

ULTIMATUM

THE ASSOCIATION FOR SOLIDARITY AMONG STUDENT UNIONS (ASSÉ) NEWSPAPER

October 2004, volume 4, number 2

The Right to Education: Massacred for 15 Years

Gabriel Dumas, Collège de Sherbrooke Student

Red or blue, the government has bled students white for almost 15 years with numerous cuts and reforms that accentuate the cycle of student indebtedness.

Cutbacks since 1990

Since NAFTA came into effect in 1994, over 2 billion dollars have been cut from education. The largest cutback, which was announced at the 1996 socio-economic forum, amounted to 700 million dollars. Almost all of these cuts can be attributed to the Parti Québécois (PQ).

In addition to student debt and a diminished quality of education, what are the impacts of these cutbacks? It is clear that this series of budgetary reductions favours partnerships with the private sector. The equation is simple: if public funding diminishes, CEGEPs and universities will look elsewhere, be it in advertizing, creating foundations to seek private investment, signing exclusivity contracts, or in raising tuition fees for international students. And this is without even mentioning the proliferation of ancillary fees, commonly known as "mushroom" fees.

The government has endlessly repeated that it is short on funds and must, therefore, cut in education. Although there are surely

several reasons why the government lacks money, a principal cause is the fact that while 90% of taxes are presently collected from the general population, only 10% are drawn from companies (1). If the government, therefore, is missing money, this is because it has made a choice and elected to make the people pay, as opposed to the corporations who get richer and richer.

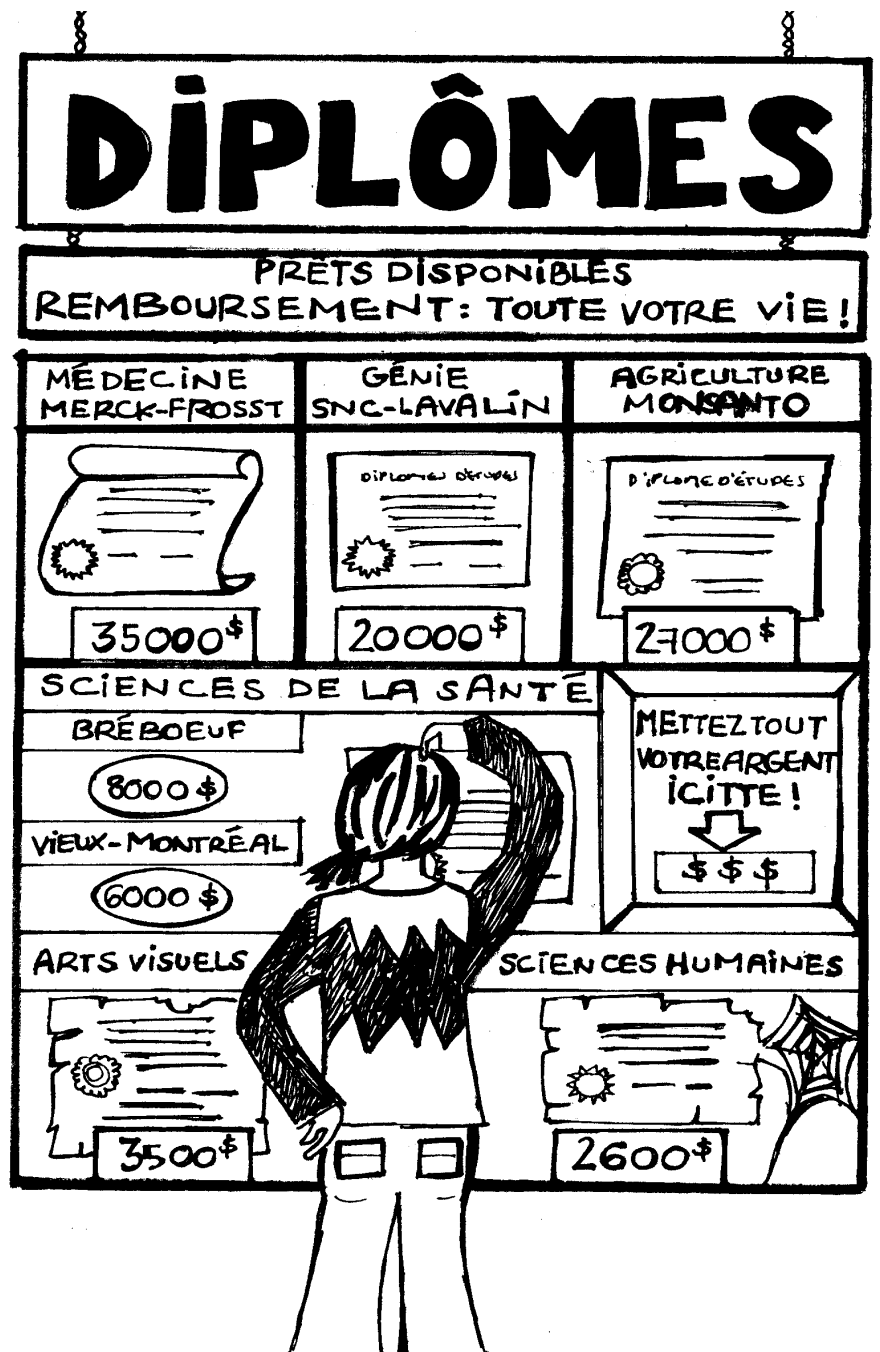
Reforms

Following cuts of more than 2 billion dollars in education in the 90s, several reforms (leading to the privatization of educational institutions) were instituted. Here are some examples:

Success Plans

Originating during the Parti Québécois-orchestrated Sommet du Québec et de la Jeunesse (SQJ), Student Success Plans aim to address the current graduation rate, which is lower than ever at the CEGEP level. Their objective is to increase the rate of students who graduate and ensure that diplomas are obtained by a given deadline. Instead, the impacts include a decrease in the quality of education, the selection of students using elitist criteria and the incorporation of a market logic into the heart of the CEGEPs.

Continued on page 6



Ultimatum au gouvernement

Congrès de l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante (ASSÉ)

Nous, membres de l'ASSÉ réuni-e-s en Congrès, considérons que depuis la dernière décennie, le gouvernement n'a fait que creuser la tombe de notre système d'éducation public: les coupures et les réformes s'accumulent et laissent de plus en plus la place au secteur privé, sapant ainsi les fondements de notre éducation. Considérant que ces reculs, notamment la dernière réforme de l'Aide financière aux études, sont une importante entrave à l'accessibilité aux études post-secondaires, l'Association pour une solidarité syndicale étudiante exige du gouvernement :

Qu'il abolisse rétroactivement la dernière réforme de l'Aide financière aux études et retire la coupure de 103 millions;

Qu'il reconnaisse l'autonomie des étudiantes et étudiants dès le départ du domicile familial;

Que la politique sur les frais de scolarité des étudiantes internationales et des étudiants internationaux soit rigoureusement appliquée; et qu'en ce sens, soient condamnées les hausses unilatérales perpétrées par les universités McGill et Concordia.

De plus, considérant que le réseau collégial est lui aussi grandement menacé par les projets de décentralisation du gouvernement libéral, l'ASSÉ revendique du gouvernement:

Qu'il renonce à tout projet pouvant nuire à l'intégrité du réseau d'enseignement public collégial afin d'en empêcher la privatisation et d'en garantir l'accessibilité.

Ces revendications s'inscrivent dans la perspective d'obtenir une éducation gratuite et de qualité ainsi qu'un régime de l'Aide financière aux études qui éliminerait l'endettement étudiant par la conversion des prêts en bourses et qui garantirait un niveau de vie au-dessus du seuil de la pauvreté à tous les étudiants et toutes les étudiantes, y compris les étudiantes internationales et étudiants internationaux.

Dans le cas où ces revendications ne seraient pas satisfaites le 23 octobre, l'ASSÉ prendra tous les moyens nécessaires pour défendre le DROIT à l'éducation!

EDITORIAL

Calling for a Strike Campaign

The Executive Council of the Association for a Solidarity Among Student Unions (ASSÉ)

The last decade was an immense step backwards for the right to an accessible and free public education. "Unfreezing" tuition fees, which was catastrophic for accessibility, was followed by cutbacks of hundreds of millions of dollars in the post-secondary education budget. Added to these were measures which foster privatization and additional increases in costs through the implementation of ancillary fees.

But the state has not finished its demolition of the public education system. It has come back again this year with a cutback of \$103 million in the student financial aid budget. And it has even allowed Concordia and McGill universities to dramatically increase fees for their international students. Finally, the state continues to set the stage for private corporations to fill their bellies and profit immensely from the dismantlement of the CEGEP network.

A landmark year

As we cannot repeat often enough, this year is a landmark year for the right to education and the student movement. First, we must use all necessary means and mobilizations to demand that cuts and reforms to the Financial Aid regime be retracted. This must be done for the simple reason that these are direct attacks on the economic conditions of student beneficiaries, too many of whom live on the poverty line. And this is happening in one of the richest societies in the world! Stopping this attack is, in itself, a sufficient reason for a large mobilization. But there is more: If the tables are not turned this year, we can expect that the process of privatization and setbacks in terms of accessibility to education will continue to accelerate in the near future.

Effectively, the setbacks of the past few years figure clearly in a plan for the privatization of post-secondary education and of the financial aid system. Little by little, conditions which favour complete privatization are being established. From the advertising invasion in schools, to private funding of research and fragmented diplomas such as the AEC (attestations d'études secondaires) - which are modeled according to the needs of the market at the expense of academic training - the measures put into place this year leave us fearing the worst.

One recent example is the fact that the total amount granted to financial aid beneficiaries is, from now on, administered by private financial institutions. Another is a modification to the method used to calculate student loan allocations, which now varies according to tuition fees which the beneficiary must pay. This measure gives us reason to fear a liberalization of tuition fees, as it allows the government to claim that students have the financial resources necessary to respond to an eventual hike in the fees required by their respective institutions because their loans would rise proportionally (1). Similarly, and not surprisingly, the government is threatening to decentralize the collegial network, which would eventually permit CEGEPs to independently define the tuition fees they charge students. These are but a few examples which were not generated by the overly-fertile imagination of paranoiacs, but rather from the working documents of organizations which

are very influential to governments, such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

In the end, both the events to come and the question of whether the process of privatization and cutbacks can be halted depend on the capacity of the student movement to strike back. This year, therefore, is also a landmark for the student movement, and we must call for a student unionism which will be capable of defending students' true interests. If this is our objective, we cannot sit around waiting and hoping while setbacks accumulate year after year. A movement which stays passive when faced with attacks will find itself discredited and increasingly unable to mobilize the student population to defend its own rights, although the need to do so grows stronger every day. We must also keep in mind that letting these attacks slide by means that activists will be forced to work even more to compensate for a hike in fees or a drop in bursaries, reducing their capacity to take action. On the other hand, succeeding in organizing to reverse this year's counter-reforms would revive the student movement, renewing our tradition of fighting student unions!

The fact that a large number of students are directly touched by an increase in debt creates a situation which is highly conducive to a counter-attack. If we add this to the rumble in the unions and social movements - plus the Liberals' attempts to improve their reputation through their widely-denounced empty consultative forums - we see a social context which calls for a large popular mobilization. And the student movement must participate, if not initiate, this movement.

A strike to defend our rights!

In the situation we have found ourselves in, we must fight for the right to education, the consolidation of ASSÉ and the construction of a student movement worthy of its name, regardless of what happens. In order to be successful, our counter-attack may require a campaign for an unlimited strike. The history of the student movement has demonstrated on more than one occasion that a strike is an effective tactic to force the government to step back and to make our gains (2).

A strike is a tool with which students can block the workings of the system within which they evolve at its root. It forces both the local administrators and the state to take the demands of the student population into consideration. As the administrators and the state hold an interest in ensuring that courses continue, they will cede easily if students sustain their strike action long enough. The fact that a term has never been cancelled due to a decision taken by administrators or the state demonstrates that local authorities and governments want to see terms end



and courses restart. At the same time, a strike is also a means of organizing, gathering, debating, and studying certain problems. In short, we can give ourselves the time and space to share and to define our political direction both before and during a strike.

We must respond to those who claim that we have to inform ourselves before we act by restating that we have been collecting information on the dismantlement of the right to education for years.

We began before the beginning of the term, and we will continue to inform ourselves during that campaign to follow, and everyone must begin to do the same in their own CEGEP or university. Taking action is the most effective way to learn and be informed!

We must remind those who say that people are sick of hearing about the strike that there has not been a general strike in Québec for eight years, despite all the setbacks that the right to education has faced during this time. We must affirm that before claiming that students don't want to strike, we have to let them channel their anger and create spaces which allow them to express and develop their opinions on the issue. In doing so, we have nothing to lose but everything to win!

In the face of this sabotage, we can't stand as simple spectators with our arms crossed, saying that we want to defend our interests without really having the heart to do so. We have to act! We have to organize and build a real balance of power before the state. We must begin preparing for an unlimited general strike immediately in case the Charest government fails to take our demands and ultimatum seriously. This is not merely taking a leap of faith; it is proof of our seriousness and resolution in defending of our rights and putting our demands forward. And we will take all necessary means to ensure that they are won!

1 This implies that each CEGEP or university would be free to set the tuition fees that it would demand from its students and the state would no longer impose the tuition fee freeze.

2 Information on the seven general strikes in the history of the student movement can be found in the *Recueil de textes sur l'histoire du mouvement étudiant Québécois* brochure produced by ASSÉ.

W O M E N

Feminist Struggles at ASSÉ

Marie-Michèle Whitlock, Undergraduate Student at UQAM

At the last congress in Sherbrooke, a plan of action was adopted and several mandates were defined to integrate the feminist struggle into the student movement. But the emphasis was placed on the task of mobilizing to complete the ASSÉ Women's Committee. It was decided that ASSÉ members will actively work to promote the involvement of women in the Women's Committee with the objective of filling the three vacant positions by the end of the term.

Why is it important for ASSÉ to take a position and define action plans which are pro-feminist?

The feminist struggle must be integrated into all social struggles. Women are often found at the bottom of the social ladder. They are the most indebted by the loans and bursaries system, they are more likely to experience precarious employment, they are most often on social assistance; in short, women are the poorest class in our society. This class requires good social services such as education, health and employment insurance, and this is why social movements must make it a duty to integrate a feminist perspective into their actions, demands and struggles. Calling for a solidarity with all social struggles, ASSÉ has always proclaimed the importance of students taking a position on subjects which touch social spheres outside of education. Women are also students whose rights and interests need to be defended. It is, therefore, important for student associations to be familiar with feminist demands and promote the fight against patriarchy.

The ASSÉ Women's Committee

The ASSÉ Women's Committee is elected at the Congress and has more importance and power than the other committees. It holds a right to propose and support in all bodies (the Congress and Interregional Council). The structure was adopted at ASSÉ so that students would be well-represented and their rights well-defended. The Women's Committee must produce, in collaboration with the Information Committee, educative materials and organize actions which put forward feminist demands together with the Mobilization Committees and the Regional Councils. In order to be on the Committee, which has three open positions, you must be a student member of ASSÉ (see the Statutes and Regulations on our website).

How can we fill these positions and build a local women's committee?

It is clear that filling the open positions on the ASSÉ Women's Committee would be easier if

there were women's committees in all member student associations. Unfortunately, this is still not the case as there are presently only women's committees in two ASSÉ members. Promoting the national Women's Committee must involve a local mobilization to build local committees.

While there is no shortage of original ideas in our demands to attract people's interest, the principles at the base of the mobilization and action rest on decisive premises. In order for women to want to get involved in women's committees, they must both relate to the demands and - above all - be very motivated. It is through organizing demonstrations and feminist actions that students become interested in the committees.

It is, therefore, important that all local associations continue to mobilize and organize pro-feminist actions and activities (conferences, presentations, actions, delegations to loan and bursary offices, denouncing sexist advertisements, etc.), even if a women's committee does not yet exist. The committee will not build itself alone and everyone must get their hands dirty - men included!

Does all this work bring about any results?

ASSÉ has existed for three years and, since it was created, has adopted measures which promote women's involvement. Examples include alternating men-women speaking turns, the policy of "feminizing" when writing and speaking, and non-mixed caucuses. We have already seen that the number of women representatives in delegations is growing, women's committees are being built at the local level and a feminist perspective is increasingly integrated into actions. We can compare ourselves to other student organizations (FECQ-FEUQ), where no measures have been taken and feminist demands are far from being heard, the participation of women is weak, demands and action plans with a feminist perspective are overturned, and all the work is relegated to women. The results of the measures we have taken and the integration of a feminist view in the struggle remains, however, difficult to evaluate as the process is long-term. At the same time, we can already see positive results after just a few years. It is crucial to persevere and essential for students to continue to struggle to defend their rights! Get involved in the ASSÉ Women's Committee and your local committees!

The following are some of the mandates which were adopted at the last ASSÉ Congress, held on September 24th and 25th in Sherbrooke:

1. Local associations must be encouraged to include an item on "women" in their general assemblies when revising their demands and preparing a plan of action and its follow-up.
2. ASSÉ members should actively work to promote the participation of women in the ASSÉ Women's Committee with the objective of filling the three vacant positions by the end of the term.
3. Every ASSÉ structure must prepare an item on "women" and local associations should be encouraged to do the same.
4. A "women's" page should be added to the ASSÉ website.
5. ASSÉ should invite all local associations to put committees into place to organize events and debates on feminism and to mobilize for the 8th of March 2005. These committees should be invited to coordinate their activities with each other.
6. For the next ASSÉ Regular Congress, the ASSÉ Executive Council and member associations must work to develop a position on the "International Masculinist Congress" to be held at the Université du Québec à Montréal in the spring of 2005.
7. The ASSÉ Executive Council will issue a press release in support of actions at the Pro-Choice Demonstration on October 3rd in Montreal.

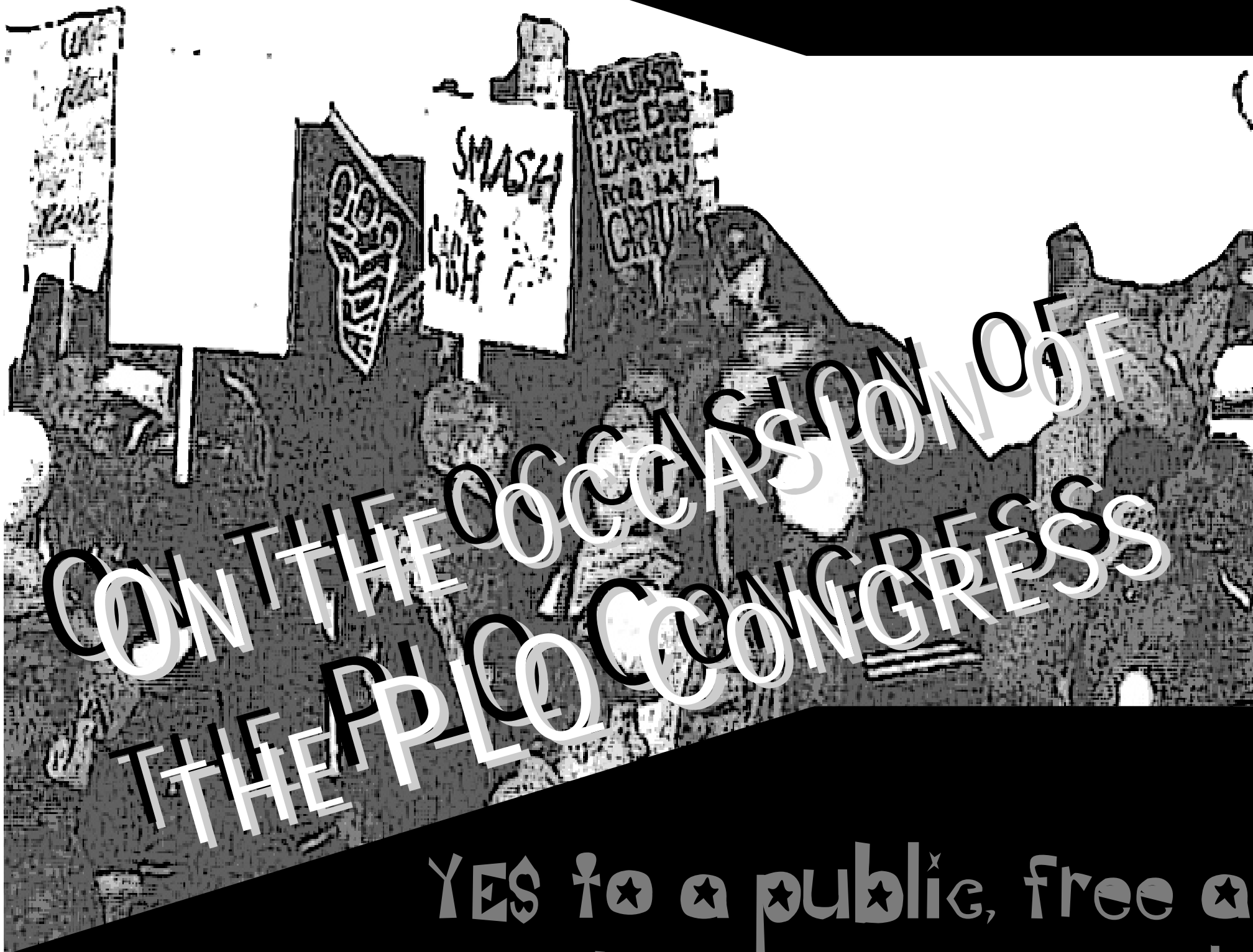


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In response to the latest cuts to the Student Financial Services
of the dismantlement of

National Day November



YES to a public, free and
NON to the fierce cutback

INFO:

*For more information, contact
your local student association!*

Financial Aid regime and in the face of the threat
of the collegial network...

of Actions

per 19th



and quality education!
to loans and bursaries!

The Association for Solidarity Among
Student Unions (ASSÉ)

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NATIONAL

Continued from page 1

This works as follows: CEGEPs must produce an analysis of their particular situation which explains the barriers to their success and determines measures to be taken as a remedy. The application of success plans varies according to the institution. At the Collège de Sherbrooke, there are "success contracts". The way they work is simple -students who fail more than 3 of their courses in a term find themselves on a "contract" for the following term. Afterwards, if they fail a course the following term, they are automatically expelled. And this is supposed to be an incentive for success!

Performance contracts

Performance contracts were also ratified at the SQJ. Performance contracts oblige universities to reach certain targets in order to obtain a conditional component of their funding. One of the obligations of these contracts, for example, is to attain a balanced budget. The effects are devastating for universities which lack crucial public funding. As expenditures must be reduced at all costs, we see either a reduction in services or a greater private sector presence.

A particularly worrisome element of these contracts is that the established objectives must be quantifiable and measurable. The problem is that many aspects of the quality of education - such as the development of critical thought or the diversity of courses offered - are difficult to quantify.

The qualitative aspects of education are therefore supplanted, bringing us closer to a vision of education which resembles the management of a company instead of a service essential to society. Performance contracts also promote the rationalization of courses. In concrete terms, this entails the disappearance of courses which are not heavily attended, an increase in the number of students per class or the fusion of certain courses.

Decentralization and "autonomy"

The ultimate objective of decentralization (formerly referred to as "habilitation", or "autonomy" in French) of CEGEPs is their privatization, which entails the destruction of the collegial network. This implies that the responsibility for issuing diplomas should be allocated to CEGEPs. Presently, decentralization consists in granting more power to the Boards of Administration of each CEGEP, raising a series of problems which include:

- The fact that the value of a diploma would vary according to the establishment;
- A fierce competition between CEGEPs to be recognized as the best;
- A variation in ancillary fees (frais de toute autre nature) according to the national ranking of a CEGEP;
- A specialization in CEGEPs (programmes would conform to the needs of regional enterprises and markets).

Increased Student Debt

Student indebtedness has not ceased to grow since the beginning of the 1990s. Today, 80% of the university student population and 20% of CEGEP students live on the poverty line, while 10% of them live in extreme poverty at CEGEP. One of the factors which contributed to the increase in student indebtedness was the explosion of university tuition fees, which had not augmented since 1968 (the impact of close to \$2 billion in cutbacks in education...).

What follows are some statistics on the rise in student indebtedness throughout the years. A table from Statistics Canada (3) shows us that the average debt of an undergraduate student was \$6,400 in 1982, \$10,260 in 1986, \$10,800 in 1990, \$14,461 in 1995 and \$21,200 in 2001. Other figures, also from Statistics Canada (4), provide us with a clear view of the gravity of the situation: In 2000, the average amount of debt generated from all sources upon graduation attained \$12,700 at the CEGEP level, \$20,500 at the undergraduate level, \$20,300 at the graduate level and \$23,900 at the doctoral level. These figures, of course, only offer us a partial vision of the nature of student indebtedness; for more information, visit the ASSÉ website or the office of your local student association.

In the end, we can see that the Parti Québécois (PQ) and the Parti libéral du Québec (PLQ) have taken great pleasure in shattering accessibility to education and driving the student population into debt for over 15 years in order to please the Conseil du patronat. This is why we believe that the time to organize to put an end to this massacre and demand a massive reinvestment in education is now!

1 BERNARD, Michel, LAUZON, Léo-Paul, Finances publiques, profits privés, Éditions du Renouveau Québécois - Chaire d'études socio-économiques de l'UQAM, 1996, p.47 (of 42)

2 Ministère de l'éducation du Québec, Indicateurs de l'éducation, édition 1996, 2000 édition, 2002 édition, 2003 édition, 2004 édition, Chapter on l'aide financière aux études et les droits de scolarité.

3 Statistics Canada, Enquête nationale auprès des étudiants, 1982, 1986, 1990 and 1995 (taken from Ross Finnie, Les prêts aux étudiantes et étudiants au Canada : analyse empirique des emprunts et du remboursement depuis les années 80)

4 Statistics Canada, Class of 2000: Profile of postsecondary graduates and student debt N 81-595-MIF2004016 in the catalogue (free publication)

PLAN OF ACTION, ADOPTED AT THE LAST ASSÉ CONGRESS (OCTOBER 24TH IN MONTREAL)

4.0 Bilan des mobilisations

4.2 Manifestation du 14 octobre 2004

1. Motion de félicitations au Conseil exécutif de l'ASSÉ et au Comité ad hoc pour l'organisation de la manifestation du 14 octobre 2004.

6.0 Plan d'action

6.2 Délibérante

1. Attendu que, l'éducation publique, gratuite, laïque, de qualité, accessible et non-discriminatoire est un droit et non un privilège; Attendu que, les attaques perpétrées par l'État cette année et depuis près de 15 ans menacent le droit à l'éducation puisqu'elles augmentent l'endettement étudiant, limitent l'accessibilité aux études post-secondaire, favorisent la privatisation et réduisent la qualité de l'enseignement;

Attendu que, le 27 septembre dernier, l'ASSÉ a lancé un ultimatum au gouvernement afin qu'il mette fin à ces attaques et annule les reculs subits et que cet ultimatum est demeuré sans réponse au moment de son échéance fixée au 23 octobre 2004;

Attendu que, l'ASSÉ reconnaît l'importance absolue de faire halte aux récentes attaques aux droits à l'éducation;

Attendu que, 40 ans d'histoire du mouvement étudiant démontrent que seul la construction d'un rapport de force face à l'État peut permettre de bloquer les attaques de ce dernier et l'obtention de gains;

Attendu que, la passivité du mouvement syndical étudiant face aux reculs des dernières années deviendra éventuellement, si elle persiste, synonyme de la non-existence de ce mouvement;

Attendu que, notre lutte s'inscrit en solidarité avec toutes les luttes pour une vraie justice sociale et de résistance face au néo-libéralisme; En ce sens,

Il est proposé que, au sortir du présent congrès, l'ASSÉ lance un appel à la grève générale illimitée pour l'hiver 2005 afin que les revendications qu'elle a formulées sous forme d'ultimatum au gouvernement soient satisfaites si elles ne le sont pas déjà.

Ainsi,

Que les associations étudiantes membres de l'ASSÉ ainsi que les associations non-membres se joignant à la campagne de grève tiennent des assemblées générales afin d'obtenir des mandats de grève pour la session d'hiver 2005.

Que la grève soit déclenchée lorsqu'un plancher de 7 associations étudiantes ayant votées la grève aura été atteint.

Que l'exécutif de l'ASSÉ émette un communiqué de presse pour annoncer le déclenchement de la campagne de grève le plus rapidement possible.

2. D'inviter les associations étudiantes qui ne l'avaient pas déjà fait à lancer parmi leurs membres le débat sur l'opportunité d'une grève générale à l'hiver contre la conversion des bourses en prêts, qu'à ce titre elles :

- organisent des événements d'information et de débat sur le sujet;
- diffusent du matériel d'information en préparation de ces débats.

3. Que l'ASSÉ appelle les associations locales à tenir des actions régionales et locales en appui à l'ultimatum d'ici le déclenchement de la grève.

4. De la même façon que l'ASSÉ adopte sur ses bases autonomes ses positions, revendications et plans d'action;

De la même façon que l'ASSÉ prend aujourd'hui l'initiative de lancer un appel à la grève générale illimitée et qu'elle investira ses ressources et énergies afin de diffuser cet appel et de mettre en marche le mouvement de grève;

L'ASSÉ conserve, une fois la grève déclenchée, toute son autonomie et toute son initiative quant aux appels à lancer concernant la direction du mouvement de grève, quant à la réponse à faire aux éventuelles offres du gouvernement, etc.

continued on page 7

Year	Fee (\$)
1968 - 1989	581
1990 - 1991	984
1991 - 1992	1350
1993 - 1994	1630
1994 - 1998	1682
1999 - 2000	1690
2001 - 2002	1691
2002 - 2003	1851
2003 - 2004	1862

NATIONAL

continued from page 6

Toutefois, comme à l'habitude, l'ASSÉ invitera les associations non-membres à participer aux débats qui auront lieu en son sein concernant ces enjeux.

De plus, dans l'éventualité où l'ASSÉ recevrait du gouvernement une invitation à négocier l'issue de la grève, elle inviterait les associations non-membres en grève, partageant la même plate-forme de revendications, à désigner une délégation pour entendre à ses côtés les offres du gouvernement.

Bien entendu, de la même façon que la grève ne se mettra en branle que par la décision des assemblées générales et des associations locales, il reviendra toujours à celles-ci d'en décider l'issue, indépendamment des affiliations nationales.

Au-delà de l'actuel mouvement de grève, afin de construire à long terme un solide rapport de force face au gouvernement et ainsi défendre adéquatement le droit à l'éducation, nous invitons les associations non-membres à rejoindre les rangs de l'ASSÉ. Nous croyons que la mission politique du mouvement étudiant ne peut se réaliser pleinement dans l'improvisation ponctuelle d'une coordination nationale de ses forces, qu'elle sera au contraire bien mieux assurée par un travail continu dans le cadre d'une organisation aux orientations progressistes et misant sur une conscientisation et une mobilisation massive et soutenue de la population étudiante.

5. Dans l'optique d'en déclenchement d'une grève générale du mouvement étudiant à la session d'hiver;

Considérant que, pour cette campagne, l'ASSÉ devra unir toutes ses forces afin de la mener jusqu'au bout;

- Que les associations étudiantes membres ainsi que l'exécutif mettent tout en oeuvre afin de trouver des militants et militantes pour canaliser les forces vers les structures les plus susceptibles de diffuser le plan d'action et d'élargir le potentiel d'organisation et de mobilisation : en priorité les Comités journal, information, femmes et formation.

- Que les associations membres et non-membres mettent tout en oeuvre afin de former des comités de mobilisation locaux efficaces afin de diffuser le plan d'action et atteindre un niveau maximal d'étudiants et d'étudiantes informé-e-s et convaincu-e-s de la pertinence de la grève générale illimitée.

- Que la journée de mobilisation du 19 novembre soit l'occasion de diffuser un journal spécial " Pour la construction d'un rapport de force : Un syndicalisme étudiant de lutte. "

- Que le 27 novembre 2004 se tienne un Congrès d'une journée ayant pour objectif de faire des élections sur les différents comités de travail, de prévoir un camp de formation et un Congrès sur la grève pour la rentrée de la session d'hiver 2005, de discuter d'un plan d'action de grève pour cette même session et de discuter des États généraux du mouvement étudiant.

- Que ce Congrès soit suivi d'une journée de formation sur le travail des comités pour ensuite en dégager les priorités et objectifs de travail en regard du plan d'action de grève.

- Que soit produit un journal sur la grève pour la rentrée d'hiver 2005.

6. Que la journée nationale d'actions du 19 novembre 2004 consiste en une manifestation nationale à Montréal à 15h contre le Congrès du Parti Libéral du Québec. Que l'ASSÉ invite les associations étudiantes à participer à la manifestation du 20 novembre.

7. La création d'un comité ad hoc visant la planification logistique et technique de la journée nationale d'actions du 19 novembre 2004 et de la manifestation du 20 novembre 2004, avec comme candidat-e-s : Alexandre Ouellet de l'AECS, Mathieu Jobin de l'AEMPS-UQÀM, Cylia Themens et Jérôme Charaoui de l'AECSL, Marc-André Faucher du RÉÉSUM, Blandine Juchs de l'AFESH-UQÀM, Guillaume Constantineau de l'AGES et François Carbonneau de l'AGECFXG.

8. Que la manifestation passe par le Palais des Congrès et mette en valeur le discours de l'ASSÉ sur l'aide financière aux études, pour ensuite aller rejoindre la manifestation de la CLAC au Square-Phillips à 17h.

9. Que l'ASSÉ invite les étudiants et les étudiantes à porter un bout de tissu rose pour signaler " la fin de la vie en rose " lors de la manifestation du 19 novembre.



the student's point of view...

«...the CEGEP of Saint-Jérôme aimed to cease all collaboration with the student association and even act as a barrier to the realization of its projects. »

Illegal Attacks Against the Collège de Saint-Jérôme Student Union

Julie Lachance, Undergraduate Student in Social Sciences at the Université de Laval

Since its recent accreditation, the General Student Association of Saint-Jérôme (AGES) has been subject to reprisals from an administration which is frustrated by having lost control of students organizing for their rights. The hostilities began the day when the General Assembly voted to cancel classes in an act of political protest against the Charest government on April 14th, 2004. Although the decision was legitimate, it was not recognized by the CEGEP administration. From that moment on, the CEGEP of Saint-Jérôme inflicted nothing but inadmissible, illegitimate and even illegal cheap shots against the student population.

Over the course of the summer, the CEGEP evicted the student association from its office without any prior notice and attempted to relocate it to a space which was inadequate for its needs and those of its committees. Angry at having found their office equipment left unsupervised in the hallways, the students decided to occupy their former office. Following numerous incidents of verbal harassment on the part of the administration, the occupiers were evicted through a brutal police intervention. A series of offenses followed, proving that the CEGEP of Saint-Jérôme aimed to cease all collaboration with the student association and even act as a barrier to the realization of its projects.

On September 1st, 2004, the final shot was made: The administration, in violation of a law on the accreditation and financing of student associations, decided to freeze the AGES' funding. On the basis of not recognizing the legitimacy of the student Board of Directors, which was duly elected in accordance with the rules, the CEGEP launched a smear campaign against the association - clearly an anti-union and authoritarian action.

Using all possible means to defend their rights, students held a general assembly on October 6th which ratified the election results and led to the adoption of a strong position against an agreement between the AGES and the CEGEP. Despite the fact that the administration, through its Director of Student Life, demonstrated a greater openness following these decisions, the student organization must remain vigilant to ensure that the students' rights are respected. In this perspective, during a Board meeting, the AGES made a decision to propose an eventual affiliation with ASSÉ at the next general assembly. In this way, the AGES will participate in building a balance of power vis-a-vis the government and the local administration while preventing a similar situation from arising again.



REMINDER



EVENTS

ON THE OCCASION OF THE PLQ CONGRESS

National day of action

MONTREAL / NOVEMBER 19TH / 3:00 PM

NATIONAL

Actions at UQAM

Tiphanie Allain, Undergraduate Student in
Political Sciences at UQAM

At UQAM, resistance is mounting against the cuts in loans and bursaries. A pan-UQAM mobilization committee was created at the initiative of the Association Facultaire des Sciences Humaines de l'UQAM (AFESH). Material has been distributed to inform the student population of the impacts of budgetary cuts of \$103 million to the student financial aid programme.

The mobilization committee decided to perform theatre activities to better reach out to the student population. The first action was a toll at the UQAM entrance which represented the fact that university is expensive and that now, more than ever, students fall into debt if they strive to earn a diploma. A skit was organized with students disguised as police officers and bourgeois. Others played poor students who were refused access to university. The action allowed us to distribute many flyers and newsletters. The theatre also gave us an opportunity to establish a better contact with students, who were more interested in receiving information.

The second action organized by the committee was a "baptism" of the financial aid office, which is now named the "student debt office". A funeral march took place on September 29th at noon, where another theatre action was organized with a (fake) priest, funeral candles and slogans. A hundred people participated in the action, which unraveled with much enthusiasm.

A study day is planned at UQAM on October 13th. The theme is the "Liberal Offensive" and the reform of the loans and bursaries system. Creative activities are planned, as well as a panel and workshops where speakers have been invited. The day will end with a plenary, followed by a bed-in. The objective of the day is to mobilize and prepare for a demonstration against the Liberal Government's National Forum, which will take place in Québec. A departure to the demonstration, organized by ASSÉ, is scheduled at 8:30 pm from UQAM.

Other actions will follow, and UQAM will mobilize and organize against the Québec Liberal Party (PLQ) Congress on November 19th. It is time to fight the cutbacks and strike back!

What is ASSÉ

"ASSE" is the acronym for the Association for Solidarity Among Student Unions. It groups together provincial student associations at both the college (CÉGEP) and university levels. ASSÉ aims to gather students across the province to call for:

A Free and Public Education

For ASSÉ, education must be free because it is a right and not a privilege. As such, post-secondary education must not be reserved for an elite but accessible to all individuals, regardless of their class, origins, gender, sexual orientations or skin colour.

Education must be public because it is the role of society to ensure education and training for all. School must be a place for educating citizens and not reserved strictly for service-oriented training. It is also the responsibility of the government to fully finance education – and we have a government that has run from its responsibilities since it butchered almost two million dollars from the Québec education budget in 1994.

No counter-reforms

In keeping consistent with the neoliberal reforms raging in all four corners of the globe, the government of Québec has carried out a series of counter-reforms in post-secondary education since 1993. From the Robillard Reforms to the Legault Plans, the State has sought to instil competition between different CÉGEPs and universities in order to create a market for education. These changes fit very well into the demands of international capitalist institutions such as the OECD, the IMF and the World Bank – as well as the numerous existing and planned free-trade agreements (NAFTA, FTAA, MAI, EU, etc.).

In practice, these attacks take the form of performance contracts at uni-

versities and success and graduation plans at CÉGEPs. The direct effects of these measures are cutbacks and reforms in university programs (reductions in course banks, the abolition of programmes, rising professor/student ratios, etc.) and habilitation in CÉGEPs (destruction of the college network, diploma rates, increases in AECs, etc.). The general framework for diplomas is being shattered in order to emphasize overly-specialized training.

Militant unionism

For ASSÉ, students are young workers in training. It is from this theoretical base that militant student groups have organized on union bases in Québec since the 1960s. The base of union organizing is the General Assembly (GA). This is why the GAs held by student union members mandate and delegate comrades to the ASSÉ Congress, its highest body. The Inter-Regional Council, the Regional Councils, the Executive Committee, the Women's Committee and the different Working Committees are all found under the Congress. The work of these bodies must be based on training, informing, raising awareness and mobilizing. All members must feel involved.

Another fundamental principle of militant unionism is that a battle must be fought in order to win. There is an irreconcilable antagonism between the interests and needs of students and the will of local administrators and the Ministry of Education. Demands cannot be met without a shift in the balance of power. Negotiating without building this shift can only lead to failure. Practices like lobbying, co-managing and concerting lead automatically to a collaboration and an integration into the machinery of the state. This strategies caused incredible damage during the 1990s (tuition unfreezes, zero deficit, the Robillard Reform, Legault Plan, etc.).

TO JOIN US

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