

## Teachers in the firing line - whoever wins the Election

(Rachael Thomas, Bristol NUT)

December's pre-budget report outlined the attacks that are facing public services, whoever wins the general election.

Our living standards will fall. VAT and National Insurance will rise. Labour is proposing a maximum 1% pay increase for all public sector workers for two years or more from 2011, while the Tories are proposing to go further and freeze pay for 80% of public sector workers.

Public sector pensions are to be 'brought into line' with private sector pensions, in other words face draconian cuts.

Even with the limited protection promised for education, schools will still face cuts and 'efficiency savings'. The Tories will probably cut even further.

But it wasn't teachers, support staff or any other public sector worker that got us into this mess - it was the bankers and establishment politicians.

We need to send out a warning straight away that unions will take united strike action if the next government comes for our jobs, pensions or pay. Let's start by organising meetings and marches to bring together trade unionists and prepare for battle.

## TEACHER WORKLOAD: WE NEED NATIONAL ACTION

### NUT must carry out Conference policy

(Martin Powell-Davies, Lewisham NUT)

The pressure on teachers and education is reaching a crisis point.

Workload gets worse every year, grinding down teachers and damaging education.

The NUT National Executive urgently needs to build national action to defend teachers. After all, that is the policy that they have been instructed to carry out.

At both 2008 and 2009 Annual Conferences, supporters of 'Classroom Teacher' persuaded delegates to support a national ballot on workload. It's time it was carried out!

Unions can't just act as giant 'casework' organisations, leaving school reps and local officers to run themselves ragged trying to deal with the symptoms. To really win, we have to fight the disease!

We have argued that instead of asking individual school groups to struggle in isolation as we do at present, unions should hold a national action ballot to bring all members together to tackle the issue nationally.

The aim of the action would be clear and popular with teachers across the country - to win a National Contract that at last sets properly

binding limits on overall working hours, contact time and class sizes. In other words, teachers would be guaranteed a real limit on our workload, not the worthless promise of a 'reasonable work/life balance' - a very broken promise.

If properly planned and built for, consulting with members about the right balance of public campaigning, work-to-rule and regional and national strike action, this campaign could help galvanise teachers into action and raise confidence to stand firm on all the other issues we face.

If you agree, get in contact with Classroom Teacher and help us campaign for the national ballot to be put in place at last!

### NUT DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY ELECTION

In the campaigning to elect the next DGS of the NUT, **KEVIN COURTNEY** has been the candidate that has clearly spoken out for joint union action in defence of teachers' conditions and education.

Classroom Teacher recommends a vote for:  
**KEVIN COURTNEY 1**  
**HAZEL DANSON 2**

# Inadequate Ofsted

Tim Woodcock (Greenwich NUT)

It seems Ofsted are getting touchy about the bad press they are rightly receiving (and about time too!)

Their latest 'Ofsted News' tries to answer teachers' criticisms about the new inspection arrangements. Schools have reported being down-graded because their fence was too low or because they failed to check the inspectors' name badges ! More fundamentally, their judgements unfairly penalise schools in challenging circumstances.

Ofsted's website invited comments - so here's what I submitted:

*"The decisions made by OfSTED potentially affect thousands of lives and the down grading of schools based on crude and subjective factors should be properly investigated and published for all to see. This is particularly important since the schools success or otherwise is open to public scrutiny and one damning statement can live with a school for a very long time. Your statement is bland and limited and does not reflect the damage a poor, clumsy or inaccurate result in an inspection can do to a school and the schools wider community".*

We have to stand up to the bullying regime of Sats, Ofsted, and endless targets, capability procedures and demoralising observations. United action can make a difference.

# Academies: 'Hands off Weston Favell' wins!

Lee Dunkley ( 'Hands Off Weston Favell School' )

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) has been trying to force the infamous United Learning Trust (ULT) on Weston Favell school, in Northampton, as part of the Government's academies agenda.

The threat has been looming over the school for over a year. Initially we were set to be taken over in the last academic year - but the determination of the organised campaigners forced the date back twice to April 2010. Trade unionists, staff, parents, the student council, the governors, socialists and other activists formed a solid campaign against the proposal.

This came to a peak last month, when both the NASUWT and NUT teaching unions came out on strike together on 3 December. Then followed an 'extraordinary cabinet meeting' at NCC on 10 Dec. which saw 24 members of the public speak - every one of them in opposition. 400 letters were also sent to NCC about the plans; 390 of those were against. Despite the overwhelming opposition, the so-called "listening council" steam-rolled the proposal through.

The only response of Sally Keeble, the Northampton North Labour MP, was to issue a warning to the teachers saying that her support for the cause would be withdrawn if further strike action was taken. Further strike action did loom, however - teaching unions were beginning to prepare for ongoing action and the students were also keen to strike.

But other things were happening at ULT. Their two 'sister' academies in Sheffield had been flagged up to the government as failing. ULT were informed just before Christmas that they could no longer take on the two academies that they were in the process of obtaining - one in Oxfordshire, and Weston Favell.

This has left both the Labour government and the Tory local council with egg on their faces. They were willing to disregard the whole community, and jeopardise the students' short term education, as well as begin to privatise education in the long term. Yet another example of how out-of-touch mainstream politicians are.

The hard work done by the 'parents' action group', by the teaching unions and campaigners has provided the momentum needed to quash the proposal, and has demonstrated that a unified grassroots fight can beat an unrepresentative and self-interested authority.

## Classroom Teacher

... is an initiative ...  
by, and for, classroom teachers  
... voicing the concerns and  
experiences of classroom teachers  
... so we can build action to win  
change for classroom teachers

## If you want :

... help organising a strong Union group in your school  
... to share your views about the pressures teachers face  
... to take action to defend teachers and education ...

**Get in touch :** [www.classroomteacher.org.uk](http://www.classroomteacher.org.uk)  
[classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk)  
Martin Powell-Davies - 020 8659 8478