



## Pensions: Time for a Reckoning

By Pat Murphy, NUT National Exec Member (pc)

Whatever differences there were between delegates at last year's NUT conference, on one thing all were agreed. The Coalition's pension proposals were the greatest threat to our members' conditions of service in living memory and the most serious challenge the Union had faced for many decades. Defeating them was vital, would require industrial action on a huge scale and was a struggle we simply had to win. The priority motion passed at that Conference included the statement that '*This Union believes that a one day strike in the summer term will only be the start of the battle on pensions, and that further, more widespread and coordinated strike action across the public sector will be*

**needed**'. The one-day strike referred to was June 30<sup>th</sup>.

A year later the balance sheet does not look good. The government has not shifted from any of the essential prongs of their pension proposals and, indeed, teachers will see significant sums taken out of our pay later this month, the first of three contribution increases between now and 2014. The change in inflation-proofing of our pensions so that it is linked to CPI rather than RPI was in place last April and continues despite the much-vaunted legal challenge and the strike action of last year. The normal pension age for teachers will not only rise to 68, it will happen much quicker than originally proposed (by 2026) as a result of an announcement by Osborne on the eve of the last national strike.

The priority motion was right to assert that '**further, more widespread and co-ordinated strike action**' would be needed. No-one should be surprised that the government has had such an easy time in forcing through their plans, however, as the aforementioned action was never to materialise. June 30<sup>th</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup> were glorious days which, as we said in our paper Solidarity at the time, '**demonstrated the potential social power of the working class to a generation of workers who had not experienced it before. It was a glimpse of the mass labour movement as a vital social force**'. They were, however, essentially protest strikes; moments of anger in defence of our rights but not nearly adequate to meet the task.

As things now stand, Conference delegates are assessing whether we can quickly build up to national action again after a retreat by the National Executive to localised strike action in London only. It has to be hoped that we can or the pensions campaign may be doomed. Whatever the outcome of that debate, though, we need to consider how we got here and how we ensure no repeat of some avoidable mistakes. A return to national action on the same basis as this time last year would represent little advance. It remains the case that neither the



NUT nor any other public sector union has put forward a strategy for a real winnable dispute as opposed to a series of protests.

## How did we get here?

### External factors

A number of factors which have exerted a damaging effect on this campaign have been largely outside the control of the NUT. The TUC and the leaders of the largest unions made it clear from the start that they had no appetite for a serious campaign of industrial action. Under the pressure of June 30<sup>th</sup> (as a show of strength a genuine success) they shifted their tactics but not their assessment or objectives. In

essence they joined the strike movement all the better to demobilise it at the least sign of concessions. The first offer from government in November (protection for older workers and no contribution increases for the lowest paid) was more than enough for them and they signalled clearly to Ministers before November 30<sup>th</sup> that that day would be the last such action and they would settle with no hesitation afterwards. Their actions are a disgrace, they played absolutely no positive role in the campaign and they stand rightfully condemned. But the criticism should not be made only privately. Unions whose action has been 'mugged' in this way

should ignore internal TUC diplomacy and organise together to fight this craven trade unionism in the open. Without this approach talk of the betrayals of Prentis and Barber is just excuse-making.

Just as important the job of co-ordinating strike action should not be left only to one-to-one talks between union general secretaries. Regular joint meetings between the national executives of public sector unions would have broadened the democratic control of the dispute and undercut the ability of a small number of individuals to use union difference to undermine the campaign.

The NASUWT too have played an appalling role. The fundamental fact of teacher trade unionism is still that the two largest unions representing teachers could sustain a very effective defence of our terms and conditions if they worked together and co-ordinated action. No blame whatsoever for the lack of such co-ordination lies with the NUT leadership. On the contrary the (completely understandable) determination of the NUT to exhaust every possibility of bringing the NASUWT on board, together with the resolute refusal of that union to enter into any meaningful discussions about joint action has acted as a major drag on the pensions' campaign. And the NASUWT did worse than refuse to work with us. They worked through the TUC and 'behind the scenes' to wreck the June 30<sup>th</sup> action, attempting to force the ATL to withdraw from it.

It was right to work hard to get teacher (and indeed broad trade union) support for a co-ordinated public sector action campaign to defend pensions. It was also necessary, however, to assess the prospects of achieving this and, above all, to ensure that the campaign was being shaped by those who were prepared to fight and not, as it in fact was, by those who had little interest in it. The likely position of the NASUWT, for

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example, was very easy to predict. Under the unchallenged control of its General Secretary, with no visible rank and file or activist pressure of any kind, the prospect of them engaging meaningfully with us was always very slim. We couldn't rule out some wild lurch into action to outflank the NUT (to a large extent their bizarre non-strike action is just that) but what never seemed likely on any of the evidence was serious co-ordination. In our relations with the NASUWT we have allowed hope to triumph over sober assessment.

### **Internal mistakes and misleadership.**

Piled on top of the external factors, though, have been a number of decisive mistakes from our own leadership. It helps no-one for us to refuse to face up to these seriously. On the contrary the success of future campaigns on workload, regional pay and indeed pensions if we can revive that struggle, depend absolutely on confronting our own weaknesses. This list is not exhaustive but it does include the decisive episodes.

### **No Strategy.**

The tone for this campaign was set at last year's Conference when we debated the priority motion. The basic message of the motion was unanimously agreed - we needed action on pensions starting with June 30<sup>th</sup> and much more co-ordinated action beyond that. If it was to be fleshed out more that would be done in amendments, of which there were three, all from the left. One proposed some basic campaigning ideas that would certainly have been taken up in any case, one proposed the development of a detailed plan of escalating action to follow June 30<sup>th</sup> and one called for no action at all from the Union, merely stating that '***action would be strengthened if the TUC called such coordinated action,***



***beginning with a one day public sector general strike in the autumn'***. It didn't call on the TUC to do this, or even instruct the NUT to make such a call. It was an utterly meaningless amendment, as could be seen when the whole conference voted for it. The CBC placed the only amendment to discuss a strategy beyond June 30<sup>th</sup> last and the debate was then closed down before we reached it. The decisive forces in this manoeuvre were on the left (on CBC and the conference floor). It wasn't just that there was no strategy, it was also important to avoid any debate which would reveal that this was the case. This approach continued throughout the pensions' campaign whether on the Executive or in the wider union. At no point did any of the activist groups in the Union (STA, CDFU, Broadly Speaking) publish any material outlining a strategy any different from that pursued by the Executive. Strike day meetings have been rallies at which members heard from the great and the good, reps briefings have been mainly information sessions and what has been avoided is an honest and open

discussion with members about how this dispute could be won.

### **Protest strikes.**

June 30<sup>th</sup> was ***not*** a platform for '***further, more widespread and coordinated strike action***'. Instead it was a protest strike that was not followed up by any further strike action for five months. And then it was succeeded by another one-day protest strike. A much bigger one for sure but in character no different, with no set plans for what to do next, no discussion organised or allowed at the strike rallies and a repeat of the 'wait and see what your leaders hand down' approach of the entire campaign. Indeed the strike day rallies were considerably worse in most cases than June 30<sup>th</sup> in that they were dominated by the least inspiring and most timid of union full-timers. Nine months after Conference and over a year after the pension proposals were first announced we had no more idea of where this was going than we had at the start.

### **The reserved position.**

On December 19<sup>th</sup> the Government gathered all of the

public sector unions in a room and tried to browbeat them into accepting a final agreement which kept all the key proposals intact. The NUT response was terrible and it made tangible in a new and more damaging way the problem with our focus on the NASUWT. Faced with a completely unacceptable deal, the abject and pre-arranged surrender of the 'big' unions and a heavyweight news management plan designed to send public sector workers into their Christmas holidays with the message that the pensions' dispute is over the Union's job could not have been clearer. We had to reject the deal unmistakably and emerge from the talks pledging to organise with all other rejectionist unions to co-ordinate further action as soon as possible. What we, in fact, did was announce that we had a '**reserved position**'. What that meant we still do not know. The material to divisions talked, ludicrously, of some additional information which the government had not yet provided which prevented us from reaching a final view. It was utter nonsense. There was no new information that would alter the basic facts; we would still pay more, work longer (even longer than before November 30<sup>th</sup>) and get a worse pension. School reps and

members left work at the end of term neither knowing nor understanding whether their union had rejected a deal or was close to settling. The reason given for this stance (but only to the Executive) was that this was the position the NASUWT had taken and it might help us draw them into future action if we avoided taking a different position. Not for the first time we showed more concern to court the NASUWT (who were making it quite plain they didn't fancy us) than to properly inform and give confidence to our own members.

### **Failure to respond to the Heads of Agreement.**

Anyone watching the depressing events of December 19<sup>th</sup> unfold on the media could see that what was needed was a rapid demonstration that, in fact, this dispute was not finished and that a significant number of unions were prepared to continue to organise action against this rotten deal. Given the government's deliberate timing this could not happen until January but that restriction apart the responsibility was obvious. In fact, despite emergency meetings being convened, the Executive voted down proposals to take urgent further action in January or February. The key reason given was again the need to wait for

other unions to step forward with concrete plans. When one of the education unions, UCU, did just that and named March 1<sup>st</sup>, we rejected that date as too early and announced that we wanted to consult our whole membership.

### **Uncertain signals.**

The signal all of this delay and vacillation sends out to members is surely unmistakable. We did not know what we were going to do next, we were waiting for the decisions of others and we hadn't even announced a clear rejection of the deal.

### **Death by survey.**

In February the Executive decided to survey all members on two questions (rejection of the deal and further action to start with a national strike on March 28<sup>th</sup>). We had already carried out very large sample surveys of members since the December 'Heads of Agreement'. There was no need to carry out a further poll as the original ballot was valid and we had the mandate to call further action. The decision to carry out a full membership survey and refuse to call any action or discuss an effective strategy to win until it was complete simply reinforced the signal conveyed by all of the above- uncertainty, delay and vacillation.



### **Ignoring the members.**

Despite all of this the survey produced a really positive result. 73.4% of our members voted to support further action '**starting with a national strike on March 28<sup>th</sup>**'. That they did this despite all of the mood music since December and in full knowledge that the ATL and NAHT had pulled out and the NASUWT were showing no signs at all of taking strike action demonstrated significant confidence and determination in the

circumstances. Their clearly expressed views became, however, only the backdrop to the most bizarre decision of the entire campaign. By a majority of 24-15 the Executive responded to the survey on March 14<sup>th</sup> by voting **against** a proposal to proceed with national action on March 28<sup>th</sup>. The problem, it seems, was the turnout though there were negative comments made about the yes vote too (less than the overwhelming 92% in the original ballot). And this was not a defeat on 'the left' inflicted by 'the right'. The recommendation not to proceed was made by the General Secretary and explained in her absence by the Deputy General Secretary. It was carried on the votes of all the CDFU members on the Executive and the one abstention was STA member, Dave Harvey. This was followed in a domino effect by UCU, PCS, EIS and NIPSA also deciding not to take national action. Having waited for other unions to line up with us before calling action the Executive were now instrumental in ensuring that none of them did.

## Where now?

The future of the pensions' campaign will be the subject of the most important debate at Conference when the priority motion is debated on Saturday

afternoon. If activists and members in London get the reward they deserve for the hard work in selling and then delivering a regional strike there on March 28<sup>th</sup> then we should be voting on proposals for an escalation of that action to national action again as soon as possible after Easter. It is still the case that a combination of national strikes with rolling local or regional action will be needed to force the government to make more concessions.

From Conference the only realistic and serious next step forward must be a decision to:

- set a national strike day now, for as early as possible in the summer term, and campaign to get the PCS, UCU, Unite, EIS, and NIPSA out on the same day. This is possible. PCS, Unite, and NIPSA are already talking of a strike in "late April", and PCS leaders will be under pressure from their members to display some action before their union conference in May;
- formulate plans now for a quick-tempo rolling programme of regional and selective strikes, sustained by strike levies, to follow the national strike;
- put out those plans to wide democratic discussion in the

union, including in democratic strike meetings on the late-April strike day; and organise strike committees in every area jointly with other unions continuing the campaign;

- formulate precise and credible demands on the Government: reopen negotiations, exempt teachers below average pay from contribution increases, reduce the pension penalty for retiring below pension age.

Rescinding the Government's entire package will be very difficult, now that the union leaderships have wasted so much time. Merely to call on members for protest strikes "about" pensions, without indicating what precisely what the union demands, is to eat away at the union's stock of loyalty and credibility. Making limited demands now in no way blocks the union from advancing more radical demands as and when a new mobilisation gathers momentum.



# Defend our Reps!

By Pat Markey and Dean Cornwall, Northampton NUT

On occasions, our School NUT Reps face victimisation from school managers.

That the NUT is committed to supporting our Reps is beyond doubt, but recent experience suggests that this support sometimes needs to be more vigorous.

First, it must be the default position that victimisation requires a collective approach. The members must understand that if

the School Rep is bullied, then it won't be long before someone else suffers the same fate. It is in their best interests to defend the Rep, by strike action if necessary.

School management will often use 2 weapons: Suspension and confidentiality. Suspension ensures the Rep is out of sight, and confidentiality serves the purpose of sowing confusion and doubt in the minds of those remaining at the chalkface.

A suspended Rep needs to be confident of backing from the Regional Office when he or she

decides to respond by declaring: 'This is not a matter of confidentiality, this is an attack on the Union, and I will meet with my members, off site if necessary, in order to explain the issues and appeal for support from my members.'

Of course, every case is different in some ways, but if the above were adopted as a default position, then we would be better prepared to defend those Reps who face victimisation in the battles to come.

# Young Teachers Conference has potential but...

By a London NUT Member

The NUT's annual Young Teachers Conference is described as an 'opportunity to meet and network with other young teachers from across England and Wales. It aims to support young teachers already active in the NUT and to encourage other young teachers to become active within the NUT.'

It seems a good idea that the trade union movement, traditionally thought of as the territory of older white men, makes efforts to engage with a younger audience. Young Teachers' Conference has a jolly feel, the kind of atmosphere you'd expect to find in your student bar. The conference appeals to NUT members under 35 by giving them a good time – disco, gym, sauna, bar - all the 4 star attractions of Stoke Rochford Hall, and some CPD – how to use drama or ICT across the curriculum, how to deal with racist incidents, or 'how to get the buggers to behave' were all subjects of workshops at this year's Young Teachers Conference. Amidst this, there is a scattering of workshops and speakers that seem more at home at a trade union conference. Amongst the CPD and fun times at Young Teachers' Conference, there were some brief but potentially useful sessions on organising against academisation and the role of the rep in the workplace.

In teaching, there have been aggressive recruitment drives over the last ten years to entice recent graduates into the profession. Programmes such as Teach First and the golden handshakes that were offered to PGCE students, have meant that many younger people have come into teaching in recent years. The preference for 'top' graduates and, as is the case for the Teach

First programme, top graduates who agree to teach for two years while being mentored by a private or third sector sponsor before moving on into their chosen profession, makes it a reasonable assumption that teaching is being manipulated somewhat to become an even more middle class profession.

The combination of this trend in recruitment, and the quiet of the labour movement over the last 15 years, means that most young teachers could be forgiven for not having much of an idea of what a trade union is, how it works and what it's for. In these times, however, when teachers in the NUT have been called out on strike action up to 3 or 4 times within a year, when the attacks on the basic infrastructure of a comprehensive education system and welfare state are coming thick and fast, it is essential that our union reaches out to young teachers as labour movement activists.

Our union does have a responsibility to engage its members, of all ages, in debates of pedagogy and practice, however not to reproduce inset days that we experience in our working lives. If a fighting union capable of winning serious battles is what we are trying to achieve, we need new or young members' initiation into the union to be one that educates and empowers. By

virtue of being under 35, if nothing else, the vast majority of delegates at this conference will have little or no memory, let alone experience, of industrial action or organising. And yet increasingly it is these people who find themselves needing to mobilise school groups, or being asked to sit on committees of divisions.

The Young Teachers' Conference should be a place where younger activists get an education in the history of trade unionism and the place of the NUT within that history. It should incorporate aspects of reps training as well explaining the structures and procedures of the NUT and engaging people in the political debates taking place within it; it should do this in order that young teachers are not just courted, but enabled to play an active and responsible part in their union. Yes there is a place for meeting people and networking of course, but to dumb down what our union is and why it exists, to shy away from asking people to see the union as a political organisation, to assume that a serious approach would simply turn people off, is patronising and totally self-defeating. At a time when we need more than ever a politically conscious, confident and well-organised rank and file, we need Young Teachers Conference to be a hotbed of political debate and education.



# ***Vote for Amendment 47.3 don't close the debate!***

**By Tom Unterrainer President,  
Nottingham City NUT (pc)**

Motion 47, 'Solidarity with Egyptian Workers', is in some ways a major improvement on previous years' motions. The reason? A substantial part of the motion addresses itself to the single most important advance for workers in the past twelve months – namely, the creation from almost nothing of a vibrant, fighting and independent trade union movement in Egypt. We should all celebrate and support this development.

However, and as in other years, the motion verges off this particular topic in the final instructions to the Executive. Fair enough? Yes and no. Yes, because in raising opposition to military intervention the authors of the motion have raised a very important topic. No, because they do so in just one sentence.

There is nothing particularly objectionable about amendments 47.1 and 47.2 other than their failure to address detail. 47.1 asks conference to reaffirm opposition to "military action or intervention against Iran". Again, fair enough? Yes and no. Yes, because only someone of epic ignorance and stupidity would want war against Iran. It's right that the Union takes a position on these matters – as we

have before – and that we register our opposition. No, because the threat of war is not isolated from the facts and realities of the Iranian regime and their pursuit of nuclear weapons.

Only amendment 47.3 raises opposition to all forms of nuclear weapons no matter which country possesses them. Some will argue that there is no symmetry between the possession of such weapons by the US, UK and Israel on the one hand and somewhere like Iran. Whilst the former are either world powers or linked to and backed by world powers, Iran is a threatened and isolated country. "If they have them, Iran has a right to them also" goes the argument.

This sort of "reasoning" is a well worn path, reminiscent of those who defended the 'right' of the USSR to possess and threaten the use of nuclear weapons. There is no such special right: there can never be a 'right' to possess the capability to bring an end to all human life.

In addition to these basic arguments, there is the issue of the Iranian regime itself. Whether or not it is nuclear armed, Iran is ultimately controlled by a theocratic-reactionary dictatorship. There are currently signs of a split between

the government of Ahmadinejad and the ruling religious apparatus. Tensions are very high in Iran and more widely, with considerable regional realignment away from Tehran and towards Qatar (and its massive oil wealth) and Cairo (the site of dynamic political development). Iran has acted as a regional power since the counter-revolution in the early 1980s, using largesse to control and influence events in Palestine, Syria and Lebanon and waging war with Iraq.

Nuclear weapons could allow Iran to resume this influence and threaten the spread and development of the Arab Spring. It would also allow Iran to make good its professed wish to see Israel wiped off the map – something that the belligerent Israeli armed forces and current government are bound to respond to.

Then there is the issue of the internal situation in Iran. Disregard for a moment the violent and intimidatory 'policing' of women, ethnic and religious minorities and use this basic measure: how quickly would NUT conference be broken up, how swiftly would we be dumped in jail and how long would we be kept there if we were meeting in Iran rather than sunny Torquay? How many of us would 'disappear' in the process?

If we are to discuss our opposition to war on Iran, we are impelled by the logic of our own basic politics to consider and speak against the realities of the Iranian regime. We are bound to extend and build solidarity with opponents of the Iranian regime – the independent trade unions in particular – and promote their cause.

We are pretty sure that attempts will be made to close the debate before we reach 47.3: we ask you to oppose such a move and to allow a full, frank and honest debate.



# Workload: we need a strategy of non-compliance

By Liam Conway, Joint Secretary  
Notts NUT (pc)

The number of teachers on either capability or absence monitoring has mushroomed alarmingly. Those on capability are often there because they cannot teach in ways that supposedly shows pupil progress in a single lesson. Nor are they able to operate robotically in line with a data-obsessed, Ofsted written script. Many on absence monitoring are essentially suffering stress-related symptoms generated by the same thing.

Frequently the teachers in absence monitoring or capability are women in their 50's who have spent a life time caring for the welfare and educational interests of children. Many are being driven out of the profession early because they care more about children than statistics. In reality current union responses to this tragedy amount to little more than 'getting deals' to soften the blow for teachers unable to take another battering from Ofsted and their willing accomplices. It is astonishing to note that schools with the most bullying forms of management often come out of Ofsted inspections with the senior leadership team identified as outstanding – it beggars belief.

The workload debate is clearly not just about how much work teachers have to do, it is about the quality and nature of that work. In the early 80's the nature of a teachers' work was very much determined by teachers themselves. Individual lessons were created rather than planned and the emphasis was on

process and encouraging critical thinking rather than on product and spoon feeding for exam success.

The introduction of the National Curriculum and Ofsted in the 1988 Act was the beginning of the end of teacher professional autonomy and its been downhill ever since.

Schools today are under permanent Ofsted alert and operate largely as if Ofsted was in school all the time. The pressure to match national standards is creating a world in which teachers must be subject to spying every day. The new Performance Management regulations threaten to remove any limit on observations and drop-ins despite the vast majority of teachers identifying excessive observation as a key source of excessive workload as well as stress related illness.

Gove and his Bullingdon Club friends claim that teachers want an increase in the number of time-tabled lessons because they love teaching so much. But loving teaching shouldn't necessarily boost staff moral because a 'hero' of Gove's Michael Wilshaw, the Ofsted chief, believes that low teacher moral shows that headteachers are doing things right.

The 'standards agenda' behind so much of this workload has nothing to do with standards, at least not for the majority of our students, whom the government holds in contempt. This is about controlling and isolating teachers, forcing them to submit and making it impossible for unions to defend them

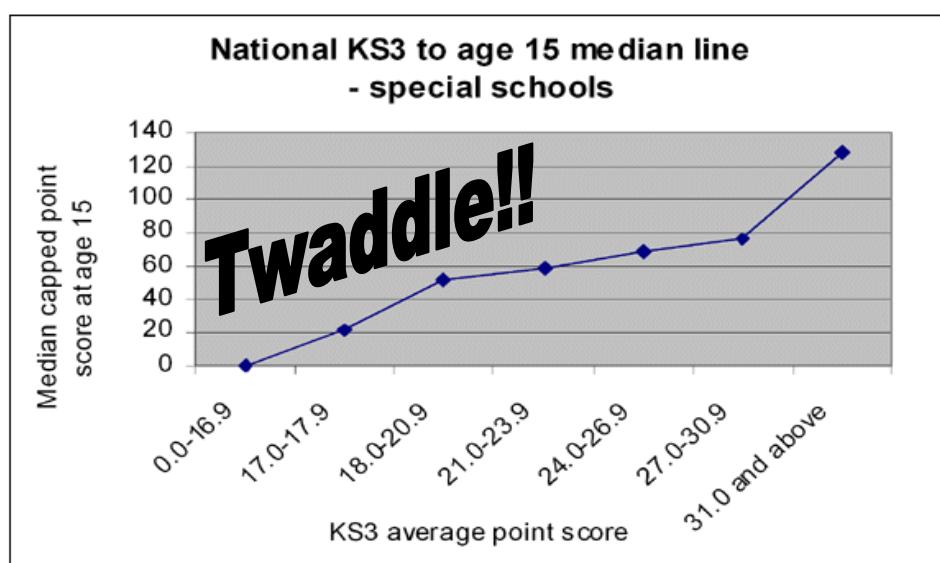
collectively. A simple test of the effectiveness of our current response would be to do a national count of the number of caseworks generated by workload and compare that to the number of industrial disputes generated by it.

Without a national campaign of action on workload not much is likely to change. There are some good responses in some of the motions and amendments at conference - motions 15, 16 and 17 on workload related matters and motion 30 on Ofsted - but, though proposing more collective approaches, they still fail to outline an effective national strategy of non-compliance with the 'standards agenda'.

So what would such a strategy look like? Here are some random thoughts

- A boycott of all data entry and analysis
- A boycott of Ofsted based on the Irish model
- A refusal to co-operate with observation other than peer observation
- A boycott of all objective-driven lesson planning
- A boycott of all nationally imposed testing regimes below GCSE and equivalents taken at age 16

There are probably many more possibilities for action. None of them will really count for anything unless the Union ballots members with a view to non-compliance with the 'standards agenda' and its accompanying policing regimes. Non-compliance would have the added advantages of strengthening the pensions campaign and begin to return control of their professional lives to teachers and their co-workers. This would be good for everyone in schools, not least the kids. So the executive should stop pussy footing around and begin a serious battle on workload. At a Division Secretaries Briefing a couple of years ago Christine Blower, in response to a question bemoaning the lack of national initiative on workload said, 'we are where we are'. Well Christine, for thousands of teachers, where we are is shit and you and the rest of our leadership need to initiate some serious action to get us out of it.



# What sort of Internationalism?

By Tom Unterrainer President, Nottingham City NUT (pc)

The form and substance of the challenges facing teachers across the globe are not incidental or ephemeral phenomena. The struggles we face in this country against privatisation, deregulation, intensification of work and the slashing of pay and conditions are an echo of broad and fundamental changes taking place not just in the 'education sector' but in the public provision of services more generally. These developments are in turn intimately associated with the way in which capital continues to pursue neoliberal policies as a route out of crisis.

Many of the motions and amendments up for debate at NUT conference are linked to the process described above. Motion 41 on 'The Economy' attacks the government's austerity measures and notes that "[s]imilar being pursued elsewhere in the world have ... failed to do anything other than slash the living standards of ordinary people and slash the services they depend on".

Motion 39 on 'Trade Union Rights', Motion 44 on 'Academies and Free Schools' and Motion 35 on 'Youth Unemployment' touch directly on the facts of how capitalism works and the consequences for teachers and the young people we work with.

However, none of the motions makes a definite link between what teachers in the UK experience and the prospects and battles of our brothers and sisters around the world. Even the motion in the International Section, 'Solidarity with Egyptian Workers', calls for no more than an affiliation to the Socialist Workers Party dominated 'Middle East and North Africa Solidarity Network'.

We are living through interesting times, even in the relative quietude of the British working class movement. The financial crisis, Arab Spring, the pre-revolutionary situation in Greece, the potential re-



alignment of economic dominance away from the west and the continued forward march of neoliberalism – all of these events inform and shape what British capitalism and therefore what the UK government and our employers, will do next.

They also shape the struggles and responses of workers – and importantly for the NUT, teachers – around the world. The victories and defeats; strategies and tactics; methods and forms of organisation used by teacher trade unionists around the globe deserve the close attention of our union.

Solidarity is not a one way street: it is not simply a matter of signing a cheque, adding your name to a declaration or supporting a front group.

## Perspectives or Solidarity?

Too often, the international section of conference is dominated by a 'perspectives' document rather than a motion paying attention to fundamental changes taking place globally and the courageous fight-back against them. Most often, the motions and amendments that make it to the top of the International Section repeat and reaffirm long-held positions of the Union. All too often, the wording and intentions of these motions and amendments leave a great deal to be desired.

Also problematic is the fact that

these motions are written some months before conference convenes. One week is a very long time in international affairs, let alone four or five months. This means that whilst the motions strive to be 'contemporary' – as with this years motion, 'Solidarity with Egyptian Workers' – they end up offering generalisations of the situation. Much important detail is missed.

The amendments process is partly designed to allow for new developments to be included, but with the International Section the amendment process is used to add 'political correctives' rather than additional substance. It's a process that members of Workers' Liberty engage with, but it leaves a bitter taste in the mouth – especially so this year when the first amendment simply 'reaffirms' an existing position.

Rather than a full debate on the threat of war against Iran – something introduced into the main motion by its authors – it's likely that the left (Socialist Teachers Alliance) will close down debate after the first or second amendment. Another conference, another broad 'perspectives' document on international issues ... and no consideration of what working class fighters and ordinary men, women and children are experiencing on the ground.

## **International working class solidarity**

War, the threat of war and the consequences of British involvement in international military confrontations are important issues. For good or bad, the NUT is affiliated to the Stop the War Coalition and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and has passed motions opposing the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan, the threat of war against Iran and the brutal attacks of the Israeli military against innocent Palestinians. In this sense, the NUT is an 'anti-war' union. Good.

The devil, as so often, is in the detail. It's right that we continue to discuss and deliberate on these issues and we should have no truck with groups and individuals within the Union who would oppose such discussions as "irrelevant". However, the fact that the International Section is dominated by motions that almost exclusively address these issues at the expense all else is no good at all.

Teachers are an international workforce and education is an increasingly globalised 'market'. When our union addresses itself to international issues we should keep in mind that "[o]ur ability to build an international movement to reverse policies that are destroying public education ... depends on projecting a vision of human emancipation, a world that provides both political freedom *and* social control over economic resources." (Lois Weiner, 'Building the International Movement We Need', *The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers and their Unions*)

There is an urgent need for the Union and the organised left more specifically to get to grips with the monumental global changes to the 'education industry'; the facts and dynamics of the living-breathing struggle for democratic and independent trade unionism in places like Iran, Iraq and Egypt; and the lessons we can draw from teachers resisting neo-liberal 'reforms' in Mexico, the US and elsewhere.

We need a Union that is fighting, democratic *and* international.

# **Action on Ofsted**

**By Dean Cornwall,  
Northampton NUT**

INTO, The Irish National Teachers Organisation has recently entered into action short of strike in Northern Ireland. Instead of merely refusing to complete tasks that they are not required to do anyway they are also refusing to cooperate with inspections from ETI, the equivalent to Ofsted.

The following is taken from a leaflet produced giving advice on how to participate in action short of strike

### **NON-CO-OPERATION WITH INSPECTIONS – This action remains unchanged**

#### **What to do if a member of ETI contacts/comes into your school:**

#### **PRINCIPALS**

Inform the Inspector:

- You are an INTO member and that you are on industrial action of non co-operation with ETI, therefore you cannot discuss any issues relating to the school/teachers or education in general;
- That the INTO and UTU members in your school (give the number but no names) are also on industrial action of non-co-operation with the ETI;
- If the Inspector persists in

inspecting any members of the staff not in INTO/UTU, inform the Inspector that you cannot discuss any aspect of these teachers' work, or that of the school for the duration of this industrial action;

- Contact Northern Office and we can put you in touch with another INTO principal if you require any advice or support in relation to this action.

#### **SCHOOL REPS**

- Inform the principal of the INTO industrial action of non-co-operation with the ETI and the number (not names) of INTO members in the school. The principal should then inform any member of ETI, who contacts the school, of the action and the number of staff affected;
- Inform the INTO members in the school of the industrial action and what it means for them.

#### **TEACHERS**

If inspection is going ahead in your school;

- Do not provide any documentation, policies, data, books, etc to the ETI; and
- If an inspector comes into your classroom, you stop teaching, tell your class to stop what they're doing and inform the inspector that you are on industrial action.

For more info got to [www.into.ie](http://www.into.ie)



# NUT Conference Fringe Meeting

# **Local Associations for National Action on Pensions**

***How can we rebuild the pensions dispute?***

**Friday April 6th  
8pm**

**Grosvenor Hotel, Belgrave Road, Torquay**

**Speakers:** Nina Franklin (ex-National President), local associations and NEC members.

**Called and supported by the following associations and divisions:** Bristol, Devon, Liverpool, Leeds, City of Leicester, Calderdale, Wirral, West Chester, Northants Division, Northampton Association, Halton, Oldham, Bolton

## **STA Meetings Conference 2012**

Friday 6	8:00pm	<b>STA Meeting Austerity and Resistance</b>	Grand Hotel
Saturday 7	12.45pm  5.45pm  8:00pm	<b>Campaign Teacher Meeting  Anti Academies Alliance  Education for Liberation</b>	Rainbow Hotel  Conference Centre  ?
Sunday 8	8:00pm	<b>Crisis in the Middle East</b>	Grand Hotel
Monday 9	12:45pm	<b>Palestine Solidarity Campaign</b>	Conference Centre

# Heads in the Union?

By an NUT Activist

I'm sure we can all agree on the following: 1) Academies are renowned for bullying and disregarding our standard pay and conditions. 2) Headteachers can not always be trusted to act in the best interest of their staff. 3) If workers are being bullied and exploited, they will be supported by their unions in asserting their rights.

When I became a rep in a vicious academy I knew all three of the above statements to be true. Through my experiences, however, I have learnt that no.3 is something of a myth. I have learnt that Headteachers and senior managers can be members of the Union and it seems they can get away with just about anything without being called to account. This is a huge problem and, in my opinion, the biggest threat that our Union has come under.

Counter-argument: " But where there's a strong membership we respond to the calls of our members... Look at Langdon for example." (School in Newham where staff have been taking action over oppressive practices).

Yes, but what about when your attempts to build a strong union membership are consistently blighted from within by particularly

prominent members... namely the Headteacher and a ring of cronies? I've been shouted down in my own meetings so that all members leave the room in fear. I've had the membership list hijacked with abusive e-mails addressed to me. I've had to constantly rebuke 'NUT protocol' that has been entirely invented by the Headteacher and fed to the membership. I've even had managers set up their own NUT branch that they named 'The Real NUT,' in an attempt to discredit our School group. Anecdotal? yes. An extreme case? Of course. But we all know this kind of behaviour is becoming more and more commonplace and people like this Headteacher are being given more and more credence by Gove et al. This particular NUT Head plans to federate a number of schools in the near future.

The answer is simple. This conference needs to address the rights of Headteachers to be members of the Union. Clearer lines need to be drawn up between the oppressed and the oppressors, and the union needs to take sides with the oppressed. With the educational landscape now so populated by tyrannical megalomaniacs, it is essential that the union is able to carve out and occupy a vital space for education workers to claw back

some autonomy and, dare I say it, self respect.



## A Workers plan for the crisis

This Alliance for Workers Liberty pamphlet seeks to explain the ongoing capitalist crisis from an independent working-class socialist viewpoint. It puts forward an action plan for the working class to defend itself against the bosses' attempts to make us pay for their crisis, and to go on the offensive to replace capitalism with working-class power and socialism

Visit [www.workersliberty.org/workersplan](http://www.workersliberty.org/workersplan) to download the pamphlet and for more information

The AWL is an organisation fighting as part of the labour movement for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership and democracy

## CDFU Meetings Conference 2012

Saturday 7	12.45pm 7:30 pm	<b>Campaign Teacher Meeting</b>  Developing an International strategy based on Solidarity in struggle	Rainbow Hotel  Rainbow Hotel
Sunday 8	8:00pm	Crisis in the Middle East	Grand Hotel
Monday 9	8:00pm	How to keep a fighting and democratic union in the era of Academies & threats to facilities time	Grand Hotel



# WHAT IS CAPITALISM? CAN IT LAST?

A weekend of socialist discussion and  
debate hosted by Workers' Liberty

## Ideas for Freedom

A weekend of socialist discussion and debate  
hosted by Workers'  
Liberty

**Friday 29 June-1 July**  
Highgate Newtown  
Community Centre, Archway,  
North London

- Weekend Tickets are £22 waged, £14 Low Waged/HE Students, £6 unwaged/FE Students/School Students if bought before the end of April
- Day tickets also available. Send a cheque made out to AWL to AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, SE1 3DG
- Further Details on page 9 and on the web at [www.workersliberty.org/ideas](http://www.workersliberty.org/ideas)

# We should learn from past troublemakers

By Gemma Short, President Rotherham NUT

In the 1880s many workers, trade unionists and activists were learning major lessons through struggle. Lessons that would shape the labour movement for decades to come, and were a defining force in breaking workers from the shackles of the old craft based unions. This period has become known as 'New Unionism', and its ideas have been taken on board and replicated (not always honestly) many times in our movement, most notably in the Organising Agenda and strategy of the last decade.

In the 1880s union organising and strikes spread through what were considered unskilled or semi-skilled workers. The response of the existing union movement of the craft unions was not dissimilar to how today's labour movement bureaucracy responds to calls to organise precarious, migrant and casual workers. Strikes, that won significant victories, spread through several industries, from

the matchmakers strikes in Bryant and May, the gas workers, miners, mill workers and the dock workers. The defining features of these movements made New Unionism a way to win: organising unskilled or semi-skilled workers, organising across grades and jobs in industrial unions and being explicitly fighting unions that used dues to organise members and fund strikes. This meant two very important things, 1. That disputes were in the hands of the workers they involved and 2. disputes often involved all grades or workers in an industry, meaning more industrially powerful workers could be called out to win conditions for others..

However these tactics should not be merely a distant inspiration for us, or a piece of history to study. Today's conditions, and the state of today's labour movement needs a New Unionism response from us. In the NUT that means looking critically at how we organise. Local association and division based democracy is

becoming increasingly difficult to operate. The union is under attack on two, linked, fronts. The break-up of Local Authorities by Academies, means we are no longer negotiation with one employer per association but upwards of 5 or 6. Secondly the attack on facilities time can mean union officers using what time they have on case work to the detriment of other union activity. And



the organising that is required to empower a membership to collectivise issues and deal with management can also be pushed out.

Given the multiplying numbers of employers and reduction in facilities time an argument can be made for the Union to move towards a school branch based model. There are problems with this, such as how school branches would interact with existing democratic structures at association and division level. However steps can, and should, be taken now to empower members and properly make us a lay led union.

The Union should do all it can to support school groups where they exist and encourage their development where they don't. Reps should be trained to be activists not passive transferors of the Union's mail to the notice board. This is happening in some regions and should be extended. We will be required in the coming period to deal with attempts to massively increase workload.

Organising a campaign on workload cannot be done on a divisional or national level alone as some issues are specific to individual schools and the nature of management in them and Gove's new performance management policies encourage Governing bodies and heads to make up their own policies. In my own school I am doing the patient work of preparing the ground for



this, and it is transforming the membership in my school. Lunch time visits to departments, a roving ‘what is preventing you teaching’ concern board, stress survey and a minirep structure across departments means we may just be ready to act collectively on workload. The NUT has employed organisers across all regions in the last few years, along with many other unions the NUT has taken a lot from the TUC organisers’ school style. However there are pitfalls in the apolitical nature of this type of organising, which is unashamedly top-down and still linked to employer partnership.

The fact that workers in a school are in a different union is the major stumbling block to effective working class resistance to the break-up of the education system. We should learn the lessons that the London Dockers did in 1888 in realising that winning improvements in conditions and pay meant organising together. We need an Education Workers Union that organises teachers and support staff, but also cleaners, lunchtime supervisors and caretakers in one union.

More information on New Unionism - <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/18262>

# ***The Eton Gloating Song (or All In This Together)***

By Andy Parsons

- 1) Jolly gloating weather**  
*A budget for us toffs  
Tax breaks for the wealthy  
You lot can just f. off  
All in this together  
Yes that's George, Dave and  
Nick and me  
We'll be richer than ever  
While you plebs feel austerity*
- 4) Bonuses for bankers**  
*Taking care of our chums  
Caviar and champers  
Not for you common bums  
All in this together  
Bailing out pals at RBS  
Helping to cut their losses  
While tax payers clear up our mess*
- 2) Screwing your health service**  
*Privatising your schools  
Loads of easy pickings  
From unsuspecting fools  
All in this together  
That's us Tories and tame Lib  
Dems  
Robbing the public sector  
For the benefit of our friends*
- 5) Our gold – plated pensions**  
*Buy villas in Tuscany  
Ski – lodges in Klosters  
Après with royalty  
All in this together  
Hob-nobbing with other posh  
nobs  
Loving early retirement  
While poor workers die in your  
jobs*
- 3) Parties for our donors**  
*All wined and dined by Dave  
Dodgy business leaders  
Buying policies they crave  
All in this together  
Bent bosses and government  
Sharing ill – gained profits  
While you peasants can't pay  
your rent*
- 6) Jolly gloating weather**  
*Everything looks top hole  
We have hot Cornish pasties  
Plenty of gas in our Rolls  
All in this together  
We're a happy band of brothers  
All of us living equal  
But some more equal than oth-  
ers*

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# Galloway in Bradford: a victory for the left?

By Charlie Salmon

The landslide victory of George Galloway in Bradford West has been hailed by many on the left as a "victory" for our side. Tony Muhern of the Socialist Party – and TUSC candidate for mayor of Liverpool – writes "I applaud George Galloway's victory". Anindya Bhattacharyya writes on the *Socialist Worker* website that "his win is a boost for the left in Britain".

Meanwhile the Labour Party leadership has thrown itself into a fake "soul searching" exercise, promising to reflect on the defeat and learn the lessons. Such a tactic dodges the need for real accountability, but will it generate positive reassessments? Not if Yvette Cooper's comments are anything to go by. When interviewed by Andrew Marr on the BBC after Galloway's victory, Cooper announced Labour's major theme for upcoming local elections: "We're going to be campaigning on crime and anti-social behaviour because that is the sort of thing people are very concerned about in streets and communities across the country." No serious assessment there then! So how did Galloway manage to turn a 5000 majority for Labour into a 10000 majority for himself in the space of just three weeks? Is it true that he simply out-did Labour's communalist approach? We know from previous experience that Galloway and Respect run communal campaigns, cynically harnessing the power and prestige of the imam and the mosque to mobilise support. We know that Galloway and his campaigns reject a class approach to politics, instead focusing on his record as a "fighter for Muslims". We already know that during the Bradford West campaign, Galloway supporters distributed a letter which contains the following:

"God KNOWS who is a Muslim. And he KNOWS who is not. Instinctively, so do you. Let me point out to all the Muslim brothers and

sisters what I stand for:  
I, George Galloway, do not drink alcohol and never have. Ask yourself if you believe the other candidate in this election can say that truthfully.  
I, George Galloway, have fought for the Muslims at home and abroad, all my life. And paid a price for it. I

*believe the other candidate in this election cannot say so truthfully"*

So a determined communalist slant from the Galloway camp definitely played a part wouldn't you say? But Labour's candidate, Imran Hussein, is a Muslim of Pakistani heritage and for the past five elections Bradford West returned a Sikh to Westminster. So we should criticise Galloway's antics and note that communalism played a role, but let's not paint a complex picture in just one shade as some right-wing critics have done.

The election in Bradford West was a by-election and in such circumstances, strange voting patterns can occur. By some accounts, although Galloway had the support of Labour's former election agent and, one assumes, a number of former Labour activists, his campaign team was not substantial. It's doubtful if the campaign managed to visit many houses in the constituency and win an argument on the doorstep. It is claimed that the Respect campaign focussed on mobilising people who wouldn't have otherwise voted – the young, students etc... Even then, can such a swing be explained by such tactics?



The facts of the current political situation must feed into Galloway's victory. So what are the facts? A Tory government determinedly seeing through an austerity campaign; a massively unpopular traditional 'third party', the Liberal Democrats, who look on the brink of electoral collapse and a Labour Party that seems to have learned nothing from the experience of Blairism and New Labour. Galloway's 'headline' campaign message – against war and cuts – will have chimed with a great many people.

So the victory for Galloway and Respect in Bradford is a victory for the left? Not at all.

The factors leading to Galloway's victory are a complex mix of communalism, anti-government sentiment, the 'celebrity' status of the candidate and the political ineptitude of Labour. The overriding feature of Galloway's victory is the fact that Galloway has been returned to national politics and the fact that many on the left have fallen behind 'Galloway the personality'. This is most definitely a 'bad' thing.

In parliament, Galloway never acted as a tribune of the working class, trade unionism and socialist

ideas. He is best remembered for using the back-benches as a platform to promote himself and his allegedly anti-imperialist credentials. For Galloway, anti-imperialism amounts to siding with Saddam Hussein against the Iraqi people, siding with the Iranian regime against the Iranian people and lauding the murderer Assad for being the “last Arab leader”. Galloway even informed the people of Syria that they are a “free people”! The story of Galloway’s anti-imperialism is a book-length catalogue of demagogic lovemaking to some of the foulest characters on the planet.

We are likely to hear much about Galloway and his victory over the duration of conference. He has doubtless given some backbone to comrades in the Socialist Party and SWP to shamelessly promote their electoral front group, TUSC. Thinking socialists should not give them an easy ride.

The result in Bradford West will no doubt breathe new life into the idea that there is a short-cut to dealing with the political problems our movement faces. It will boost the idea that our union and others should back initiatives like TUSC and characters like Galloway. Recent events will no doubt mean for

some that we do not need to organise for a fight inside Labour against the remnants of Blair and New Labour.

Such false conclusions will generate a false political outlook for our class and our movement. The left – even those who’ve been at the receiving end of Galloway’s politics in the recent past – have learned nothing because they seem to care nothing for consistent working class politics. We say: learn the lessons, get a grip on reality, call Galloway out for what he is and build a serious working class politics.

## ***Mayor Timewaster and the missing weekend – a story***

Not so long ago, in a town not so far away Mayor Ivor Timewaster sat scratching his balding scalp. He had so much to do to keep his town running, but he found it all very boring. “There are not many headlines in keeping the roads clean, the buses running and the fountains flowing” he mused. “What I need is a special project that’ll get me on the front page of that local rag, the *Daily Skoop*.”

So he sat and he scratched, he scratched and he sat. He just couldn’t think. Meanwhile, the rubbish piled up, the buses stopped running and the fountains stopped gushing. The people of the town were not very happy. “I’ve got to do something!” cried the Mayor. “I’ve just got to do something or they’ll think I’m a waste of space! They’ll find someone new to run the town ... that’ll never do.”

After a restless night, Mayor Timewaster still had no ideas. But then it struck him: “I know,” shouted the Mayor, “I’ll visit a school ... that’s what I’ll do! There’s nothing the *Skoop* loves more than a bit of a visit. The free tea and biscuits get them every time.”

So pleased was the Mayor, that he ran to the nearest school, phoning the *Skoop*’s editor on his way.

“But it’s a Saturday” said the editor. “All the schools are closed!”

“Closed?” asked the Mayor. “That will never do. How’s anyone supposed to learn anything if the school is closed?” Then he thought back to when he was a young chap, many years before he became Mayor Timewaster. He remembered that between Friday and Monday, he always forgot everything the teachers had tried to teach him. “Never mind,” thought the Mayor, “even if I didn’t learn a thing, I’m still the Mayor.”

This thought pleased him for a minute but then he started to think about all the other people he went to school with: Professor Positron who won the Nobel Prize, Dr Everlast who runs the local hospital, Mrs Scribble the editor of the *Skoop* ... all those saps who failed to make it as Mayor of the town.

“Those poor people. Perhaps they couldn’t remember anything after the weekend either!” wor-

ried Mayor Timewaster. “I simply have to sort this out. I know what I’ll do – I’ll scrap Saturday. We’ll prevent learning loss over the weekend by lengthening the week and shortening the weekend! Mrs Scribble at the *Skoop* will love it. That nice Mr Gove will love it too! It’ll be front page news or my name isn’t Mayor Ivor Timewaster.”

The Mayor slept soundly that night.



# ***A rate for the job not regional pay***

**By Mark Sandell, President West Sussex NUT (PC).**

The Government's proposal to impose regional pay aims to drive down pay in the public sector to the local minimum in a race to the bottom. In the private sector employers have used the recession and high unemployment to drive down or keep down wages and the Government thinks it's just not fair that they cannot do the same in the public sector.

Despite an increasing number of academies, pay rates for most teachers have remained based on the national levels, academy employers have even claimed that they will not change pay rates be-

cause they still need to attract teachers who have the option of national pay rates in local authority schools. Government ministers on the other hand have promoted academy status as a way for schools to cut themselves loose of national pay and conditions. Their much publicised promotion of regional pay in the public sector is just the latest bid to try to rip open the public sector to full blown market forces.

NUT activists are of course acutely aware that our pay is not negotiated but imposed, however the proposal for regional pay is still an attack on every teacher. As teachers we have maintained national pay

and conditions that unite us and lay down some minimum standards but for too long we have depended on the status quo rather than fighting for improvements. Unions only ever won national pay and conditions by fighting for them or gained them as a by product of struggle.

In the face of these attacks union activists need to organise to defend the idea of a rate for the job by going on the offensive against the pay freeze. We need to draw up a pay demand and plan a campaign to fight for our demands across all schools including academies, meekly 'defending' the current imposed national pay arrangements is obviously now absurd.

## ***Fighting the Five Term Year in Nottingham***

**By Tom Unterrainer  
President, Nottingham City NUT (pc)**

Members of the National Union of Teachers in Nottingham took strike action on 29 March in response to Local Authority plans to move to a five term year.

In the face of mass opposition from all the unions representing school workers, the majority of secondary heads and school governors in the city, the LA seems determined to force through the changes. So entrenched is their position that they are prepared to see the overwhelming majority of city secondary schools – most of which are either academies, voluntary aided or foundation schools – maintain the existing term pattern and force a change on just four secondary schools and city primaries.

Such a change would only compound the already ridiculous prospect of neighbouring county schools having a different holiday pattern. The Tory-led county council investigated but rejected the

idea of a change as unworkable. Not so with Labour-dominated Nottingham City Council, which seems determined to have a showdown. The lines of the showdown have been set in stone by the LA, which not only "lost" the details of their 'consultation' over the proposed changes but then went on to threaten city teachers with dismissal if they refused to sign new contracts. It's the LA who put the NUT on a course to action and it's action they've got!

An overwhelming majority of NUT members agreed to take three days of sustained strike action to defend themselves, their families and the children they teach from the madness of the changes.

The national action committee should be congratulated for approving such action and for putting the full weight of the Union behind the dispute. But we should draw some conclusions from this decision and apply them elsewhere. If we can announce three days of action in advance to 'deal with' an intransigent LA, why can we not do

the same when we're fighting a much bigger beast? Why does the Union imagine that a one day protest strike followed by another day months down the line will shift the government over pensions when we would never conceive of using such a 'strategy' in other cases? Other key lessons from this dispute come from the way in which the local union has been able to organise and recruit. To say that the local union has been transformed would not be an exaggeration. Not only have more reps been identified and members won from other unions, but the local committee has been energised to a far greater degree than during the pensions dispute. Why is this? Because local activists feel they have some control and a real role to play in forming the direction and actually winning the dispute.

If the Union could imbue the pensions and other national disputes with the same spirit, we would be on much firmer – and, let's be honest – more democratic ground.

# **Despite strong London strike, NUT leaders commit only to "review"**

**By Martin Thomas**

The teachers' (NUT) and lecturers' (UCU) strike in London on 28 March was strong, with a lively demonstration maybe 10,000 strong. Yet NUT Exec will put a "priority motion" to its 6-10 April conference which commits it only to "reviewing" things and then maybe calling more action.

If you want to know what the Executive proposes, skip the blah-blah which makes up most of the text and scroll down to the end...

It mandates the Exec to "**review... in the light of the London action of 28 March 2012... bringing all other regions and Wales, in turn or together, into pensions action**"; and to "**seek to build a coalition of unions committed to further strike action**".

Members already know that the Exec was willing to overrule a 73% survey majority to strike nationwide on 28 March, at a time when, if the NUT had gone ahead, it would almost certainly have had PCS, UCU, EIS, and NIPSA on strike with it.

They will not be satisfied by the Exec vaguely promising confer-

ence that it might call some further action of some sort sometime, with the implied condition that this will happen only if a "coalition" is available.

Restarting action will be harder in April than in March, and harder in May than in April. As more time elapses without the unions taking any national action against what the Government declares are its final and settled terms, inevitably more momentum is lost and the Government becomes more able to impose on teachers' minds the idea that the pension changes, however bad, are a settled fact.

For example, the increased pension-contribution deductions from wages start in April. Striking against those deductions after they have been made is harder than striking against them before they are made.

To believe in the motion, you have to believe in some deus ex machina which will somehow make the Executive's vague promises to call action more "operational" in future and more difficult circumstances than they were for 28 March. Or you must be resigned to the pensions campaign dying

amidst continued pleas from the Exec that it *would* call strikes in some future favourable conditions (and so the Exec is not to blame for any setbacks: God, or the labour movement in general, is to blame, for not providing those favourable conditions).

The only realistic and serious next step forward now is a decision by the NUT's Easter conference to:

- \* set a national strike day now, for early as possible in the third term, and campaign to get the PCS, UCU, Unite, EIS, and NIPSA out on the same day. This is possible. PCS, Unite, and NIPSA are already talking of a strike in "late April", and PCS leaders will be under pressure from their members to display some action before their union conference in May.

- \* formulate plans now for a quick-tempo rolling programme of regional and selective strikes, sustained by strike levies, to follow the national strike.

- \* put out those plans to wide democratic discussion in the union, including in democratic strike meetings on the national strike day; and organise strike committees in every area jointly with other unions continuing the campaign.

- \* formulate precise and credible demands on the Government.

It will be difficult to restart the campaign now even with the best policy. But it is possible.

We need to build a rank-and-file network in the NUT which will provide space for democratic debate of strategy when the official union channels do not allow it, and enable local activists to come together to exert organised pressure on the supposedly "left" Executive and general secretary, and where necessary campaign in an organised way across the union for alternative strategies.





NUT Conference  
Public  
Meeting  
Torquay 2012

# How to be a troublemaker

## Speakers:

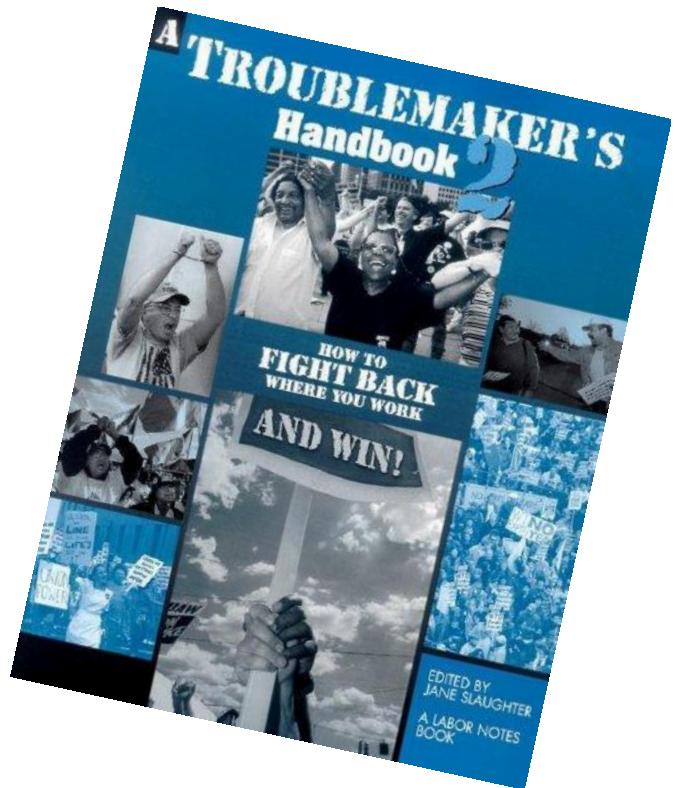
**Gemma Short**, President Rotherham NUT (PC). As a school based rep Gemma has been involved in trying to revive a 'legacy union' in an academy to fight attacks on workload.

**Jean Lane**, Tower Hamlets Unison, learning support assistant. With Unison Jean has been involved in organising cleaners across Tower Hamlets against

*"Troublemakers have a long history of empowering workers, winning against the bosses, and causing a stir in the union movement. We have a long proud history to learn from as Troublemakers: from Tom Mann, Eleanor Marx, Sylvia Pankhurst, Will Thorne and many others who broke with the craft unions in the wave of New Unionism, to troublemakers in the USA that organised the Justice for Janitors campaign. We need the spirit of New Unionism now."*

*With Local Authorities being broken up by academisation and attacks on facility time happening up and down the country, we need to examine how best to organise in order to win in these conditions. Troublemakers on the London Docks in the 1880s organised unions from scratch. There is a lot to learn from them on how to organise the unorganised, whether that be in academies or in areas of the country with lower union density.*

*The period of New Unionism was characterised by the rise of industrial unions. Clearly we have more in common with the cleaners that clean our classroom, the learning support and the dinner supervisors than we do with the Head, our boss. Is it time for one Education Workers Union?"*



Come and Join the discussion

# Sunday 8th April

1:30pm, The Rainbow Hotel, Belgrave Road.