

## THE AXE-MEN ARE COMING!

**IT'S MARCH - only two more months of unpaid overtime to go!**

*(Rachael Thomas, Bristol NUT)*

The TUC have just released figures confirming what teachers, and their families, already know only too well - that we clock up many hours of 'unpaid overtime' every week.

The report, released to mark "Work Your Proper Hours Day", describes the 18.7 hours of extra work that an average teacher carries out in the evenings and weekends as 'extreme' overtime.

Put a different way, the report points out that, in effect, it as if teachers worked the first FOUR months of the year for free - before actually starting on the 1265 paid 'directed hours'.

Teachers can be exploited and overworked in this way because the existing Pay and Conditions Document puts no limit on the additional hours that have to be put in outside the teaching day. That's why we need a national campaign to win a National Contract that sets a binding limit on overall working hours.

'Classroom Teacher' calls for our unions to hold a national ballot to sanction a programme of both strike and non-strike action to win such a Contract. This should include clear guidelines that allow teachers to refuse to carry out excessive demands.

*(Martin Powell-Davies, Lewisham NUT)*

A debate is raging amongst the financiers and politicians about when to make spending cuts.

Some - backed by the Tories - argue for immediate action after the General Election to cut the deficit and placate the money-markets. Others - backing the Chancellor - rightly warn that the Tories' 'short, sharp shock' would risk plunging Britain's fragile economy further into recession.

But teachers - and other public sector workers - should not be fooled into thinking that there is any difference between the two camps over whether cuts will have to be made - sooner or just a little later. The 'open letters' from the economists backing Labour simply support the chancellor's decision to "delay government spending cuts until 2011".



All the main political parties agree that the huge state debts built up by bailing out the private finance sector's toxic loans need to be repaid. Britain has rung up a budget deficit of around 12% of national

income. That's not far short of Greece's ratio - a deficit that the bankers are demanding is immediately slashed. Those austerity plans have already led to big protests - with millions joining a 24-hour general strike across Greece on February 24th.

Will we see the same level of cuts - and protests - here? The £75 million cuts just announced by the Tory-Lib Dem leaders of Birmingham City Council shows what may lie in store. As their Chief Executive announced, "the scale of cuts is likely to be of a magnitude that no one has seen". He's right. Even Mrs. Thatcher did not attempt to implement the absolute cuts in public spending planned by both Labour and Tories after the election.

Of course, we are being told that there is no option but to cut. But why should we pay for the crisis caused by the 'banksters' greed? Once the actual effects of the cuts become clear - wrecking education and other public services - protests will begin. The vital factor will be trade union leadership.

The NUT should put out a call for a massive national demonstration alongside other unions to demand 'No cuts - defend jobs and services' as a preparation for the national strike action that will be required.

**Action and  
Change for  
Teachers**

# SATS BOYCOTT

## Only Heads and Deputies to be balloted

The NUT Executive has confirmed that only Headteachers, Deputy and Assistant Heads will be included in the ballot on a boycott of the 2010 Key Stage 2 SATs. The NUT and NAHT will both be issuing ballot papers on 15 March, for return by 16 April.

As the February Classroom Teacher reported, this decision has apparently been made following concern that a wider ballot might be challenged in court - particularly in the wake of the injunction against strike action threatened by British Airways staff.

Legal advice suggests that only these post holders have a contractual responsibility for administering SATs. But where does this leave Year 6 teachers who want to boycott the grinding preparation for these tests?

The NUT promises that further advice will be issued for classroom teachers but, without a ballot, how many will feel confident to refuse when their Head instructs them to prepare their classes for the tests? Unfortunately, it is another example of the lack of a clear strategy. Strong guidance supporting Year 6 staff in resisting SATs preparation should have been issued at the start of September!

Nevertheless, it is vital that staff encourage those being balloted to support a boycott. SATs are a key part of the bullying regime that unfairly compares - and condemns - so many staff, children and schools. Heads need to stand up to the pressure put on them by Government and Councils and support a boycott.

**What do you think? Send in your views to the Classroom Teacher blog**

# THOSE WHO CAN...

## get observed and bullied?

*by a school NUT Representative*

I think I speak for a lot of people when I say that if I had known what the life of a teacher was actually like, I wouldn't have started initial teacher training.

Unlike the misleading adverts, instead of planning creative, enjoyable and worthwhile lessons, we have found ourselves sat for hours in front of computers filling in data on a spreadsheet.

Added to this, many staff in my school are incredulous at a new observation procedure, where in an 'observation week' for a year group, teachers should expect leadership to observe a maths lesson or science lesson unannounced. Being observed is bad enough, but not knowing when (and after only 4 or 5 hours sleep because you've been up until 1 or 2 in the morning in front of Excel), nor being told exactly what is being observed, takes the biscuit.

NUT members approached me with their concerns and anxieties. On their behalf, I questioned leadership about the observation regime and said I would consult with my local branch. When I pointed out that reproducing raw data on different spreadsheets was unproductive, a waste of time and contradicted the Teachers Pay and Conditions Document I was met with a firm, "Well I'm all for unions, however, you better make sure that all your data is correct because I'm going to check every single one of your books to make sure it is." Was this threat because I was seen to be the one stirring up trouble? Members in my school are reticent about taking action for this reason, they fear for their jobs if they rock the boat. Yet they are stressed and overworked.

Of course the real reason behind this data analysis and over observation is the impending spectre of OFSTED. After all, they are the ones who want the raw data via RAISEonline to compare the kids at my school who have an ingrown toenail, are left handed and speak fluent Esperanto, with similar children in Uttoxeter.

There won't be many teachers left at my school next year, they'll get jobs in Sainsbury's rather than put up with this nonsense. This is why we not only need national action on teacher workload and conditions but also a concerted attack on the behemoth that is OFSTED. Not just for NUT members, but for the children we are supposed to be educating.

## 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 :

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