

♀ Network



A network? (Or, the story of solidarity...)

Last year in the report on the final round of CEGEP negotiations, we discussed and clarified the purpose of the Network. Now, with a new round of CEGEP negotiations underway, and especially after the events that marked the Federation during the past year, we think it essential to once again tell the women of the Federation about the Network and how it functions.

The Network is an extremely important vehicle for women. It has enabled us to develop and express our specific points of view, as well as our demands and commonalities. But like all "unofficial" bodies whose existence depends on how conscious their members are of their condition, the Network is fragile. That is why we are encouraging women to attend and participate in the meetings of the Network, since it is here that we develop policies and discuss the major issues that need to be addressed.

Over the years we have used different means to ensure that the Network remain strong and continue to advance the cause of women. Firstly, we have helped organize, and continue to support, local women's committees. While almost all CEGEPs have such committees, there are only a few at the university level and none at all in the private sector. All the educational institutions, for their part, have at least a representative who maintains close and regular telephone contact between the Federation and women in the locals. Also, let us not forget the Network Bulletin which, because of budgetary cut-backs, is unfortunately only published twice a year.

The FNEEQ Women's Committee is made up of six women. We try to ensure representation from the following groups: four representatives from the CEGEPs, one representative from the private sector and one from among hourly-paid professors. The Committee receives its mandate from and is accountable to the Network, but has a leadership role to play as well. The Committee must also maintain a certain autonomy and a true political independence, making sure the needs of women remain its main focus.

WHAT IS THE NETWORK?

The Network is women getting together to discuss and consider the problems they face as teachers, workers and women. It is a feminist network, one in which the women of the Federation work in solidarity with other women, participating in their struggles in a variety of ways.

Maintaining a political presence and a political dimension is a major concern of the FNEEQ Women's Committee and the Network. Constantly consulted on the different issues of concern to women, and well aware of the reality women experience, the Network does not limit itself to dealing solely with working conditions; this inevitably entails looking at living conditions in general.

Women are also questioning the validity of unionism in its present form, for example, the level of involvement required of the activist as well as union practices based on power struggles. Our goal is to find a place, one that truly suits us and makes us

feel at ease, within a structure conceived and until recently dominated by men.

Since the Network is also a union network, we also work on union demands concerning issues dear to women, such as sexual harassment, affirmative action, parental leave, etc. To transform the conditions in which women work, as well as the attitudes that prevent women from assuming their rightful place in the work force, such demands can and must be supported by the union movement.

HOW IT WORKS

The Network is open to everyone, just like a General Assembly of the women of the Federation. Procedures are kept to a minimum and we always try to do things by consensus. In the event of a ballot, each woman casts one vote regardless of how many women there may be from each union.

Consensus is our fundamental rule. Our extensive debates, where the time is taken to explore all aspects of a situation, are the best guarantee of our solidarity. Experience has taught us that when we do take our time, each participant gets the chance to speak at her own pace and is listened to with an unbiased ear. Women's issues are often extremely difficult to promote and take a great deal of energy to defend; consequently, true consensus is the best assurance of our ability to make headway with these matters. Functioning in this fashion serves a double purpose: the Network's cohesion supports and fosters individual participation, and each woman acquires a sense of responsibility because she is an active player in the decision-making process.

It must be pointed out, however, that the Network is not an authoritative decision-making body. Women have the right to take positions, to explore the issues and promote them within official channels, but they never have the last word in a given matter. Our intention was not to create a parallel structure; rather, we want to be thoroughly integrated in the existing scheme of things.

CEGEP NEGOTIATIONS

We passed some additional rules concerning the process of CEGEP negotiations. It's a well known fact that when time runs short and a decision must be reached on a major topic, it is often impossible to respect normal procedures.

Despite this, consensus remains our fundamental rule, the only one that does not give rise to tension and division. Naturally it takes time, but if the groundwork on the issues is done properly, and if the information is complete and adequate, a consensus can be reached on the basis of our common needs.

At times, however, we have no choice but to put an issue to the vote. On such occasion, we believe that "one woman, one vote" is the formula that best reflects the experiences and voice of each individual woman. In the event of a vote, a position will only be adopted by the Network if 80% of the women present approve it. This percentage may seem high, but it indicates our desire to remain as close as possible to consensus without compromising our ability to reach a decision quickly, should it be necessary.

During periods of negotiation, a negotiator is appointed by the Network to sit on the Negotiating Committee, to be sure women's demands are well-represented. This person receives her mandates from the Women's Committee and has the right to defend them before the various authorities, until a final decision is taken by the General Assemblies.

The Network can and must assist women in defining their own place in the union movement. The first steps have been taken, the legitimacy and credibility of the Network slowly but surely established. Yet, nothing can be taken for granted. Deciding on our orientations together is the best way to ensure continued strength and solidarity.

Women's Committee

WOMEN'S COMMITTEE A SHORT HISTORY OF THE POLICY RESPECTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ABUSE OF POWER

In 1980, a number of female students at CEGEP de l'Outaouais brought complaints of sexual harassment to the Women's Committee (then known as the Committee on the Status of Women or the CSW) of the Teachers' Union. It was necessary to act quickly. The Committee held informative meetings to discuss what action to take. In no time at all, a heated debate broke out between the men and women teachers. Thanks to the women's tenacity and despite the uncomfortable situations these lively discussions often produced, in 1982, the Union Assembly recognized the definition of sexual harassment as defined by the Human Rights Commission and spoke out against such behaviour. It should be noted that, at that time, no recourse or mechanism existed to deal with sexual harassment cases. Soon afterwards, a new Committee was formed which included women from every union, as well as the Director of Student Services. Certain cases were then settled through disciplinary measures taken by the administration or through confrontations with the offenders (needless to say, much to their displeasure). This Committee, however, quickly ran into problems: the Director of Student Services left the CEGEP, the women from other unions gradually lost interest, and the administration was not very open to the subject (marked chauvinism on the part of certain executives). A serious incident then arose in one of the departments. Immediately, a student movement was organized and, shortly afterwards, the students themselves went to the Academic Council demanding a policy respecting abuse of power and sexual harassment. Thus, the Academic Council formed a sub-committee for the purpose of developing a policy to be presented to and voted upon by the Academic Council before being adopted by the Board of Directors. In this way, the policy would become official College policy.

The women of the Academic Council sub-committee (some of whom were members of the Teachers' Union Women's Committee) had their work cut out for them. They nevertheless tackled the job at hand: while keeping in regular contact with the students (most complaints were spontaneous and came from women interested in the cause), the latter had to find solutions and come up with a policy that could settle situations through effective mechanisms and recourse. In addition, they participated in meetings organized by a representative from the Human Rights Commission: an ideal place to gather information and ensure support. Soon, these meetings ended and consequently, work at the sub-committee slowed down. However, the number of student complaints did not diminish.

Aware of the seriousness of the problems experienced by harassed students, the sub-committee women took up their cause again in 1986. From that time on, the sub-committee was made up of women teachers only. In the fall of 1986 and the spring of 1987, one of the subcommittee members (also a member of the Teachers' Union Women's Committee) took part in the training sessions organized by the FNEEQ. These sessions explained the phenomenon of sexual harassment and, in particular, how to develop a standard Federation policy. This was what triggered the completion of the local policy; we needed support, the advice of specialists and legal counsel; we needed the input of women from other colleges who had experienced a local policy; we needed to analyze the policies already in force. These were the tools we needed to develop accurate, fair, effective and legal mechanisms and solutions.

While the standard FNEEQ policy was being completed and presented to the spring 1988 Federal Board, we continued to sensitize our colleagues at the local level. Finally, encouraged and inspired by the creation of a standard policy, which received the unanimous approval of both our own members and our representatives from the Federal Board delegation, we drew up an initial local discussion paper: the Academic Council sub-committee finally saw the fruits of its labour. But our troubles weren't over yet. How were we to get this policy, in the

form of a discussion paper, as far as the Academic Council?

At our CEGEP, the Teachers' Union held a pre-Academic Council meeting to discuss cases. Since we had to make serious preparations to present our working document to the Academic Council, we decided to discuss it at the pre-Academic Council committee for purposes of clarification and correction and, in particular, to gain support.

The pre-Academic Council Committee worked a good twenty hours. Following long, profitable exchanges, changes (mainly format) were made. For example, the Committee Respecting Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Power became a limited Committee of three (3) people when a case had to be dealt with: this ensured confidentiality, since only a small number of people were informed about the case. The men from the pre-Academic Council Committee made this modification. Once the paper was finalized, we presented it to the Teachers' General Assembly. The debate was heated, but the numerous hours spent on discussions and corrections provided us with the ammunition we needed to defend the policy. It was adopted by the majority and, from that time on, all teachers from the Academic Council were bound by a General Assembly mandate.

The policy was presented to the Academic Council on June 3, 1988: the sub-committee members (teachers) were supported by other teachers appointed by the Meeting. In addition, as many representatives from other unions as possible had been contacted and provided with any necessary explanations.

The obvious reservations on the part of the Director of Educational Services resulted in the policy being put on hold. This was difficult to accept, since the discussion paper of the 1987-1988 Academic Council provided for a vote on such a policy. Nevertheless, we preferred to put the policy on hold and come back to it in the fall of 1988: we chose to pay the price of the postponement of our mandate in order to ensure ourselves a unanimous vote. The Director of Educational Services is at the C.A.; what would she have done if she had voted against or ab-

stained at the Academic Council? In addition to the vote for postponement, we formed a Committee of six (6) people, including the Director of Educational Services, to modify passages of the text that caused problems. Moreover, this Committee would discuss the future of the D.E.S.'s authority in of sexual harassment or abuse of power cases: the D.E.S. preferred to maintain her authority in this area.

In September 1988, this Committee of six (6) held a meeting. Finally, the D.E.S. agreed to the policy, following minor corrections. At the Academic Council of September 15, 1988 - unanimity! Furthermore, the Academic Council met with the General Manager responsible for implementing the policy. We are waiting for this policy to be voted on at the C.A. The Chairman of the Academic Council will present and explain it. She is a member of the Sub-Committee, the Women's Committee and the Committee of six (6).

Once adopted by the C.A., the CEGEP de L'OUTAOUAIS will have a policy respecting sexual harassment and abuse of power. It has been a long haul. We believed in our cause and have fought for it with great passion. All we can do now is hope that the Academic Council will recognize that, as described in the discussion paper, this policy is the product of serious reflection and an ongoing, courageous effort, and that such a policy is vital for the College.

This road is unique and reflects our local situation. Nonetheless, it is an interesting one and ideal for making the policy a College policy. Thus we were anxious to keep you informed of each new development. It must be pointed out that, from the beginning, the members of the Women's Committee were introduced and participated on the Academic Council Committee, the Academic Council Sub-Committee, the pre-Academic Council Committee, the General Assembly and the Committee of six (6). And the Chairman of the Academic Council this year is a member of the Women's Committee.

Nicole GABOURY

Representative of the Teachers' Union Women's Committee

CEGEP de L'OUTAOUAIS

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION: IN SHORT...

NEW PROGRAMS

Five (5) colleges have received grants to implement affirmative action programs in 1988-1989, namely, AHUNTSIC, JOLIETTE, JONQUIERE, SAINT-JÉROME and SHERBROOKE. Two (2) universities, MCGILL and SHERBROOKE, have also been granted funds for this purpose.

The five (5) colleges of the 1987-1988 generation tabled their diagnostic report in the Fall and are presently carrying out consultations to arrive at an action plan and policy with respect to affirmative action.

A NEW COMMITTEE

We have agreed to take part in a committee for the pre-evaluation of local programs, which was formed by the coordinators of the M.E.S.S. affirmative action programs. This committee has been given the mandate to determine the stakes and focus of the evaluation, which will serve in making recommendations to the Minister concerning the local affirmative action programs. One of the questions begging to be asked is the following: Should programs be developed on a national or local scale?

Stay tuned for more...

A NEW PROGRAM SOON?

As part of the next round of CEGEP negotiations, the demand for a national affirmative action program was accepted by an overwhelming majority at the general assemblies, minus, however, an article on job security. The contents of this program, developed by the SESSIONS-FEMMES, were recommended by the Strategy Committee and unanimously adopted by the Atelier CEGEP. This program includes the following:

- preferential hiring in those disciplines where women are underrepresented;
- the presence of women on all selection committees when there are target figures to be reached;
- implementation of a local sexual harassment policy;
- that priority be given at the local level to women with the least amount of schooling;
- the addition of ten new retraining openings reserved to women;
- a day-care centre in the workplace when justified.

Diane BRIERE
FNEEQ Women's Committee

VACATIONING WORKING TRAVELLING

Working: CSN Coordination

The members of the various CSN women's committees, namely, those of the central councils and of the federations, meet several times a year to discuss common concerns and develop orientations whenever possible. The first meeting was held on October 17, 1988.

As the discussion wound round the table to the various regions and federations, the topic that kept coming up was the difficulty of recruiting women to fill positions on the women's committees. I realized that we are not the only ones with this problem (our own committee is not complete). How do we explain this phenomenon? Demobilization? The demands placed on militants? Disillusionment? Burn-out? ...

We've all heard these reasons before, but it seems to me that as long as the debate is not opened on the conditions under which one is forced to militate, we can gripe all we want, positions on the committees will remain vacant. This will probably not be enough to solve the problem, but we have to start somewhere.

Some people are starting to question the principle of having "all-women" women's committees. Should men be allowed in?

The Fédération des Affaires Sociales debated the issue at its last congress in November 1988 and the decision was reached to keep the women's committee unmixed.

How then will we attract women to the women's committees? New blood is hard to come by everywhere.

Also, I've been told that the Central Council of Montreal has adopted a sexual harassment policy.



We should be hearing more about it at the Federal Council in December.

Travelling to Lomé, Togo: Image of the women

The image I've retained of the women of this country is that of a woman carrying all sorts of things on her head, usually with a child strapped to her back, possibly pregnant, walking with the poised gait of a model, headed towards who knows where.

When she is not walking, she can be found behind a table, at the open market or by the roadside, or next to some stand, selling her goods to who knows who.

She is everywhere and doesn't appear to be unhappy.

Wherever you go it's the same story...

I visited two classes at a secondary school, the highest level before university. The first class: concentration – Languages and Literature; the overwhelming majority of students – girls.

The second class: concentration – Mathematics and Science; the students – you guessed it: not one girl...

The principal of the school, a priest, reassured me that efforts are made to encourage girls to enter this faculty...

Rose PELLERIN

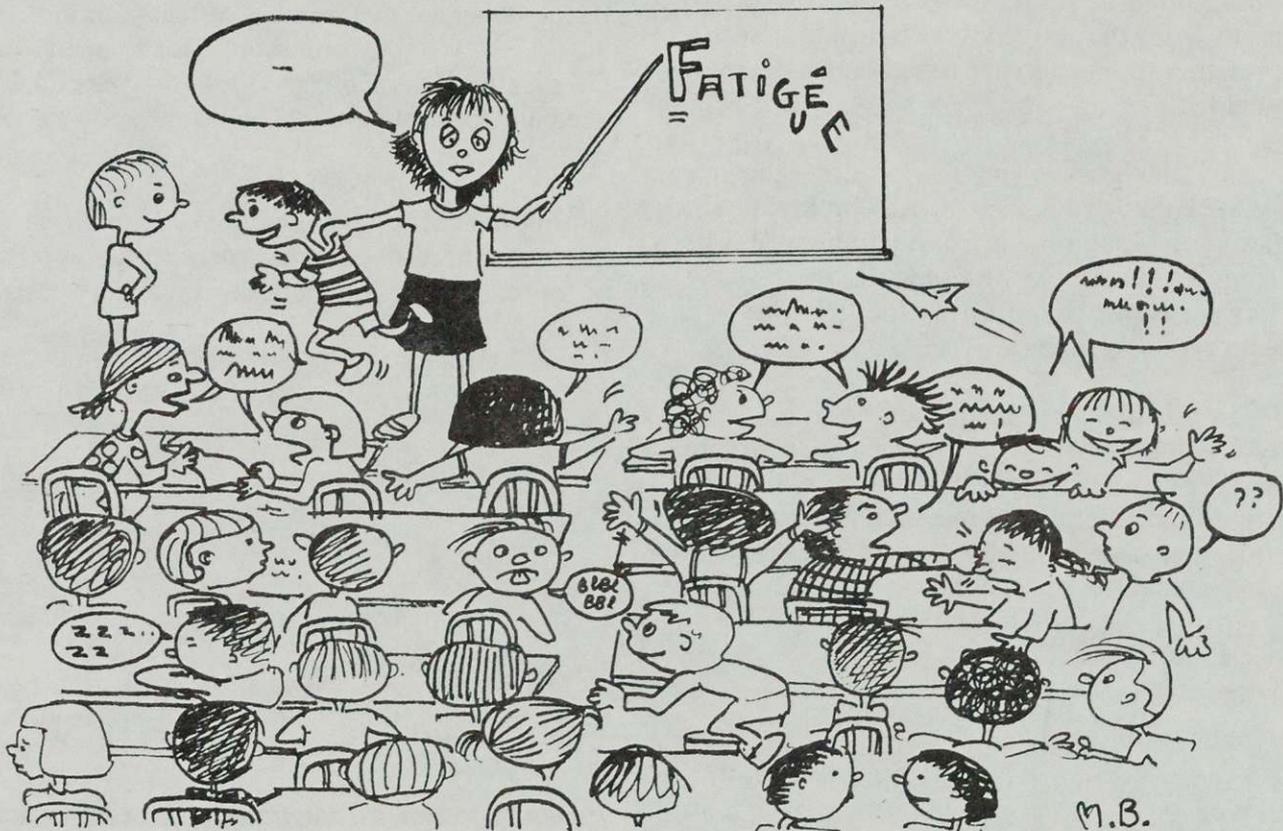
WAGE EQUITY

On Friday, November 18 was held the eleventh meeting between spokespersons of the Treasury Board and unions on the subject of wage equity.

It should be reminded that in the letter of intent signed December 1986, the negotiating parties agreed to begin negotiations six (6) months prior to the deadline for renewing the collective agreements in order to study, as a matter of priority, the relative salaries earned in jobs dominated by women in the public and parapublic sectors.

In the Fall of 1987, the CSN public sector unions gave their federations the mandate to prepare a wage restructuring proposal geared primarily to correcting the wage situation of women.

In June 1988, following an in-depth study of the labour force in the public sector and adoption of the recommendation by the general assemblies, the CSN submitted its Proposal for Wage Equity to the Treasury Board. It should be pointed out, however, that the FNEEQ general assemblies had decided not to include professors in the proposal.



"Is it because women happen to hold certain types of jobs that they aren't paid as well, or is it because these jobs happen to be less demanding?" asked Mr. Johnson. "A host of criteria must be taken into account when fixing wages," he pointed out. "He also stated: "They want us to admit that it is because they are women that they are not paid as well, but that is not at all obvious."

LaPresse, 13-10-88

This document clearly identifies the job titles that in the public sector are the object of wage discrimination based on sex.

Finally, the parties began to meet at the bargaining table in August.

At this point in time, we're still at an impasse. According to the employer's group "there is no wage discrimination in the wage structure of the public sector", and they intend to prove it at forthcoming meetings.

The employer's group proposes the creation of a parity committee to study, for a period of six (6) months, how all the job titles in the public sector fare in relation to one another based on a system of points and factors.

In addition, the spokespersons for the Treasury Board stated that even if any wage problems are identified in the long run, any corrections would be made from within the existing payroll, whereas the corrective measures called for by the CSN involve the injection of new monies.

As you can see, the government's proposal to create a parity committee brings us right back to square one. As far as we're concerned, redoing studies and reinvesting time, energy and resources in this is out of the question since all that work has already been done and our findings are conclusive.

Laurence PEDNEAULT
Negotiator

NEWS FLASH...

At the Federal Council in December, a session on sexual harassment gave us the opportunity to learn about the sexual harassment policy at Perkin's (a paper mill) and at the Central Council of Montreal as well as the implementation of the FNEEQ draft policy at CEGEP AHUNTSIC and CEGEP OUTAOUAIS.

The discussions proved to be extremely interesting and made us realize that the issue of sexual harassment is more and more being handled by the unions.

Within the FNEEQ, the draft policy is beginning to be implemented in a number of local unions. If you would like more information, we can send you the policies that were presented at the panel. If you need any kind of support, do not hesitate to contact us.

During the second session, we'll be working on an intervention guide to help you with the application of the sexual harassment policy on a daily basis.

Diane BRIERE

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