

## Pay and Pensions - what's going on?

The emergence of the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition has given rise to widespread concern among teachers and other public sector workers that our pay, pension entitlements and funding for the services we work in will all be under attack in the years to come. These concerns are well-founded. The government has made it clear that they will plug the deficit caused by unregulated greed in the banking sector by implementing public spending cuts more drastic than those of the Thatcher government in the 1980s. Inevitably this will have a serious impact on teachers and education.

### Pay

In the budget statement on June 22 the Chancellor announced a pay freeze for all public sector workers earning more than £21,000. As the starting salary for teachers (M1) is £21,101 this affects all of us. However, it is likely that the 2.3% increase already approved by the

previous government for this September will be honoured.

So expect to receive a 2.3% pay increase from September 2010 followed by no increase at all in 2011 and 2012.

### Pensions

So far there has been more ill-informed rhetoric than detailed proposals relating to public sector pensions. Despite talk of this coalition representing a 'fresh start', the discussion on pensions has been dominated by the same tired old clichés; 'pensions apartheid', 'gold-plated pensions' and so on.

The only action so far has been to announce that an independent commission will be set up to look into reform of public sector pensions. We now know that this will be chaired by John Hutton, Work and Pensions Minister under the previous Labour government. It's good to see that John is taking his responsibilities as an opposition politician seriously by offering to help the new regime attack our pensions.

And attack it will. Although we do not yet have any proposals the remit of the Commission will undoubtedly be to find savings. There are a number of possible options for achieving this. We could see the Normal Pension Age increase from 60 to 65,

contributions increase or even a move away from a final salary scheme to something less favourable such as a career average scheme. It is not impossible that all public sector workers might be asked to pay a 'pensions levy' to fill the gap between income into our schemes and payments out. That was the device used in Ireland and represents, effectively, a significant cut in pay.

What all of this ignores is that the Teachers' Pension Scheme was 'reformed' in 2006 to take account of the cost pressures on it for decades to come. Our contributions were increased and a cost-sharing system was put in place which caps the employers' contributions at 14%. Teachers entering the scheme from January 1st 2007 already have a normal pension age of 65.

### NUT Response

Obviously the NUT will be putting the case for proper levels of pay which can recruit and retain teachers and in defence of our pension rights wherever we can. We will take the Commission seriously and are confident that the evidence will show that our rights under the current scheme are affordable.

It is extremely unlikely, however, that this alone will be enough to fend off the threat. At a national level the Union has already begun to consider what actions may be necessary and to talk to other unions about joint campaigning against the cuts and in defence of our pension rights.

**Watch this space!**



*Michael Gove - Tory Toff who wants to steal our pay, pensions and schools - stop him now!*

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# Craporama's incompetent journalism

The Panorama program about so-called 'incompetent teachers' illustrates just how much we need a programme about incompetent, reactionary journalists. It was a combination of distortion and misinformation from start to finish.

The journalist mentioned how few teachers the GTC had struck off in forty years, but the GTC has only existed since 1997. Incompetence as a concept was not explored in any way. Most teachers will tell you that they were poor teachers when they started and got better with time. Does this mean all young teacher should be sacked? Clearly not, although what is interesting here is that teachers are allowed to practice with so little training, the 'Teach First' initiative being a case in point.

So what does incompetent mean? What if it was an incompetent doctor? Asked the reporter in fake horror. Well a teacher isn't a doctor and can't kill you. Although judging by the pushy middle-class mums we are supposed to believe they can do almost that much damage. The teacher in question was a supply teacher, which begs the question why didn't the Head get rid of him or her as often happens in schools when a supply teach is deemed not up to scratch?

The programme provided no evidence at all that they were incompetent - it was just assumed that the 'mums' were right. The dodgy character of the programme was laid bare when Chris Woodhead was literally wheeled out to spread his anti-teacher and anti-union

bible. The idea that the percentage of lessons judged as 'unsatisfactory' by Ofsted equals the percentage of 'incompetent teachers' is nonsense on every level. Unrealistic criteria for lesson observations means the best teachers can be judged unsatisfactory by incompetent inspectors who are often ex-teachers who wanted to get out of the classroom. And even if a lesson was genuinely unsatisfactory it doesn't mean that the teacher is incompetent because every teacher has unsatisfactory lessons.

The real purpose the Craporama programme was to put the profession on the back foot with the public at a time when teachers face wage cuts and an ideological and political battering from the Coalition Government. It is no accident that the Panorama programme was aired on the same day as the BSF scheme was scrapped despite the fact that many schools are falling to pieces. We are back in the world of the reactionary Tory politician Rhodes Boyson who boasted that he could teach 60 children in a bus shelter. The only difference is that many bus shelters are in much better structural condition than many of our schools.



*Samantha Poling - incompetent journalist?*

## **On the other hand - use Craporama in a lesson**

The Panorama programme might make a good case study for an English lesson, Media Studies or Critical Thinking. Lots of assertions but nothing discursive. Start with a hypothesis and then find the evidence to match it (could make for a good science or sociology lesson there!).

Don't give the opposition, aka Blower and Keates, time to develop any line of thought (Politics and Citizenship) but ensure the leader who appears to be on your side (Mick Brookes) gets as much time as the two Union leaders put together (Sports or Gamesmanship?). Note the careful elision from "unsatisfactory lessons" to "incompetent teachers" (very useful in History lessons for understanding how apparently normal people end up demonising whole groups of people - as in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia).

The programme probably wouldn't be any good for Geography as it had no idea where it was going or Maths as the programme just didn't add up. Probably topping it all would be Careers Education - don't put yourself through university, a PGCE and an induction year (five years in which you run up a debt during the first four and don't start earning until the fifth), don't plan, assess and review your work, don't actually worry and care about the people you are dealing with when you could be a reporter for Panorama and dress down, be filmed with a pencil in your mouth and earn big money whilst you sit on motorway flyovers.

## **No freedom to depart from testing in primary schools**

'Let teachers teach' was the Government's mantra immediately after the election. Well that clearly doesn't apply to primary schools where Gove has declared his intention to stick to the discredited SATs in the face of all teacher opinion and educational research.

NUT General Secretary, Christine Blower, condemned the Tories "ideological commitment to testing", but praised the 4,000 plus schools that boycotted the tests for their "courage" and "commitment to protecting children from the malign impact of high-stakes testing."

The NUT will be looking at a further boycott of the tests in 2011.



# Government offers academy status but nothing concrete

The Lib-Con coalition government came into power offering to liberate schools. Academy status would remove the deadening hand of the local authority and allow teachers to teach.

But the one thing many teachers were expecting to be liberated from - their decaying school buildings - turns out - turns out to be a mirage.

Over 700 schools will now have to wait indefinitely for the privately owned construction companies to arrive on site. So it won't be just public sector workers facing tough times because of public sector cuts. That's £7 billion worth of investment in construction and related jobs down the drain.

Just over a year ago the previous government spent about ten times that bailing out the banks - the same banks who are still paying fat bonuses to executives but lending very little money to people who need houses. So its clearly a much bigger government priority for bankers to have lashings of champagne whilst school children

sit in sub-standard classrooms and their teachers face pay freezes and reduced pensions.

To add insult to injury, Michael Gove mistakenly informed 25 schools, including 9 in Sandwell, that their building programme was safe in Lib-Con hands. In a strange reversal of roles the Tory MP for Sandwell threatened to march on Parliament at the head of teachers, students and parents who were wrongly told that their schools would be rebuilt.

Many of the new schools were promised for socially disadvantaged areas such as Ollerton where the proposal for the re-building of The Dukeries School has been shelved. Teachers there - as everywhere - are doing a fantastic job with no sign of the incompetence displayed by Gove on July 7th. But there is a desperate need for new buildings and every student and member of staff there deserves better treatment than that dished out by Gove and his public school pals.

Meanwhile 'outstanding' schools, mainly in socially advantaged areas, can have academy status, take vital resources away from other community schools, be exempt from the Freedom of Information Act and begin the slow but steady reintroduction of overt selection based on ability.

We urge all teachers and school based support staff to stand up to the Government's miserly policies. Unite with parents, students and the Unions to fight against these pernicious cuts and the

divisive academies programme. The stakes are very high here but millions of parents, staff and students have concrete reasons for fighting the government all the way in interests of high quality, free, comprehensive education.

*Liam Conway, Editor*

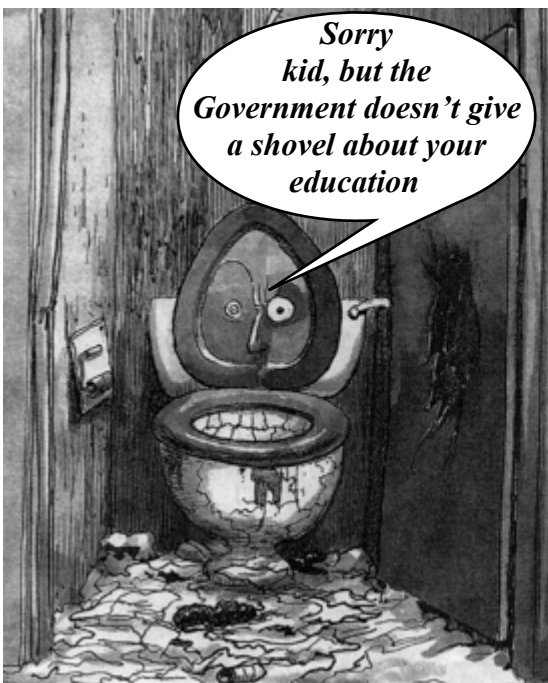
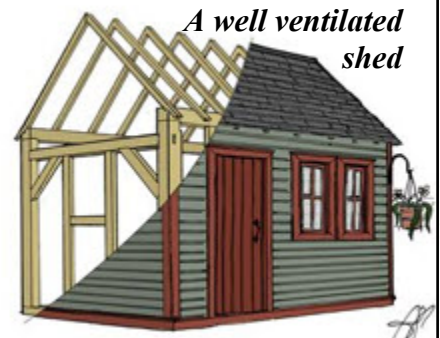
## Government suggested alternatives for schools



## A double-decker portakabin



## A well ventilated shed



# Scandal of teacher pay docking

## Volcano burns a hole in teacher's pocket

Another case of unwarranted pay deduction occurred following the travel disruption induced by the Icelandic volcano.

In most cases governors and local authorities fully understood that any deductions made to teachers pay resulting from being stranded abroad through no fault of their own would be damaging to industrial relations.

Once again the offending advice came from the Local Government Employers. Legal advice from the NUT suggests that any deductions made without the consent of the employee would be unlawful.

To complicate matters further some heads and governors have been looking at ways that teachers stuck abroad during term time might make up the time lost in school.

Suggestions have included additional twilight inset, attendance at Summer Schools during the forthcoming vacation and coming into school on a Saturday.

The NUT advice is that teachers are not contracted to work such additional hours. Teachers employed full time must be available for work for 195 days and may be directed to work for 1265 hours in any school year with 'those hours to be allocated reasonably throughout those days in the school year on which the teacher is required to be available for work'.

The NUT would argue that in order to be 'allocated reasonably' those

directed hours **should be allocated during term time.**

If you have any queries about pay docking in connection with SATs or travel disruption, especially if you have actually had pay docked, contact the Notts NUT office.

## SATs Boycott

In May the Local Government Employers and NEOST advised governing bodies to consider making deductions from the pay of leadership group members who have taken industrial action. Some local authorities are also issuing advice to governing bodies.

As a result Notts County Council, unlike neighbouring councils, issued advice asking governors to consider such deductions. The advice was worded in such a way that governors may have perceived it as their duty to dock pay from head teachers

supporting the boycott. Consequently we are now aware of a limited number of schools where this has taken place.

We believe the local authority's actions have simply damaged relations between the council and teachers and, potentially, between governors and head teachers. The SATs boycott was an official industrial action about a matter of serious concern to our profession.

Headteachers refusing to administer the SATs were not only protecting teachers from excessive workload but ensuring, as they **worked a normal school day**, that children received a better educational experience as a result of the boycott.

Notts NUT will be looking at the legal implications of the deductions made, challenging the decisions and seeking a reimbursement of lost pay.

## Crossing the Threshold

There has been a change in the way Threshold applications are assessed which came into effect last year. It is now solely based on evidence gathered from Performance Management covering the two-year period leading up to the teachers request for Threshold assessment. It is important therefore that what is being looked at in your PM process covers the criteria needed to allow you to progress.

You need to be on M6 to apply to cross the Threshold but, because of the two-year assessment period, teachers currently on M5 who are planning to apply should be thinking about how they are meeting the criteria and ensuring this is recorded in their PM reviews. A portfolio is no longer needed for this but you do need to make a written request to the head for assessment.

Assessment in this round can be requested any time between September 1st 2009 and October 31st 2010. Contact us if you need further details.

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