

Classroom Teacher

Vote YES in the NUT pay ballot

1. Why is the NUT balloting for more strike action?

* So this Government understands that teachers aren't going to put up with year after year of pay cuts.

Our solid national strike action on 24 April hit the headlines and showed that the NUT wasn't going to sit back while price rises outstripped teachers' pay increases.

The Government saw our strength - but have chosen to call our bluff. The 'Review Body' (STRB) has fallen into line and refused to recommend any increased pay awards to take account of spiralling inflation. Unless we act, the STRB will rubber-stamp the awards proposed for 2009 and 2010 - of just 2.3%!

With food and fuel prices rocketing, many teachers are already feeling the pinch. As debts rise and negative equity takes hold, many more will be struggling if pay continues to fall in real terms. We have no alternative but to ballot for strike action again.

2. Will teachers vote to strike?

* A clear majority voted YES before - we ask you to do the same again.

The NUT is a democratic Union - we ballot members so that you can make the decision.

Nobody takes strike action lightly, least of all teachers who put in so many hours of work so school students can learn and develop. But we have a responsibility to ourselves, and our families, to defend our salaries. We will also be defending education. Already teacher vacancies are beginning to rise. More pay cuts will only make things worse.

Thousands voted for action in April - and thousands more joined the strike on the day. Your solid support exceeded expectations - we need to show that strength once again.

While inflation goes UP:

2006/7 3.75%

2007/8 4.1%

July 2008 5.0%

Our pay awards

go DOWN:

2005 3.25%

2006 2.5%

2007 2.5%

2008 2.45%

2009 2.3% ?

2010 2.3% ?

3. Will the public support us?

* April showed that many parents understood why we had to act.

Of course we will disrupt childcare when we strike - that's what makes our action bite. But feedback in April showed that many parents understood why we were on strike - after all, they are suffering the same price rises too.

We have to go out with leaflets to explain our case. But our lead can encourage other trade unionists, pensioners and parents to demand something is done to stop the squeeze on all of our living standards.

Classroom Teacher is a campaigning newsletter written for, and by, classroom teachers. If you want help organising a union in your school, if you want to take action to defend teachers and education, if you want to give us your views about the pressures teachers face:

Write to: classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk **Visit:** www.classroomteacher.org.uk

4. Will other trade unions join our action?

*** Some are ready for joint action now - we want others to join in too.**

September's Trades Union Congress voted to back a co-ordinated campaign on pay, including a national demonstration. If this is held on our strike day, it will allow trade unions that aren't balloting at the moment - like UNISON and the NASUWT - to join protests alongside trade unions that are likely to be on strike - such as the NUT, PCS (civil servants) and UCU (lecturers).

5. So can we win?

*** Yes. Governments respond to pressure - if enough is applied.**

The Government is under pressure on many fronts. When the pressure over issues like Northern Rock became too much, the billions needed for a bailout were found after all. The money needed to fund our pay claim can also be found. Firm action, linked with other unions too, can force a U-turn.

Instead of blaming trade union action for 'undermining Labour' at the polls, Ministers need to realise it's their unpopular policies that are draining their support. If they don't want to lose the next election, it's time they changed track - including on teachers' pay.

6. Won't pay rises just make prices go even higher?

*** No. The Bank of England admits "wages do not cause inflation".**

It's inevitable that politicians will try the old line that 'we all have to tighten our belts'. (but apparently not the energy companies!) Everyone can see the economy is in trouble. But why should we pay for the mess?

Teachers' pay hasn't caused surging oil prices. We haven't been speculating on basic foodstuffs. We haven't been the ones leading banks into crisis (however big our credit card bills!). No, we are the victims of price rises, not their cause.

In fact, putting more money in our pockets can help make sure struggling businesses have got someone to sell to after all!

7. What about workload?

*** Winning on pay can help boost campaigning on other issues too.**

NUT Annual Conference voted to support action on workload and class sizes, as well as on pay. For now, the National Executive have chosen to concentrate national action on pay but local disputes over workload and Academies are also being backed. A strong campaign over pay can also strengthen our confidence to stand firm on other issues too.

8. Why are we being balloted on 'discontinuous' action?

*** So that the Union has the legal go-ahead to plan a full campaign.**

Our last ballot only sanctioned a one-day strike. That meant that the Union wasn't able to call any further action - for example alongside UNISON in July - until we had balloted NUT members again.

This ballot will be for 'discontinuous' action so that the Union can plan a series of days of action without having to go through a full legal ballot each time. This could include both national and regional strike action. Of course, the NUT will be discussing at each stage what action to take next, and when.

9. Can I afford to strike?

*** Can we afford not to?**

NUT members will lose pay when we strike - but we will lose many thousands of pounds in purchasing power if we allow our salaries to be pushed further behind inflation.

NUT Associations will organise hardship funds so that we can help make sure that members in the worst financial position can afford to strike - after all, these are the NUT colleagues that most need the Union to win!

BALLOT PAPERS WILL BE SENT TO HOME ADDRESSES ON 6 OCT.

- * Make sure the Union's records have your correct home address.**
- * Hold a meeting in your school.**
- * Vote YES and encourage your colleagues to vote YES too!**