

# The Women's Network



## A day in the life...

### February, 1985.

**6:00 a.m.**, Thursday. Still warm and cozy under the covers, I hear the radio-alarm go off with an energetic wake-up song.

— "I've got to get up or I'll be late".

**6:05 a.m.** "Oh, no. It's true! I really have to get up".

For the next 35-40 minutes the paths from the bedroom to the bathroom, the bathroom to the kitchen and the kitchen to the bedroom are constantly in use according to the needs and moods of each of us.

I wash and dress and start putting on my make-up.

— "Oh, good morning, E...! How are you?"

(I cheerily say to my oldest daughter.)

— "Hello!..."

— (Oops! She's sure got up on the wrong side of the bed. Guess I'd better ignore her for now). I run to

the kitchen, grind the coffee, set the table and then go back to putting my make-up on.

— (Hey, the T.V. is on!)

— "I...", I call to my youngest, "turn off that T.V. You know you're not allowed to have it on in the morning!"

— "An, just for a minute?"

— "No, turn it off right now!"

— "Hmph! Sure is boring around here!"

**6:20** I rush back to the kitchen, make some orange juice and wipe up the glass of milk that was spilled...

— "Who spilled the milk?"

— "Not me..."

— "Not me..."

— "..."

— "Of course, it spilled by itself!"

The radio announces, "It is..."

**6:40** Already? Hurry up! I've got to get dressed.

Back to the bedroom, back to the kitchen... Hurry!

I get stopped on the stairway.

— "Can you sign my test?"

— "Not this morning, C..."

— "Oh, but you've got to. It's *really* important. The teacher said that anybody, who doesn't bring it back will get a detention".

— "Alright. O.K. Get me a pen".

**6:50** Back to the kitchen. I put two pieces of toast in the toaster and pour myself a cup of coffee.

In between bites I spot the test to be signed on the table... with a mark of 40%. I call the guilty party but in vain. Too bad, I sign it and promise myself that I'll look into it this evening.

Back to the bathroom where I brush my teeth and put a rebellious curl back in place. Finally, I'm ready. From the kitchen I hear the beginning of a fight over the peanut butter jar.

**7:10** — "He started it".

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## Feminist pedagogy

On November the 1st and 2nd, the topic of feminist pedagogy will be on the agenda at FNEEQ, no matter what is happening in negotiations! Last year we "timidly" tackled this issue in our document "Finding a job is tough..." now we would like to go a little further in our reflection at the next session of the **WOMEN'S NETWORK**.

Some of the questions to be considered are:

- *What is the best way of getting some feminist content in our courses? Is it easier in 1985 to openly call ourselves feminists? Is it strategically better to create certain feminist courses or to try to*

*integrate a feminist point of view in all courses? Has feminism been more "internalized" by our students now or are we going backwards?*

- *Are female teacher and students satisfied with traditional authoritarian teaching methods? Have we developed alternatives which better meet our needs?*
- *What are we doing to get female students in Science and Technology programmes more involved? What approaches have we developed to help students learn?*

In the framework of this session, we have contacted women teachers

who have helped to advance this issue, either on the theoretical or organizational level:

- Greta NEMIROFF, Director of the Dawson New School, author of numerous articles on the subject;
- Shirley PETTIFER, Co-ordinator of Women's Studies at Vanier, Ste. Croix Campus;
- Lesley LEE, Ex-president of the C.S.N. Women's Committee, who has worked on the topic of "Women & Science".

All FNEEQ women, whether they teach at the high school, college or university level, are invited to this session.

We hope that you will come and share your experiences, your thoughts and your questions.

Montreal, September 15, 1985.  
To the FNEEQ Women's Committee,

Dear Friends;

Having been away for quite awhile, I've lost touch with what women in Quebec are doing. Recently I hear about your committee on the radio and I'd like to know more about you. How long has the committee existed and what has it done? What are you working on now? I'd also like to know if you are against men. How is your committee chosen and do you represent all of the women in your federation? What happens if the women take different positions than the Federation does? I've also heard that the way that you negotiate is being radically changed. What does this mean? And I've heard a lot about "affirmative action" and wondered what your committee is doing about it.

I hope that you can respond as quickly as possible.

Yours Truly,  
Maureen

lic sector negotiations and are presently preparing for another. The private school and university unions in our Federation will also be negotiating this year. I'll talk about negotiations a bit later. At the moment our Committee is made up of 8 women who are CEGEP teachers or hourly-paid university teachers. We hope to soon add a member from the private schools. Rose Pellerin, the president of the Federation, and Madeleine Massé, the negotiator on women's issues, are also a part of the Committee. As a committee we have the right to speak at any meeting and to make recommendations on matters that concern women. If the positions of the Committee differ from the positions of other decision-making bodies, we have the right to argue our point of view until a final decision has been made.

### Who we represent

We don't have the pretention to claim to represent all of the women of the Federation, but the dossiers that we defend do concern all of them. We may have different experiences and different perceptions of things like sexual harassment or systematic discrimination, but objectively, they do affect all women. To show the specific problems that women have in life, and especially at work, is one of the principal reasons that Women's Committees exist in a union organization. This year our priorities are to strengthen the support for the affirmative set in dossier and to build or consolidate women's network in the non-Cegep locals. As for the changes in the public and parapublic negotiating regime, I won't discuss the details. The CSN and FNEEQ have already published documents that explain it very fully.

### Women's Working Conditions in Education and the Public Sector are at Stake

One thing for sure, our working conditions will be drastically

## My Dear Friend,

What a surprise to receive your letter and to be asked if we are against men. Before answering that question, I'd like to answer some of your other questions about our committee. Then I'll tell you about the changes to the negotiating regime, and how it will affect women workers in the public sector, and what we're doing about affirmative action. Hopefully you'll be able to judge for yourself if we're against men!

### The Beginning of the Committee

The FNEEQ Women's Committee has existed since June 1982. It was formed to lessen the isolation felt by many women in FNEEQ and to create and develop contacts between women, to fight for women's issues and support, or help to set up, Women's Committees at the local unions. From the beginning, the Committee thought that it was important to not be

totally preoccupied with just negotiations but to fight all kinds of discrimination against women. A very big task, we have set ourselves! But although there is a lot left to do, we have managed to fulfill some of these initial goals.

In listing our accomplishments, I'm afraid that I may forget some of them; but anyway, let me underline some: we have set up a Women's Network where women of the Federation can meet to discuss various situations and decide what to do about them; we've worked to sensitize people about the phenomena of sexual harassment; we've done a questionnaire on female FNEEQ members; published a booklet on affirmative action; and we have a regular newsletter called the Women's Network.

### Our Priorities

We have also held a special Federal Council meeting on women's questions. We have been involved in one set of pub-

affected by it. As you probably know, the majority of public and para-public workers are women. I don't think that it could be going to far to say that, in the short run, the whole question of women's working conditions are at stake and, in the long run, their right to a decent job whose value is fully recognized. It's especially this last point that I'd like to talk to you about and I hope you'll forgive me if I try to do it briefly.

Bill 37 institutes a mechanism to compare the remuneration in the private sector to that in the public and parapublic sectors. Our salaries will be "negotiated" on the basis of these comparisons. For us, this comparison is very dubious for many reasons. The very fact of making these comparisons presupposes that such comparisons for example between salaries, direct and indirect fringe benefits like pensions, etc.) are appropriate. But for women, the private sector is characterized by low salaries, precarious jobs, salary discrimination based on sex (men are better paid), a low rate of unionization, fewer parental rights, etc. For example, the salary of a secretary in a CEGEP will be compared to that of a secretary in a private company. **Now you know how much work in a "feminine sector" (the well-known female job ghettos) is undervalued. In past negotiations we have managed to correct, at least a bit, some of the salary discrimination. Now the government wants to go backwards.**

Another problem with comparisons is the fact that almost half of the public sector employees work in jobs that, according to the Treasury Board, are not comparable to any private sector jobs. These are the jobs where the state is the only employer or at least the only major employer; as in the case of teachers, nurses, and nurses'aides. Except in the case of CEGEP teachers, all of these

jobs can be classified as female "ghettos". They will be compared to other jobs on the basis of some past relation or of common characteristics that they present. Who's to say that the government won't underestimate the value of work that is done by women. After all, this is a characteristic of jobs done mainly by women.

As for finding "comparable" jobs, to be really accurate the job descriptions would have to be identical or a whole study done to establish "equal value". There are other methodological problems but the most important one is the under-valuation of women's jobs-especially in the private sector where the gap between men's and women's wages is even bigger. Also very serious is the government's desire to use the private sector for comparisons as though the female workers of this sector have any chance to demand better conditions. In most cases, this just isn't possible because they are isolated and few of them are in unions.

**Another of the aspects of Bill 37 is especially going to affect women. Negotiations will take place sector by sector which will lead to a fragmentation of the power to negotiate and no doubt, a narrowing of what is negotiated. You know how much unionization in the public and para-public sectors helped women workers. Just think of maternity leaves where we are paid and can accumulate seniority. Our think of areas where we have made some inroads but are still fighting for real gains: like sexual harassment, affirmative action and daycare. These all affect the lives of women who work outside the home. Now we know that in this area, the public sector has been like a locomotive-winning gains that were later extended to the private sector. The decentralization of negotiations will weaken our power to negotiate and limit our**

**demands. Many of them, like parental rights, have up until now, been negotiated at the national level by several areas at once. If we are negotiating separately would we see some of these gains given up? Would it be more difficult to keep them off the negotiating table in federations like FNEEQ, where women are in a minority and most are past the age of bearing children? Under the new system women in the public sector will lose part of their "rapport de force" and their ability to win social demands for all female workers will be severely limited.**

Of course the whole question of the new law is very complicated and I've just tried to mention a few things that will especially affect women. If you are interested in more details or a broader analysis, there have been other documents published that give a much broader picture. (Just call us and we'll make sure that you get them.)

Lucie

**Note:** For space reasons, this letter will be continued in the next issue.

### GET INVOLVED!

Do you have an interesting experience or article to share? A feminist analysis or point of view to offer? Or perhaps you've seen a film, participated in an activity or read a book that you'd like to recommend to other women?

Don't hesitate! Send your articles to the FNEEQ WOMEN'S COMMITTEE for the next issue of the WOMEN'S NETWORK BULLETIN. We are counting on your participation to make the bulletin a publication that reflects all of our interests.

Articles should be sent to the WOMEN'S COMMITTEE, attention: Janice Paquette, 1601 de Lorimier ave., Montreal, P.Q. H2K 4M5.

## • A day

- "I had it first".
- "Go see your father. I have to leave now".

After kisses and goodbyes all round, I'm out on the balcony. Damn! I forgot the student's papers. I go back in the house, grab the papers in question and start the car.

**7:15 a.m.** I mentally list all of the things that I have to remember.

- Don't forget to talk about the test.

— See E..., and find out what's wrong.

- Encourage C to practise his piano.

— Don't forget to make a dentist appointment. I said she thinks she has a cavity and along the whole route, which I drive like a sleep-walker, my thoughts turn to my day on "stage..."

— I have to talk to N., she has a problem communicating with her clients...

— How come I always see S. in the corridor or at the nurse's station? She's never around her clients.

— B... told me that he's in love with Julie but he's going to have to come down to earth before the "stage" finishes.

**7:25 a.m.** I park, go down the stairs and through the corridors to the cloakroom; then back to the stairs and go up four floors to the unit.

**7:35 a.m.** I wish the night shift good morning and we exchange information.

- "A heavy night"?
- It was quiet until 2, but after that it never stopped! An emergency caesarean, a delivery that..., and two..."
- "Are there any students to day?"
- "Yes"
- "The day shift is luck; there's lots of work".

(Hmm. Here's one that appreciates the students).

I take a quick look at the card index, the dossiers of the clients who are assigned to the students and already the students are arriving with the personnel on the day shift.

**7:50 a.m.** The night's report is given.

- (Everyone is there except 2...; what in the world are they doing?)
- "Your students are late this morning?"

(It's the unit director. Oh boy the day is starting off great. What in the world are they doing?)

**8:05 a.m.** I go to see N. in room 232 (who's on intravenous) and B. in room 264. (Her blood pressure is 180/120; what's going on? I'll have to check that...).

- I check T's medicine.
- "What are you giving your patient?"

## Women's Committee '85-'86

Names	Concerns	Release-Time (Fall-85)
BOIVIN, Lise CEGEP ST-JEROME Work: (514) 436-1580 Local 231	• co-ordination of the Women's Network	0.5
CÔTÉ, Denyse Union of hourly-paid workers at UQAM 527-4924	• Women in the universities	0.2
LAMBERT, Lucie DAWSON COLLEGE 273-2238	• consolidation of the Network	—
PAQUETTE, Janice VANIER COLLEGE Work: 744-7053	• co-ordination of the bulletin "Women's Network"	0.2
PIROTTE, Nadine	• translation • Organization of sessions • new projects	—

### The following are "attached" to the Women's Committee:

MASSE, Madeleine	• our negotiator
PELLERIN, Rose	• political responsibility for the Women's Committee
PEPIN, Marie	• employee responsible for information

### Office hours:

For the Women's Committee at FNEEQ: Tuesday a.m., Wednesday, p.m., Thursday and Friday, all day. Don't hesitate to contact us at: (514) 598-2219. There are still two positions to fill. One of these members should come from the private sector. Anyone interested?

- "A pill... it's parolol".
- Do you know its composition and side-effects?"
- "Uh, no".
- "Look it up and I'll come back".
- I go to see F., whom I had sent to the delivery room.
- "How's it going? Did you hear the night shift's report"?
- "Yes, there should be a delivery in about an hour. I saw the nurse who's handling it and everything is going well".
- "Great, I'm going back to maternity to join the others but if you need me, just call me, O.K."?
- I go back and check the medicine.
- "What is the prescription"?
- "One capsule".
- "Are you sure? Look at it; it's a half..."
- "Oh"
- 8:15 a.m.** "Oh, there you are! My two latecomers."
- "We missed the bus".
- "Alright. Go and see N. I asked him to take your vital signs".
- "Everybody to the

**8:30** And that's the way my teaching day goes. It's the student who's learning; it's the client to satisfy and it's the unit personnel who all make up part of daily life during the "stages". There's no question of having a break, may be

10 minutes in the morning between completing a client's sponge bath in bed or demonstrating to a student the correct way to position the baby at the breast during breast-feeding so that it nurses properly. It's also the student, who I meet on the run, with whom I'm going to discuss his/her plans for patient-care and see if he/she really has some problems communicating with clients. Or it's listening to this other student, who comes to me with tears in his/her eyes, to tell me how fantastic it was to be involved in the delivery of a child.

During the "stage", you're always racing around. And at the end of a stage, you're like an exhausted runner after a race.

It's at these moments that I dream of "regular" teaching. Having 12 or 15 periods of courses a week rather than 24 to 32 hours a week; working from 9 to 5 rather than from 7:30 to 4:30 with an hour or more of marking or research every night.

So, why do I continue?

Because...

Because I love it. There is something in the work that I do that cannot be explained rationally, you have to live it to understand it.

**Hélène BOISSONNEAULT,**  
Nursing teacher at  
CEGEP LIMOULOU