



# nouvelles csn

## THE STRIKE FUND, FOR ALL OF US

Our movement is now going through difficult times, but times rich in vitality. We have already experienced similar problems in the past and have managed to come out on top. Together, we will once again get through the temporary difficulties we now face. I am sure of that.

The campaign now underway to support

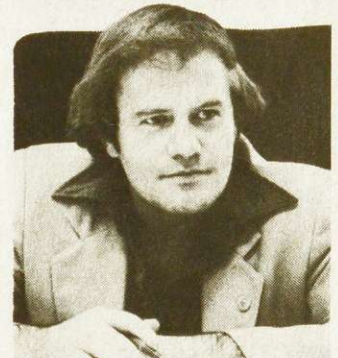
the Defence Fund will mean an extra effort for all our militants. We'll have to visit everyone in the federations, the Central Councils, the local unions. We'll have to talk about it. We'll have to explain the reasons that the weekly average number of strikers in the last year has been from 1,500 to 2,000 more than the predicted figure.

We'll have to convince our affiliate's members that solidarity means this: lend support to those who are now on strike or lock out, and those who will be in the coming weeks. They have to be able to count on their labour confederation, on the movement.

The Confederal Council decided that this campaign would be organized in the unions on a voluntary basis. This campaign must not be seen as simply an accounting operation in order to balance a budget.

It is much more than that: this is a great exercise in union democracy which means meeting with our members, and re-affirming our commitment as CSN members.

In nine months, \$7,742,049 went into the strike fund and



Léopold Beaulieu  
CSN Treasurer

\$12,334,066 was paid out. And the strikes are still going on. And others are around the corner.

We need \$6 million to keep on supporting these strikers. In other words, we need our movement's solidarity.

Each militant, each and every CSN employee and officer must do everything he or she possibly can to show the establishment that when our movement is faced with problems such as these, it has an extraordinary ability to come out of them stronger still.



# A UNION APPROACH BASED ON OUR COMMITMENT

Due to the individualist attitudes fostered by our consumeristic society, we are quick to spend money individually, even if it means going into debt. But we are more hesitant about group expenses. Of course the taxes we pay are a form of group spending, but we have no choice about them.

Practically speaking, the only group expense the workers exert any real control over is their union dues. This means it is normal for workers to grumble about increases in their dues, for the only place where workers have a say is in the trade union movement.

From this standpoint, it is clear that the campaign we will have to



wage during the next few months can't be seen as simply an accounting operation in order to balance our budget.

It means much more than that: it is a great exercise in union democracy which means meeting with people, with our members, and reaffirming our commitment as union members. It means explaining, convincing, making understood the reasons behind the financial difficulties our movement is now facing.

We aren't facing these temporary difficulties because the money went elsewhere. It is because the requirements of our union struggles, on the offensive and the defensive now mean that we have to make an extra

effort to support one of the means the workers have developed to improve their chances of winning their demands. That's why we have the PDF.

But in the meantime, the other means, which are just as important as the PDF, continue to play their role: the general service departments, the Federations, the Central Councils.

Our unions decide to wage struggles because they have set goals; the CSN and the Federations have a part to play in defining these goals, as was the case, for example, when the forestry workers demanded an end to piecework, or when the public sector workers demanded \$265 a week.

## Many changes in 30 years

*The short history of the PDF also reminds us that this defensive weapon has gone through hard times during its 30 years in existence. We are also reminded that it changed over the years and the efforts made by affiliate's members have been ever greater.*

*For example, over a ten year period, from 1964 to 1974, the PDF paid out a total of \$13,925,485 in the form of strike pay.*

*However, during the first nine months of the current fiscal year going from March 1st to November 31st 1980, the PDF paid almost as much money to strikers, \$10,492,102.*



# temporary, voluntary contribution

Before it was passed by a considerable majority, the motion to kick off the strike fund on a voluntary basis led to an interesting debate at the Confederal Council. Some of the delegates would have preferred to have the dues set

on a mandatory basis.

Many arguments led the delegates to decide in favour of a voluntary contribution. One opinion was to the effect that all dues, whether voluntary or mandatory, were ultimately voluntary as a union which didn't want to contribute them could always leave. Another argument also influenced the delegates: if the campaign were mandatory, it ran the risk of soon going on the defensive because the only option a union which refused to abide by it

had was to face expulsion. On the other hand, if we were voluntary, it meant re-affirming a commitment, calling upon solidarity, in order to convince the membership.

With a voluntary dues, the entire focus of the debate was shifted away from the fear of expulsion is the event of refusal.

The debate was refocused around the concept of solidarity, of our responsibility as a group towards workers who need this bare minimum to begin or keep on struggling.



## The Right To Strike

During the last few months, through a series of union meetings, we explained to what extent the right to strike enabled the workers to make breakthroughs in the past

which benefited the entire population. This is why we don't accept this right to be called into question, or for its exercise to be limited to such an extent that it becomes merely symbolic.

One of our fundamental demands, which we must not lose sight of, is for the right to strike at all times, which is more and more necessary faced with the growing legal restrictions closing in on workers' struggles to resist injustice.

We need only think of the small claims court suits and the use of class action suits against our unions.

The same holds for struggles against plant closings, against job cutbacks, which also cut into the PDF but which are also essential during these times of high unemployment.

The campaign being waged to eliminate or severely restrict the right to strike in the public sector can be better understood in the context of the offensive being waged

throughout the western world to rechannel public spending towards support for private business, to the detriment of public services and the employees' working conditions. The last Parizeau budget, which cuts a billion dollars in large part from social expenses, is an outstanding example of this trend. We can expect a reaction on the part of public sector workers. These situations mean we must be well organized to face them. Once again, the PDF has an essential part to play. **During the last 33 months, which corresponded to the negotiating period in the public sector, the PDF contributed a total of \$6,308,131 in support of the unions and federations involved in the Common Front.**

We are aware of the problems these negotiations faced, due to the employers' and the government's attempt to isolate the trade union movement by saying our demands were egotistic and anti-social.



## Strike fund 30 years old

In 1982, the Professional Defence Fund (PDF) will be 30 years old. It dates back to January '52 when the workers decided to establish this defensive weapon to enable men and women faced with struggles for better conditions to keep on.

At the outset, the dues was set at 10 cents per month and strike pay at \$2.50 per week. The first 17 months ended up with a \$163,108.15 deficit.

As you can see, the Defence Fund's problems didn't start yesterday. In fact, we can venture to say that it is normal for such a fund to encounter difficulties at certain periods.

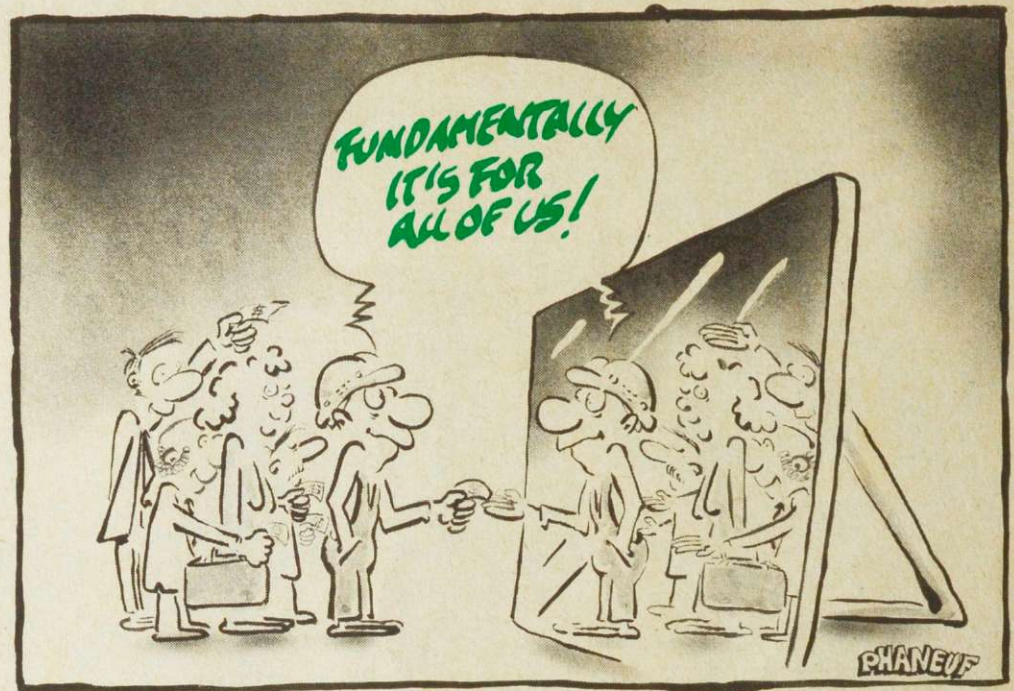
Something had to be done about the 1953 deficit. As time went by, the CSN's membership adjusted the dues to the problems they faced. But when large groups went out on long-term strikes, urgent and necessary measures were required.

This was the case in 1966. The same thing happened in 1974-1975. But each time, the movement was able to react to ensure workers who wanted to improve their working conditions that they would be backed up by all the members of the CSN.

As of now, the portion of the overall dues paid by the members which goes into the strike fund amounts to .41% of their salary. This means for example, if the total dues comes to 2% of your salary, one fourth of this amount goes towards the strike fund; the rest is distributed among the local union, the federation, the Central Council and the CSN's operational budget.

## Our goal: \$6 millions

# TO SUPPORT THE STRIKERS



The CSN's members make a great effort to support strikers; we all know that the dues are rather high. But despite this major effort, the regular dues are not enough. We have come to a point at which the demands of solidarity are greater still, temporarily.

The great number of strikers in the CSN during the past year means the reserve which has been built is dried up. At the present rate in May we will have to rely on loans to support the strikers until August. This is why we must act now and as a group.

The difficult economic situation has a bearing on the

problems faced by the defence fund: high unemployment, lay offs and job cutbacks, plant closings, high cost of living all force our members to defend their buying power, and their jobs. Strikes are more often necessary; businesses more often initiate lock-outs, than before. In Cap-de-la-Madeleine, the Reynolds company locked out the workers for a year before the latter were able to win their demands. The concrete support provided by the movement to the workers and their families resulted in around \$2.5 million being contributed by the defence fund.

This is the basic principle behind this

strike fund: everyone contributes and everyone can count on it in one way or another sooner or later. For example, during the 33 months when the public sector negotiations were taking place, the PDF contributed a total of \$6,308,131 to the unions and federations which were a part of the Common Front.

The PDF's normal capacity for support is 2,500 strikers per week. During the last year, the average has varied between 4,000 and 5,000. For our solidarity as a group to continue to be expressed, every union, every Federation, every Central Council must meet its campaign goal.