



Vanier Teachers Vote No!

The Vanier College teachers voted in an important majority **against** both Sectoral and Central Table agreements in principle (offers from the Ministry) at the September 2nd General Assembly. About 80 union members attended the meeting which was held September 2nd. The topic at hand was crucial as it concerns the nature of the working conditions and salaries of CEGEP teachers for the next five years.

Back in June 2010, much to the surprise of many teachers on summer vacation, the Common Front and FNEEQ's negotiation committees reached an agreement with the government's representatives on the ongoing negotiations. The local representatives of all the FNEEQ CEGEP unions then met – this body is referred to as Regroupement CEGEP – to debate and vote on whether to recommend or reject the Central and Sectoral Table agreements-in-principal to their General Assemblies. After a long debate and the close rejection

of an amendment to reject the salary agreement, the majority voted in favour of accepting it. About two thirds voted in favour of recommending acceptance of the Sectoral agreement.

The VCTA representatives, in consultation with the rest of the Executive, voted **against** both proposals. Based on these results, it was time to go to the local General Assemblies to have the members vote. In our case, because our union reps voted against the agreements and expressed their dissidence, the VCTA invited FNEEQ reps to present the position of the majority. The VCTA Executive debated the agreements in principle with Association Council. After discussion, it was voted unanimously that we reject both Sectoral and Central Table agreements in principle. The FNEEQ reps presence left the VCTA reps free to critique the agreements. In the final analysis, it will be the will of the General Assemblies that determines the final outcomes. A double majority is

needed (majority of members and majority of locals) to accept or reject the Agreements in Principle. If both are accepted, we will have a new collective agreement based on these agreements.

The Fneeq representatives at our General Assembly were Bruce Toombs - Humanities teacher at Champlain and member of the Fneeq negotiation committee – and Yves de Repentigny – Biology teacher and member of the Fneeq negotiation committee. It was decided that the Fneeq reps would have 20 minutes to defend the Sectoral Table agreement in principle and 20 minutes to defend the Central Table agreement in principal. The local VCTA union officers had the same time to argue against both agreements in principle. After the presentations there were questions and debate from the floor of the General Assembly. The rich debate took about an hour.

What are the Sectoral and Central Tables?

Sectoral: related to everything that involves working conditions. (job security, sick days, number of preps.

Central: everything that involves pay, retirement, and family leaves, etc

Fneeq

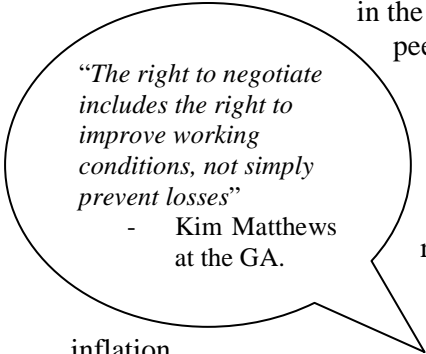
The Federation des enseignants et enseignantes du Quebec is a federation that contains 46 CEGEP unions. It is part of the CSN.

"It was pointed out many times last night that you are happy to be with FNEEQ and we know it is true. There are disagreements in all close-knit families and this is normal. The overall mood last night was very good and quite respectful, and we'd like to thank you for having invited us to defend the regroupment's position."

- Yves de Repentigny in email correspondence the day following the vote.

On the Sectoral Table Agreement Bruce Toombs presented the past history of negotiations and explained that the negotiation team was able to stave off some extreme cuts by the Provincial government. Toombs argued that the gain in full time equivalents (FTEs) was substantive in that it is more FTEs than we have received from all previous negotiations combined.

Janice Paquette, the president of the VCTA then presented the arguments of Association Council against the acceptance of the Sectoral Table agreement in principle. She stated that the 5 year settlement is illegal as current laws state the maximum is a 3 year settlement. The settlement was negotiated in summer while the potential for mobilization was practically nil and that the offer does not seem very different from the decree that was imposed five years ago. She also stated the concerns about the changes in the role of coordinators: would they become bosses and no longer peers among peers?



“The right to negotiate includes the right to improve working conditions, not simply prevent losses”
- Kim Matthews
at the GA.

In the debate that followed, members addressed questions and expressed their opinions. Among the many notable comments that arose from the floor of the General Assembly was the statement of a member who said that an important demand from Vanier teachers was to link the allocation given with the workload. This demand seems to be off the table right now, since it has been sent to yet another committee.

On the Central Table agreement Yves de Repentigny argued that the increase in salaries was the best we can get in order to catch up with inflation. He also argued that we got everything was asked on the pension offer. Finally, he explained that Fneeq was the most mobilized union in the Common Front.

Kim Matthews, a VCTA vice-president, passionately presented the local position. She argued that the Common Front was mobilized and ready to fight for better working conditions. The timing of the negotiations, when many members were on vacation, made it difficult to pressure the government. She also questioned the mediocre offer and argued that the government has many other options to get more money, including fighting corruption. She explained that we are setting the foundation for our future negotiations. It is important to show that we disagree with such an insulting offer, argued Kim Matthews; both on the local and national level.

Following the presentations, most VCTA members agreed with the Association Council position. However, it is worth mentioning that a member felt that the offer was decent since, in his opinion, there is a likelihood of reaching the nominal GDP targets over the prevision of the government, thus enabling us to get a more reasonable pay increase.

At the end of the debate, the members voted by secret ballot. The results were counted by the VCTA scrutineers the following day. The results were: 73 % of members voted **against** accepting the Central Table Agreement in Principle while 72% of members voted **against** accepting the Sectoral Table Agreement in Principle.

We now have to wait for the results from the other General Assemblies within FNEEQ and the Common Front. The deadline for the Fneeq results is September 17th. Once all of the votes are in, there will be another meeting of Regroupment CEGEP with all of the Fneeq representatives. If there is a double majority, majority of unions and members, in favour of accepting both agreements we will have a new collective agreement. If that does not occur, we will need to explore our options. This undoubtedly will include escalating pressure tactics to get a decent offer.

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