

Lecturers' Union General Secretary opposes return of third-level fees

Tuesday, 4 February 2009

“Speaking as a representative of the generation that benefited from the decision of Donagh O’Malley to introduce free second-level education, I can testify to the very real difference that not having to pay fees makes to individuals and society alike,” Mike Jennings, General Secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT), said, addressing a protest rally against third-level fees organised by the Union of Students in Ireland today (Tuesday, 4 February 2009).

He criticised the “crocodile tears of current Education Minister, Batt O’Keefe, who bemoans the low level of third-level participation, while at the same time pursuing an increase in teacher-pupil ratios at first- and second-level, making access to third-level all the more difficult, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds.”

Mr Jennings condemned the current chronic under-funding of Irish universities. “It would represent dangerous naïvety on their part if the Heads of our Universities were to believe that a return of third-level fees would mean anything other than the Government using it as an opportunity to reduce State funding to the sector still further.”

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