

Saute-moutons*

* The title of "Saute-mouton" (French name for the game of leapfrog) was chosen because we are inviting all students to come together and move forward in earnest. To not just blindly follow what is said (as a sheep - mouton in french - would do), but to play an active role in general assemblies and the public space. Instead of jumping to preconceived conclusions, you can leap above them and spring forward new ideas.

Decisions taken recently by the government not only bear the seeds of an extraordinary social regression but also of the beginnings of a large social movement. Whether we decide to be a part of this movement or not, decisive actions for the future of education in Quebec will soon be undertaken. If we do leave the field open to the politicians and the managers that administer our institutions, regression will prevail: their increase of tuition fees is only intended to keep diplomas for the affluent class or for those who will be able to bear an immense financial burden in their future.

"That's what it costs in all the other provinces" we are told. Are we expected to take that as a justification? The real question is not how much it costs to study in North America, but rather what Quebec would look like today if, as the people in power are now proposing, we had always aligned ourselves with the dominant trend. Obviously unable to ask such a question, or perhaps scared of the answer, those who climbed to the top of our society are now ready to slash our gains unscrupulously, despite their reliance on those gains for their own personal success. Without equal opportunities, which cannot be separated from universal access to education, there is nothing left but a battle for the survival of the fittest. However, it is towards this inequity that decision makers are preparing to lead our society. We need to turn the tide: we know it's possible, but to succeed we need everybody.

It's not always easy to act out in defense of our own principles, isolated as we may be amongst the passive and numb masses. Those around us who present themselves as protest professionals often come with an unattractive gang. If we proceed seriously, it would require only two or three people sharing real affinities to take the first step onto the battlefield. It is through this action that we come to realize that we are stronger than we thought and the gangs we saw as powerful are not so in the end. A movement must create itself with the sum of all individual participants, not be created by a small group of individuals masquerading as leaders. Everything remains to be done and it is by our own personal involvement that we will make a difference. Diversity and quality of individual involvement strengthen the richness and vitality of the movement.



After we have broken free from our isolation, we must learn to join the emerging movement and take part in it as actively as possible. We often believe that political action is futile. It seems natural to have a 40-hour workweek, a minimum wage and the right to vote. We must remember that before us, people decided to give themselves the necessary means to have a decent quality of life and to obtain the acknowledgment of our legitimate rights. Similarly to these struggles, the large student strikes were the means by which we obtained the loans and bursaries program and the reason we continue to maintain the lowest level of tuition fees in the country. In Quebec, general strikes are the only historically proven way to sway the government.

This rich history of the student movement has been written in general meetings. These meetings guarantee an actual democratic space for us to occupy during strike movements. After having been elected, the government imposes its views and decisions on the whole population for four years. In contrast, general meetings are based on direct democracy, sovereignty of the base and the revocability of officials. Meetings can be held regularly, not be under the control of leaders and allow debate and collective decision-making adapted to the context. However, they too have their faults. They remain a battlefield where different trends oppose with each other and it is not uncommon to observe insidious dynamics of power and disrespectful actions. Those that arrive well prepared are the ones that take charge. This makes the investment in general meetings by all unsatisfied students the first step towards a real change.

In regards to the current state of political life in executive positions, becoming a student representative is far from being the most effective strategy in defending and improving the quality and the accessibility of education. It is important to avoid being overshadowed by the bureaucracy of student unions and executives. It is better to get involved in mobilization committees whose structures are more flexible. They give us the opportunity to keep a critical distance from the decisions of the executive and even of the general meeting. Getting involved also means rising above the representatives that want to speak for us from atop their podium. It is also about developing our own discourse oriented towards our priorities instead of choosing between the bland slogans on offer by the political parties and star activists.

We don't have to conform to the role of lazy spoiled babies that the media is falling over themselves to propagate at our expense. We can choose to be the promise of better days for this ailing society and refuse to watch it degenerate any further. Nevertheless, hijacking is possible. Student leaders have their own plans, often half-assed. From the current movement must be born something that will be a strike for each and for all, and not simply a replica of the spectacular subservience that the imaginary collective would like to pass off as the student movement. The *critical students forces* belong to whomsoever is aware that the struggle for free education is only a brief moment in the grand struggle against capitalist society.

Force étudiante critique

force.etudiante.critique@gmail.com

www.forceetudiantecritique.org