

Vol. 3 - No. 1 October 1986

Women's Network
Newsletter

Réseau

FNEEQ Women's Committee



LET'S SHOW OUR FACES AND TAKE OUR PLACE

For sale! Do we have a buyer? We have here for sale ladies, a slice of maternity leave: 8 weeks paid at two-thirds of your salary. You'd prefer something else? Well, here's a nice 20 week maternity leave... partially paid. This offer doesn't interest you either? You might then want to invest in a regular but unpredictable layoff. This will put spice in your life! This summer you will certainly be unemployed and perhaps they'll even cut off your unemployment benefits! Anything to satisfy a customer.

Don't be enslaved by your work. Get more free time. Don't let yourself get bogged down in the same old routine. Uncertain course availability, the devaluation of your academic field, fluctuations in student enrollment, intellectual and professional fads, employer high-handedness, your academic qualifications that the employer may or may not recognize, further professional studies that you have to do entirely at your own cost... all that will certainly keep you on your toes!

We are the first generation of women to have massively entered university and there are more female part-time university lecturers than there are female professors: 30% of the part-time lecturers are women while only 17% of professors are. Money is of no importance to us, right? We can survive on nothing. After all, we've been doing it for years. For us, it's the prestige that's important! We're educating the next generation of academics, so why bother worrying about material conditions? Really, who needs an office to work in? It's more fun to work in the bus, at home or in the cafeteria. A regular secretarial service? Who needs it? Certainly not us "self-made women" who worked our... heads off to get our diplomas. We don't bother with such luxuries. We're like the ghost teachers of academia, working away

in the dark. And we hear a constant refrain. We don't cost a lot of money; our work is not recognized and so remains invisible; we don't have any institutional support but, so what? We know how to survive through thick and thin. At Laval University, language teachers (the majority women) and part-time lecturers, at the University of Quebec (in Rimouski, Montreal and Chicoutimi) and at the University of Montreal, there are over 1,800 of us affiliated with FNEEQ — or over 6,000 if we include our male colleagues. It is time to get to know each other and to be recognized!

Our living and working conditions are bad and it is often difficult to communicate with each other since it is difficult to establish and maintain lines of communication. How can we reach one another when we don't share the same working spaces or schedules? When we share no administrative ties? How do we contact those of us who have to deal with various types of work contracts? Or those of us who have parental responsibilities and are thus constantly racing around juggling time, energy and money. Or those of us who didn't get any courses this semester?

At the same time, we have had real victories. It wasn't so long ago that everyone thought that it would be impossible for a part-time worker — a contract worker at that! — to benefit from a maternity leave. And didn't we succeed in getting the text of our collective agreements feminized?

Didn't we succeed in getting a release-time policy that is better suited to our needs? And aren't we very present in our union at the local and federation level? Who are we? What are our experiences, what do we want? The pages of the Women's Network Newsletter are open to you.

Let's celebrate our presence!

Du 14 au 17 octobre 1986, semaine de visibilité des chargé-e-s de cours.

WHAT DO WOMEN WANT?

EDITORIAL

Many of us are still affected by the anti-public sector publicity campaign that the government conducted during the last round of negotiations. This campaign was designed to convince people that public sector workers were "fat cats", overpaid and underworked. Seldom did the government propaganda mention that it was attacking a group which is **mainly** made up of women.

Somehow the government has managed to pretend to be serving the public interest in general while portraying the unions as a "special interest" group which cares only for narrow interests in the style of business unionism. If we look at our demands, this is clearly not true since so many of our demands will have a broader social impact. The right to negotiate salaries is a fundamental right. Also, after the salary cuts that we suffered in 1983, our salary demands are very reasonable. Furthermore, let's not forget that the salary demand also includes some elementary social justice! Lower paid workers will get higher percentage increases to continue the Common Front tradition of trying to lower the gap between higher and lower paid workers (the majority of whom tend to be women). Also, our salary demand takes into account our wish to end salary discrimination by sex.

Many of our demands like the ones on workload and job security clearly have a social dimension. Anyone concerned about the quality of education that is offered to our young people has to be concerned with the teacher's workload. As for job security, is it just to expect the non-tenured people to work year after year, being laid-off every June and re-hired every August? Is it fair to expect "surplus" teachers to live with the uncertainty of never knowing what courses they will teach or what pay they'll get? And can we expect these people to continue to provide a quality education with little time to plan their courses? Obviously these demands go beyond individual interests to affect broader questions. And the demands in the women's dossier are even more obviously tied to important social concerns.

The two relatively new demands in this round that especially concern women are the demands on sexual harassment and affirmative action. The majority of FNEEQ members in the cegep's will not gain *strictly* as individuals if we win these demands. In fact, these demands go far beyond purely personal interests and are crucial if we want to create an atmosphere of fairness now and for the future.

Sexual harassment may mean that some female students drop out of school or feel that they have to trade sexual favours for marks. It may mean that some students, teachers or support staff find their lives at school very uncomfortable. Through our collective agreement we hope to put a stop to this by educating our members about the problem and by forcing employers to take their responsibility for making workplaces safe.

With an affirmative action programme more of our female students would have female role models to show them that women can and do enter all fields in the labour force. The programme would at least make a start to correct the systemic discrimination that women have suffered in many fields. It would also open up some jobs to women who have studied in non-traditional areas but who still face fairly direct discrimination in the labour force.

Neither of these demands will change the world tomorrow morning if we win them. However both of them reflect our social concerns as educators and as human beings. Do we want a world where girls growing up never have to face sexual harassment, where they have the same chance as their brothers for the well-paid, rewarding jobs?

So if you look at our demands from the standpoint of social concerns, it is obvious that they are not narrow corporatist demands. In the present context, of course, they are not going to be easy to win either. How much we gain will depend on how willing we are to fight for them.

WHAT ABOUT DAYCARE?

1,600 workers from 120 CSN daycare locals are demanding a province-wide central table at which to negotiate their working conditions. Presently daycare workers earn between \$4 and \$12 an hour and have different working conditions and tasks according to which establishment that they work in.

They want a province-wide central table in order to establish uniform working conditions in all matters that have a monetary impact. By what logic can we justify huge salary differences for doing the same job? And what about the meagre two weeks of annual vacation? Or the total absence of pedagogical days?

At the same time, we must be clear about one thing. The desire to have a central negotiating table to negotiate certain clauses does not negate the role of the parents. It was the involvement of parents which led to the establishment of daycare centres and they must continue to be involved in the development of the centres. On a social and pedagogical level the users of the centres must still be involved.

Improving the working conditions in daycares means improving the living conditions in which our young children grow day by day. Do we consider the education of little children important enough to fight for better working conditions for the people who care for them on a daily basis?

A FAIR SHARE!

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

35% before the decree and 30% now, what will be the percentage of women teachers in the cegep tomorrow? And what disciplines will women be teaching? Our demand for an affirmative action programme is designed to address the fact that women are under-represented as teachers in the cegeps and unequally distributed by discipline. However, the affirmative action demand concerns not only women's right to work but also the kind of future society that we want to help create. We envisage a future where women have the right to an education which is free of all sexist prejudice, and where there are as many female as male models. We no longer wish to help reproduce the systemic discrimination that we have denounced.

And yet, the administrators in the Federation of cegep and in the government tell us that there is no problem, that there are enough women in the cegep.

What is the percentage of women in your school? Do you know the details of our affirmative action demand?

SALARY DISCRIMINATION

An important aspect of our salary demand concerns correcting salary discrimination between men and women, a flagrant injustice which still exists, even though it is against the Human Rights Law. We propose to correct the salary discrimination suffered by certain women by fixing their salaries at the same level as men who have jobs of equal value. The principle of equal value must be established on the basis of the function of the jobs rather than by how similar the actual tasks are. The human rights legislation suggests four criteria which could serve as a basis for comparison: qualifications, effort required, responsibilities and working conditions.

WHERE DO WE FIND SALARY DISCRIMINATION?

So far, we have identified 37 job titles where there is salary discrimination based on sex in the following groups of public sector workers: professionals, office workers and maintenance and service workers.

We must maintain our demand for equal pay for work of equal value. There is no possible justification for continuing salary discrimination based on sex in the Quebec public sector.

Are there women at your school who are making less money because they are women???

PARENTAL RIGHTS

This dossier has advanced the most of any negotiating dossier. We are demanding some improvements in parental leave; in particular we want to make the paid maternity leave and other leaves in this chapter of the Collective Agreement available to all teachers independent of their employment status. We also want to correct a certain number of problems that we've had with applying the articles on parental rights.

Let's look at the principal questions where there has been an agreement or which are still under discussion after the government's counter proposal of August 22.

The government has not agreed to extend maternity rights to all workers-temporary, occasional, replacement or contact workers. This demand is extremely important for people who do not have full-time permanent jobs.

The government has partially accepted the demand that a worker who gets pregnant when she is on a full or part-time unpaid parental leave has a right to compensation for 10 or 20 weeks.

The government is also willing to put a clause in the collective agreement which explicitly states that an employee has a right to apply for and get a job which is posted while she is on the paid maternity leave or any other leave in this chapter.

Our original demand on preventative leave did not get a favourable response from the other side, so on July 3 the CCNSP deposited a counter proposition. This counter proposal says that a women who must change jobs because of a danger during pregnancy would be able to switch jobs on a temporary basis with another employee-if the other employee agrees. Both would conserve the rights and privileges of their original posts. Obviously this disposition would apply only if both parties concerned had the normal qualifications for the respective jobs.

NEXT PAGE 4

And about sexual harassment...

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Among other demands in the proposed collective agreement for the cegeps, we find a specific demand concerning sexual harassment. This union demand is based on five parts: a definition in the collective agreement, the employer's responsibility to ensure that the workplace is free of harassment (ensuring the psychological and physical integrity of employees, working areas and conditions that are adequate etc.), forbidding the production of sexist material, the union obtaining the right to study and investigate the measures taken to assure the physical and psychological integrity as well as the setting aside of one working day a year to educate employees about the problem. A parity committee would be formed to look into complaints.

WHY A DEFINITION IN THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT?

Defining sexual harassment is already quite a feat. You have to be careful that a simple definition doesn't become too narrow. Where does sexual harassment begin? How far should the definition go? How is harassment different from trying to pick someone up, from complimenting someone, from being nice to someone, etc.? A definition in the Collective Agreement can't respond to all of the possible nuances involved. The objective is the recognition that sexual harassment exists and that it is a problem. This is an important step in our fight since a problem must be recognized as such before it can be dealt with effectively.

WHAT IS THE EMPLOYER'S RESPONSIBILITY?

Sexual harassment is not just a union topic but a social problem. Employers can and should make sure that the workplace discourages such behaviour. After all, it is the employer who is responsible for the laying out of such areas as parking lots, stairways, etc. and so it is up to them to arrange such areas in a way that will discourage harassers. Look around your school area. Do you feel safe going to your car after classes? Do you feel

safe in the hallways, the stairways, the bathrooms etc. when the school seems deserted?

THE RIGHT TO INVESTIGATE

As for the union's right to investigate conditions leading to sexual harassment, it is not the union's role to play detective nor to act as a judge and punish harassers. However, it is the union's job to make sure that the physical and psychological integrity of our members is assured.

WHY INFORMATION DAYS?

There are many questions posed by the problem of sexual harassment. It is a behaviour that we have to stop and to stop it takes education. Many of the men with whom we work harass women on a regular basis-female teachers, students, support staff etc. and feel quite at home with their attitudes, without realising the results of their behaviour. Is this a product of a male civilization? of a sexist education? or of a social model where men see the right to harass women as an "acquired right"?

And what about the other side of the question? As women in our society, haven't we been whistled at since we were very young, seen ourselves undressed by men's eyes, etc.? Have we learned to ignore such things or even to consider them as normal just because we are women? Is our level of tolerance for such behaviour too high?

Dealing with sexual harassment is a question of fundamental social education. Since we work in educational institutions, it is of vital importance that men and women are educated in a non-sexist manner. Under these circumstances, setting aside one day a year for male and female teachers to get together and think about the inequalities based on the criteria of sex does not seem like too much to ask.

PARENTAL RIGHTS

At the moment, if a worker who regularly works on video display terminals can't be switched to another job, she gets a special leave until the birth of the child. An employee who does not have the right to get compensation from the CSST (Health and Safety Commission) receives an equivalent amount from her employer. In an important step backward, the government is refusing to assure the cost of such measures.

Leaves for visiting the doctor during pregnancy already exist in the parental leave chapter. We are demanding that these leaves not be taken out of the sick bank and should not result in any loss of salary or rights. The government has thrown out this demand!

The government has accepted that during the full or part-time leave without pay after the maternity leave, a teacher can change the full-time leave to a part-time leave or vice versa with a written request.

Are there any problems with maternity leaves at your school?

Pro Choice Quebec.

OCTOBER 18 CEGEP de Ste-Therese at 13H30.

A mock trial where we'll hear the testimony of women who have lived various experiences.