



## BULLETIN EXPRESS

GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES ITS DRAFT LEGISLATION  
(projet de loi) AND ATTACKS DIRECTLY THE  
FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT-TO-STRIKE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Last Friday April the 12th, the government met with the 19 unions comprising the «Coalition» in Montreal, in order to inform them about its draft legislation on the negotiations in the public and parapublic sectors (projet de loi sur le régime de négociation du secteur public et parapublic) which will be presented to the Québec National Assembly shortly. Premier Lévesque initially suggested a meeting with a limited delegation from the Coalition leaving the impression that the government is open to discussion. Upon arrival at the premier's office the delegates were confronted with complete and numbered copies of the "projet de loi". Realizing that the session would be one of information only, the 34 union delegates insisted that all be present at this meeting. Lévesque accepted their demand. The CSN delegation was composed of Gérald Larose, Monique Simard, Normand Brouillet and the president of the 4 CSN federations, including the president of FNEEQ, Rose Pellerin. The government side included René Lévesque, Michel Clair, Pierre-Marc Johnson, Guy Chevrette, Francine Lalonde and Michel Leduc as well as the government advisors Jean-François Munn, Louis Bernard and Martine Tremblay. Once again, Bérubé was absent.

What did Lévesque and Clair had to say? Certain newspapers on the week-end were talking about "openings". It is a question of interpretation...

### A "symbolic" right to strike

The principal point to note clearly is that the government wishes to dramatically reduce the right to strike. Thus within the entire Social Affairs sector, according to the premier's words the right to strike is to be reduced to a symbolic level. The essential services will be subjected, in terms both of numbers and ratios, to percentages fixed in the law. In old age homes, specialized hospital centres, regional hospital centres, psychiatric centres, etc., essential services will include at least 90% of the workers (they also want to abolish the utilization of management for essential services). Essential services will cover 80% of the working personnel in the hospital of short-time convalescence, 60% in the CLSC's and 55% in the social services centres. Furthermore (!) the lists of essential services for each union will have to be approved by the essential services Council. Finally, in the event of a labour conflict, the Council will have the power to modify the content of the lists as its decisions will be equivalent in weight to those of the Superior Court (thus any contravention will also be equivalent to contempt of Court). The government does not seem to be willing to consider the work done by FAS (Social Affairs Federation)-on a syndical code of ethics (during a strike) which will be voted by the union in June- as too time consuming.

In the education sector, the right to strike on local negotiations is banned. In the CEGEP sector local negotiations will include at least 25 items.

### Negotiations on salaries for the 1st year

Another important point which Lévesque announced was his intention to grant the right to strike in the first year of a three-years contract negotiations on salaries. The other two years will be decreed according to the mechanisms stipulated in the draft legislation (see document INFO-FNEEQ volume 3 no. 1, entitled "An attempt to turn the decrees into a permanent system.") This may possibly be seen as a sort of improvement but considering what became of the right to strike, this "concession" is all too relative. Furthermore the financial burden of a strike for the 1st year may well prove too costly given the fact that the decreed salary levels of the other 2 years won't be known in advance.

### Other modifications

The "projet de loi" contains some other modifications compared to the preliminary project-law :

- the composition of the Salary research Institute (Institut de recherche sur la rémunération) increases from 13 to 19 members to include:
  - 2 vice-presidents
  - 2 union members of the private sector
  - 2 employer members of the private sector

This confirms our concerns on the important implications these new rules of the game will have, not only on the public sector but on the entire labour force in Québec.

- The mandate of this Institute is broadened: in addition to comparative studies between salaries in the public and private sectors, it would be empowered to carry out studies among different job types or among different groups of workers in Québec.
- The salaries of public corporations such as RIO, Hydro-Québec, SAQ, SQ, etc. will be subjected to the same mechanisms as ours. The same will apply to the Public service sector. We should note that the new law governing the public service sector has suspended the right to negotiate certain important normative clauses.
- decentralization:  
the special "régime" for the teachers (elementary-secondary-College) announced on March 15th is confirmed. We will be the only ones together with the professionals to have been subjected to local negotiations (we remind! Without the right to strike). The list of the items is in the law, and it is the same with the list in the "avant-projet" given some modifications (See INFO-FNEEQ vol.3 no. 2 "A study of Annex A") and it provides no more the possibility of negotiating certain items on the list provincially if there were an agreement among the parties (as it was the case in the "avant-projet").

As for the support staff (CEGEPs and school commissions), the school professionals and the social affairs sector, the law provides for local arrangements on issues negotiated provincially.

This draft legislation will be finalized at the Council of Ministers meeting of this week or will be submitted to the National Assembly towards the end of April - beginning of May. According to Lévesque, adherence to this time table is essential as the mandate of the government is drawing to an end.

It is evident that there is little difference between the "avant-projet" and the announced draft legislation. The government is pushing ahead with its objectives:

- Desynchronization of the negotiations
- Introduction of permanent negotiations
- Decentralization
- Cutting down the negotiability of the salaries
- Cutting down the right to strike

It is dividing the different union groups in the public sector by its new rules, and reduces our potential mobilizing power. By its attack on our capability to negotiate decent working conditions it takes away much of our capacity to do a decent job and to provide an adequate service to a population much in need. By its attack on the public sector it drastically reduces the capacity of the private sector- an already weakened sector- to negotiate decent working conditions.

We can not let this government continue undermining the acquired rights of the workers in Québec. Today it finds itself in the midst of a pre-election period and the situation in the National Assembly is fragile. This is why we should nor forget our "rendez-vous" on the 20th of April in Québec. The stakes are very high for ALL OF US.

Its significance becomes all that more acute at this moment when hiring proposals and workleads are being submitted for next year, when more and more teachers lose their jobs, when many others become MEDs and when classes become more crowded. **THERE IS NO CREDIBILITY LEFT IN THIS GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE TO MAKE IT RETREAT!**

To defend our right  
to negotiate!



Saturday  
April 20th  
Québec...  
I'll be there

