Seamus Hanna, INTO Chairperson

The minister of education told the news outlets that this was a pointless act, teachers would not support industrial action, they would not turn out, they would not close schools, they would not object to whatever he put on the table. Look around this hall and look at what is happening in Newry, Derry, Starbane, Omagh, Armagh and wherever the teachers from INTO can be found. Colleagues, today let’s educate the minister further and separate truth from lies, spin from facts.

Lie One: Teachers have an easy job, they work five hours per day, have four months a year on holiday and when in school it is nothing more than minding children.

The truth is that teachers’ workload has continued to rise, as have the expectations and demands of management and Government. Price Waterhouse Cooper ranked teaching as one of the most stressful jobs and while pupils may not be in schools teachers are. Weekends and evening are consumed with school work. Teachers cannot just leave their place of employment and forget about it until the next day. We are constantly working.

Lie Two: Teachers are overpaid.

The truth: Teachers are all graduates, professionals, we left institutions such as Queens University and started work on a salary that is on average £7500 below our peers and while they watched salaries increase we watched our salaries stagnate and then just stop. Now we watch as year by year it begins to creep backwards. I have two salary slips from a teacher who is at the top of the pay scale and with no posts of responsibility, the first from September 2008 and the second from September 2016. Colleagues, our salaries have fallen by £722.28. That is real money, not percentages or any other nonsense, real cash that should be in your pocket. Take a moment and ask what could you do with £722.28.

FACT: We are continually compared to other OECD countries, our ranking and position is placed in newspapers and DENI likes to benchmark our teachers. Compared to these countries teachers here are paid on average 16% less. You judge our work but neglect our salary.

Lie Three: Teachers want a big fat pay increase.

The Truth: teachers deserve a pay increase that reflects their value and increasing workload; teachers are asking for the restoration of the meager and miserable pay award that was ours by right for 2015/16. This pay award is the first of our demands; it is the grand total of 1%. Let the public know that it is 1%. The figure is ridiculous when you compare it to our colleagues in the South but the non award reflects the attitude of management and the minister to teachers. The total figure in
the budget would be just over 6 million. If we had five wood chip burner the INTO could fund the increase in teachers' salary ourselves.

**Lie Four: Teachers were offered a just and fair pay increase and this was rejected by their unions.**

The Truth: Teachers were offered a pay increase in exchange for surrendering the rights of new teachers entering this profession to the same terms and conditions of service that we all experienced. Young teachers would start £7500 below the average graduate salary and stay there unless the principal could find the money to allow them to move along incremental grades. The 9% of young teachers would go cap in hand each year to ask to be moved along the grades and despite doing the same work and the same hours and the same pressure would be paid less. This union does not sell out its members and we, like our colleagues from the other unions, said no. That is not a just and fair pay offer.

**Lie Five: Teachers received over 3% pay increase since 2015, an above inflation pay increase.**

The Truth: 9% of teachers received a contractual increase in salary. They moved up the incremental grades. This is not a pay increase, it is a contractual right and no amount of spin should be used to confuse this. Teachers received 1% for the two years from 2015 to 2017. Wherever you are, tell people the truth we got 1% for 2016/17 and nothing for 2015/16

**Lie Six: We have no money to fund a pay increase.**

The Truth; This colleagues is the biggest lie. The money was there, the money was budgeted for and Peter Weir decided that teachers did not deserve that money and gave it away. He gave away money that I earned and money that you earned. He gave money that should be in our pockets. It is our money and we want it back. Nonsense talk that it has gone and he does not have any more so just go back and accept it is not acceptable. This assembly could find money to pay for failed airline routes and for pet projects that were allowed to over spend. When you want to find the money and it is important enough it is always there. Minister go find the money!!!

**Lie Seven: Peter Weir “I value and respect teachers.”**

The Truth: Our minister expected teachers to simply turn up, put up and shut up. He neither values nor respects teachers and as far as he is concerned we will just roll over. Minster and management that day has long since gone. Teachers will no longer roll over and take every new initiative, every new demand and every new education fad that comes along. Platitudes are not enough. If you want it pay for it because that is the only thing that you truly value.
Lie Eight: INTO action hits our pupils

The Truth: INTO teachers have always put our pupils first and we ensure that our pupils receive the best of us. We teach our pupils to read, write, be creative, think and express their ideas. We give them choices for their futures, help to raise their potential and care for their educational, social and emotional needs. This education system has been underfunded and relies of teachers to patch it up and pay for the resources that schools need from their own pockets, this is failing our pupils. Our education system is at breaking point with a lack of resources, personnel shortages and is leading to continual increases in teacher workload. The unwillingness of our politicians to properly fund schools is what is failing our pupils.

Today we have returned to Queen’s university which, for many of us, was the starting point of our careers. We are graduates, professionals, part of a profession that impacts positively on society. Political spin is being fed to parents, the public and we have had to suffer the nonsense that derides our profession. Today we stand up together to tell the minister and management of this education system that we will no longer be taken for granted. We know the truth, we will tell the truth and we will fight and stand together for a deal that turns the minister’s platitudes into action.