

en Action

7th Convention
June 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, 2005

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Reasserting our collective power

It was with great pride and tremendous emotion that outgoing President Jennie Skene, opened the 7th Convention. Faithful to its mission of reporting on the decision-making bodies, *FIIQ en Action* presents a summary of the Executive Committee report delivered by the President to the delegates, along with extensive excerpts from her address¹.

The means to live up to our commitments

The President then paid tribute to the solidarity shown by the nurses who, through special dues, all shared the costs of the penalties imposed by the Bouchard Government after the historic nurses' strike in the summer of 1999.

"This wasn't always easy, but the FIIQ, with its unions, succeeded in ensuring that all nurses, regardless of whether they were on the picket lines, in essential services, at work or on vacation, made the same financial contribution to the struggle waged to defend their rights and improve their living and working conditions."

Thanking the representatives of Canadian nurses' unions, Jennie Skene recalled that these additional dues also made it possible to repay nearly \$2 million loaned by our Canadian colleagues to make up for the lack of cash flow in fall 1999.

Finally, discussing the issue of the financial resources necessary to meet the members' needs and expectations better, the President congratulated herself on the quality of the debates around the increase in dues at the June 2003 Convention. Adding her voice to that of the delegates, she reaffirmed their message.

"It is important to leave a legacy to future activists – a strong, credible, militant and determined organization with which the members identify."

Solid in solidarity

Making the connection with the 2001 Convention, the President began with a reminder that the members of the Executive Committee and the delegates were and still are convinced of the necessity for a federation that is solid in solidarity.

"Solid in solidarity, we said, for respect for human and social rights, to stand up to the Government, press our demands vigorously, and counter and get around the effects of unfair and antiunion legislation. Solid in solidarity, we repeated, to obtain better working conditions, obtain recognition of the value of our work, provide care under safe conditions, preserve our union rights, and obtain accessible, quality public services. Today, four years later, despite the Liberal tempest, we are still solid in solidarity," she declared.

Towards FIIQ TOMORROW

Reviewing the work performed under the approach known as FIIQ TOMORROW, an approach which sought to renew our union practice, the President recalled the delegates' commitment to adapt their organization better to the realities of the 21st century. Mentioning the consultations that marked certain reconsiderations of our methods, we recalled the three major points on which the Federation had to focus its efforts: union education, support for local union life and integration of feminist analysis into all of its issues.

"Let me tell you, without false modesty, that I am proud to observe that we were visionaries. [...] The current context obliges us to review and consolidate local union life. The best way to accomplish this is to educate the union reps who work at the local and regional levels. Likewise, isn't it normal that the question of women is the cornerstone of our organization, when this question will influence all the problems concerning its members? [...] Unfortunately, the actions foreseen in the FIIQ TOMORROW action plan could not all be carried out. Indeed, when we had just begun to implement these measures, Hurricane Charest hit Quebec. [...] Even Minister Rochon's reform had not succeeded in creating such upheaval in the labour movement so aggressively and in so short a time. Fortunately, FIIQ TOMORROW is still alive [...] and today, since we are a step ahead of the future [...] it is easier for us to shift from reactive to proactive mode."

Building on our legacy

Guaranteeing our organization's sustainability by providing it with a solid financial base, preparing the new generation of union activists and, above all, ensuring that those who will take over in the health-care institutions will benefit from satisfactory working and living conditions – these are major concerns for the FIIQ and its union reps.

"Let me emphasize the responsibility we have as experienced activists – not to say old activists – to prepare the new generation. For this purpose [...] it will not simply be a matter of transmitting our knowledge to the younger members, because without an injection of union values, this knowledge is useless. Nor will it be enough if they are simply able to acquire union experience by working alongside us. The important thing, in my opinion, is to share with them our passion for equality, freedom, solidarity, justice and peace. We endorse these constructive values of the Women's Global Charter for Humanity. [...] Our duty is to convey these values to young people [...] who in turn, in their own way, will know how to defend the living and working conditions of their fellow care professionals, while working for the betterment of humanity."

1 The complete Executive Committee report can be found on the FIIQ Web site at <www.fiiq.qc.ca>



Reasserting our collective power

Union struggles, social struggles: the same fight

Moreover, as Jennie Skene pointed out, unionism has always been obliged to go beyond the strict boundaries of the working world. On the one hand, the introduction of some types of protection was obtained by demands conveyed by social organizations other than unions. On the other hand, we need only remember the struggles waged by union organizations to realize that they have contributed in turn to the advancement of justice and equality in our societies. The President also referred to the interventions by the Federation and the alliances it has built to counter the effects of neoliberal globalization on Quebec society, on the working world and on the health and social services network.

“Since its creation,” the President insisted, “the FIIQ has always been involved in these dynamics of solidarity with all progressive groups. [...] It has developed closer ties with community groups, union organizations and women’s groups [...] not only in the battle against Bills 25, 30 and 31, but throughout these four years in coalitions to obtain a Quebec parental leave plan or demand a Quebec without poverty. [...] Over the years, the FIIQ has acquired credibility on social issues, particularly when unionism and mobilization are involved, but also, to a great extent, on the health-care system and its management and organization. It has also developed expertise, now well recognized, on the major economic treaties, particularly on the government procurement clauses. I take great pride in its alliances with feminist groups,” Jennie Skene reminded the delegates. “Today, the FIIQ has become an inevitable discussion partner in social debates.”

Investing in struggles

Making a common front with our partners in the struggle for social justice, the President drew the delegates’ attention to the financial problems experienced by community organizations in these times of neoliberal policies taken to the limit, even while their battles are often engines of social change.

“Times are hard for union organizations. But, believe me, life is even harder in the community sector. Many groups can barely make ends meet. It is up to organizations like ours to try to generate funds to ensure that they maintain their ability to be part of the struggle. [...] We are thinking of the Fédération des femmes du Québec, without which the Bread and Roses March, the 2005 World March of Women Against Poverty and Violence and the 2005 World March of Women would not have happened. We are also thinking of the major organizations fighting globalization and the small local organizations, without which the words “democracy” and “human dignity” would be meaningless. To all these organizations and many others, the FIIQ tips its hat and offers its support. [...]”

A non-negotiable right, pay equity

The President then discussed two major current issues: pay equity and the negotiation of working conditions. FIIQ en Action only presents a few excerpts here, given that these issues have been discussed regularly in our previous publications. Thus, concerning pay equity, the President deplored the recent allegations by the Chair of the Conseil du trésor.

“Her statements are an official attack on the very principle of equity. [...] With a shameful lack of consideration, Ms. Jérôme-Forget has announced that she would like all public and parapublic sector employees to pay for their pay equity from their normal salary increase. [...] It is clear to us that it would be scandalous to limit the financial effort to Government employees alone, when society as a whole should be absorbing the costs of equity. This social contribution, in my opinion, represents fair redress, because it is women who have subsidized this society for decades through their unpaid jobs.”

Discussing the negotiation of the collective agreement, Ms. Skene emphasized the importance that that this has acquired in the current context of deterioration of working conditions, despite the FIIQ’s introduction of measures, such as accelerated processing of workload complaints submitted to the Committee on Nursing, nursing workforce planning or local interventions on the organization of

work (ILOT), which produced and are still producing concrete results.

“Unfortunately, many employers refused and are still refusing to recognize the nurses as essential discussion partners when they have to identify solutions to workload, the staff shortage or a deficient organization of work. Given the employer attitude, the negotiation of a new collective agreement represents the ultimate weapon to correct the situation.”

Recalling the four consultations which served to prepare the draft collective agreement, the President emphasized the highly democratic nature of the process. Of course, the influx of new members from other professions, subject to different collective agreements, resulted in the revision of our draft agreement, but this harmonization has improved it, the President said.

“This is why today I can talk about a single draft collective agreement for all nursing and cardio-respiratory care professionals, and especially, an improved draft. The Negotiating Committee has also been enriched by the participation of delegates from the new professions now represented by the Federation. On the eve of the intensive negotiations, I wish good luck to these new members, to all the members of the Negotiating Committee and to the regional and local information and support officers, and assure you of the Executive Committee’s support.”

Discussing the issue of decentralization of the negotiations, the President insisted on the necessity to establish favourable and acceptable conditions, so that the local negotiation process does not put the members’ rights into question. She also pointed out that a proposed local negotiating structure has been developed and that training will be provided to the union reps responsible for these negotiations.

“No doubt [...] by mobilizing all of the nursing and cardio-respiratory care professionals, the union reps will be able to turn the Government’s decentralization weapon against it. [...] As in the past, the FIIQ intends to keep control of its negotiations, both regarding the central negotiations on the pension plan, salaries, job security, salary insurance, the grievance procedure or vacation pay, to name only a few, and regarding the local negotiations.”

A union organization in the feminine gender

Emphasizing the feminine nature of the membership in an organization 91% composed of women, the President, pointed out that this distinction that honours us is reflected in our vocabulary and especially in our interventions.

“The FIIQ can claim credit for being the first organization to address the problem of retirement from the feminine perspective. It has reminded society that, in the past, at a time when daycare did not exist and sharing of household tasks was an almost unknown phenomenon, nurses, like other women, had to put their careers on hold to raise their children or took part-time positions so that they could continue keeping an eye on the home. Calling for social and monetary recognition of women’s involvement in the children’s care and education, the Federation convinced its union partners and obtained substantial improvements: recognition of part-time employment as full-time for eligibility purposes, revaluation of pension credits, etc. In our draft collective agreement, you will find demands regarding the pension plans which, once again, account for this reality, such as the elimination of prejudice in the exercise of parental rights or the possibility of buying back reimbursed contribution periods,” she added.

The President invited the delegates to reread FIIQ en Action, as evidence of the importance attached to the struggle against violence against women in its articles concerning the adoption of the General Policy Against Violence in the Workplace, the distribution of the policy and the mini-posters on violence and the harm it does, workshops and training sessions, the development of a Workplace Safety Audit Guide, the safety audits and the involvement of the consultants with the local teams. She drew the delegates’ attention to the influence of our actions aimed at zero tolerance of violence in the workplace.

“Here’s one piece of good news. Many of our posters denouncing the different forms of violence in the workplace, which we had distributed in May 2002, are

still in place in the network's institutions three years later. In the current voting period, during which the visibility of union organizations in the health-care sector resulted in a "poster war", it is comforting to observe that the Federation has done useful work for all health professionals by addressing the problem of violence. Proof of this is that our posters are on display everywhere: on the walls behind the reception desk, at the nursing station, at the entrance or next to the elevators. Many of them can also be found in emergency room or the waiting rooms – and you can understand why. While the omnipresence of these posters shows that we were on target in attacking violence in the work-place, it also confirms that this problem persists and that the struggle must continue."

91% women and 100% professionals

While the FIIQ's is still made up of professionals, it speaks today not only on behalf of nurses, but of nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, perfusionists, child nurses, baby nurses and extra-corporal circulation technicians. On the strength of its members' diversity of experience, said Jennie Skene, it will be in an even better position to develop and propose a comprehensive vision of health-care.

"I have a message for the nursing and cardio-respiratory care professionals who have joined our organization – from now on they can rely on everything the Federation has developed to date. The exercise of harmonizing the collective agreements proved that even though they practice different professions, they face similar problems. Sharing the same workplaces, where safety is often inadequate, they are also subject in common to the impact of the staff shortage. In addition, they all continue to suffer the effects of the zero deficit policy and the accompanying budget cuts. [...] Our single draft collective agreement offers some solutions, such as restructuring of work time, maintenance and development of competencies, stabilization of positions, or prevention of violence in the work environment. Other avenues require professional leadership [...] which will only be possible if we take on the challenge of harmonizing practices while respecting fields of professional practice and their associated responsibilities."

Getting to know each other



The 7th Convention marked the starting point of a new union organization. The Convention Organizing Committee found a very interesting way to share certain key events or issues of the Federation and its newly affiliated organizations. Through six information pamphlets and an interactive quiz, the delegates were able to learn a little more.

The main themes discussed were: history, work environments, violence against women, freedom of choice in abortion, retirement and pay equity. In response to questions, the delegates had to find the right answers in the pamphlets. For each theme discussed, a resource person completed the information and answered the questions.

This activity, both useful and fun, was greatly appreciated by all the delegates.

Stronger and more solid

Finally, the President reiterated the Federation's opposition to Bill 30 and drew attention to the leading role played by the APIQ, the Association professionnelle des inhalothérapeutes du Québec, now affiliated to the FIIQ, in contesting this legislation. She explained that despite the legal remedies seeking to render this law inoperative or have it declared unconstitutional, the Federation had to assume its responsibilities to all of its members, both old and new. She therefore announced that the FIIQ is preparing, with others, to continue the process initiated by FIIQ TOMORROW, with the aim of renewing the labour movement in health care.

"Together, we can take on the challenge and turn the situation around, ensuring that a measure designed by the Government to weaken the labour movement becomes the instrument of new union leadership. Victory is not assured in advance, but with the determination I know we possess, I have no doubt that we will succeed."

The union votes: an opportunity to bring us together

The different waves of votes which have unfolded since last fall have also been a very rewarding opportunity for the members of the Executive Committee to be close to the members. They took up the wanderer's staff, as in the early days of the labour movement when it was necessary, almost clandestinely, to convince the workers personally to join a union. This time they had to persuade some to maintain their affiliation to the FIIQ and invite others to join our ranks. Saluting the union reps for their determination, the President emphasized the importance of their role with the members. Mentioning the waves of union votes which led to an unprecedented investment by all of the Federation's stakeholders, the President concluded with a stirring appeal.

"Together we will work to revitalize democracy, strengthen the commitment of our members and union reps, develop the roots of our solidarity and broaden our alliances. Together, as union reps and nursing and cardio-respiratory care professionals, we will reassert our collective power and make a commitment to restore our members' confidence in their ability to change things."

"Together, [...] we will define a union vision that promotes social transformation, in the name of collective action."

A great honour ...



The outgoing President, Jennie Skene, received the Bread and Roses Award presented by the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions (CFNU). The President of the CFNU, Linda Silas, presented the award to Ms. Skene. The CFNU instituted this award in 1993 to recognize outstanding contributions to unionized nursing at the local or national level.

The FIIQ maintains its financial BALANCE

ADMINISTRATION FUND	2004	2003
	(12 months)	(12 months)
REVENUE		
Regular Dues	16 931 836	13 709 800
Interest	81 578	133 001
Grants	40 470	40 582
Other revenue	<u>82 448</u>	<u>2 321</u>
Total revenue	17 136 332	13 885 704
EXPENSES		
Meetings and elected union officers	1 012 011	1 289 164
Sectors s		
Negotiations	0	0
Labour Relations	7 807 684	7 565 501
Sectors and Services	770 205	636 096
Health-Care	194 895	229 185
Status of Women	160 742	165 179
Health and Safety at Work	183 159	168 026
Task and Organization of Work	88 741	132 932
Social Security	<u>163 760</u>	<u>166 596</u>
Total for the sectors	9 369 186	9 063 515
Services		
Education-Animation	490 919	465 141
Union Organizing	435 001	310 161
Communication-Information	258 468	257 624
Translation	<u>109 310</u>	<u>116 499</u>
Total for the services	1 293 698	1 149 425
Equalization	538 113	394 738
General Administration	3 516 836	3 350 246
Human Resources	<u>534 974</u>	<u>647 072</u>
Total expenses	16 264 818	15 894 160
EXCESS OF REVENUE		
OVER EXPENSES	<u>871 514</u>	<u>(2 008 456)</u>

RESERVE FOR NEGOTIATIONS	2004	2003
	(12 months)	(12 months)
Correcting entry, Dec.31 2003	0	0
BALANCE, BEGINNING OF PERIOD	514 184	1 048 907
ADMINISTRATION FUND CONTRIBUTION		
Regular dues	1 600 000	1 228 203
Special assessment	0	0
Other revenue	<u>0</u>	<u>27</u>
Total contribution	1 600 000	1 228 230
PROVINCIAL NEGOTIATIONS		
Salaries and fringe benefits	393 398	714 053
Travelling expenses	114 076	386 233
Rental expenses	30 133	65 266
Printing expenses	30 815	78 162
Courier and communications	31 667	20 674
Professional fees	10 880	53 479
Publications	46 429	34 036
Special projects	0	23 554
Federal Council meetings	225 355	358 512
Other expenses	55	17 324
Private sector negotiations	<u>17 666</u>	<u>11 660</u>
Total for negotiation expenses	900 474	1 762 953
EXCESS OF REVENUE /		
EXPENSES BEFORE CONTRIB.	<u>699 526</u>	<u>(534 723)</u>

During the presentation of the financial statements and the auditors' report by the Treasurer, Lise Martel, accompanied by all the coordinators, the delegates found that the Federation's financial stability has been maintained over the past four years.

The Federation has continued to collect union dues, for some of its affiliated unions, from members who did not fulfill their obligation after the application of Bill 160, following the 1999 strike. The increase in union dues, adopted at the June 2003 convention, also made it possible, among other consequences, to make changes to the equalization payments, adjust the application of the policy for reimbursement of delegates' expenses, and maintain services completely. All the necessary actions were also taken to achieve the objective of restoring an adequate General Administration Fund (GAF) to the FIIQ within two years.

However, 2004 was a year when the vast majority of the financial activities and expenses incurred undoubtedly concerned the application of Bill 30. The profound upheavals the Federation is currently experiencing due to this legislation oblige it to review its practices and policies, since several debates with financial implications will have to be conducted within the context of FIIQ+. For these decisions to be made in the best interests of all nursing and cardiorespiratory care professionals who are members of the FIIQ, a Special Convention will be held in spring 2006.

SOLIDARITY RESERVE	2004	2003
	(12 months)	(12 months)
REVENUE		
Administration Fund Contribution	83 810	83 664
EXPENSES		
Solidarity	<u>82 737</u>	<u>68 606</u>
EXCESS OF REVENUE / EXPENSES	<u>1 073</u>	<u>15 058</u>

RESERVE FOR CONVENTION & F.C.	2004	2003
	(12 months)	(12 months)
REVENUE		
Contribution from administration fund	1 040 136	863 091
EXPENSES		
Convention & F.C. meetings	<u>1 346 594</u>	<u>940 957</u>
EXCESS OF EXPENSES / REVENUE	<u>(306 458)</u>	<u>(77 866)</u>

RESERVE FOR HEAD OFFICE	2004	2003
	(12 months)	(12 months)
REVENUE		
Contribution from administration fund	250 000	0
EXPENSES		
Convention & F.C. meetings	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
EXCESS OF REVENUE / EXPENSES	<u>250 000</u>	<u>0</u>

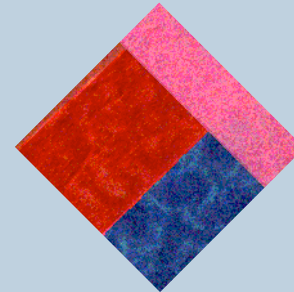


UNION DEFENCE FUND	2004	2003
	(12 months)	(12 months)
REVENUE		
Administration Fund Contribution		
Benefits		
Regular dues	205 214	163 994
Donations	0	0
Interest	0	14 088
Union Organizing		
Regular dues	203 770	359 306
Interest		
Special projects		
Other revenue - Distribution of penalties	<u>258 134</u>	<u>0</u>
Total income	667 118	537 388
EXPENSES		
Benefits		
Union Defence Fund Committee	354	(217)
Salaries and fringe benefits	0	0
Fines and legal expenses	0	0
Professional fees	35 988	12 156
Interest and bank charges	18	18
Other expenses	45 876	37 193
Financial aid - strike	<u>0</u>	<u>1 971</u>
	82 236	51 121
Union Organizing		
Salaries, union leaves & fringe benefits	500 212	288 039
Travelling expenses	84 626	6 687
Rental expenses	11 334	1 038
Printing expenses	91 183	4 894
Courier and communications	67 634	10 639
Professional fees	163 450	119 273
Other expenses	<u>93 061</u>	<u>14 682</u>
	1 011 500	445 252
Special projects		
Salaries and fringe benefits	237 082	0
Travelling expenses	3 449	0
Financial aid - strike	0	0
Other expenses	<u>17 603</u>	<u>0</u>
	258 134	0
Total expenses	1 351 870	496 373
EXCESS OF EXPENSES		
OVER REVENUE	(684 752)	41 015

BALANCE SHEET AS OF DEC. 31, 2004

	Union Defence Fund	Adminis- tration Fund*	Total
CURRENT ASSETS			
Cash	829 594	1 508 506	2 338 100
Temporary investments	0	3 319 909	3 319 909
Advance payment on benefits	3 753	0	3 753
Advance to Insurance Comm. Fund.	0	65 563	65 563
Advance to Union Defence Fund	0	584 080	584 080
Debtors s	1 266	1 029 621	1 030 887
Expenses computable on next period and long-term	0	102 398	102 398
	<u>834 613</u>	<u>6 610 077</u>	<u>7 444 690</u>
FIXED ASSETS	<u>0</u>	<u>577 240</u>	<u>577 240</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	834 613	7 187 317	8 021 930
CURRENT LIABILITIES			
Suppliers and accrued liabilities	0	575 153	575 153
Deferred income	0	0	0
Human Resources dev't	0	114 133	114 133
Advance from Administration Fund	584 080	0	584 080
Debt coming to term within a year	0	0	0
Accounts payable	0	3 867 115	3 867 115
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>584 080</u>	<u>4 556 401</u>	<u>5 140 481</u>
LONG-TERM DEBT	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
	584 080	4 556 401	5 140 481
MEMBER'S EQUITY			
Accumulated surplus	250 532	1 348 054	1 598 586
Reserve for head office	0	250 000	
Reserve for negotiations	0	1 213 711	1 213 711
Solidarity reserve	0	16 773	16 773
Reserve for convention	<u>0</u>	<u>(197 622)</u>	<u>(197 622)</u>
	<u>250 532</u>	<u>2 630 916</u>	<u>2 881 448</u>
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	834 612	7 187 317	8 021 929

* negotiations, solidarity, head office and Conv. & F.C. meetings.



REVENUE AND EXPENSES FOR THE PERIOD AND BALANCE OF ALL FUNDS AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2004

	Union defence Fund	adminis- tration Fund	Negotiation Reserve	Solidarity Reserve	E.C. and convention Reserve	Head office Reserve	Total
BALANCE							
AS OF 31-12-03	935 285	476 540	514 184	15 700	108 836	0	2 050 545
Adjustment	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Balance after correction as of 31-12-03	935 285	476 540	514 184	15 700	108 836	0	2 050 545
Income							
for the 2004 period	667 118	17 136 332	1 600 000	83 810	1 040 136	250 000	20 777 396
Expenses							
for the 2004 period	<u>1 351 871</u>	<u>16 264 818</u>	<u>900 474</u>	<u>82 737</u>	<u>1 346 594</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>19 946 494</u>
Excess							
for the 2004 period	(684 753)	871 514	699 526	1 073	(306 458)	250 000	830 902
BALANCE							
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2004	<u>250 532</u>	<u>1 348 054</u>	<u>1 213 710</u>	<u>16 773</u>	<u>(197 622)</u>	<u>250 000</u>	<u>2 881 447</u>

Note: Difference is due to rounding off of decimals

CONVENTION



At 8:30 a.m., the first delegates show up for registration.



Around 10:15 a.m., the outgoing President delivers the Executive Committee report to about 900 delegates.



The delegates pay close attention to the opening address.



The first evening, guests, elected officers, delegates and staff get together for a tribute to mark the departures of President Jennie Skene and Vice-President Sylvie Boulanger.



PHOTOS



The new President, Lina Bonamie.



Whether by speaking or voting, the delegates express their opinion.



NON au privé! No to private health-care. This is what nurses, nursing assistants, respiratory therapists and perfusionists chanted at the demonstration organized on the last day of the Convention.



Building the future together

Three projects

The FIIQ Executive Committee proposed a formula for discussion at this Convention, a formula stimulating for its novelty, which will enable the delegates to reflect on major union issues. The delegates unanimously and enthusiastically adopted the creation of three projects, *Solidarity, Alliances for Gender Equality and New Generation of Activists*. The project formula combines the search for consensus around major problem with the construction and implementation of new strategies. The delegates thus can look forward to a collective effort at the next Federal Councils, because each discussion project will be spread over several meetings and all delegates will be invited to sign up for one of the activities on the agenda.

The three projects were presented to the delegates throughout the Convention. Very interesting discussions ensued and the delegates said they were delighted with these themes, which convey visions for the future and which are essential to ensure the organization's sustainable growth. The projects will essentially serve for discussion, thinking together, consensus building, preparation for debate and proposing action strategies. As forums for learning and mastering the cultures specific to certain professions, certain health and social service missions and innovative union practices, the projects will be fertile soil to grow the roots of a renewed FIIQ.

For ever-stronger solidarity

Struggles that bring us together

Solidarity is an essential tool when a group decides to fight to defend its point of view or its demands. Three activists addressed the delegates to talk about their own struggle and share the issues. Throughout their testimony, they emphasized the importance of solidarity.

François Saillant, of the *Front d'action populaire en réaménagement urbain (FRAPRU)*, Sylvie Cadieux, of the *Wal-Mart CAW*, a union activist from Saint-Hyacinthe, and François Vincent, of the *Fédération étudiante universitaire du Québec (FEUQ)*, each in their own way, focused on the fundamental aspects of their battle and the necessity to continue it. The right to housing, the right of association and the right to accessible education were thus on the agenda.

What the delegates learned from this testimony was the importance of maintaining and building solidarity, not only among the individuals engaged in the struggle, but with the different groups involved and the population. The mobilization of the various groups and the population in the students' struggle is a good example. It clearly shows the positive results that can be obtained when a large number of people mobilize around the same cause.

Solidarity Project

Rooted in the mass mobilizations which have been milestones in the FIIQ's history, the Solidarity Project is a factor in the struggles ahead. There is no doubt that the transformations experienced throughout the organization, and more broadly throughout the health-care network, will have definite impacts on the members and on the sense of solidarity which unites them.

In a social dynamic undermined by the supporters of neoliberalism who, rejecting collective solidarity, have constantly appealed to individual responsibility, it becomes imperative for the delegates to revitalize collective responsibility.

Today, more than ever, the FIIQ denounces government choices which weaken workers' rights and make the poorest members of society even poorer. It also opposes the reduction of public services and the reengineering of the State, as proposed by the Charest Government. The Federation participates in the debates regarding accessible, free, universal, quality health services. Finally, the FIIQ defends nurses, nursing assistants, respiratory therapists, child nurses, baby nurses, extra-corporal circulation technicians and perfusionists as union members, women and citizens. To the extent that the Federation has long since decided to engage in struggle on such broad fronts, it is clear that the solidarity it advocates extends beyond its ranks.

In this perspective, the delegates want to give themselves the means to develop stronger solidarity extending beyond the boundaries of the labour movement and the health and social services sector. Already, with the



A distinguished guest

The delegates had the opportunity to hear a distinguished guest. Cameron Duncan, Regional Secretary for *Inter-Americas of the Public Services International (PSI)*, of which the FIIQ has been a member since 2003, dropped in at the Convention. His address was very interesting. His harsh critique of the Bush Administration and the catastrophic effects of NAFTA left no doubt regarding Mr. Duncan's convictions as a great defender of workers' rights. He also spoke extensively about the need to continue the struggle against privatization and the campaign launched by the PSI in favour of quality public services.

The private sector gains ground in Quebec

Three days later, the delegates demonstrated against the Supreme Court decision authorizing private health insurance in Quebec. The message was clearly understood – and vigilance is essential in the presence of neoliberalism, which is increasingly present and underhanded!

Fédération des femmes du Québec or with the *Réseau de vigilance*, milestones have been established. What remains is to ensure that FIIQ+ expertise is more recognized, that its vision is shared and that the appropriate means are used so that it can really contribute, with others, to changing the way things are.

A priority

It is also necessary to consolidate this among the organization's members and the other groups that share the values of democracy, equality and social justice... The priority of the Solidarity project will thus be to quickly develop a process of reflection on the conditions to be put in place so that this solidarity, while respecting differences, becomes a reality for the members, particularly by the creation of a union action fund. This is why the Convention adopted the following objectives for the Solidarity Project:

- To reflect on the revitalization of social solidarity and adopt the means to make this solidarity among the members a reality.
- To develop the solidarity of union reps with the struggles and mobilizations of their community with aim of promoting the members' involvement at the local and regional levels.
- To root the FIIQ's involvement in national and international solidarity with the goal of countering the effects of the ongoing neoliberal globalization.

For gender equality

The Réseau des femmes takes root

In the past few years, the *Réseau des femmes* has become increasingly rooted in the Federation. There is no doubt that this network can count on committed activists with a sense of solidarity, who feel that they are stakeholders in the women's movement. Despite all the work accomplished, there are still aspects to improve. The main objective of the *Réseau des femmes* in the months ahead will be to increase its influence.

The *Réseau des femmes* presented recommendations to the delegates to increase its visibility, all of which were adopted. The first recommendation is the very essence of the *Réseau's* purpose – to remain a place of increasing awareness, mobilization and solidarity with the aim of working to put an end to the inequalities that persist regarding women.

The *Réseau* also hopes that the local officers responsible for the status of women become part of the local team and be able to participate in the decision-making bodies. It is also hoped that the composition of the *Réseau des femmes* will be increased. A more representative *Réseau* in the image of the new union organization can only be beneficial. There is thus great interest in increasing participation of nursing assistants and respiratory therapists.

The meetings of the activists, publication of the *Bulletin du Réseau des femmes*, dissemination of information in Sector and Federation documents and the basic session on the status of women will all be concrete means to increase the influence of the FIIQ's *Réseau des femmes*.

Alliances for Gender Equality Project

As the Responsible Executive Officer, Sylvie Boulanger, mentioned, the question of gender equality is at the core of this project. How can this be otherwise in an organization that represents nearly 50,000 women? Indeed, as long as women's rights are not fully recognized and equality has not found its full expression in every aspect of everyday life, the vast majority of the Federation's members will continue to be disadvantaged by the mere fact that they are women.

This is the gigantic task to which the women's movement has hitched its wagon. But there is still a long way to go. A few facts: pay equity, even though it is based on the *Quebec Charter* and is promulgated by law, is still pending, and women's chances of advancement and promotion in the workplace are still unequal; egalitarian sharing of domestic tasks and family responsibilities has yet to come and family caregivers are always women; with regard to poverty, two thirds of minimum wage workers are women and they head the majority of one-parent families; most victims of sexual assault or conjugal violence are women; and in 2003, Canada ranked 37th in the world in women's political representation, with 20.6% women Members of Parliament. The list could go on.

The neoliberal context does not solve the problems. On the contrary, it has the effect of increasing inequalities, particularly in terms of poverty and violence. It is no accident that women, all over the world, are the poorest members of society and suffer the most violence. As the World March of Women pointed out, neoliberal capitalism and patriarchy feed on each other and reinforce each other to maintain the vast majority of women in inferior status. We need only think of the extensive of women's free invisible work and their use as a flexible and underpaid workforce in the name of profit. We need only to think of the armed conflicts proliferating in the poor regions of the world, which hit women hard, particularly through sexual violence. Added to this is the rise of neoconservatism, which opens the door to the return in force of traditional roles, constituting a major threat to women and their gains.

The delegates thus decided to take on the challenge: to entrench a culture of equality even more deeply in union practice, a culture that respects the specific forums already established by the Federation while proposing a new forum for collaboration among the members, both women and men, on common issues. This is a call for an experiment in convergence around common problems which will open up a new field of solidarity.

Two themes

The project will thus serve as a forum for exploration and materialization of alliances within our organization around the following two themes: sexual and sexist stereotypes and reconciliation of work and family.

The project proposes a critical reflection on the female and male stereotypes which are at the basis of social roles and maintain inequalities. The work could progress by learning the modes of socialization that serve as the foundation of female and male identities; noting the confinement and the limits they impose and the hierarchization they involve, or analyzing the return to traditional roles within the context of the rise of right-wing values.

The second theme suggests a reflection on reconciliation of work and family. This theme concerns not only the State or the employers with regard to policies and measures, but also challenges men regarding their behaviour. Thus, appropriating the problem and becoming aware of the specific stakes for women involved in non-egalitarian sharing of family responsibilities; situating the increase in invisible work performed by women in the neoliberal context and accounting for the emergence of new behaviours among men are factors that will be at the very basis of the discussions of those participating in this project. The Convention thus adopted the following objectives for the Alliances for Gender Equality Project:

- To lay the foundations of an alliance between the women and men of our organization in order to work together to promote gender equality within the perspective of union solidarity;
- To explore and concretize alliances based on the following two themes: sexual and sexist stereotypes, and reconciliation of work and family.

For a new generation of activists

A first report for the Youth Committee

The Responsible Executive Officer, Michèle Boisclair, and three members of the Youth Committee, Danielange Charles, Isabelle Pouliot and Jérôme Rousseau, presented a report to the delegation on the Committee's activities.

During its first mandate, the Youth Committee began by conducting a telephone survey of affiliated unions to find out the level of representation of young people age 30 and under. This survey found that young members held positions in a few affiliated unions and that several unions had no responsible executive officer or youth committee. The Committee therefore considered it important to promote the creation of youth committees within the unions to find out and integrate the realities of young people and enable them to participate in the debates.

In the pursuit of this objective, the Committee conducted a random survey, in March 2004, 400 young nurses coming from different regions of Quebec and working in institutions with different missions to produce a profile of their situation. Even though the results do not allow generalization, since the participation rate was only 16%, the data collected nonetheless

made it possible to isolate some special conditions. Based on the analyses of these qualitative and quantitative data, the Committee invested its energy in developing a reference tool to encourage the establishment of youth committees at the local level and to assist them.

The women on the Youth Committee also participated in the FIIQ's *Réseau des femmes*. A Committee member also participated in the coordinating committee of the *Forum de la relève syndicale et militante* (FRSM). This event, entitled *Le défi du militantisme relevons-le!* (Meet the challenge of activism!) was held on September 24 and 25, 2004 at UQAM, with 250 young people attending. The FRSM provided an opportunity for information sharing and networking to begin discussion of the social issues facing Quebec. All the organizations found that they were having difficulty mobilizing youth.

Despite some obstacles, given that two members resigned and three others were absent at various times for maternity leave, the Committee expressed great satisfaction with its achievements.

New Generation of Activists Project

Recruiting and training a new generation of activists are among the unavoidable strategies of union organizations to ensure the sustainability of their union vision, and to continue to defend the workers' rights and working conditions. The FIIQ's young members are concerned because they only have 7% representation on the various decision-making bodies and 4% on the local teams, even though they account for 14% of the membership.

Given their absence from the representative forums and the local teams, it is appropriate to ask questions to identify the solutions required to remedy this apparent non-involvement of the under-thirty generation. This is especially important given that the Federation Convention was held barely two months after a strike by students who, by their militancy and determination, convinced the population of the justice of their cause. Identifying the factors behind these facts is the first step the organization must take if it wants to be effective in recruiting and training a new generation of activists and gradually give way to them.

In continuity with the questions already raised by the Youth Committee, a project on the new generation of activists should make it possible to better discern the actions required to reach a misunderstood generation. It should also allow us to approach this challenge collectively, combining experience and innovation.

For the delegates, the objective of mobilizing and training a new union generation cannot be limited to opening up representative structures. Making room isn't enough. It will be necessary to account for the realities of our time and converge around principles to which these young activists will adhere and which are cherished by the FIIQ+ membership – democracy and solidarity.

To respond to this problem, a collective process of reflection will be initiated, and will allow the Federation to continue to commit itself in solidarity in the field of union renewal.

Strategies

The delegates found that the main difficulty – and not the least – this project will encounter is inherent in the problem, namely the small number of people under thirty who are active in the Federation. The project will thus propose an approach that will provide more information on the realities of young members and thus understand their reasons for union disengagement, if applicable. Finally, this project will make it possible to know and learn more and will develop action strategies to transmit union knowledge, promote solidarity and, finally, bring the generations closer together. The Convention thus adopted the following objectives for the New Generation of Activists Project:

- To recognize and identify the cultural, professional, socioeconomic and union particularities of the under-thirty generation.
- To identify how the commitment of the younger members is actualized with the aim of developing strategies.
- To develop strategies that account for the proposals already made by the Youth Committee in order to promote their union and activist integration while building bridges, transferring the knowledge of the more experienced members, respecting the specific values, interests and needs of each generation and cultivating solidarity between generations.

The three projects were launched at the Convention. The next step will be to establish an action plan which will be submitted to the delegates this fall. Then everyone will become actively involved in the development and progress of the projects. This exercise will make it possible to develop tools and establish mechanisms that will enable the union reps to play their leadership role fully at every level of the organization and reinvigorate the organization's union spirit.

THE FIIQ WILL CHANGE ITS NAME

With the adoption of Bill 30, the Federation now includes in its ranks not only new members but, above all, new classes of personnel. So that all these members can identify with our organization and recognize themselves in it, the President, Jennie Skene, presented the steps of the name change process to the delegates.

As a first stage, the Federation invites all its members to send their suggested names to the Quebec City office by **September 15, 2005**, to the attention of the Communication-Information Service, or by email to <info@fiiq.qc.ca>. The Service will then evaluate all the suggestions received and will work on the design of a new visual identity.

The Executive Committee will deposit an amendment to the Constitution and By-laws at the November Federal Council to change the name. The adoption of the new name, the unveiling of the logo and the official launch of the new visual identity will all happen at the April 2006 Convention.

The standing committees: still just as active and important

All the standing committees were renewed except two: the Journal Committee and the Insurance Committee. The first was replaced with a Publications Review Committee and the second was simply abolished, because since the disappearance of the Parity Committee on Insurance, the delegates considered that it no longer had a purpose. However, they want an ad hoc committee to be formed as needed to participate in specific tasks related to insurance. The Publications Review Committee will meet at least once a year to analyze and evaluate the Federation's publications intended for the members.

The delegates also adopted recommendations to assure the committees of greater stability. Thus, for each committee, in addition to the members elected at the Convention for a three-year mandate, they added two substitute members.

Finally, all the members of the federal standing committees will be fraternal delegates to the Federation's regular decision-making bodies (Regular Federal Councils and Conventions). Union leaves and expenses will thus be assumed by the Federation.

Finally, the general role of the communities was defined as follows:

- INTEGRATE THE REALITY OF CARE PROFESSIONALS INTO DIFFERENT SPHERES OF ACTIVITY
- INFLUENCE THE DEBATES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION
- SUPPORT THE FIIQ IN ITS ACHIEVEMENTS
- REPORT ON THEIR ACTIVITIES TO THE CONVENTION.

The committees, forums for discussion and influence, a place for union reps to get actively involved.

Panel on GLOBALIZATION and HEALTH



On the third day of the Convention, the President, Jennie Skene, moderated a panel on the effect of neoliberal globalization on health with which we are confronted as workers, professionals and citizens. Three Université Laval researchers presented their vision on the subject. The delegates also had the opportunity to exchange views with these three speakers on the impacts of the sociopolitical context on the health-care network and on the care provided to patients. This was a rewarding and constructive meeting, greatly appreciated by all the delegates.

“Thinking differently about the economy: start by changing the conception of the economic discourse” - this was the theme discussed by Sylvie Morel, of the Department of Industrial Relations. In her view, establishing an assess-

ment of the economy requires a radical challenge to the current economic discourse. The same principle applies to shaping a progressive vision of society, based on a more egalitarian distribution of wealth and increased democratization of the levers of economic development. The discussion led to the issue of a different economic discourse which we must conceive in order to develop action to challenge the existing order and for social change.

The presentation by Diane Morin, of the Faculty of Nursing, focused on the service networks, which have emerged in two ways: in a positivist way because of the findings established by different study commissions, and in a constructivist way, as the product of experiments conducted in the field. Thus, from the time when the networks become conditions to be implemented, the question of appropriation arises. The delegates discussed the importance

of understanding the context and giving it meaning and perspective in order to appropriate innovations.

Economic globalization in the neoliberal context affects the lives of the majority of the world's populations, especially the poorest. Francine Saillant, of the Department of Anthropology, discussed this issue. The neoliberal context unfortunately has transformed some of the best health-care systems in the world, including those of Canada and Brazil, the first in Latin America to be largely public. Based on Quebec and Brazilian examples and case histories, the discussions focused on the transformations occurring in the care experiences in the North and South and in the assignment of responsibilities to professionals and non-professionals. The intention was to understand the scope of these transformations on the personal and public ethics of care.

FIIQ UNION LEAVE bank

After a presentation by the Responsible Executive Officer, Daniel Gilbert, the delegates established the guidelines determining the distribution of the 350 days of shared-cost union leave with the unions, and the criteria for use of these days.

This union leave bank is made available to union reps involved in groups or organizations at the local or regional level. They must be duly constituted and work with the population of the locality or the region, and their actions must be consistent with the Federation's orientations.

Thus, depending on its size, each region has a minimum of 15 hours of leave, up to a maximum of 40. A total of 325 days is thus allocated, leaving a reserve of 25 days of leave. This reserve will be used for special situations in the regions when the budgeted days of leave have been exhausted. The administration of the reserve of residual days is under the responsibility of the FIIQ Treasurer.

The FIIQ union leave bank adds to the means available to the Federation and its affiliates to support union practice geared to local and regional collective action. For many union reps, local or regional involvement in community groups, union groups or citizen organizations is a new experience and the struggles to be waged require time and energy. Thus, after a few years of local and regional involvement, the Federation should be able to evaluate the spinoffs from use of this union leave bank.



Financial support for the local negotiations

When they adopted the amendments to the Union Defence Fund (UDF), the delegates decided to make a financial contribution to the unions from this Fund to support mobilization during the local negotiations. Thus, each union will receive an amount of \$5 per member to support local mobilization. The amounts not used up at the end of the negotiations will be returned to the UDF. A member summoned to appear or called before a body provided by law or the collective agreement, due to concerted pressure tactics applied with the knowledge of the union and the Federation, will also receive an amount from the UDF equivalent to one day of pay for the member's job title. This amount will be disbursed for each day when the member's presence is required for the hearings or the preparation of these hearings, and for the expenses incurred according to the policies in force.

The debate initiated at the Convention on the issue of financial support for means of action or pressure tactics during the national negotiations will continue in the fall, as part of the discussions on the Union Defence Fund within the context of the Solidarity Project, and will be concluded at the Special Convention scheduled for spring 2006.

The Federation's new team

At the Convention, the delegates proceeded to elect the Executive Committee and the statutory and standing committees. Some union reps were reelected and new ones were added. The Executive Committee's composition now reflects the new organization the Federation has become and definitely makes up a winning combination for the next few years. These individuals are ready to change direction and take on the challenges looming on the horizon.

FIQ en Action is pleased to present your new federal representatives.

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