

Open letter to the moderators of the Facebook page “Nurses on the Move”

Louis Girard
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Two reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* have been blocked from the *Infirmières en mouvement* (Nurses on the Move) Facebook page. A first appeal that you reverse this arbitrary ban emphasized our democratic right to be part of the debate. “Workers entering struggle,” we wrote, “need access to a wide range of ideas and free debate.”

The terrible working conditions of nurses and the deterioration of health care and all public services is a Canada-wide phenomenon. It is a direct consequence of the austerity measures adopted by all levels of government. Around the world, the ruling class wants workers to pay for the deep crisis of the profit system.

In this context, your Facebook page has become a forum for discussion and organization for tens of thousands of nurses and other health care workers. But some of your moderators are seeking to stifle this essential democratic debate. Their actions are highly detrimental to the attempt of nurses, and of the entire working class, to fight against big business’s socially regressive agenda.

One of *Infirmières en mouvement* moderators, Simon Chandonnet, has put forward a series of arguments to justify the censorship directed against us. Let me quote and answer these arguments one by one.

1. “We are not here,” Chandonnet, declares “to conduct a witch hunt [against] FIQ (the Interprofessional Federation of Health of Quebec, the principal nurses’ union).”

Our postings on the *Infirmières en mouvement* Facebook page do not constitute a witch hunt against the FIQ or any other union. Our arguments are accurate and true. They are based on an objective analysis of the historical evolution of the unions. The latter, because of their nationalist and pro-capitalist perspective, are now collaborating with the employers to impose vast

rollbacks on the workers they ostensibly represent.

2. “The goal,” says Chandonnet, “will remain to unify, mobilize, (and) inform on the conditions of nurses” in order to achieve the “unity of the profession.”

The call for “unity of the profession” is the discourse employed by the trade union bureaucracy to justify its policy of isolating different groups of workers. In the case of the nurses, it has served, and still serves, to erect an artificial barrier between them and other workers who are suffering the same ruling-class attack on their wages, pensions, workload, and so forth.

3. “Political ideals,” Chandonnet asserts, “must take second place,” adding “the [Facebook] group will not serve as a means of political propaganda for any existing party.”

Behind this call to avoid politics lies a very well-defined type of politics: support for the trade union bureaucracy, which isolates and suppresses worker struggles and subordinates the working class to the Parti Québécois, a party of big business which imposed massive social spending cuts in 1997 and forced thousands of nurses and teachers into retirement without replacing them.

4. “A system,” affirms Chandonnet, “is in place and we need to use it to make a difference.”

Ah, so politics *is* allowed, so long as it is politics that defends the status quo, the “system in place”—a system whose gross inequality and injustice many nurses and other sections of workers are now rebelling against.

Mr. Chandonnet gets tangled up in the contradictions of his antidemocratic arguments and actions, when he writes in the rules of operation of the *Infirmières en mouvement* group: “This group IS a political activity.”

5. Chandonnet enjoys, “This group is not a recruiting

center for ‘revolutionary’ socialism.”

Here is the real reason for the measures taken against us: the political censorship of an idea—socialism—which has been intimately associated with the labor movement for more than 150 years, but which is disapproved of by some *Infirmières en mouvement* moderators like Mr. Chandonnet.

We strongly protest the undemocratic ban on the WSWS and demand the right to participate fully in the crucial debates that are taking place among nurses! Given the urgency of the situation, we expect to receive a prompt reply.

Yours,

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