 2004) and during difficult negotiations when the government is threatening cutbacks and asking public sector workers to be realistic, as they are now. It certainly is helpful to know that funds to mount a defense campaign exist and are accessible.