

PAY EQUITY

A VICTORY FOR UNIONS

Over the last few days, the Conseil du trésor has been distributing leaflets in our workplaces, portraying the government as the good guy in the pay equity settlement. This campaign looks like pure political manoeuvring on an issue which has been rallying unionized women and their allies in the feminist movement for more than thirty years.

Successive governments, including the current Liberal government, have not facilitated the progress of pay equity. Far from it! Over the years, these governments have maintained that there was no pay discrimination against women in the public sector. However, the settlement of June 20, 2006 demonstrates that the opposite is true: 360,000 people, or 95% of workers in predominantly female positions, will receive salary adjustments.

If this government, elected in 2003, was so convinced of the legitimacy of our claims, why did it wait until it was obliged by the Court to get on with the job? The unions had to go before the courts to force the government to take action. Why did this process have to be so difficult? Why was it necessary to organize so many demonstrations and rallies?

THE SETTLEMENT OF THIS FILE HAS COME ABOUT THANKS TO THE DETERMINATION OF OUR UNIONS AND OF TENS OF THOUSANDS OF WOMEN. IT IS NOT THE GIFT OF A GOVERNMENT SEEKING TO MAKE POLITICAL GAIN FROM A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT: THE RIGHT TO EQUITY!

ADJUSTMENTS OVER TIME

The government has asked the Pay Equity Commission for permission to spread adjustments out over seven years rather than the four years specified by the Pay Equity Act. The unions have not agreed to the government's request. By permitting employers to make adjustments over a four-year period, this Act allows them to greatly reduce the financial impact of correcting the discrimination. Nevertheless, employers may request an adjustment over a longer period if they are able to prove that, due to financial difficulties, they are unable to respect the rights of women.

The Commission should not give in to such a request unless it has been proven necessary and unless the right to pay equity threatens the very existence of jobs. However, from the information we have obtained regarding the state of public finances, we cannot reasonably conclude that the government, the largest employer of female labour in Quebec, is in a situation that would prevent it from giving full recognition to women. Any extension to the deadline for adjustments entails losses for those entitled to payments. Moreover, following the imposition of a two-year salary freeze, public sector employees should not be further penalized by an additional delay in the application of pay equity adjustments owed to a large number of women.

**WOMEN HAVE BEEN PATIENT.
BUT A 30-YEAR WAIT IS LONG ENOUGH!**

