28th November 2016

Dear Member

**Re: INTO Ballot on Strike Action and Withdrawal of Co-operation from the ETI**

The INTO is strongly recommending that you vote ‘**YES**’ to both questions on the ballot you will shortly receive.

**Background**

For more than 12 months, INTO officials have been engaged in a negotiation on teachers’ pay for the 2015/16 year. We, along with our colleagues in the other teacher unions in the Northern Ireland Teachers’ Council (NITC), presented a just and fair claim for a realistic uplift in teacher salaries. Despite our best efforts, the Employing Authorities have made no realistic attempt to come to an equitable settlement with teachers which truly reflects your hard work, commitment and dedication to the young people in your care. At our final meeting we were presented with a pay offer which would have meant teachers’ salaries falling further rather than the expected increase we had been negotiating towards.

The pay offer presented by management was:

- **0%** pay increase for the year 2015/16
- **1%** pay increase for the year 2016/17

This has subsequently been imposed from September 2016 by the Minister.

In real terms, this means an increase of only 78p per teaching day for a teacher at M6. This, despite all other workers in the Northern Ireland education sector, along with our teaching colleagues in every other jurisdiction across these islands receiving a pay increase for 2015/16.

Teachers in Northern Ireland already earn a wage that is 16% below the OECD average and since 2008 have endured a year-on-year erosion to the value of their take home pay in real terms to the tune of approximately 15%. **A teacher on UPS3 in 2008 will now take home £60.17 LESS than in 2008.** This is despite a significant increase in your workload which has delivered a year-on-year rise in school performance.

As a result of this **INTO is balloting all members to seek a mandate for strike action and action short of strike.**

**It is proposed to engage in a series of half day strike actions.**

The implications of a half day strike are:

- Salary loss will be calculated at 1/730 on your annual salary per strike period. For a teacher who has reached the top of the main professional grade it will equate to less than £36. For a teacher who has reached UPS 3 it will equate to less than £42.
• Strike action does not constitute a break in continuous service. As you will not be paid for any strike half day(s), you will not be paying superannuation for that half day(s) either. This will result in a reduction of a half day for each strike half day against your total reckonable pension service.
• No break in service means there will be no impact on potential further redundancy payments.

The proposed industrial action short of strike will be non co-operation with the ETI. ETI continues to enforce policy from the Department of Education and is the single most significant generator of increased workload for teachers for which you the members are being so poorly paid.

It is not the INTO’s intention to impact upon the education of students and we have attempted to use other means to redress this injustice placed upon you, the member. We have: entered all negotiations in good faith; have used industrial action short of strike; have protested at lunch; held after school protests and engaged in political lobbying to pursue our claim. Withdrawal of our labour is a legitimate and established way for workers to demonstrate their frustration and anger in the face of uncaring and disingenuous Employing Authorities. INTO take this course of action because all other options have been exhausted and our Employing Authorities have shown themselves to have no respect for your professionalism or hard work.

In seeking your support for this action which we appreciate is a significant ask, INTO aim to achieve two things:
• A pay award for 2015/16 in line with that awarded to every other worker in the education sector in that year; and
• To enter talks with a view to achieving a multi-year pay deal that will last until the end of this Assembly mandate in 2021.

These aims are shared by our colleagues in the other teacher unions and we will be joined in balloting for the action outlined above by the UTU and the ATL. Colleagues in the NASUWT have already announced a strike day with more expected to follow. INTO and the other teachers’ unions have a unity of purpose seldom demonstrated before in the north and working together we increase our chances of a successful outcome.

It is crucially important that INTO members deliver a strong ‘YES’ vote for both strike action and industrial action short of strike action to enable us to pursue an equitable pay deal for you. Industrial action will not be declared unless two thirds of the votes cast are in favour of strike action and/or action short of strike.

INTO strongly recommends that you vote ‘YES’ to both questions on the ballot paper and return it to the independent scrutineer in the pre-paid envelope provided by 12.00 noon on Thursday 22 December 2016.

Please complete and return your ballot paper immediately you receive it. Don’t delay by putting it to the side or leaving it too late with the Christmas post!

Yours sincerely

GERRY MURPHY
Northern Secretary

SEAMUS HANNA
INTO Chairperson