EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

ROTRE CEUR BATA GAUCHE

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OUR HEART BEATS ON THE LEFT 4

OUR HEART BEATS ON THE LEFT

The theme of the 35th Convention of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain—CSN fits well with the current situation: the Right is on the rise again, but at the same time movements of protest and resistance are growing and spreading. We are firmly convinced that it is time more than ever to propose a society respectful of human beings and the environment, based on left-wing values. The labour movement must join in resolutely, in alliance with progressive forces, to bring about change. Major challenges lie ahead and we are committed to participating wholeheartedly in the struggles that need to be waged. Our heart beats on the left. It beats in time with the steps to be taken towards social justice and the common good.

MOBILISATION GÉNÉRAL CONTRE LES POLITIQUES NÉOLIBÉRAL

FINANCIAL CRISIS AND AUSTERITY POLICIES

My heart's on the left but my wallet's on the right... This is something we hear regularly from columnists, or even from in-laws at Christmas parties. As if left-wing values and the corresponding demands were frivolous or irrational. As if logic and reason inevitably go together with growth, commodification, productivity and competitiveness. But we know that the truth is actually very different.

Following the 2008 financial crisis, logic and rationality would have dictated extensive, thoroughgoing reforms to a financial system that first destabilized the world's economies and then dipped into taxpayers' pockets to bail itself out. But little has in fact changed. Regardless of the tragedies stemming from this crisis, the dominant classes and the governments that smooth the way for them are ready to save the system at all costs. The only ones who haven't had to tighten their belts are the ones who profit from it all.

The capitalist line continues to be that the more growth there is, the more wealth is created and the better it can be redistributed. Yet the income gap between social classes has gotten steadily





wider for the past thirty years, even during periods of growth. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which can hardly be accused of left-wing leanings, acknowledges that in recent decades the rich have profited more from economic growth than the poor. In some countries, like Canada, the gap between the rich and the middle class has grown too. In 1998, the median compensation of Canadian CEOS was more than 60 times the average wage paid in the private sector in Canada; by 2010, it was more than 150 times the average wage. In Québec, where union density (the rate of unionization) is the highest in North America, the gap between the rich and the rest of the population is not as wide as the Canadian average. Nonetheless, we aren't spared this reality. From 1976 to 2006, Québec's economy grew 71%, but most of the gains in income went to the richest 10%. If the system was efficient, if growth was THE solution, it would profit everyone, not just a small handful of privileged rich people.

The crisis of capitalism is used to justify new social rollbacks. We are exhorted to tighten our belts on the pretext that we can't afford to keep our public services, improve our social policies or increase wages significantly. Governments attack the unemployed instead of tackling unemployment. The Harper government's new measures that are devastating employment insurance in Canada are a prime example of this! The same goes for the changes that the PQ is making to social assistance,



such as reducing benefits paid to people between the ages of 55 and 57 as well as to couples with children under 5. Meanwhile, half of companies and financial corporations don't pay taxes. Crisis or no crisis, if we do nothing the rich will continue to get richer and the rest of the population will get poorer. We have to put an end to a model of development that cannot survive without despoiling human beings and the environment.

The Central Council calls for an economy that serves the common good and therefore combats the prevailing capitalist ideology and defends a fair distribution of wealth. It asserts the responsibility of government, acting in citizens' stead, to intervene in economic affairs and regulate them to foster the common good, equality, social justice, labour-market integration, job protection and the environment.

Excerpt from the CCMM-CSN's Statement of Principles

¹ Allaire Yvan (2012) L'américanisation de la rémunération des dirigeants canadiens, Les Affaires.com, April 5.

² IRIS (2010) Qui s'enrichit s'appauvrit.



OUR HEART BEATS FOR A RENEWAL OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT AND UNION FORCES



The labour movement is still a powerful tool of political and social resistance. Yet union membership has declined steadily all over the world since the 1980s. Although the rate of union density in Québec has stayed relatively stable, we —

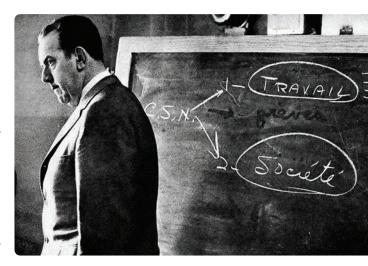
like the CSN – believe that the labour movement must renew itself. Because it makes things happen and stirs things up, the labour movement is the target of many attacks on various fronts. It is constantly denigrated by right-wing demagogues who spew their vitriol day after day on trash radio stations, TV and in the "humorous" columns of Richard Martineau and his ilk. Neo-liberal governments pass legislation that erodes labour rights or hinders its action, like right-to-work laws in the United States that relieve employees of the obligation to pay dues to their unions, and Bill C-377 in Canada, which will oblige unions to publicly disclose all transactions worth more than \$5,000. The claim that this is a move to improve the financial transparency of union organizations is nonsense! We already follow very rigorous rules of accountability. One of the most recent attacks is the gradual elimination of the tax credit for labour funds like Fondaction, a move that jeopardizes the development of decent, sustainable jobs.

There are other challenges that warrant the renewal of the labour movement. Battles are getting tougher and tougher. Although 98% of collective agreements are settled without a labour dispute today, when a dispute does occur the employer takes a hard line. In the private sector, there are more disputes that are dragging on. In the public sector, using decrees or the threat of special legislation to settle collective agreements has become a habit. These repeated attacks have an impact on the strategies that unions adopt and on the confidence that union members have in the possibility of making gains. In another vein, the labour movement must also renew itself to adapt to the new realities of work. One of the things it must do is to meet the challenge of building solidarity in a work world characterized by more and more contingent, precarious work. Today, being hired by a company that executes all parts of the production process has become an exception rather than the rule.

An autonomous, democratic union movement characterized by solidarity is vital for democracy. It acts in defence of workers' rights and through its action helps curb social inequalities. Where union density is high, pay rates are less unequal. The strength of the labour movement is its mass – the number of people who join in the struggles to be waged and invest their combativity in them. To create this indispensable synergy, we must renew our practices and be inspiring.

OUR HEART BEATS ON ALL FRONTS!

In the course of its history, the CSN has made major shifts to meet the challenges that arose as it developed. The creation by the CSN of a second front in 1968 was one of the very significant moments in its history. The first front is where the union work of collective bargaining and enforcing collective agreements – in short, the work we do on a daily basis in our workplaces – is concentrated. But unfortunately, the gains that workers make in their workplaces are regularly cancelled out by other attacks coming from outside the workplace. For example, raises in pay are regularly completely eroded by inflation and higher rates for utilities and so on. So following a process of thinking and analysis begun in 1966, the CSN asserted its determination to break with business unionism. "The CSN was especially troubled by the closures



of foreign-controlled factories. On the Executive Committee, Marcel Pepin and Raymond Parent came to the conclusion that what was necessary was political action, i.e., political education of workers."³

This courageous political choice created shockwaves. After this resolution was adopted, thousands of members left our ranks. But with time, many of them returned and others joined. And it is largely thanks to this policy direction that the CSN is perceived as a politicized, protest union organization.

If there is one organization that embodies the struggles of the second front in a particularly militant way, it is our Central Council, the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain—CSN. Through the years, we have participated in all the struggles waged by both the labour movement and social movements. This was why Michel Chartrand and the Central Council, then known as the Conseil central des syndicats nationaux de Montréal, helped found the weekly Québec Presse and open Cooprix,

the first co-op supermarket in Montréal, and later the organization of the Congrès international de solidarité ouvrière in 1975 that brought together hundreds of delegates from Arab countries, the Americas and Africa, and gave rise to the Centre de solidarité ouvrière (CISO - centre for labour solidarity), of which the CCMM-CSN is still a very active member today. Other priorities were added over time. But what is certain is that the Central Council remains an essential participant on issues on the second front, in alliance with its partners in the social movements.



³ Confédération des syndicats nationaux (2012) Ne comptons que sur nos propres moyens (Reprint) M Éditeur – Preface by Jean-Guy Loranger, p.15. A translation of the original manifesto (Only rely on our own means) was published in Québec – Only the beginning, New Press, 1972.

This is why the Central Council engages resolutely in social, economic and political struggles to build a democratic society that is more just and fair, in a world that is inclusive and respectful of our values.

It defends the fundamental values of justice, solidarity, equality, freedom, democracy and peace. ...

It builds its union action through its struggles as part of coalitions; it develops the broadest possible alliances with other union organizations and progressive social movements. It mobilizes on various fronts, such as the anti-poverty struggle, the integration of newcomers into the labour market, more rights for non-unionized workers and access to unionization for atypical workers.

It asserts that in the dominant context of a globalized economy and global markets, it is all the more necessary to respond with genuine globalization of workers' rights. This is why it advocates indispensable solidarity among peoples and support for the struggles of union and social movements in all countries to improve democratic, social and cultural rights everywhere.

Our social combat is multi-faceted and diverse. The Central Council encourages and supports those excluded from the sphere of work as well as various women's, indigenous, cultural, international solidarity and environmental movements, and movements focusing on regional development and urban life. It wages the necessary war on war and stands for peace and lasting improvements in the living conditions of all peoples of the world without exception.

Excerpt from the CCMM-CSN's Statement of Principles



Unions are regularly taken to task sometimes from within their own ranks - for working on issues that go beyond the strict confines of the collective agreement. Of course our work is to negotiate good collective agreements to improve the living conditions of our members in affiliated unions. But workers are also citizens who need food, housing, education for their children and care, and who want to live in a society that is fully democratic and equal. As well, the context for collective bargaining, in both the private and public sectors, is being transformed and becoming more complex. A whole host of issues are involved without it necessarily being obvious. Free-trade agreements negotiated behind our backs with a lack of transparency unworthy of a democratic system are just one example among many.

There is no let-up in the capitalist system's attacks. We must take the lead and together identify methods to push for accountability and demand real political, social and economic changes. And this is precisely why the Central Council decided to go ahead during the past three years and begin considering the political and organizational criteria to be met with a view to the possibility of resorting to a social strike. This is why, in the summer of 2012, we made available to all our affiliated unions a discussion paper aimed at pursuing debates at the September 2012 general assembly. The discussions were incredibly enriching. Some unions even continued the discussion within their own ranks, in collaboration with members of the Central Council executive.⁴

We are firmly convinced that to do a good job in our work on the first front, we have to broaden the scope of our actions and alliances to wage struggles on the second front. What is more, we believe that one of the major keys to the renewal of tradeunionism depends on this. The idea that union work that deals with matters other than collective bargaining is a waste of time and a poor use of union dues just winds up playing into the hands of those who don't want us to stir things up so as to allow them to continue their dirty work. Using the strength of our movement to wage struggles in the political arena is an important key to the overall improvement of our living conditions. This is the point of the second front!



It (the Central Council) stands for combative trade-unionism that strives for unity, solidarity and democracy, unions that listen to their members, are sensitive to human distress and promote solidarity in the face of inequalities.

Its practices are based on support from and mobilization of its members to establish bargaining leverage to advance their common demands. It considers labour unity to be vital, because it is also the tangible sign of workers' determination to build new social relations.

Excerpt from the CCMM-CSN's Statement of Principles

⁴ www.ccmm.csn.qc.ca/textes-de-réflexion





OUR HEART BEATS IN TIME WITH INDIGNATION AND MOBILIZATION

During the past three years, a wave of resistance and hope has swept the planet. All over the world – from Spanish indignados denouncing the ravages of the financiers to the Arab spring that called loud and clear for more democracy – people rose up in revolt against fundamentally unfair political and economic systems. The slogan of Occupy Wall Street was very telling in this regard: We are the 99%! Throughout the world, the population demonstrated its discontent and protested the effects



of development models whose results have been to aggravate inequalities, destroy the environment and promote unscrupulous, corrupt business models. As Joseph Stiglitz, U.S. economist and Nobel Prize winner points out, "... what is most surprising is not that demonstrations have erupted, but rather that they took so long to do so."⁵

Québec was no exception, with its very inspiring "printemps érable" marching to the drumbeat of the student movement. Students led the fight against lifting the freeze on tuition in exemplary fashion. Citizens joined in the struggle by the thousands: from angry mothers (Mères en colère et solidaires) to seniors against the tuition hike (Aînés contre la hausse), the student movement set the pace and the population joined in! The Central Council and its affiliated unions were no exception.

The battle against the Charest government's demagogic ideological attack on the accessibility of university studies did not end in a clear win. It should, however, be said that while we can't claim total victory, a few invaluable, important battles were won. First, the Charest government lost the election and the planned tuition hike and shameful Bill 12 were repealed. But the most important victory was certainly having large sectors of the population coming together en masse and with combativity to protest the commodification of education and the Charest government's attacks on democracy with the adoption of its infamous Bill 12. Some of these victories were, of course, rapidly hollowed out by the Parti Québécois, notably with its own "camouflaged" increase in tuition by means of indexation of 3% annually. Whatever the PQ may say, its true colours show through!

OUR HEART BEATS FOR DEMOCRACY

Democracy is increasingly hard hit and we have to defend it fiercely. The laws and regulations passed by the Québec government and Montréal administration to restrict the right to demonstrate are just some examples of this. The Harper government has been a formidable foe of democracy ever since it took power, multiplying attacks on democratic



institutions and rights and freedoms. Budget bills C-38 (Jobs, Growth and Long-term Prosperity Act) and C-45 (2012 Jobs and Growth Act) were adopted without the usual parliamentary processes, in a total denial of democracy. These two budget bills, described as "mammoth" because of their size, made major amendments to more than 80 other pieces of legislation in areas such as environmental review. immigration, Old Age Security and many others.

⁵ Stiglitz, Joseph E. (2012) *Le prix de l'inégalité*, Les liens qui libèrent, WW Norton, New York, p.18 (our translation from the French, though the book is also published in English – The price of inequality).

Other feats of the Harper government include cutting funding for advocacy work by women's groups; closing down Rights and Democracy; and putting \$1 billion into repressing public demonstrations protesting the G20 meeting in Toronto two years ago. The repressive operation resulted in the largest mass arrests in Canadian history, with more than 900 people arrested – not to mention the many others who were intimidated, questioned or searched simply because they were taking pictures.

OUR HEART BEATS ON THE LEFT

Progressive forces must unite their voices to avoid further deterioration in the population's living conditions and to stop the dominant classes from strengthening their stranglehold on the economy while rolling back our rights and destroying the planet. Our economic system has to be rethought in terms of the fulfilment of human beings rather than the drive for profits at all costs.

What role can the Central Council play in this vast project? It would be very pretentious to claim that we can change the course of events all by ourselves! In the CSN, the mandate of Central Councils is to support unions in their struggles and work on regional social and political issues. It is from this angle that we will undertake a collective process of considering the policy directions to be taken to renew trade-unionism and union forces. We will explore our realities to focus on the changes that we want to see happen and we will look at how we intend to succeed collectively in making these advances a tangible reality.

Our collective discussion and debate at this convention will be aimed first at building inspiring action-oriented union life, and at looking at how we can broaden and consolidate alliances. Next, we will target aspects on which we need to work in order to succeed in living in a better world, free of corruption and more respectful of human beings and the environment. Finally, we will also propose practical actions to better entrench our demands within our ranks as well as at the centre of our struggles, including a vast campaign of grassroots political education to counter the all-pervasive propaganda serving up right-wing ideas. This is what we invite you to join in, in keeping with the CSN's three fundamental values: autonomy, democracy and solidarity. We know that our collective aspirations are just, and that our values are in the right place. Our heart beats on the left.







OUR HEART BEATS

FOR INSPIRING ACTION-ORIENTED UNION LIFE

The context of union struggles in recent years has been an increasingly difficult one. In the public sector, employees are up against governments that refuse to negotiate in good faith and that, except for the last round of bargaining, have preferred to settle by decree. In the private sector, disputes drag on and unions are confronted with loopholes in the Labour Code's provisions on strikebreakers – what is commonly known as the "anti-scab law". In our region, the lack of teeth in the law and the need to modernize the definition of "establishment" has had devastating effects on a number of disputes. The example that got



the most media coverage was the dispute at the Journal de Montréal. The paper continued to come out for the entire duration of the lockout, replacing journalists with scabs who were able to write their articles in another workplace, thanks to new technologies. But the need to overhaul the concept of "establishment" goes well beyond the use of technological innovations. In the case of the dispute at MAPEI, the company got around the provisions of the law by using the services of an outside firm to prepare and send out customers' orders, even though this was work usually done by MAPEI workers. Such practices no longer respect the spirit of the law passed in 1977. Employers are developing a whole array of tricks for ignoring the law and destroying the bargaining clout of women and men fighting determinedly for better working conditions.

IN UNION LIFE

Union work is not getting any easier. To start with, increasing reliance on the courts and the legal system in labour disputes has changed the parameters. Some employers even use this strategy deliberately. The work is more and more demanding for many unions, leaving them with the impression that they are not up to the task. Cases with psychological aspects raise special problems for which union executive members feel unequipped and powerless. On top of this, there is the turnover among union representatives, meaning that there has to be a process of training and transferring gains and experience that seems to start over and over again, as well as a dreadful shortage of days of union leave, especially in the private sector. We think that it is urgent to take action to strengthen our work by improving union life as a whole and attaching more value to a collective approach to our struggles.

In a context of increasingly complex and bitter struggles, union solidarity is more crucial than ever, and unions realize this. The creation of a "solidarity network" at our 34th convention was designed as a response to the issues involved in maintaining solidarity with our unions involved in disputes over long periods of time. We think that it would be appropriate to review and assess this tool for mobilization and consider the best ways of mobilizing for our struggles with a view to advancing militant trade-unionism.

Strong, militant mobilization is based on democratic, dynamic union life. Yet many are worried about the declining participation they see in their decision-making meetings, including general membership meetings. These play a key role in union life: they are essential forums for thought and debate with a view to obtaining strong mandates that members have had the time to make their own fully.



The reasons contributing to these problems in mobilization are varied. First of all, the possibilities of leave for union work have been greatly reduced, and often the people on leave are not replaced, thus adding to excessive workloads. Members feel crushed by steadily increasing workloads, and as a result stop being involved in the union. In some workplaces, precarious forms of work and cuts in pay have forced people to hold more than one job in order to make ends meet. Job cuts in other workplaces have resulted in extra work for the people who still have jobs.

More precarious employment ties and the proliferation of differing job statuses in a single business are growing phenomena in workplaces. There has also been a strong turnover in the workforce in recent years. The end result is a situation in which everyone is trying to figure out where they fit: newly hired employees want to feel included and those approaching retirement don't want to feel that they're being pushed aside. These realities make it harder to build solidarities. Union organizations in Québec are not alone in identifying these trends: to make room for younger workers, some union organizations are adopting drastic measures like the ELA (the central Basque union organization), which decided at its convention to set an age limit of 58 for staffers and elected officers.6 We don't think we have to go that far. However, we believe that we do have to take this issue seriously and establish procedures for welcoming new members in our unions, in part by making known the history of local struggles and issues and our union values.

Our workplaces are also characterized by their diversity. And although this can be a tremendous asset, it can also pose major challenges. In the Montréal and Laval region, there are more and more workers from many different cultural communities, and our union practices must meet the challenges posed by this diversity. People from the LGBT community hesitate to turn to their union to defend their rights for fear of being victims of homophobia or having their sexual orientation outed.

Turning to the status of women, women's struggles have brought some good progress, but the gains are increasingly threatened. In workplaces, there is still a long way to go before women enjoy full equality. Some workplaces even have trouble imagining the inclusion of women! In the construction industry, for example, there is still a lot to be done in order for women to be able to work in trades equitably. They are still discriminated against in hiring: only 7% of the 25,000 employers in the sector in Québec hire women. Once they are hired, women face daily harassment, ranging from offensive, offcolour jokes to equipment sabotage. There's still a lot to be done before women can take their rightful place.

Since establishing a strong bargaining position depends on strong, unified union life, we have to take good note of these risks of division in our workplaces. Unions must give themselves the means to play their role fully as a place for participation that is representative of all their members and their specific interests.

⁶ DUFOUR Christian, HEGE Adelheid (March 2009) Pays basque, 12th convention of the ELA, Basque union confederation, Chronique internationale de l'IRES no. 117.









BEING INSPIRING!

We think that, from the viewpoint of renewing the labour movement and its dynamic forces, we have to propose a union and social blueprint that is inspiring, that is solidly rooted in the struggles to be waged and that echoes and realizes our values, namely the importance of maintaining the autonomy, democracy and solidarity of our unions. While this renewal does not put into question the fundamental values at the CSN, its embodiment in daily union life can sometimes be problematic.⁷

Unions must see themselves as agents for social change and collectively give themselves the means of working for this. This is also the message that we received from delegates at the Central Council's monthly general assemblies, emphasizing that we have to transmit the desire and hope of changing the world and make our successes and gains better known, since unfortunately they are ignored by the mass media. As we said earlier in this connection, establishing or re-establishing the place of struggles on the second front in our union work is a key to renewing trade-unionism.

⁷ CSN (2012) Réfléchir aux services dispensés au sein de la CSN, une nouvelle occasion d'améliorer l'action de tout le mouvement, Interim report from the Committee on Services, Spring 2012, p.8

RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION 1

Considering the round of meetings begun by the Executive Committee in the fall of 2012, to be continued during the next three years;

and considering the need to renew our union practices locally, regionally, nationally and internationally to make the labour movement a real agent of political and social change;

and considering the current and on-going renewal of the labour force affecting the labour market today and in the coming years;

and considering the turnover among union staff representatives;

and considering the thinking of the National Youth Committee leading up to the adoption of the Notre avenir, un projet syndical! statement at the 5th rally of CSN youth;

and considering the challenges to be met in order to wage our union struggles to our satisfaction in the current situation;

Be it resolved:

- That the unions affiliated with the CCMM-CSN, in collaboration with the latter, conduct a process of analysis and reflection in their decision-making meetings on the union values of the CSN autonomy, democracy and solidarity and how these are translated into their work and their union struggles;
- That the unions affiliated with the CCMM-CSN tell the story of their major local struggles in recent years on both the first and the second fronts, using, in particular, the Central Council's communications tools, like the monthly *Unité*, the web site and the Facebook page, to make them known.
- That the CCMM-CSN revive the struggle to modernize Labour Code provisions on strikebreakers, etc., documenting the negative impact of current provisions on our regional struggles.
- That the CCMM-CSN receive the Notre avenir, un projet syndical! youth statement and invite its unions to do the same, in part by inviting members of the Youth Committee to come and discuss it in local decision-making meetings. (This resolution will be debated in the plenary session.)

OUR HEART BEATS

IN TIME WITH THOSE WHO SHARE THE SAME VALUES AS WE HOLD

Unions are major actors for social change and must give themselves all the resources they need to play their role fully. To do so, two aspects are key, in our opinion: putting forward a message that is critical of the capitalist and patriarchal systems and broadening our alliances.

As Jean-Guy Loranger says quite rightly in his preface to the reprint of *Ne comptons que sur nos propres moyens*: "Today, there are voices throughout the entire world clamouring for the need to change the system. So the CSN has every interest today in renewing with its critique of capitalism, developing its understanding of the issues at stake and again relying only on its own means, including and especially in terms of political action (a workers' party) if necessary to transform the system, because as it was forty years ago, Québec is still for sale to multinationals, and in both mining and forestry its servile State encourages the multinationals to grab our resources for next to nothing."

In this connection, the CSN's campaign plan Et si on avançait: le progrès social dépend de nous (And if we are to move forward: social progress depends on us) is very inspiring. The campaign seeks to "reach as many members as possible in our affiliated unions and the largest possible number of citizens in all regions of Québec in order to: share a common analysis of current conditions; inform and train members about the issues that will come up in the next election; and make known and discuss our demands."9 This campaign is indeed entirely in keeping with the round of meetings with unions begun by the Central Council executive in the fall of 2012. The specific nature of the CSN, including unions from all sectors of the labour market (and this is also true of the Central Council at the regional level), gives it an undeniable strength, allowing the debates that occur there to percolate throughout the movement and thus reach workers from all backgrounds. It is up to us to take advantage of this to broaden this critical analysis to the movement as a whole and share it with our partners in other social movements.

⁸ Confédération des syndicats nationaux (2012) Ne comptons que sur nos propres moyens (Reprint) M Éditeur – Preface by Jean-Guy Loranger, p.22. A translation of the original manifesto (Only rely on our own means) was published in Québec – Only the beginning, New Press, 1972

⁹ Confédération des syndicats nationaux (2013) Et si on avançait : le progrès social dépend de nous, Campaign plan and partial budget proposed by the CSN Executive Committee on the campaign for political discussion submitted to the Confederal Bureau, February 21-22.









BROADENING AND CONSOLIDATING OUR ALLIANCES

The consolidation of our work of alliances with our partners in progressive movements and organizations must be done at both the local and inter-union levels as well as regionally and internationally. This is, in our opinion, another key part of renewing the labour movement.

A number of unions in the region are working towards this - like, for example, the Syndicat des travailleuses et des travailleurs du CSSS Ahuntsic-Montréal-Nord, which is part of an FSSS-CSN-FIQ-APTS alliance to protest the distortions of the optimization of organization of work processes developed by Proaction, a private firm, that stress higher productivity at the expense of the quality of services. Other unions in CSSSs have since taken similar steps. In another example, the AGSEM/AÉÉDEM, the union in teaching at McGill University representing teaching assistants, correctors, exam invigilators and lecturers, waged an inter-union struggle (including with student unions) against the protocol governing demonstrations on campus.10

At the regional level too, we have everything to gain from allying with other citizen movements to broaden the scope of our demands, both for members of our affiliated unions and for all workers. The work of concertation and mobilization done by the Central Council in collaboration with its partners in progressive movements is exemplary in a number of ways. Take, for example, the organization of the conference on jointly funded foundations (like the Lucie et André Chagnon Foundation) organized by the Central Council in partnership with the Regroupement des organismes communautaires famille de Montréal (ROCFM - Montréal coalition of family community organizations) and the Regroupement intersectoriel des organismes communautaires de Montréal (RIOCM – Montréal inter-sectoral coalition of community organizations). The conference was an opportunity to take stock of this disturbing emerging trend and the need to take action against what seems to be a new wave of governance of social movements and organizations in Québec. Furthermore, broadening our collaboration with other partners also helps us move forward and get around the unfortunate mean-spiritedness related to certain contexts of raiding in both the public and private sectors.

¹⁰ List of acronyms: Fédération de la santé et des services sociaux (FSSS-CSN), Fédération interprofessionnelle du Québec (FIQ), Alliance du personnel professionnel et technique de la santé et des services sociaux (APTS) Association of Graduate Students Employed at McGill (AGSEM/AÉÉDEM).

Many of our struggles require taking action that goes beyond the framework of a collective agreement. Add in the fact that not everyone is lucky enough to be unionized, and that attacks on workers' rights by the ruling classes are becoming increasingly aggressive in every respect. The recent adoption of the reform of employment insurance is a stark example. In this battle, the alliance between advocacy groups for the non-unionized and the labour movement is crucial in order to sway Ottawa.



The Central Council's dynamism and expertise makes it an indispensable player in the region on many social struggles, as its commitment and that of its affiliated unions in support of the student struggle shows. The evolution of the student struggle towards a broader, unifying social struggle led us to update and share our thinking on the social strike with all our affiliated unions.



This struggle had an unquestionable unifying effect. Many of us got to know each other better during daytime and evening demonstrations. The banging on pots and pans was heard throughout Québec, and no region was left untouched by the strike movement, but it is worth emphasizing that student mobilization reached a historic scale in the greater Montréal area, including the northern and southern offisland communities. To start with, there is a strong concentration of CEGEPs and universities, and this was where the student associations



that stayed out on strike the longest were located. But we reject the idea of comparing regions with each other, which plays into the hands of right-wing demagogues who want to bank on division. Though the students' struggle was very inspiring for a majority of Central Council members, as we said above, we should take good note of the fact that this support was not unanimous; we still have a lot of informationawareness work to do to offset the right-wing message that opposes free tuition. And the struggle is not over: the 3% indexation imposed by the Marois government is unacceptable. So it is imperative to have an independent inquiry into police repression during the student spring - repression that continues today. One thing is certain: after the student movement's memorable battle, no one can dare go on saying that young people are not politicized or involved!

Looking at alliances at the regional level, we think that we also have to take note of the "citizen" nature of many mobilizations and be open to new perspectives that can help broaden the mobilization. Through movements like Occupy!, Mères en colère et solidaires or Profs contre la hausse, people were mobilized outside the more "traditional" movements like the

labour movement and the women's movement some because the more established movements. didn't meet their expectations, and others because they weren't part of any group and the upswelling of citizen indignation echoed their own. Some of these people asked for our expertise, while others expressed a wish to participate in Central Council actions or at the very least to be kept informed. Workers with precarious jobs whose employment situation fluctuates from contract to contract have expressed the same wish. As well, retired members want to stay in touch with the Central Council. The Central Council has already opened the door to participation by people who are not members of the CSN, in particular through committees on fronts of struggle. We think that we have to innovate in this regard, notably by creating a group of "friends of the Central Council" that provides a way of staying in contact with these people, keeping them informed and inviting them to participate in our actions and events. For the time being, our thinking on this is in the early stages, but it should be part of the Central Council's work plan.

STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES

Union organizations have to develop bargaining strategies adapted to the context of globalized economies, even for collective bargaining on a local contract. "It is henceforth impossible for the labour movement to ignore the risks related to the global economic context, which puts constant pressure on working conditions and makes jobs more vulnerable and uncertain. Corporate concentration, the growing influence of multinationals, technological change and individualism are all realities that unions have to cope with. Their bargaining power is threatened by the rise of neo-liberalism and they are forced to claim their place by any means available in order to ensure a better distribution of wealth."¹¹

A telling example in this regard is the initiative taken by the Syndicat des travailleuses et des travailleurs de Labatt de Montréal to create an alliance of unions in Labatt's breweries across Canada, in an effort to better understand the issues related to volume transfers. The unions even broadened their contacts internationally to get information about capacity in the industry elsewhere, to assess whether it could provide alternate supplies in the event of a work stoppage here.¹²



We are firmly convinced that the struggle against neo-liberalism requires union action without borders. Our struggles are often strikingly similar. At the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit in June 2010, the Central Council and the CSN had organized a workshop on the preservation of public services in collaboration with the FAT (Frente autentico del trabajo), a democratic, independent Mexican labour organization, and UE (United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America), a U.S. union organization. Strategies for the privatization of public services and their impact on the organization of work and the cost and quality of services were very similar. The same was true of the actions taken in the three countries (Canada, United States and Mexico). Participants recognized the need to establish alliances between the labour movement, social movements and citizens to defend the common good. We observed the same phenomenon with the student struggle and the struggle against precarious, contingent work at the meeting of the Coalition of Contingent Academic Labour X (COCAL X) in Mexico City in the summer of 2012.

¹¹ Bilodeau Pierre-Luc, Dans un monde globalisé réinventer notre rapport de force, Perspectives CSN, no. 40 (January 2013) p 12.







Governments throughout North America are attacking union rights, but there are some countries, like Mexico and Colombia, where unionists involved in union work put their own lives at risk in doing so. In this regard, solidarity is our duty. First, to defend rights, but also because if we look away or close our eyes, it is the entire labour movement that will collapse. Our experiences with international solidarity teach us that when we make our presence felt, governments are more cautious. However, we are now confronted with the impact of the Harper government's new policy directions on public international development aid. Since 2010, none of the projects submitted by the Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO) or union organizations have received funding from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The very survival of CISO is in jeopardy. Union organization and advocacy groups in the South with which we work are suffering serious consequences as a result of CIDA's cuts and the redefinition of funding criteria. In its most recent budget, the Harper government announced \$319 million in cuts at CIDA. The criteria for awarding funding are now guided by Harper's foreign policy and favour private companies, especially mining operations. They are diametrically opposed to our vision of development based on solidarity and defending people's rights. Last March, the Harper government planted the last nail in the coffin of what CIDA used to be by folding it into the Department of Foreign Affairs. In such a context, our union tools, like the CSN's Alliance syndicats et tiers monde à la CSN, and CISO at the inter-union level, are all the more important. More than ever, our struggles must be built on strong solidarity, at both the regional and global levels!

RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION 2

Considering the expansion of precarious employment and the proportion of workers who hold atypical jobs;

and considering union practices tried in Europe and the United States with unorganized workers;

and considering the labour movement's major role as an agent of political and social change;

and considering the need to intensify our struggles against neo-liberalism; and considering the need to make our struggles as broad-based as possible:

and considering the need to propose a militant approach to trade-unionism within the labour movement and also in support of social struggles;

and considering the round of meetings with unions by the CCMM-CSN executive begun in the fall of 2012, which will continue over the next three years;

and considering the work already begun with our partners in the community movement working with non-unionized workers in the region;

Be it resolved:

- That the unions affiliated with the CCMM-CSN begin a debate in their decision-making bodies on the social and political struggles to be waged and the means of action they would be ready to take. That in this sense, they participate actively in the CSN Et si on avançait campaign. (This recommendation will be debated in the plenary session.)
- That the CCMM-CSN, in collaboration with its partners in unions and in the community movement, launch a vast process of thinking and action on the best ways to propose for reaching, bringing together and mobilizing non-unionized workers in the region.
- That the CCMM—CSN create a network of friends of the Central Council, and that to this end, a working committee be created and charged with clarifying the objectives and details of how it would work.
- That the CCMM–CSN invite its affiliated unions to contribute to Alliance syndicats et tiers-monde and to become members of CISO. (This recommendation will be debated in the plenary session.)



3 OUR HEART BEATS

TO FIGHT CORRUPTION AND CAPITALISTS' SCANDALOUS PRACTICES

A wind tainted by the stench of corruption is blowing across Québec. Without being cynical, we can say that although we deplore the situation, we're not really surprised. Capitalist governments don't have any monopoly on corruption, of course, and there are scoundrels to be found everywhere. But our economic system is based on an ideology that promotes individual enrichment at the expense of the public interest. The dogma of being competitive, the privatization of our public services, the questionable management that is the result and the secrecy surrounding the contracts, in particular the P3s, are all factors that pave the way for all kinds of potential abuses.

Unions in our region – the McGill University Health Centre Employees' Union (MUHCEU) and the Syndicat des employé-es du Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal (SECHUM) – decided that they had had enough and launched a campaign against privatization in health care on the theme "The worm in the apple". Their newsletter points out that the UPAC (Unité permanente anticorruption) investigation of Arthur Porter, former CEO of the MUHC, the police investigation of the actions of the former director of human resources at the MUHC and the MUHC's deficit, which is resulting in unprecedented staffing cuts, are all consequences of an approach to managing public services drawn from the private sector.



As we and many other organizations had predicted, building the MUHC and the CHUM as P3s (public-private partnerships) is a disaster. Québec's Auditor-General had already denounced the content of the P3 contract for the CHUM. Despite that, the government decided to go ahead. The CHUM is now announcing cutbacks for an amount corresponding to the



amount of interest that it has to pay on loans to finance the firms building the hospital as a P3. The idea that P3s would encourage lower prices and avoid cost overruns is nonsense! Costs for the CHUM project are up 127%, to \$3.4 billion, while at the MUHC costs have risen 78%, to \$2.8 billion. Even more disturbing, financial information about these two P3 contracts is not publicly available.

The MUHC's gigantic accumulated deficit (\$208) million) is largely the result of dubious transactions. It is being paid down at the expense of workers, who are being told that replacement hours for vacation time and maternity leave, for example, will be cut and that job cuts can be expected. Workers shouldn't have to foot the bill for questionable management practices. Nor should the population! Because don't forget that these cuts have direct repercussions on the delivery of services. Maintenance employees are essential to the fight against nosocomial diseases (caught in hospitals). These practices also put pressure on public finances and consequently the population as a whole. As well, when everything is contracted out to the private sector, the government loses invaluable expertise in a number of fields. The struggle against such practices must be at the top of our list of priorities.

In another vein, the Central Council denounces the close ties that exist between political parties, private companies and the Mafia. The Charbonneau Commission has turned a spotlight on unacceptable practices whose effect has been to add more than 30% to the value of contracts. Here again, it's the taxpayers who are footing the bill. There seems to be widespread corruption – regardless of the administration or political party – in Laval, Montréal and the world of municipal politics in general both inside and outside this region. The Commission has not yet begun to tackle the work of evaluating the situation at the provincial level. It's unlikely to be much better.

PRIVATI\$ATION of HEALTH CARE

But we can take action! Without grassroots pressure, the commission of inquiry would never have been established. Citizen mobilization is essential and unavoidable. We have to use every opportunity, every forum in which we can intervene – municipal councils, advisory bodies, boards of directors of public institutions. There's no lack of opportunities for making our voices heard! It's up to us to use them!

RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION 3

Considering the widespread corruption in the region and its impact on working conditions, public finances and democracy;

and considering that the privatization of public services and the use of P3s increases the risk of embezzlement and corruption;

Be it resolved:

- That the CCMM-CSN, in collaboration with its affiliated unions, continue the struggle against P3s and contracting-out;
- That the CCMM-CSN denounce corruption and collusion in the municipal realm and all other fields;
- That the CCMM-CSN, in partnership with its allies, organize a public event on the issues at stake in the upcoming municipal elections.





OUR HEART BEATS

FOR DEVELOPMENT THAT IS RESPECTFUL OF HUMAN BEINGS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

At our 34th Convention, a resolution from a delegate invited the Central Council to begin a consideration of de-growth. We began this thinking and analysis in the past year, but we are far from finished. Sustainable development, ecosocialism, de-growth: the thinking about the political direction of our actions will continue, but this must not prevent us from moving forward. Because structural action is urgent! Even the World Bank, which can certainly not be accused of being leftist, recognizes this. It fears that global temperatures will rise by 4 degrees by 2060, with cataclysmic effects. This scenario is a far cry from the international community's commitment to take measures to curb global warming to less than 2 degrees above temperatures in the pre-industrial era. We are already feeling the effects of higher temperatures – just ask our comrades in the Far North! At Kuujjuag, the overall annual temperature rose from -90 degrees in 1990 to -5.7 in 2005. These changes mean that freeze-up comes later and the snow melts earlier, making transportation as well as hunting and fishing more dangerous.13 The World Bank fears that "the projected increase in intensity of extreme events in the future would likely have adverse implications for efforts to reduce poverty, particularly in developing countries... the global community could become more fractured, and unequal than todav."14

Some even say that the concept of sustainable development is a failure because of the refusal to question the dominant economic model. The very disappointing results of the 2012 Earth

¹³ BÉGIN Yves (2006) Les changements climatiques en cours dans le Nord-du-Québec, Brief presented to the Parliamentary Committee on transportation and the environment on the theme of the impact of climate warming in northern Québec, National Assembly, September 18, 2006, Centre d'études nordiques, Université Laval, UQAR, INRS, 19 p.

¹⁴ World Bank, Turn Down the Heat, November 2012, p. xviii (quoted in "Climat: la Banque mondiale redoute le pire", Le Devoir. November 19, 2012.

Summit in Rio tend to confirm this. However, the concept of sustainable development has been useful in emphasizing the need to take social and economic issues into account in economic development while calling for environmental "governance" and measures for oversight, monitoring and regulation to conserve natural resources for future generations. "All this represents a certain realization and improvement compared to the classic economic approach that sees the natural world as a vast dumping ground. In practice, sustainable development has resulted in production processes that are more efficient and use less energy, cars that pollute less, and in general stricter standards, although a trend towards deregulation is currently re-emerging. In fact, the overall picture is very discouraging. Consumption is higher than ever. With globalization... production is increasingly located elsewhere and since prices don't reflect environmental costs at all, it goes without saying that consumption is correspondingly stimulated. Often "sustainable development" goes hand in hand with a profitable delocalization of the problem towards mis-developing countries."15

In the next three years, the Central Council will continue its critique of the concept of sustainable development and the "practices and systems that are leading us to an ecological apocalypse on the promise of consumer happiness," as Andrea Levy put it at a talk given at an evening on the environment and development (*Pour sauver la planète, repenser le développement*) organized by the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain—CSN on November 29, 2012.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TERRITORY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

At the present time, land-use planning offers opportunities to get across our message that governments must take the necessary steps to establish structural measures that will result in a real change of direction. During the past three years, we have intervened repeatedly along these lines and used all the forums available to us to do so. Work on the metropolitan planning and development plan (PMAD - Plan métropolitain d'aménagement et de développement (PMAD)) is key in this respect and an opportunity to make our voices heard on comprehensive strategies. The PMAD will establish the policies that will subsequently guide urban planning for the Communauté métropolitaine de Montréal (CMM)'s 82 municipalities.

The brief we presented in collaboration with the Conseil central de la Montérégie and the Conseil central des Laurentides at the CMM's public consultations on the PMAD began by pointing out that "the survival of humanity will depend on what societies choose to do now. These gestures must correspond to a genuine desire to stop behaving as if the planet's resources were inexhaustible."

¹⁵ LEVY Andrea, Développement durable, décroissance et réduction du temps de travail, Text of a talk given at the evening on the theme Pour sauver la planète, repenser le développement (To save the planet, rethink development) organized by the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain-CSN, November 29, 2012.



Each time we intervene on land-use planning, we defend the following principles: developing sustainable living environments that break with land-use planning approaches that foster urban sprawl; these must encourage public and active transportation and a densification of human-scale living environments while also ensuring social mixity, increasing cultivated land area with a view to food security and sovereignty and respecting biodiversity.

This is why the Central Council is fighting on new fronts to protect air and water quality, guarantee food security, protect green spaces in urban areas, encourage and develop public transit, protect biodiversity and reduce greenhouse gases. The Central Council condemns the commodification of water, an irreplaceable resource that is a vital element of the quality of life....

The Central Council wants a green and inclusive city in which democracy is practised in daily life, where citizens have a say in local life and where their thirst for social justice cannot be ignored. Development on the Island of Montréal and the territory of Laval should foster urban life on a human scale, based on sustainable development principles and urban development that allows for inclusion, social interaction, social justice, diversity and participatory democracy. The city must combat social inequalities by remaining a place that is accessible for everyone who wants to live there, regardless of income....

The Central Council wants residents of its territory to have genuine access to collective and active transportation and therefore demands development of the metropolitan network. It demands that public decision-makers at all levels of power reinvest in public transit and encourage the reduction in greenhouse gases....

The Central Council invites us to participate in democratic life, to get involved in neighbourhood life and to make life in our city ours.

Excerpt from the CCMM–CSN's Statement of Principles



Citizen participation plays a crucial role in entrenching these demands. The number of briefs (344) filed during consultations on the PMAD testifies to the interest of the population in these issues. As well, in some municipalities in the region, like Laval, citizens are demanding spaces for consultation to give their viewpoint. During the Laval Social Forum, the issue of citizen participation came through clearly. Participants even made it a priority and demanded public consultation procedures similar to Montréal's Office de consultation publique. As we said in the previous section, we invite unions in the region and their members to use advisory forums to make their demands heard.

RECOMMENDATION SECTION 4

Considering the need to review our models of development;

and considering the central role of the metropolitan area within Québec, notably because of the concentration of the population there;

and considering the land-use planning issues and the role citizens can play in choosing solutions;

and considering the democratic deficit that affects numerous municipalities in the region;

and considering the need for citizen engagement in order to reverse the trend towards the "neo-liberalization" of municipalities;

and considering the need to fully assert our "right to the city";

Be it resolved:

That the CCMM-CSN demand spaces for public consultations that foster genuine citizen participation in all municipalities in the region; that it invite its affiliated unions to make active use of such spaces for consultation in order to make known their vision of development.



5 OUR HEART BEATS

FOR A MORE HUMANE ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Transformations in the work world caused by globalization and the financialization of the economy as well as the dogma of competition have changed people's relationship to employment. The trend today is for businesses to break up production-related activities, no longer grouping them together in a single company or plant. They are externalized through greater use of contracting-out or delocalization. One third of the labour force have atypical work situations (part-time, casual, temporary, home work, on call, personnel agency).¹⁶

These kinds of labour are no longer being used on a temporary or transitional basis. It is harder to build solidarity within workplaces and, consequently, to take advantage of the resulting social support networks. In other words, it is harder to establish significant ties among colleagues when the colleagues change with the ups and downs of contracting-out, or when these same colleagues are seen as "competitors" from outside agencies who stand in the way of better working conditions by accepting poorer conditions or because they are not obliged to follow the same rules as the others.

Furthermore, many people have to have more than one job in order to piece together an adequate income. As well as increasing stress and fatigue levels, holding multiple jobs makes it harder to balance family, work and studies. Workplaces in both the private and public sectors are constantly searching for an organization of work that is more flexible and that reduces labour costs. The negative consequences for quality of life and psychological health at work are indisputable and growing steadily. The supporters of neo-liberalism hope that we will adapt to all these changes without saying a word in the interests of productivity and competitiveness.

TRANSFORMATIONS THAT HAVE CONSEQUENCES

These transformations have consequences for workers' physical and psychological health, their interpersonal relations and the balance between work and personal life. There is a good reason why this issue is of increasing concern to union organizations.

The incidence of psychological health problems in workplaces is rising steadily. Statistics Canada estimates that more than 3.4 million people suffer from burnout in Canada. "The number of claims for disability benefits related to mental health problems, in particular depression, is the fastest-growing category in Canada, according to a Canadian study." ¹⁷

One of the leading decisive risk factors is the imbalance between the demands of the work world and the autonomy a worker has to do her or his work. Always doing more with less in workplaces where tasks are constantly being redefined creates a series of negative effects. Workers are subjected to numerous different organization of work experiments, often without being consulted – for example, in a number of CSSSs that are implementing "Lean"-type projects orchestrated by certain private firms and notably Proaction. In this regard, the presentation to the Central Council's January 2012 general assembly on the foundations of this method and the conditions for implementing it sparked the indignation of attending delegates over issues related to the working conditions of the comrades concerned and the impact on the quality of services to the population.

¹⁶ Jean Bernier, Diversité et croissance des modèles atypiques d'organisation du travail, À bâbord, December-January 2010, pp. 18 and 19.

¹⁷ Doyon, Brigitte and Mercier, Lucie, Flexibilisation de la main-d'oeuvre en santé, le cas des entreprises privées de placement en soins (EPPS). À Bâbord, December-January 2010, p. 20.



Unfortunately, reorganization of work projects are often implemented to the detriment of coherent professional practices and with a short-term management outlook. Furthermore, though implemented with the goal of improving productivity and reducing labour costs, some of these practices instead lead to higher costs. The Ministry of Health and Social Services (MSSS) estimates that purchasing hours of independent labour costs 18% to 20%, or \$35 million a year.

In Québec, there has been a substantial growth in the use of temporary work agencies (placement agencies) in recent years. According to Statistics Canada, the value of this industry's annual business went from \$801 million in 2001 to \$1.217 billion in 2007. This sector of employment is not regulated, and its occupational health and safety record is far from brilliant. "According to a study by the IRSST (Institut de recherche Robert Sauvé en santé et sécurité au travail), for the category of manual work, agencies are the sector with the highest rate of compensated injuries, in full-time equivalents (ETCs)." Generally speaking, the use of temporary workers leads to various problems that contribute to the emergence of mental health problems. For example, the use of agencies results in disparities that are liable to generate conflicts among colleagues.

As well, it becomes almost impossible to establish stable basic work teams. "At the St-Léonard and St-Michel CSSS, for example, 34% of the hours worked in 2008-2009 for the department of services to persons with reduced independence were worked by independent labour." The systematization of such practices complicates the delivery of services and makes follow-up with users harder. Regular staff are left with heavier responsibilities. The impression of injustice in the workplace can be echoed in both groups of workers. In addition to its impact on the organization of work, high turnover also undermines the sense of belonging that can be a protective factor for mental health at work.

Furthermore, these practices skew institutions' occupational health and safety statistics: "Indeed, given the considerably faster pace of work since the introduction of the shift towards ambulatory care in the 1990s, the use of independent labour lets institutions post falsely improved statistics for protective leave or reassignment, work-related accidents and salary insurance, by reducing the rates of absenteeism rates for illness of employees subjected to greater demands in terms of complex client caseloads and the quantity of compulsory or voluntary overtime."²⁰

These issues have long been a concern for the Central Council. Over time, we have developed a number of initiatives, including peer assistance networks, to promote union support in dealing with this kind of problem. These provide a simple, flexible way of helping people in distress and allow for the establishment of mechanisms of social support within the workplace. In short, they form a bulwark against some of the problems described above. Given the high rate of psychological health problems, we have to continue our work of considering these issues and taking

¹⁸ Ibid, p.18

¹⁹ Ibid, p.21

²⁰ Ibid, p.21

action on them. This should include both action on the risk factors and the implementation of measures for the return to work of someone who has been off the job for an extended period of time for these reasons.

In another vein, legislative changes are becoming imperative to adapt the list of occupational diseases recognized in Québec to better reflect the actual situation and new scientific knowledge, particularly with respect to mental health issues. There has been no change to this list since the current legislation was passed in 1985. This list is based on scientific knowledge about production processes and working conditions in the last century, in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. Because there have not been any changes to take into account major changes that have occurred in the work world, a number of categories of illness are absent. For example, burnout is still not recognized.

WORK MEANS HEALTH?

As the labour market has changed, the culture about people's relationship to their work has also changed. There is more to life than work! More and more people are insisting that it is urgent to change direction and demand more humane working conditions that allow people to balance the various spheres of their lives. Various union actions reflect this thinking. Take, for example, the Status of Women Committee's round of meetings on family-work-study balance in workplaces, which proved to be a tool for mobilization for change, or the demands about the number of rooms per room attendant in the hotel sector, which was aimed at creating conditions for doing the work with less pressure.

This is unquestionably the path to pursue. But what other demands should be put forward to take a more proactive approach? More and more people are talking about putting the demand for a reduction in work time back on the agenda. Naturally, this is diametrically opposed to current trends in the labour market. As well, it would have to be updated, taking into account the pernicious, unintended effects that it could have, such as possible reductions in income. But what's certain is that it's high time for action in our workplaces so that workers have time to breathe a little and a chance to better balance work, family, personal life, studies and, why not? Activism!

RECOMMENDATIONS SECTION 5

Considering that psychological problems are growing steadily in our workplaces;

and considering the need to prevent the emergence of such problems in our workplaces;

and considering that the CSST has not amended the list of occupational diseases since 1985:

and considering the need to intervene in our unions;

Be it resolved:

- That the CCMM-CSN invite its affiliated unions to use theme days on psychological health and for peer assistance networks to organize preventive activities.
- That the CCMM-CSN demand that the list of occupational diseases in the Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases be updated.
- That the CCMM-CSN begin a process of considering the place and meaning of work in our lives. (This recommendation will be debated in the plenary session.)

OUR HEART BEATS

FOR GRASSROOTS EDUCATION

The recommendations to the Central Council's 35th Convention are very ambitious! We think that carrying them out will require the implementation of a vast program of grassroots education. Sources of right-wing propaganda are proliferating. Since the 1990s, lobbies representing the interests of employers and right-wing think tanks have expanded at a dizzying pace. We have to develop solid arguments to counter this propaganda, make our values better known and solidly entrench our demands in the labour movement. During the student struggle, the solid media presence of the Institut de recherche et d'information socio-économique (IRIS – a progressive socio-economic research and infor-

mation institute) provided good counter-arguments to right-wing ideas. As well, the success of theme evenings and conferences organized by the Central Council show that there is a strong interest in learning more about the basic social and political problems besetting society today. Through these activities, we were able to reach people who don't come to general assembles, and even people outside the Central Council.

We think that we can do even better, and we would like to increase participation by members of unions affiliated with the Central Council and improve the transmission of information. The vast round of meetings with unions undertaken by the Central Council executive since the fall of 2012 is part of this approach and should be continued throughout the next three years. We should also see to optimizing new communications tools put in place during the past mandate, like the Facebook page. Social and political education offer a better grasp of the issues that concern us. In short, it helps us better understand and assert why our heart beats on the left!

RECOMMENDATION SECTION 6

Considering the need to develop a message and arguments to counter neo-liberal propaganda;

and considering the threats to the gains made by the women's struggle and the distance that women still have to go in order to achieve full equality;

and considering the success of the Central Council theme evenings and conferences;

Be it resolved:

 That the CCMM-CSN set in motion a social and political education project in co operation with its partners, including IRIS and any other partner considered appropriate, and incorporate gender-based analysis in its social and political training activities.

²¹ Laroche M. and Charest J. (2011) Les logiques de la représentation et de l'action patronale au Québec: premiers constats, presentation to the CSN Confederal Council, March 11, 2011.

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