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# Quebec Educational Labour-Management Relations

## A Case of Power Centralization

*For many reasons the labour-management relationships of the educational system in Quebec are of a unique complexity and have fostered to an unusual intensity frustrations probably implicit in any modern system. The authors have outlined the recent history and the present framework of these relationships in Quebec, have explored the development of "militancy" in this context, and have analysed the present situation in the light of things to come both elsewhere and in the province of Quebec.*

The purpose of this paper is to recount and analyse developments in school teacher — school board relations over the span of two decades, in a situation characterized by increasing centralization at the provincial level and rapid unionization of teacher organizations. We do this in a Canadian context where, unlike the United States, there is no powerful national teacher organization and no federal department of education. In Quebec, the battleground for teacher bargaining is at the provincial and local levels. But, as in the United States, supplication is "out" and confrontation is "in".

The events reported took place in Quebec between the late 1950's and the present, during which the system of education has undergone radical change. Of the ten provinces in Canada, Quebec has probably had the most tumultuous doings in labour-management relations over the past decade. "It would seem," one labour analyst has remarked, "this 'marginal' part of North America, culturally and politically underdeveloped, . . . can best afford . . . to try out new ways and means of social action."<sup>1</sup> The background for and an analysis of Quebec's tensions in education should prove useful then, especially since other provinces and foreign observers regard the province, to some extent, as a laboratory.

While some North American educators have been calling for more state support for (and subsequent control over) local education agencies, happenings in Quebec cast some doubt upon the virtues of centralization. If the Quebec case is unique, it is in the move from a system of autonomous small school boards to an education system run by big boards, big unions, and big government. This transition has been accom-

panied by extensive costs in human frustration as well as the typical costs in dollars.

We begin with a brief overview of the education system in Quebec and then turn to a discussion of labour-management issues. We will touch the tops of many mountains and leave the rich details of the valleys for others. In the final section, we will attempt to synthesize and interpret the case.

The population of Quebec is largely French-speaking. For over 300 years, Quebec has had an English-speaking minority. In this century a number of immigrants have entered Quebec, including Italians, Greeks, and blacks from the West Indies. To provide elementary and secondary education for this population, some 200 French and 33 English boards presently function. The French boards have their own association — the Federation des Commissions Scolaires Catholiques du Québec (FCSCQ), as do the English boards — the Quebec Association of Protestant School Boards (QAPSB).

Figure 1

SCHOOL BOARD ORGANIZATION IN QUEBEC

		Catholic	Protestant
Language	French	1	2
	English	3	4

In addition to the language distinction between boards, there is a religious difference. Schools are either Catholic or Protestant (see Figure 1). Type 1 boards, French Catholic, enrol approximately 3 out of 4 students in the province. Type 2 boards do not exist because there are so few French-speaking Protestants. Type 3 boards do not exist *per se*. While there are a number of English Catholic students, they attend English Catholic schools organized and administered within Type 1 boards. Type 4 boards, English Protestant, presently enrol about one-fifth of the students in the province.

Teachers are organized in unions. Each school board has a local affiliate of a larger provincial teacher union. In Canada's other nine provinces, there is a single provincial teacher group, but in Quebec there are three such unions. The most influential, the Centrale de l'enseignement du Québec (CEQ), because of its size and the "French fact," is the largest (in the mid 1970's) with over 65,000 members working within French Catholic boards. The Provincial Association of Protestant Teachers (PAPT) includes 6,700 members drawn from English Protestant

Boards; and the Provincial Association of Catholic Teachers (PACT) has about 5,000 members working in English schools within French Catholic boards. The English unions, up until the mid 1970's, have been affiliated with the Canadian Teachers Federation, but unlike the situation in the United States, there is no competition for membership at the national level.

### **Labour-management relations in the school sector**

To understand labour-management relations in the Quebec school sector, one has to return to the 1950's and move forward in time. At that period, contracts were determined at the local level; a rudimentary provincial educational agency existed to regulate some aspects of local board operation. At the negotiations table, teacher organizations were by and large "accommodative" rather than "militant".<sup>2</sup>

On the French side, children completed an elementary education, then usually went to work. A few went on to further study at private institutions in preparation primarily for the ministry, law, medicine or government service. At the same time English children, located primarily in the Montreal area, had access to an elementary and secondary education, and a number went on to higher education before entering business, banking or other professions.<sup>3</sup>

School boards were primarily financed by local property taxes. This tended to favor urban and industrial areas over rural areas. Because proportionally more English-speaking students than French-speaking students attended secondary schools, the cost of English education per pupil tended to be higher than the cost of French Catholic education. Of course, the employment of many teaching Brothers and Sisters within the Catholic system tended to reduce its educational costs too. Some sources said that as long as French schooling was kept at a minimum, the Catholic Church could retain strong control over its members and so provide the backbone for Quebec's French family-centered culture.<sup>4</sup> But in this process the French youngster's underdeveloped educational system often relegated him to second-class status, as he had little preparation for penetrating the business world of North America. He was the "worker", while members of the English-speaking minority, dominating the economic and financial institutions of the province, were the "bosses".

The 1950's were a dark period for teachers. Special legislation had denied rural teachers the right to compulsory arbitration, with the result that in 1955 only 55 agreements were signed throughout the province, down from almost 1000 a decade earlier. Then in 1959, traditionally underpaid rural teachers regained the right to compulsory arbitration. Teacher salary minimums rose from \$600 to \$1500 per year. Also, union dues could be deducted from pay-checks. These changes tended to revitalize collective bargaining at the local level, setting in motion a move away from the benevolent paternalism that had created a vast gap between teacher wages and those of workers in the private sector.

## **The Quiet Revolution begins**

The pace of change quickened in 1960 with the defeat of the Union Nationale government, which had operated for over fifteen years on the premise that the government should preserve the social system, not transform it. The new Liberal government was not interested in perpetuating a static society, but in reforming it through public action. Up until that time, according to Monroe, "the initiative for Quebec education had traditionally been left to religious and private groups; government remained in the background and only intervened in moments of crisis."<sup>5</sup> The Liberal government, anxious to provide visible and collective benefits, appointed a Royal Commission of Inquiry into the educational system.

The Commission found decentralized structures to be the root cause of the inferior quality of education, particularly on the French side. Early Commission recommendations called for centralization of educational decision-making and transfer of taxing powers from local boards to the provincial level under a to-be-created Ministry of Education of Quebec (MEQ). Small boards were to be consolidated, reducing the number in the province from 1800 to about 250. There was to be a uniform tax rate across the province for educational funding, and a uniform distribution of educational resources. It was to take a good part of the 1960's for many of these recommendations to take form through legislation.<sup>6</sup>

Teachers were to benefit from the Quiet Revolution through better training, better working conditions, and better pay. As is often the case, teacher expectations developed more quickly than commission recommendations were implemented. Teachers demanded higher salaries, but the tax base of local communities was not substantial enough to sustain the salaries granted during local negotiations. Teachers mounted eight illegal strikes in 1963, the main stimulus being the non-payment of wages. Provincial subsidies given on these occasions set a pattern for future claims by other boards.

To further democratize education, the Provincial Labour Code was revised in 1964 to include teachers. The right to compulsory arbitration was removed and replaced with other power-balancing mechanisms. That is, unions were given the right to strike, while local boards were given the right to lock-out teachers. Teacher organizations (now all established as unions) were to be certified as official teacher representatives in bargaining for salary, workload, and many other issues at the local level.

In 1965, first Catholic and then Protestant locals began bargaining. The first round of negotiations brought the unions many gains. Lacking experience in negotiations, local boards seemed to be reluctant to stand fast against teacher demands.

In 1966, the MEQ began issuing directives, stemming from the

Royal Commission of Inquiry, that were to have a major impact upon local negotiations. The first regulation spelled out staffing norms for the number and kind of teachers that could be hired for an individual school. Later, the MEQ issued a second regulation that set teacher salary ceilings. This leveling of workload and salary forced some local unions to give up concessions they had previously extracted from local boards. From the government's perspective, these policies were necessary to gain control over the spiraling costs of education. Perhaps, too, the government feared the amount of power that local unions might seize if left free to negotiate with scattered boards. So, to enforce the new directives, the MEQ threatened to cut off its budget-balancing grants to local boards if they deviated from the norms. In essence, then, the local boards had to negotiate with local unions, but they had no control over salaries and workload. This action by the MEQ was an early move away from local negotiations; local boards were feeling the first decisive cut toward emasculation.

Faced with these constraints on the bargaining process, teacher unions sensed they had been out-manoeuvred by the MEQ. Some responded by striking — at one point 17,000 teachers were picketing, with 10,000 more threatening to join them within two weeks. It was the French CEQ that spearheaded the drive against the MEQ and local boards. By February 1967, Quebec's education scene was said by many to be "in chaos", in part because inexperienced educators and "dictatorial" government officials had been toying with the negotiations process. The verve that accompanied the Quiet Revolution a few years earlier had been tarnished on the picket lines.

## **Bill 25**

On February 25, the recently re-elected Union Nationale government passed Bill 25, "An Act to Ensure for Children the Right to an Education and to Institute a New Schooling Agreement Plan."<sup>7</sup> Besides ordering teachers back to work, it created a province-wide salary scale, ending inequities between denominational systems, men and women, and rural and urban boards. It suspended the right of local unions to negotiate with local boards, and it set up a framework for negotiations to proceed at the provincial level. Those named to sit at the provincial table were the CEQ, PAPT and PACT for teachers, the MEQ for the government, and the FCSCQ and QAPSB for the French and English boards, respectively. Finally, the bill defined what was to be negotiated.

Injunctions against strikes legal under the Labor Code could be sought only if there was a threat to public health or safety — clearly not the case in teacher strikes. Therefore, to a government wanting to restore order to the education system, legislation seemed the only open route. But by declaring itself a party to the negotiations process the government went far beyond stopping a strike. The government was not content to issue regulations to govern local negotiations. It now wanted its voice heard at the negotiations table.

The local boards seemed satisfied, for they were taken away from the "front lines" of conflict. They may not have realized how local control of education was being further eroded, with so many working-condition clauses being settled at the central table.

Bill 25 served a latent function, too. It said to all concerned that the government can give rights and it can take them away. Nevertheless, after twenty-eight months of negotiations, the first provincial contract was signed on November 4, 1969. To satisfy the Labour Code of 1964, agents for local boards and local teacher unions were required to form a queue and sign too.

Discontent with this first provincial contract continued to run high, especially among the members of the CEQ. The move from over 600 local agreements to one provincial contract, eliminating the gains made by some locals, caused teachers to see their unions as ill equipped to work in a provincial context. Others placed blame for teacher losses on the government. In the beginning of 1970, the French secondary teachers in Montreal staged a two-month paralysis of extra-curricular activities and clerical work to demonstrate their discontent with government programs, directives and schedules. In order to gain influence they also began a *rapprochement* with other unions to open a "second front", a social and political one, alongside the traditional "negotiations" front. CEQ leaders began drafting a White Paper offering an overall plan for social and political action. It denounced "business unionism" which only focused on the immediate and exclusive interests of its members. To build a link to a broader labour movement, the paper called for the more dynamic union role of protesting the exploitation by capital of all men. The paper's recommendations for a "militant network" of teachers to transform the social order were narrowly adopted at the union's congress in 1971.<sup>8</sup>

## **Toward the decree of 1972**

The provisions of Bill 25 were to expire on June 30, 1972. This meant the Labor Code again would be honored, and negotiations would revert to the local level. Teacher unions anticipated correctly, however, that the government would pass a bill extending the existing teacher contract for another year while also continuing negotiations at the provincial level. That legislation, Bill 46, also brought all public sector employees under provincial negotiations.<sup>9</sup> In so acting, the government could be said to have categorized teachers as just another group of public employees. Bill 46 was a slap in the face for many teachers who had long seen themselves as professionals, a group apart from the civil servants.

The government was aiming for centralized control over public employee costs, nearly half of their annual budget. Negotiations began in Quebec City with the government offering pension and sick leave plans that some teachers considered inferior to the ones under which they were

working. Union negotiators regarded the government as unresponsive to their demands on job security, teacher-pupil ratios, lesson preparation time, and better facilities for special education. Such leaders believed the government was purposely dragging its feet with the stronger unions while trying to find settlements with the smaller ones. Impasse was evident early in 1972, when Bill 46 was amended to allow bargaining for all clauses at one table. Before this, local negotiators had been trying to settle workload clauses without having insight into the staffing ratios being discussed centrally.

While bargaining remained at an impasse, the public sector unions attempted to form a "common front" of all public employees. Many members of the CEQ supported this amalgam. In contrast, most English Protestant teachers saw the benefits of joining, but had difficulty associating themselves with labourers and their reputedly coercive union tactics; however, the government's intransigency finally caused most of them to walk out with other public employees. English Catholic teachers did not want to trade their autonomy in negotiations for the strength of unity.

The common front hoped to gain power by stopping Quebec through a massive public sector strike of 210,000 employees, if necessary. In April, 1972, almost a year after their contract had expired, French and English teachers joined maintenance, construction and other workers on the picket lines — they struck. Public opinion rapidly turned against the strikers when hospital services diminished and electric utility workers threatened to join the common front. By calling for the movement to bring down the capitalistic structure, one union leader further inflamed public resentment. After eleven days, when public sentiment had coalesced, the government again legislated a suspension of the teacher's right to strike. Teachers were required to return to work under the conditions of their expired contract.

Under new legislation, Bill 19, union leaders were supposed to counsel their membership to return to work.<sup>10</sup> When the leader of the CEQ and two other public-employee union leaders instead urged their followers to continue the work stoppage, they were jailed, and eventually fined. In December, 1972, after Bill 19 had twice been extended and negotiations had proven fruitless, the government *decreed* a 134 page collective agreement. Neither the federations of boards nor the teacher unions had totally agreed with the clauses of the decree (as it soon became called by teachers). It was a unilaterally imposed settlement to the contract dispute; the government acted at once as employer and arbitrator.

For the fifth time negotiations had been stymied by government action negating the right of teachers to strike: Bill 25, Bill 46, both Bill 53 and the Order-in-Council 3811-72 which extended Bill 46, and now Bill 19.<sup>11</sup> At best, one could say education had returned to conservative paternalistic benevolence, but a "benevolence" very much more centralized than teachers had experienced prior to 1960. At worst, centralization of control of education had reached a zenith, with the local

school boards removed from significant education policy-making. The decree caused widespread alienation from work among teachers and their union leadership. Unions learned that if they ever struck again, they would be giving the government cause for a unilateral settlement.

### **Toward the contract of 1976**

With the decree ending in June, 1975, one might have anticipated new contract negotiations proceeding rapidly in 1974-75, but that was not the case. Procedural matters were not settled until December, 1974, when the government enabled the teacher unions to sit at one table or three, as they chose. It took the winter and spring months of 1975 for the CEQ, PAPT and PACT to develop their separate demands. Demands were submitted in the summer, but the government did not respond until November, 1975. As in the past the government would not turn to a third party for compulsory arbitration; the government knew best how much money it could award under negotiations. The unions expressed discontent with the progress of talks and complained about the government's willingness to let teachers work without a contract. Again meetings dragged on with little progress, both sides becoming rigid in their positions. The government published its "final offer" in provincial newspapers, emphasizing percentage gains in salaries. The unions answered with their own pointed and aggressive publicity campaign in newspapers. They demonstrated the low level of a Quebec teacher's pay, even under the government's "final offer," when compared with teachers in other provinces. A publicity war followed, with each side "posturing" for the other and attempting to gain public support.

It should be remembered that about eighty per cent of the province's teachers are French-speaking and that compared to English-speaking teachers they are a somewhat captive group in Canada. Few could leave the province and find work teaching in their mother tongue. Some English-speaking teachers thought they would leave, but the present economic conditions in Canada, coupled with reduced student enrolments, made jobs scarce elsewhere even for them.

During the winter and spring of 1975-76, teacher unions resorted to their most militant tactics, short of striking, to pressure the MEQ to alter its final offer. These tactics included picketing, conducting study sessions on union matters during the school day, rotating study sessions so that boards would not know which schools would be closed until the last minute, jamming school-board members' work and home telephone lines, verbally intimidating board members at meetings, crazy-glueing locks, occupying board offices, and working-to-rule (conducting no extra-curricular activities).

In April, 1976, the government met teacher tactics with Bill 23.<sup>12</sup> It was, in essence, a cease-and-desist order to stop work-to-rule and harassment tactics. It froze the right to strike for ninety days. There were two new features to this legislation. There were not only severe



maximum penalties, but also severe minimum penalties for violations. Also, teachers were not to receive even a partial settlement on retroactive cost-of-living increases, granted all public employees, until they signed a contract. This was a patent exercise of power on the government's part. For a time, teachers rejected the bill by ignoring its directives and by continuing their work-to-rule and harassment activities. The pressure which the teachers brought against Bill 23 made some local boards try to persuade the government to alter its stand.

Under Bill 23, a three-man government-appointed commission was set to look into the dispute and make recommendations. This appointment stimulated some teacher union leaders to think that a meaningful solution was at hand. On its own initiative, the commission demanded that the government reconsider its position on retroactive pay settlements, and, in fact, the government did make partial settlements before the school year ended. The commission's report was critical on all sides, of the government for its inflexibility, and of the unions for their tactics. However, the recommendations did not lead to a settlement of the contract dispute. As the school year came to a close, teachers held back on harassment tactics but continued working-to-rule. The school year ended as it began with teachers working without a contract.<sup>13</sup>

A new twist in the negotiations process caused considerable difficulty in the fall as teachers returned to school. It had been decided that salary and fringe benefits would be negotiated at the provincial level and that working conditions would be negotiated locally. On the French side, just before school began, both salary and working condition offers were accepted by the CEQ; hence, salary offers were set for minority English-speaking teachers. But the association of English boards (QAPSB) wanted the English-speaking teachers to work longer than their French colleagues — for the same pay. The QAPSB argued that the quality of English education would suffer if teachers worked so little. The English boards reasoned that since they invested more in teaching French to English-speaking students than French boards did in teaching English, more time at work was needed by Protestant teachers. This position infuriated English teacher unions, who in turn reasoned that what was good enough for French boards should be good enough for English boards. Finally, PAPT argued that if they were to work more, they should be paid more. While the difference in work time called for by the QAPSB amounted to minutes a week, on principle the unions argued they could not accept more work for the same pay.

Exchanges of disaffection continued as the QAPSB held on to its workload offer and PAPT became more fixed in its position. An impasse was reached, and on October 1st English Protestant teachers went on strike. They returned to class on October 19th because the MEQ decided to inject more money into the education system to hire additional staff for both English and French boards. But the workload issue had not really been solved. Then, on November 12th, 1976, just three days before the provincial elections, the MEQ, the school boards and the teacher unions signed a new contract at the provincial level, the first negotiated

settlement since 1969. Local boards and local unions were left to complete workload agreements during the winter of 1977.

On the English side, the first local agreement, a 107 page document, was signed in January between the Montreal Teachers Association (a member of PAPT) and the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal.<sup>14</sup> Immediately, copies of the agreement were distributed to other local unions to act as a guide in defining their local agreements. Some sources saw this distribution, stemming from one favorable agreement, as a move to centralize union gains.

### **The Quebec case: an analysis**

When teachers believe they have been deprived of power and they decide to react aggressively and collectively against their boards, they are termed militant. Militancy reaches its peak when the power wielders continue to make decisions affecting teachers and the teachers see the decisions as intolerable. The decisions may be seen by teachers as intolerable because they infringe on an inherent or attributed right, or because the right to self-determination has been violated.

This was the case with teachers in Quebec and elsewhere in North America, certainly in the larger cities, in the late 1960's and early 1970's. There were at least two widely recognized causes for teachers finding their lot intolerable. First, they were demonstrably underpaid; and second, they were better educated than ever before and believed they were professionals.

These two factors went largely unperceived by decision-makers in the system, who continued to behave as if the general satisfaction on the part of teachers of an earlier generation still existed. Neither school boards nor their senior administrators spontaneously recommended that salaries and working conditions be improved. Nor did they recommend that teacher participation in decision-making be extended. In addition, some outspoken teachers who tried to communicate their growing dissatisfaction to their superiors were either branded malcontents and transferred out of harm's way, or they were promoted.

As a result, the teachers' collective agreement might be seen as a remedy to sins of omission committed by past educational leaders; contract clauses were developed, in part to counter past errors in school administration. For example, at the local level, teacher workload is now negotiated in minutes per week. In the past, teacher assignments had been left in the hands of school administrators, and inequities existed both between teachers within one school and between teachers in different schools. The union movement provided a communication vehicle to eradicate these inequities. A host of consultative committees have emerged in Quebec, many of them parity committees (with equal numbers of union and administrative staff), to advise decision-makers on proposed policy changes.

## Changes of goal and leadership

Going further, we have seen a shift in the goals of Quebec teacher organizations. On the English side prior to the 1960's teachers were organized primarily to improve the education of children. The secondary goal of improving the teachers' own welfare frequently was met by a standing committee typically led by a young male teacher who had aspirations to the association presidency and perhaps an administrative post after that. The teacher group was seen by its members as a professional association. But then in the mid-1960's, under a mandate from provincial legislation, the teacher organizations were placed under the Labor Code and unionized. They were required to bargain for salary and all aspects of working conditions. Sins of omission, or decisions regarded as intolerable, could now be aired at the negotiations table. At this time, increasingly well-educated teachers brought the welfare-protection goal to the forefront of union activity, and it has remained there to the present.

In the early 1970's a third goal is evident, in the CEQ's perception of itself as a builder of socialism adapted to the needs of Quebec. An independent Quebec where the French survive and flower is seen as vital for this new era, a course which most English-speaking teachers oppose out of fear that their own survival might be threatened in a French polity. As a result, collaboration between the CEQ and the English unions has been, and is likely to be, restricted to economic and pedagogical issues.

As this transition in goals has taken place, so has a change in union leadership. For example, the PAPT was formed in 1864, the first teacher organization of its kind in Canada. Its first president was Dr. Jasper Nicholls, Principal of Bishop's College. The PAPT's original goal was to improve teacher training in Quebec.<sup>15</sup> Up into the 1960's the presidents of PAPT came from the administrative and teaching ranks of the school system. To be president, one had to have a reputation as being a poised professional educator and an outstanding teacher. Teacher leaders, when discussing (not demanding) salary improvement with the board, often revealed a cooperative and accommodating style. But as these professional associations became unions, the leaders had to be assertive, aggressive individuals ready to confront school boards with "demands".<sup>16</sup> New careers opened for young activist teachers as "syndical representatives" for their teacher colleagues at every school. No longer had the teacher to consider administration as the only alternative career in education. Of course, these fledgling union leaders, the syndical "reps", had a problem if they aspired to promotion into administrative ranks. How could they be faithful to the unions and at the same time act in ways to get the positive, supportive attention of their superiors? It is not clear whether or how one can play an activist role and still have administrative aspirations.

Building principals were excluded from the bargaining unit when teachers came under the Labour Code. While unions negotiated with boards and the MEQ, "middle management" — the principals — were excluded. Unions acted as if principals were members of "the other side".

It fell to the building principals to implement the many clauses within the contracts. In some ways this was a discouraging duty because much of what had been their responsibility had been bargained away in the interests of co-management. Teacher-elected staff councils were created in the 1969 contract to "advise" the principal in areas not specified in the contract. This advice from the teacher professionals had to be listened to, and in fact, in some schools the staff council became the school manager, the principal having agreed to teacher wishes.

Now since syndical representatives often are active, aggressive individuals, and since the school principal has to listen to the staff council on virtually all matters, it is apparent that the school can be run by an extensive, explicit contract and a forceful staff council. Unless the principal is a strong individual, he can largely be pushed aside in the school decision-making process. While he may administer the decision process, he makes few decisions alone. Furthermore, because provincial teacher unions nowadays are clearly mutual benefit organizations that speak first for the interests of their members, school administrators have become worried about developments in the co-management of schools. Will teacher members of a staff council act first in the interest of the children or first in their own interests? Furthermore, is the role of the school principal becoming redundant, or, perhaps, should he be elected by the teachers as their senior member at the school level? Or, if the principal is appointed, should his vice-principals and department heads be elected by the teachers of the school? These issues are currently being debated, and developments will probably be legitimated in the 1979 contract.

### **Factors in militancy**

The rapid transition of Quebec teacher organizations from professional associations to unions of workers was aided by more than the Labour Code revisions of 1964. On five occasions when teachers would not accept offers, the government intervened in the bargaining process with legislation that contravened the code. The legislation placed the MEQ in the position of mediator and employer at the same time. This "conflict of interest" on the part of the government added to teacher militancy. The situation had become intolerable again.

In short, teacher militancy cannot be attributed to unionization alone, but to a much more complex set of factors and power relationships. These considerations include 1) the teachers being ready for change from their underpaid conditions, 2) the teachers sensing a greater professional competence, 3) Quebec's reform-minded government bringing teachers under the Labour Code, 4) Quebec's legislators giving teachers the right to strike and boards the right to lock-out, 5) Quebec's government centralizing the negotiations process at the provincial level, 6) Quebec's government using two-level bargaining, 7) unions undergoing a shift in leader characteristics, and 8) the negotiations process being unduly dragged out. From the union perspective, the giving and taking away of the right to strike suggested that the government was not sincere in

negotiating, but was more concerned with controlling the education system. Teacher militancy is then best seen as a reactive orientation to an "intolerable" and complex set of system variables. This reactive orientation may give way to a more energetic one as teachers become even more involved in school decision-making.

One of the evident unfortunate outcomes of school management by conflict is that teachers and principals often see each other in very negative terms. The often easy, if paternalistic, relations between a principal and teachers of the 1950's have given way to more formal, suspicion-laden interactions.

It should also be noted that school boards have used militant tactics too. Some withheld teachers' paychecks in response to harassment tactics. One board called in police to remove teachers blocking the main entrance to the board office when other entrances were open and usable. Heads were knocked. However, school boards have a long way to go to become as militant as the teacher unions.

### **Key components of labour-management relations**

One salient facet of Quebec teacher labour-management relations is the centralization of a negotiations process which has brought together the MEQ, federations of school boards and three provincial teacher unions. Into the hands of a very small group of people has fallen the responsibility for determining the salary of every teacher in the province and the staffing norms for each school. The centralized process has led to a reductionist view of schooling. Is this view viable? Should all teachers receive the same salary? One could easily hypothesize that the best teachers will seek the best locations, and less attractive areas will be left for the remaining teachers. The centralization of negotiations probably indicates a desire for fiscal control of schools on the part of the MEQ, rather than for a guarantee of equality of opportunity for the province's children.

Further, English language schools need more time in the school day devoted to the study of French, if English Quebec is to support the French fact. This point is consistently overlooked in staffing norms. Possibly, then, curricular flexibility is being lost at the school level in the name of provincial cost control and some form of equity in dollar allocation to school boards.

Some say big unions are strong unions. The desire on the part of union leaders at the provincial level to maintain and even increase their strength may militate against a return to local bargaining. In spite of a call for decentralization by the MEQ, all indications are that they would prefer fiscal control. While local school boards are not calling for decentralized salary negotiations, they may want to retain negotiating rights on working conditions to preserve their *raison d'être*. Similarly, local unions need local negotiations to remain viable. It is almost as if the

present negotiations system may survive to provide work for people and to provide room for advancement via the union route as enrolments drop and administrative posts decline in number. There are a number of reasons, then, that point to a continuation of the present negotiations arrangements.

A second salient facet of these labour-management relations is the link between teacher unions and other public-employee unions. One may anticipate that the connection will continue because the government will be content to continue its "reductionist" stance in dealing with workers. A major threat to the link, however, may come from the unions. They may find it difficult to reach agreement on a unified salary demand because of status problems between unions. Also, as mentioned earlier, French and English-speaking unions may seek to avoid alignments that would undercut the political position of each other.

A third and perhaps most important facet of labour-management relations is the realization of what negotiations are all about — the struggle for power and control of the schools. The CEQ, motivated by a Marxist orientation which sees schools not as neutral social agencies but as agencies that now transmit a capitalist philosophy, designed to preserve a dominant class that exploits the working class, want control of the schools not only for their salary demands but also so that their social philosophy may flourish. The PAPT, and to some extent the PACT, while lacking a Marxist view, see themselves as the "new management"; they want control of schools for the expression of their new-found professionalism and consequent autonomy. The unions seem to believe that the old administrative bureaucracy continues to be rigid when faced with teacher demands relating to curriculum issues, student examinations, budgets, and the like. At the same time, the MEQ wants control over expenditures, just as local boards want the final say on workload. Each group seems to be working for its own *particular* interest at the negotiations table, yet no group is clearly working for the *general* interest of schools and the children; naturally, however all claim service to the general interest.

### **Where are labour-management relations going?**

After a lengthy study of labour-management relations in the United States, Donley has assumed a most optimistic stance about future negotiations. He argues that there will be five areas of gain for educators:<sup>17</sup>

1. There will be fewer strikes in the future
2. Greater teacher professionalism will develop
3. Teachers will have higher morale
4. There will be an enlarged role for the teacher in setting school policy
4. There will be higher salaries for school personnel

For Donley, reduction in the number of strikes hinges upon a development of the bargaining process, an increase in expertise for negotiators, and a belief on the part of teachers that not all strikes have been effective. In Quebec the negotiations process is undergoing development, but it is not at all certain that the number of strikes will be reduced. Chaney found that a community can have a "strike mentality"<sup>18</sup> All sectors use the strike as a means of dispute settlement, and that is certainly the case in Quebec today. In Quebec, negotiators have been gaining experience, but to judge from their recent activity in the last round of teacher negotiations, militancy is at a peak. Some local boards, following the MEQ example, have hired expert "professional negotiators" to sit across the table from teachers. The teachers have nick-named them "hired guns". Quebec teachers would agree that not all strikes have been effective, but some have been: for example, the one in 1976 demonstrated their steadfast resistance to government orders and provided significant salary and workload gains. Recent experience in Quebec illustrates that methods other than prolonged work stoppages may be used by unions interested in embarrassing boards and administrators. Teachers can walk out of school without announcing their intentions. They can withhold report cards. They can occupy headquarters and disrupt meetings. They can ignore directives. These tactics are difficult to deal with short of using physical force or elaborate legal skirmishes. In short, it is not at all clear that the number of strikes and the use of other militant tactics are on the wane in Quebec.

Donley next argues that once salary issues have been settled, the teacher negotiators will turn to school issues. That is true in Quebec, but the issues have been related to workload and job security, not to curriculum and pedagogical issues. Unions in Quebec have yet to demonstrate the importance of "professional", client-oriented goals in their overall activity. Professional goals may emerge, but one senses that union executive meetings are still dominated by bread-and-butter issues.

Next, Donley links higher teacher morale to militancy. Teachers do have higher morale when they band together; however, there seems to be goal displacement. The higher morale gained by union activists does not come from rewards associated with children and learning, but from rewards coming from fights with boards, administrators, and the MEQ. The language of militants is military — it is dominated with words like *win, lose, fight, struggle, retreat, advance*.

There is no question that teachers and more particularly their unions have, along with the MEQ, reduced the decision-making powers of boards and school administrators. Teachers do have an enlarged role in school decision-making in Quebec, as Donley predicts. However, teachers have had difficulty in coming to grips with personnel matters related to hiring and firing. How can a union be a mutual-benefit association, protecting its members, and at the same time be a profession, where colleague scrutiny is assumed? It remains to be seen if the product of this enlarged role in decision-making will pay off in outcomes for students. To date, little has been demonstrated.

Teachers will have higher salaries, as will everyone else, but costs will go up too. It seems unrealistic to believe the negotiations process will dramatically improve the overall welfare of the teacher in our society. Perhaps there are just too many teachers to be supported by our present tax system.

In sum, Donley seems to have an overly optimistic view of the outcomes of labour-management relations when his suggested gains are viewed from a Quebec perspective. The Quebec experience militates (no pun intended) against easy optimism.

### **A final comment**

With the CEQ having fourteen members among the seventy-member majority in the Quebec legislature that was elected in November, 1976, one wonders how provincial level education policy will now be affected. The coming months may show significant changes as the new independence-seeking and social-democratic government comes to grips with teacher unions, teacher militancy, and the best interests of Quebec's youth. The CEQ itself has abandoned its strong anti-government approach since the Parti Québécois has come to power, a move which suggests that the most militant of unions will try to mobilize support inside and outside the parliament for a peaceful reconstruction of Quebec schools and society. Possibly the CEQ leadership may try to inhibit disruptive rank and file activity so as to maintain labour discipline in support of government educational initiatives. Recent newspaper releases from the CEQ support this possibility.

In any case, the overall trend seems to be one of power centralization. Big management (to include the government) and big unions will continue to dominate the education scene. School boards and their administrators will probably continue to lose ground in controlling local schools.

### **NOTES AND REFERENCES**

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2. J. Fris, "Militancy and Accommodation in Teachers' Negotiations: Two Ontario Settings", *Canadian Administrator*, 16 (October 1976).
3. Even as late as the mid 1960's, English Protestant School Boards had proportionally more students in Grade 11 than did French Catholic Boards, 69% versus 53%, based upon grade 1 enrolments. See *Statistiques de l'Enseignement 1966/67*, numéro de catalogue 22 - E - 6667 - 3, Ministry of Education, Québec.
4. Later, with the advent of the Ministry of Education of Quebec in 1964, many claimed the Catholic Church had lost considerable power. Under the former Department of Education, The Catholic Committee, composed largely of Quebec Bishops, had considerable influence over day-to-day educational decisions. Under the Ministry of Education, the



Catholic Committee was made a sub-committee of the Superior Council of Education and the Superior Council had only advisory power vis-a-vis the Minister of Education. Also, the Catholic Committee had a membership made up predominantly of lay people. It became evident during the early years of the Quiet Revolution that a conscious shift toward non-church control of the education system was underway.

5. David Monroe, "Reforming Quebec Education", *McGill News*, 53 (May, 1972), p. 30.
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7. Quebec Legislature, *Bill 46*, 1972.
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11. William Marcotte, "Negotiations Between the PACT and the Government of Quebec, 1975-1976", unpublished paper, Toronto: Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, August, 1976, p. 122.
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14. *Collective Agreement, 1975-1979*. Between the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal and the Montreal Teachers Association, Montreal: Montreal Teachers Association, February 4, 1977.
15. David Monroe, "Teacher Education at McGill", *McGill Journal of Education*, 6 (Spring 1971), pp. 31-32.
16. This change in terminology used to describe union-management relations is supported by the findings of Fris reported earlier.
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18. John S. Chaney, "An Analysis of Public School Teacher Strikes in the United States 1966-1968", *Urban Education*, July 1973, pp. 179-94.