



Special ADR Edition

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It Is Time To Go

*By: (Jo LaPierre, History/Classics)**

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Like Pat Romano I have many happy memories of meetings at FAC, particularly when compared to FNEEQ meetings in the early 1980s, always held in dreary hotels somewhere not quite in Quebec City after a horrid bus ride. At FAC I remember those wonderful luncheon buffets at the Crowne Plaza and the cruise down the Saguenay at the annual AF, all with a small, friendly group of people who I still enjoy seeing at our General Assemblies.

But is that what a labour union is for? No! At Vanier (where I was a MED until 1991 when I got moved to Dawson) we were mad at the CSN not so much at FNEEQ. In 1983 we had all lived through over 3 weeks of a really nasty strike, been decreed back to work, and faced a 20% loss of salary—any alternative looked good. I am delighted to know that FNEEQ is now basically fully autonomous in establishing its own policies that agree or disagree with those of the CSN, policies determined at General Assemblies, just like with FAC.

What I remember most about 1988 is heated fights at Vanier with Monique Simard from the CSN telling us we were “fat cat” teachers and to think about the “real” workers. No wonder we got the required vote out to form FAC. Yet we also realized when we woke up the next day in June 1988 that, with fewer than 15 unions and very few large urban ones, we were in trouble—and we were. The recent disaffiliations from FAC have only highlighted those problems and there are now more disaffiliations (not just Dawson) in the offing.

Where FAC has failed (aside from in attracting new members) is in not listening to the requests for changes from its big unions who pay its bills. It continues to offer wildly generous expense accounts to its elected officers. Maybe this is fine (or maybe just OK) if you have lots of money—but FAC doesn't, especially now that two unions have left. So what does it cut? The release time for the non-perm rep. (the position Pat Romano held years ago), along with one of the positions in pedagogy and one in information (aren't these all still supposed to be such important “principles” to FAC?) It does a fancy renovation on the million dollar building it bought (with our union dues). Somewhere along the line it alters the policy on tax free long-term disability insurance, without any of the much vaunted

“consultation” with General Assemblies, so that anyone over 60 on LTD and eligible for a taxable pension with no penalty (however small and of course taxable) is now “deemed to have retired” at 60, not at 65, the age we fought so hard for in our General Assemblies. This is not an acceptable way to function—especially now that we have been hit with a recession, and does not respect the role of General Assemblies, another supposed FAC “principle.”

The games played with the so-called “4 year rule” when FAC officials are supposed to “return to the classroom” is another scam—there really is a group of FAC permanents—who manage to roll over all sorts of leaves, take courses, you name it, to avoid “going back to the classroom.” Why? They like living in Montreal and they like the FAC perks—who wouldn’t?

But Dawson’s teachers need a real union and FNEEQ is the only one available. So I regret that the original idea of FAC didn’t work; I am not totally happy with having a connection to the CSN; and I am not sure I will always love FNEEQ, but I think we have no choice. We have made countless efforts to “reform” FAC to almost no avail. In my opinion it is too late to do anything but leave—it will only get worse and harder if we wait.

Right now we need to hear more about what FNEEQ plans to do for us (and a bit less about insurance, please)! A few ideas: a new fluently bilingual counselor to deal with our English-speaking members, more information on its aims for the upcoming negotiations, less talk of the past (particularly by those who played no part in the events)—and more of the future. We have a flood of new, young teachers—we need to know what FNEEQ plans to do for them. If FAC can send all our members the same old “information” at home, surely our Executive can give FNEEQ an opportunity to do the same or at least tell us more about what services it will offer us, before we vote. So why not on April 21—not April 14?

1983 and the Great Founding Myth of FAC

By: Peggy Simpson (Physics)

Gleema’s recent article in the April 3 edition of Owl Hoots suggests that maybe we were sold out by the CSN in 1983.

In 1983 I was a member of the FNEEQ negotiating team, working full-time on the negotiations at the CSN. Gleema’s tract passes very quickly over the back-to-work legislation that ended the strike that year, and suggests that the CSN capitulated because it was in bed with the PQ. That is just not how it was. We lost because we were confronted by a ruthless government that passed a brutally unethical law to force us to end a strike.

Law 111, the back to work bill, was called the “loi matraque” because of the viciousness of its provisions. It was designed to break the strike, and any unions or individuals who defied it by refusing to return to work.

Individual teachers were docked two day's pay for every strike day. They were also threatened with the loss of three year's seniority for every strike day. The threat of loss of seniority was masterful on the part of those who drafted the law. There were many MEDs who would see scabs pass them on the seniority list. And there were, at Dawson and elsewhere, significant numbers of teachers who had broken ranks and crossed lines to sign in. Fines of \$50 to \$200 per day could be levied on teachers who continued the strike or encouraged others to do so. Teachers could also be summarily fired for striking, the only "process" required, a written notice.

Local union leaders were subject to fines of \$2000 to \$10000 a day if they urged members to remain on strike. A friend reminded me yesterday that she was actually indicted under these provisions.

Federations and centrales were liable to ruinous fines of \$10000 to \$50000 if they counseled their members to continue the strike.

When our working conditions had been decreed and the strike had been declared illegal (Bill 105), some teachers had already crossed lines to go back to work. With the menace of Bill 111 over their heads, many more were finding it increasingly frightening to hold out. It was more and more difficult to maintain the strike in most colleges. The cleverly crafted menaces in Law 111 broke the strike, but only after we had dared two courageous days on the lines defying the government.

The debate about whether to continue resistance by college teachers was held in FNEEQ. The decision to recommend that local unions return to work was argued and voted on in the negotiating bodies of FNEEQ, by the representatives of all the cegep unions. Then each union local in turn held its own vote. It was wrenching; it was divisive; it was heart-breaking. But the pressure was too great; the general assemblies voted to end the strike. In sorrow and in towering and frustrated anger, we returned to the classroom.

The reaction to the passing of Bill 111, in FNEEQ and at the CSN, was first disbelief, and then, utter disillusionment. Union members, both those who shared the PQ's sovereignist goals and many who were convinced federalists, had believed that the PQ was a socially progressive and pro-labour party. The morning after Loi 111 we all knew that that was a fable, a sham.

There is no need to hypothesize a sell-out – unless you count the PQ selling out its social principles.

So the good guys lost. It happens sometimes that, though your heart is pure and your courage boundless, the forces and the circumstances ranged against you overwhelm you anyway.

Gleema's article also trivializes the integrated salary scale – it was the "quid pro quo" for the 173 hours. A fairer salary scale was also a long term goal of negotiations over many years. In the 70's the scholary scale that determined salaries for teachers at the colleges went down to level 14 and up to level 20 (19+PhD). Over several negotiations the number of categories was reduced,

narrowing the gap between pay for people doing the same work. Finally we have attained a single integrated salary scale that is more equitable for teachers with masters degrees or with industry qualifications in technical programs, who previously were permanently and quite significantly discriminated against under the old salary scales.

I will vote to leave FAC– a small, isolated federation that has no strategic sense, that led a futile campaign against the 173 hours long after it was settled (After all, as FAC likes to say, didn't we know we'd eventually get what the others got?) - at significant financial cost to many of its members, and at the cost of division inside teaching ranks at our college.

I will vote to be part of a federation that has a voice in the central table negotiations. I will vote to be part of a central that does work to organize non-unionized workers. (How many non-unionized shops has FAC organized?) I will vote to return to FNEEQ.

An Inconvenient Truth About FNEEQ-CSN

By: Sid Reichelson, English Dept.

Supported by Mark Levy, English Dept.

Twenty years ago we participated in a period of reflection on and disaffiliation from our membership in a union federation (FNEEQ) which didn't respond to our needs. FNEEQ was ideologically driven, undemocratic, dominated by a Centrale (CSN) of non-teachers uninterested in the concerns of our profession. Negotiators from FNEEQ would change sides and join the government team.

We created FAC to be the opposite.

I was on the DTU executive during our FNEEQ affiliation, during the "reflection period" and during our early years in FAC. I remember the betrayals and feelings of disempowerment stopped when we created FAC.

So what went wrong? Where does this disaffiliation sentiment come from?

Has FAC failed us? I don't see it: we have virtually the same contract, salary and working conditions as FNEEQ unions do...The local FNEEQ lobby points to the rejected Entente which we signed two years after FNEEQ unions did, but ignores the fact that the rejection came from the local unions, (the DTU voted 3 times to reject) not the federation. FAC was created to return power to the local unions, the General Assemblies which were disempowered in FNEEQ. If anything, the rejected entente proves FAC is working well.

As does Gleema Nambiar's more recent experience with FAC's initiatives in inter-Federation work on pedagogical issues, convening meetings of all 59 colleges (ADR 449). We are not isolated in FAC. This is a healthy organization making a valuable contribution to Quebec education.

Has FNEEQ-CSN changed? So they say... more democratic? The way they have lobbied us outside of the parameters of the locally defined ADR debate, spamming

our web mail with a crude propaganda "interview" with a John Abbot union executive shows a contempt for democracy and labour law (raiding: an attempt to organize workers who are already represented by another union.)

Is FNEEQ-CSN any less ideologically driven than it was 20 years ago?

Note that the CSN President in 2006 signed on to a demand from a *Defense de la langue Francaise* group to abolish English post-secondary education in Quebec. The FNEEQ President in Jan. 2009 led a delegation of FNEEQ teachers on a junket to Cuba to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Fidel Castro's entry into Havana. And the same FNEEQ President, one Ronald Cameron, was a featured speaker in February at a local meeting of the thinly veiled anti-Semitic group called "anti-Israeli apartheid."

Cuba in January...rather expensive... maybe that's why they want more of our dues than FAC does; 85% of the \$534,630 collected by the DTU, a **sum close to \$455,000, would be sucked away from the local union**; at present, only 66% of what we pay as dues goes to the Federation (FAC) i.e. **about \$100,000 more stays with the DTU**. That's the money we use to hire a full-time secretary and buy extra release time to allow us a 4 person executive. That money would be gone, if we joined FNEEQ. If we want to keep our secretary and our 4-person executive, we'd have to increase our dues: expect to pay an extra \$125 on top of the \$900 in dues (for a salary of \$60,000) you already pay, and understand that most of that money (60% of \$1025 to be exact) would go to the *Confédération des syndicats nationaux*, an umbrella organization even farther from the interests of teachers than FNEEQ, an organization whose President wants to abolish our jobs!

FAC was created on the principal that empowering local unions means local unions receive a larger share of the dues revenue. There is no umbrella organization over FAC; all the money we send FAC goes to pay four secretaries and a handful of teacher-unionists never more than four years away from the classroom, still in touch with the priorities of real teachers; none of it goes to career activists espousing the cause-de-jour and spending beach time in Havana.

Note also the extreme difficulty of disaffiliation from FNEEQ if we change our mind in the future. Unlike FAC which defers to the local union's constitution (DTU requires a simple majority of the people voting to disaffiliate), FNEEQ requires a majority of the dues-paying membership to vote to disaffiliate. This would mean that here, with 800 teachers, more than 400 Dawson teachers would need to vote to get out of that Federation. Since we rarely get more than 200 teachers participating in any referendum vote, this implies that our entry into FNEEQ would be like our entry into Jacques Parizeau's referendum lobster trap: easy entry, no exit.

This decision seems to us to be a no-brainer. Why would we vote to pay more dues to an undemocratic less responsive federation run by ideologues instead of sticking with and improving the democratic federation that we ourselves helped to create 20 years ago?

The ADR-No9 Proposed an Article from a Member of The DTU Executive titled “8 reasons why I’ll be voting to stay in FAC”

By: Jocelyn Guindon, Geography

I wish to express my profound disappointment at the position presented in that article. Associating FNEEQ-CSN to a sectarian FRENCH only movement is not only to ignore reality but it is to revert to the fear tactics used by Alliance Quebec in its darkest days. I feel the writer has placed me and all our francophone colleagues with the OTHERS and, that in the author’s vision of modern Quebec, we do not belong in the Dawson community and worse, the Dawson community does not belong to Quebec society. The use of the language issue (which is a non issue in my mind) undermines what has attracted me to Dawson in the first place: its diversity and openness. The use of the linguistic position of FNEEQ-CSN in a partial and out of context fashion undermines one of our College most valuable quality.

Fact

Over the last few years FAC has lost about 20% of its membership with the disaffiliation of the Cégep de Valleyfield and Cégep Lionel Groulx. This loss of members has already had an impact:

- on services (with the elimination of services to non-permanent teachers, the release time for the non-permanent elected FAC representative and a position in pedagogy and information)
- our dwindling numbers will have an impact on our negotiation position with the partie patronale for the renewal of our collective agreement
- and this will also affect the renegotiation of our collective insurance package.

Fact

As a group we may very well decide to remain in FAC but does that mean that the situation will stabilize? I have strong doubts about this. I personally know of 3 other FAC Cégeps where discussions are under way for disaffiliation and reaffiliation with either FEC or FNEEQ. There is a strong possibility that we will have to face again the decision of affiliation with FNEEQ in 2, 4, 5 years if FAC is unable not only to retain its unions but also to attract new ones (which it has not done in many years).

I would argue that the time to leave is now. Not only is the negotiation of a new collective agreement just around the corner but it also is preferable to leave on our own terms instead of having to leave because the Fédération autonome collegiale has collapsed.