

ULTIMATUM

EXPRESS

Newsletter of the Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante

February 14, 2008 - English Special no. 4

Concordia, **\$429 Million** in debt

UQAM, **\$565 Million** in debt

BANKRUPT! 

They screw up, we pay?

Working students can't afford higher tuitions!

On Thursday, February 21st, join tens of thousands of working students in a protest for:

- Free, quality, accessible education through a massive reinvestment -
- Quality, accessible daycares for student parents -
- The abolition of the anti-strike law C-43 -
- A \$10/h minimum wage -

Dawson: 10:00 AM, Upper Atrium **Vanier:** 10:00 AM, Jake's Mall

Concordia: 10:30 AM, Hall Building **McGill:** 11:00 AM, Shatner Student Center

November's Student Strike: Our First Step Forward

Lorenzo Fiorito

- University of Alberta Graduate, Worker -

Over 60,000 students across Quebec walked out of classes on November 14, 15, and 16. They demanded free, quality, accessible education through a massive reinvestment, the abolition of anti-strike Law C-43, and the establishment of government-funded daycare for student parents. These demands were not sweetheart deals for the government, nor were they a sugar-coated attempt to do nothing while the education system crumbles. They were objectives for the student movement, and goals for Quebec as a whole.

The three-day strike was not without its problems. The media pulled out all the stops to make the strikers look bad. When students at Vieux-Montreal and UQAM were attacked by police, the violence was blamed on the strikers. At Dawson College, the media tried to make it look like nothing much was going on - trying to hide from the public that the anglophone-francophone division in the student movement is breaking down before our eyes. Nonetheless, thousands of students from across Quebec gathered in the streets of Montreal, closing

downtown traffic by the weight of their numbers, demanding that the government listen. This was only the beginning.

Now that the strike is over, there are further challenges. The strike movement needs more internal unity in order to give the next strike more political weight. The anglophone network, now in place, must become stronger and better organized in order to win elections and unite student unions into a common federation with francophone schools.

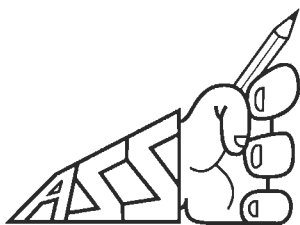
The demonstration on November 22 to "keep the freeze" shows that there are hundreds of thousands of students, represented by the FECQ and the FEUQ, who are not represented properly by their elected leaders. A contingent of free-education supporters who wanted to show their support for the demonstration were first blocked from joining the other students, even physically sexually harassed at one point! This only shows that the leaders of these unions are afraid that the demand for free education will have an effect on their rank and file,

and that they'll be forced to listen to the students they represent.

The demand to keep the freeze is a cynical play on the part of these "union leaders" to look like they have done something - without endangering their political links with the Parti Québécois. These students need proper representation - and they won't get it without our help.

Above all, the student movement must join hands with the labour movement - those who have the real power in society - in order to turn our protests into effective, concrete activity that changes society. This is how our society works. Ordinary people don't get anything out of the government unless they organize, work together, and show their strength in the streets. For thousands of students who had never been on strike before, this strike was a great education in democracy, and a stepping stone for future successes.

The movement continues February 21st!



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Quality daycares for student parents

Chelsea Hemmings

- Dawson Student -

In 1997, the \$7/day daycare system was set up in Quebec. Obviously this is extremely beneficial for student parents and any other parents for that matter. Unfortunately Quebec's daycare system is falling apart.

In 2005 the Charest Government refused to restore \$40 million in funding to Quebec's daycares. This is much needed money since not only do the daycares need massive reinvestments, but the childcare workers themselves receive poor wages. Furthermore, most daycare workers are still women and therefore get paid less compared to men with an equal amount of work.

Statistically, the majority of single parents are women. Single mothers definitely get the short end of the stick. Being a mother is a full time job, yet they still have to find time to take care of their child (or children) and work. If they are students, the pressures can be overwhelming. Most minimum wage jobs are taken up by women. While \$7 a day might not seem like much, it eventually adds up especially when you work at a lousy job and have to pay for other human beings. Add in the stagnation in wages,

where the minimum wage today can buy less food and other essentials than thirty years ago, and you have a recipe for drowning parents.

Imagine trying to balance classes, school-work, a job and a family. As has already been mentioned women still do not receive pay equity. A working student parent will have to pay for books, food, clothing, shelter as well as everything a child needs. Loans are available, but they are just that; loans. They will have to be paid back and regular students are often plagued with debt after they are out of school. The average student debt is \$24,000 dollars by the time students graduate. This is about a \$2/h wage cut for the next ten years. For single parents this is unbearable.

Aside from the economic struggles single mothers face while going through school, we have to keep in mind the social isolation they face. A female student who becomes pregnant will have to drop out for a period of time. Once she is able to return to school (who knows how long that will be) she will be much older than the other students.

These social pressures add to the impossible position of working student mothers.

Capitalism is a system of greed with no remorse. The only way forward for working student parents is linking up with other workers and working students in a fight for free, quality, accessible daycares.

**If the system can't guarantee this
abolish it!**



The world recession and

Hari Darmawan

- McGill Student -

If one pays attention to recent business news on TV or newspaper, one can see a widespread panic on stock market floors, not only in US, but also throughout Asia and Europe. World stock markets are now down over 20% compared to last November. That is technically called a 'bear market'. There is already a strong indication that this could be the worst recession in recent history, reminding us all that capitalism still has a seriously manic-depressive cycle of boom and bust.

We often hear from the news that the main catalyst of this recession is the housing bubble collapse in the US. However, beneath that is the rotteness of our current global economy, in that its growth for the past decade has been based solely on credit, i.e. spending money that we don't have. Now, all those accumulated debts have to be paid but no one is up to it since it is all money that was never there in the first place. People can't pay what they owe. To date, the banks and financial institutions have lost about \$120 billion in bad debts, and there's more to come.

To remedy this situation, the US Federal Bank, the Bank of England and the

its impact on working students

European Central Bank have launched a coordinated injection of \$500bn of credit into the world's financial system. They have also started a series of interest-rate cuts so that people will borrow more money and spend it in order to keep the economy going. Thus, their solution to an economic crisis caused by the credit crunch is to inject more credit. This is akin to digging a hole to fill a hole, only this time they have dug themselves too deep that they won't be able to get out of it.

A crash in a financial system is not a problem exclusive to the share holders and big business owners in suit. Yes, those share holders will lose millions of dollars (from their millions-dollar savings) and have to close down their companies. But, the real brunt of the crisis will be borne by workers who will be losing their jobs. Recession also begets inflation and that means your money is worth less. So, you could lose your job and then get "robbed" by inflation. That is what recession means to workers.

Now, if you are a student living off your parents, chances are they could lose their jobs. If you are living off student loans,

what makes you think that the government will continue your loan when they have to spend billions of dollars to bail out those troubled banks and financial institutions? If you are working to support your studies, looking for a job just got harder. At the same time, because our benevolent governments have to inject billions of dollars to save those poor corporations, that means deep cuts in social programs (education, healthcare, etc).

Facing this impending recession, governments should be on the side of the people. Money should instead be injected directly into social programs to help working people weather out this recession. This trend of giving handouts to big businesses, even during a "normal" period, has to end. Those big businesses have taken their own risk in the market, by preying on working people desperate for credit. Glorified loan-sharks whose poor victims couldn't pay them back is all they are. Let them reap the consequences themselves! Working people shouldn't pay for their mistakes.

**No more handouts to corporations
Massive reinvestment in
social programs**