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into 
Irish National Teachers' Organisation
Cumann Múinteoirí Éireann

January 2014



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Happy New Year! *Bliain úr mhaith*

On behalf of the officials, staff and myself in the Northern Office may I wish you all every success and happiness in the year ahead. INTO will continue to ensure your views are robustly represented, your hard work is recognised and that you are supported in dealing with the challenges you face in your schools and colleges.

January signals a new beginning and we in INTO are an upbeat, positive lot, determined to take full advantage of the promise of the new start. In keeping with this spirit our Northern Conference will follow the leaders of, what the great Neil Young described with a touch of irony, the “free world” to County Fermanagh. For



GERRY MURPHY,
Northern Secretary

the first time Enniskillen Branch will host Conference in the Killyhevlin Hotel, located on the banks of Lower Lough Erne. It will be an exciting and lively affair with INTO activists from across the North meeting together to review the year past and map out the year ahead. We have every confidence that Enniskillen Branch will facilitate a Conference to remember.

Motions will be discussed and debated. Resolutions will be passed and these will provide the Northern Committee with a route map to navigate the challenges that lie ahead. The Committee itself is enthusiastic and populated by an informed and committed

group of dedicated individuals who are unafraid to challenge or make demands of either the INTO leadership or those who administer our education system. I predict that 2014 will see this leadership team continue to provide the inspiration and direction that has seen INTO membership increase significantly in recent years.

Of course, there will be difficult times as 2014 unfolds. We are still saddled with a Tory led government in London, hell bent on continuing to pick the pockets of public servants and an administration at Stormont that appears unable to agree on little other than implementing a Tory inspired austerity agenda. Teachers deserve better and, through your participation in INTO, we will strive throughout 2014 to challenge their failed agenda, with a view to restoring teaching to a profession that is respected and valued for the contribution it makes to pupils' communities and the overall economy.

Quo Vadis?

The establishment of the long awaited Education and Skills Authority, (ESA), seems as far away as ever. Rumours abound about the progress of the Education Bill and whether or not ESA will ever emerge from its cocoon. Despite these rumours a lot of work continues behind the scenes to prepare schools and colleges for ESA taking over responsibility for the management of schools in Northern Ireland. INTO has been at the forefront of this work and we wish to ensure that whatever emerges as a result of deliberations in the Assembly or elsewhere that INTO members suffer no detriment and that their salaries and terms and conditions are protected in any transfer of employment responsibilities.

A number of key areas are presently under discussion:

▄ **Recognition and Facilities** – this is essential as all the rights of a trade union to negotiate, and consult on behalf of its membership flows from this agreement. INTO is seeking to protect and improve on the existing arrangements and to make

sure that the collective bargaining arrangements ensure that the terms and conditions of teachers are only negotiated with INTO and the other recognised teaching unions.

▄ **TUPE transfer** – presently draft transfer letters are being considered for all staff working in education. For the majority of teachers there is no risk to their employment. However INTO wishes to ensure that the maximum protections and assurances are extended to all INTO members as a result of any potential changes of employer.

▄ **Collective Bargaining Arrangements** – with the establishment of ESA the current proposals are focused around a structure which includes an element of single table

bargaining. This means that at the negotiating table with the employers would be representatives of the teaching and non-teaching unions. While there is

some merit in this approach, the view of INTO is that the issues to be negotiated in this way must be carefully controlled and that for the majority of issues concerning teachers these must be negotiated with INTO and the other teaching unions.



TONY CARLIN,
Senior Official

Whether or not these agreements and proposed changes ever see the light of day, INTO wishes to ensure that if ESA is established that the arrangements that are in

place are fit for purpose and allow us to effectively negotiate and support the demands of our growing membership.

Redundancy procedure revised

Following a successful INTO challenge to a compulsory redundancy, it was agreed that the redundancy procedure was not statutorily compliant and that it must be revised.

The issue at question surrounds the meeting with the teacher after the teacher has been declared compulsorily redundant by the selection committee. This meeting is frequently delegated to the Principal and is simply an information exchange, with no opportunity to challenge the decision.

The revised procedure now includes a new section at 2.4. This requires the se-

lection committee to invite the teacher to a meeting to explain the selection and offer them an opportunity to initially challenge the decision. The teacher will, prior to the meeting, be provided with information on the basis of their selection and a written decision, stating the outcome and reasons, will be sent to the teacher by the selection committee, after the meeting. Teachers will have the right to be represented by an INTO representative at the meeting.

INTO is also seeking to challenge the use of non-contractual criteria, such as

managing the school football team, or other voluntary activities, as the basis for or determining factor for redundancy selection. These criteria are creeping in as the pool of volunteers diminishes. The use of and reliance on such non contractual criteria should be resisted from the outset by members and representatives. Redundancy is the loss of a teaching post and only duties associated with the teachers paid contractual roles and responsibilities must be used in considering the individual in any selection for redundancy.

NEWS FLASH

DE has written to all schools indicating that the maximum severance payable to teachers in the 2014/15 round is 60 WEEKS

More than stuffed turkey!

The staff party is a great way to boost morale by rewarding staff and giving everyone a chance to bond, but when things go wrong the repercussions can go far beyond the next-day hangover. Organisations should think about potential problems now and preparing to avoid or address them can help make it a happy Christmas for everybody and minimise the risk of complaints or industrial tribunal claims. Here are some of the most common questions asked:

Q. Are there any problems I should consider about the choice of venue and entertainment?

A. The venue should be carefully selected to ensure that all employees may attend if they wish to do so. It must be accessible to disabled people and accommodate all faith communities. It is also wise to vet any entertainers and speakers to ensure that their comments and acts do not constitute any form of harassment or discrimination.

Q. What if an employee who has clearly drunk too much at the office Christmas party is planning to drive home. It's not my responsibility, is it?

A. In fact, it may be. As an employer you have a 'duty of care' toward your employees and if it's the company's



party, you need to take some responsibility. Think about travel arrangements and maybe end the party before public transport stops running. Hiring minibuses to take staff home is another option which would probably be greatly appreciated.

Q. If an employee suffers verbal abuse about being gay at the party, which is not on company premises; it's a matter for them, isn't it?

A. Wrong – going the office party, even when it is off company premises, can count as an extension of work and so all the laws covering discrimination may still apply. Make sure the company has policies in place on bullying and harassment and discrimination and that everyone

knows what they are and what the penalties are for ignoring them.

Q. Are there any problems if an employee posts photographs from the Christmas party on a social networking site?

A. Photos of colleagues misbehaving at the work party posted on social networking sites, websites and blogs could cause grievances against the employer. Having a social media policy in place could help employers avoid this risk. An organisation's social media policy should state that if employees post comments, photos, or anything that can bring the firm into disrepute, they are liable to disciplinary action. Employees should be warned that the company policy on harassment and bullying extends to social media. If the employer is planning a Christmas party they should remind employees that they are meant to enjoy themselves and have a good time, but to read the social media policy and to behave towards other people as they do in the workplace.

However despite all these concerns the party should be seen as a thank you for everyone's efforts over the year and with a little bit of thought and consideration it should be an occasion to be enjoyed.

Assessment

The OECD Report

The OECD Report on evaluation and assessment in the North, which was commissioned by the Education Minister, John O'Dowd, was published in December 2013. The Northern Committee is currently considering the Report, which stretches to over 200 pages, and will give its considered response in due course.

The Report acknowledges and commends the fact that official policy here aims to 'build on and strengthen teacher professionalism' in the area of assessment. It praises DE policy for its focus on the professional judgement of teachers and its stated aim to strengthen the levels of



BRENDAN HARRON,
Senior Official

assessment literacy amongst teachers.

The Report notes that teachers here are respected and trusted professionals and it stresses that this is of 'key importance' and central to the success of any assessment arrangements. The Report tells the Minister and DE that, of equal importance, is the need to engage the professionals in pilots and in the development of key policies. The review team noted concerns from teachers regarding specific pilots, but strongly welcomes the fact that there are open communication channels between the Department of Education and the teacher unions.

The Report is very critical of the 'polarised political debate' over the testing of pupils for post-primary school selection and states that this is

... impeding the effective implementation of pupil assessment against the Levels of Progression and, by extension, the Northern Ireland curriculum.

INTO looks forward to the forthcoming debate on the Report and is hopeful that, following discussion, a set of assessment arrangements can be agreed, which is fit for purpose, manageable and of value to pupils, teachers, parents and the other education stakeholders.

The five teacher unions have already informed the Minister, DE and CCEA that the current arrangements for the assessment of cross-curricular skills cannot possibly operate, this year.

GCSE and A Levels – The Way Forward

INTO has responded to the consultation on the way forward for GCSEs and A level examinations. The consultation followed the review of examinations here by CCEA and the subsequent report, which was given to the Education Minister in June 2013.

INTO strongly supports the recommendation that both GCSEs and A levels should be retained here, with some revision/modification to reflect our education policy and the economy in the North. This would allow the qualifications to be strengthened, with some

modifications, to reflect the curriculum here and the needs of our employers and our higher education institutions.

INTO believes that there needs to be more breadth in our examination options to cater for the needs of all of our students and to meet the growing demand from industry for skills-based training. The current system does not take sufficient account of the growing trend among schools for vocationally-based subjects and portfolio-based assessment. Examination Boards in England and Wales offer options that are

much broader and more suitable for students who do not wish to take traditional subjects. Such students cannot achieve success within our current assessment arrangements. INTO has advised that options worth exploring include the Cambridge nationals/technicals, BTEC and Diploma courses.

The Organisation has reiterated its view that qualifications gained in the North must be comparable with those gained in the Republic of Ireland and in GB, as well as being fully portable across the islands and beyond.

Teacher Education – is there a need for change?

INTO has submitted its views to DEL on the way forward for teacher education in the North. The Organisation expressed extreme concern that DEL was consulting on the provision of infrastructure and the associated costs of teacher education here, without any involvement of the Department of Education.

It would seem that the DEL Minister, Stephen Farry MLA, is more concerned about cutting costs, through rationalisation

of the teacher education infrastructure here, than any concern about the quality of provision. INTO has commended the quality of provision in the North's teacher education Colleges, which are acknowledged leaders in their field. The Organisation has also demanded that, not only must the Department of Education be involved in the review, but that DE should be the main driver of it.

Pensions Update

The Public Service Pensions Bill goes before the NI Assembly for consideration on Tuesday 14 and 28 January 2014.

Over the last year the trade unions, including INTO, through NIC ICTU, have been meeting with the Department for Finance and Personnel and the Assembly Committee for Finance and Personnel. NIC ICTU have been making representations on behalf of members to try and address the changes to pensions, contained within the proposed Public Service Pensions Bill. Those proposed changes include:

- ✦ Cost and Benefit of the Reforms
- ✦ Linking of Normal Pension Age and State Pension Age
- ✦ Consultation Provisions
- ✦ Review of Actuarial Valuations and Employers Contributions
- ✦ Governance Provisions

In their report on the Bill on 29 November 2013, the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Finance and Personnel acknowledged the issues raised by the trade unions and supported a few of the

NIC ICTU amendments. However further amendments are required to effect real change, such as the removal of the linking of the state pension age to the normal retirement age.



NUALA O'DONNELL,
Senior Official

For teachers, this is probably the most significant change the Assembly are proposing to introduce. Currently if you entered teaching before 1 April 2007 you could expect to retire, without any actuarial reductions at age 60 (NRA) and at age 65 (NRA) if you entered teaching after 1 April 2007.

If the proposal of linking the Normal Retirement Age (NRA) to the state pension age (SPA) is passed by the Assembly in the Public Service Pensions Bill, then from 1

April 2015, the age at which teachers can normally expect to retire will be linked to the state pension age.

The state pension age is rising over the next number of years to 66, then 67 and then 68. It is unlikely that it will even stop there, given the Chancellor's Autumn statement, where he brought forward the date when it will rise to 68!

To try to influence the NI Assembly in their decision on public service pensions the NIC ICTU pensions group has organised a number of activities. Briefing sessions for MLAs on the impact of the proposed changes will take place on Wednesday 8 January in the Derry City Hotel and Thursday 9 January in the Wellington Park Hotel. Local INTO Northern Committee Representatives will brief their MLAs on behalf of members at these sessions.

All INTO members are asked to get involved to persuade MLAs NOT to make the proposed changes to public service pensions:

Letter Writing Campaign

A sample letter has been prepared for INTO members to send to their MLA, highlighting the issues and encouraging the MLAs to support the NIC ICTU amendments to the Bill. A copy of the sample letter is included with the recent bulletin to schools. It is also available for ALL members to download and post or email to their MLA. A link to your MLA's contact details has been provided on the INTO website too.

Public Demonstration at Stormont

NIC ICTU organised a public demonstration from 1.00-1.30pm on the Stormont steps on Monday 13 January 2014 to impress upon the MLAs the detrimental effects of the proposed Bill and the impact on thousands of workers in NI.



SEN – not just the pupils but us teachers too

My job is challenging, it's exhausting, it can be frustrating but each day brings with it some remarkable glimpses of what can be achieved with some incredibly special children. I'm no superwoman, it is working as part of a resourceful multidisciplinary team of Therapists and Assistants that enables the experiences and learning of children in my classroom, Dept and school to exceed expectations every day. I work in a special school with pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties. I know there aren't many of you reading this article who share my experience but maybe we have more to share and learn from each other than you think.

Throughout the education system there is a marked increase in the numbers of pupils with Special Educational Needs, more children with severe, moderate, mild learning Difficulties and/or emotional & behavioural difficulties. Teachers are finding new challenges in their classrooms whether medical needs, ASD or challenging behaviours to name just a few. Our role is no longer simply to ensure a child has access to the curriculum but that they are in indeed in the right 'place' emotionally or behaviourally and ready to learn. Within Special Schools we have the opportunity to access relatively easily on site (if the cuts within health don't destroy completely the input from the Allied Health Professionals) input from a variety of therapists, medical support, even music and art.

Over the next two years there is to be a review of Allied Health Provision within Education (it has started in Special Schools and will be moved into mainstream after April '14). Pupils, parents/carers and schools will be given the opportunity to honestly feedback on the current provision available, detailing where it is working and where greater support is needed. In order to do this effectively (and our role as teachers should not be underestimated if there is to be effective



Caroline McCarthy (NC Rep) with Ross McCaffrey, Glenveagh Special School

service in the future) we need a better understanding of what this Therapy Support is aiming to provide for our pupils with SEN.

Invest in our children while they are at school with the correct input of therapy (eg. Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, dietetics, prosthetics, orthotics, orthoptics) and we all know as teachers that the future can be transformed for each individual child. For some children with SEN our success is not marked by the results that can be recorded by exams but by the confidence, independence and readiness for life after school that we have developed within the young man or woman as they leave the security of the school gates.

As always, within education, we are facing new challenges – but it is with the input and experiences of teachers in the classroom of special schools, units and

mainstream SEN that the INTO can be involved in forming an effective education for all. Clarity is always available as the demands on us as teachers changes (see Bulletin 7 re: Administration of Medication which enabled me to be confident in this aspect of my role as the class teacher).

With the aim of bringing like minded teachers together, sharing experiences and developing our knowledge the INTO are holding their second SEN conference on Wednesday 5th February 4pm-6pm at the Glenavon House Hotel Cookstown with speakers providing information and discussing the topics Speech and Language Therapy and working with Classroom Assistants. As our teaching in the classroom adapts to the new needs of some of our pupils we need to keep informed of the support available and how to maximise its effect.

SEN Seminar

A follow up to the highly successful SEN seminar in June has been arranged for Wednesday 5th February in the Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown, 4.00pm -6.00pm

This seminar provides those working or with an interest in SEN to access a purposeful Professional Development

opportunity as well as the facility to research how other colleagues are managing to meet the needs in this very complex area.

The areas targeted are

- ✦ Classroom assistants- Clarifying Job Descriptions and effective use
- ✦ Working with Allied Professionals – Speech and

Language Therapists
Light refreshments will be available from 3.30pm

To register for the Seminar please Contact Northern Office on 028 90381455 or email infoni@into.ie.
Closing Date for Registration – 31 January 2014.

Candidate Profiles for Western Area Northern Committee Primary A Representatives

Marie O'Shea

Marie O'Shea is running as a Candidate for the Western Area Northern Committee Primary A Representative of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation.

Marie, a native of Belleek in Co. Fermanagh is a Teaching Principal in St John the Baptist PS, Roscor. She has been working in the school since 2003 and has been Principal since 2005.

Marie has been a member of Enniskillen Branch since 2000 when she returned to teaching in Northern Ireland having spent a number of years teaching in the borough of Tower Hamlets in London. She has served as the Branch Chairperson for a number of years. She has been a representative of the Branch at District II which covers Fermanagh, Tyrone, Derry, Armagh, and South Down. She also regularly attends the Annual Northern Conference where she has spoken on the issues around teacher workload, Assessment and the lack of training and support structures for all

teachers. She has also attended the National Congress for the past number of years.

Marie has been an activist since her student days and is always keen that the voice of teachers working at the chalk face is heard clearly by the decision makers within education.

She actively encourages young teachers to become involved within the life of the Union and gain an understanding of what they gain from having a vibrant lobbying force on their side in this period of constant change.

Marie has a keen interest in the role of Shared Education within the future of the Northern Ireland education system and is concerned with the ever increasing demands placed on the role of the teaching Principal.

She welcomes the opportunity to represent members from the most westerly point of the Northern Area.



Paul Groogan

My name is Paul Groogan and I am presently a Year 5 teacher in the newly amalgamated Holy Family P.S. in Omagh. I have taught classes from Year 4 to Year 7 and also worked as a Special Needs support teacher for 3-4 years. I have taught in schools in Omagh and Derry over a period of 18 years. I live in Omagh with my wife Nuala and two sons Ben and Adam.

I have been involved in unions since my student days at St Joseph's College of Education, Belfast. I became President of the Students Union and have always held an interest in unions. I haven't always been in teaching. In 1986 I moved to London where I joined Post Office Counters Ltd. I returned to teach and marry in 1996 and as the years progressed have become more active in the INTO.

I am INTO rep for my school and a district representative for my branch,

Tyrone Central and since Rita Fox was the branch's Northern Committee representative I felt duty bound to put my name forward. At present I am one of the representatives for Standing Orders Conference from District II and I am also District II's representative for Standing Orders Congress - work which has given me a greater insight to the workings of our union.

I believe my experience in the Private and Public sectors of work give me a broader understanding of the issues and obstacles we face as teachers. I would strive to be a vocal and informed representative for all members in such turbulent times.

I would deem it a pleasure and a privilege to be voted onto Northern Committee as Western Area Primary A Representative.

Many thanks, Paul Groogan.



Frequently Asked Questions- Assessment

1. Why is INTO directing members not to participate in new Assessment Arrangements?

INTO has taken industrial action on the new assessment arrangements as they have significant workload implications for teachers and schools. INTO is also concerned that the procedures are not fit for purpose and could have a detrimental impact on the teaching and learning opportunities in schools. A third area of concern is the impact on the procedure when the data is used for the dual purpose of assessing pupils and school accountability.

2. What is the OECD report?

The OECD has undertaken a review of all

of the assessment arrangements undertaken within the education system. INTO will study this report and the feedback from all five recognised unions which are members of the Northern Ireland Teachers Council will inform our next steps.

3. Will the action be called off in January and will schools then be expected to deliver the portfolios to CCEA?

INTO is very aware of these concerns and has already informed DENI and CCEA that the timeframes for this year are now unachievable due to industrial action and therefore no school can be expected to submit Portfolios of Tasks or Levels of Progression during this academic year.

4. CCEA has told me it is statutory to assess and provide levels

The new assessment arrangements are Statutory. INTO members engaged in the boycott are participating in legitimate industrial action.

5. What assessment should we do this year?

Schools should continue to use the methods of assessment already established within their schools.

If this includes moderation of pupils work it should not include any use of the new levels of progression.

Leading Irish Medium Principal shows how to become creative in the kitchen

Aedin Geary, Principal of Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche, recently published her first cookery book. Designed for those with limited knowledge of the Irish language the book aims to encourage them to become creative in the kitchen and learn more Irish.

Gourmet Ní Ghadhra

Gourmet Ní Ghadhra by Aedín Ní Ghadhra is a Cookery book in Irish containing 70 recipes in total. There are recipes for Starters, Main Courses: (Meat and Fish), Pastas, Desserts, Salads and Small Meals.

The book was launched by Dr Eibhlín Mhic Aoidh in the Cultúrlann in Belfast (August 2013) and the Cultúrlann in Derry (November 2013).

Aedín has worked in the Irish-Medium sector since 1985 and is currently employed as Principal of Bunscoil Bheanna Boirche in Castlewellan.

Gourmet Ní Ghadhra is aimed at parents of children in Irish-Medium education who are learning Irish, although it will appeal to a wider audience. We know that activity based learning is very effective for language acquisition and Aedín hopes that Gourmet Ní Ghadhra will provide opportunities for children and parents to learn together and to have fun.

There are illustrations of the ingredients, a translation into English of the verbs and tricky phrases and there is a photograph of each recipe.

Aedín illustrated the book and took the photographs.

The book would not have made it to print without the support of Eibhlín Nic Gearailt, Áine Nic Gearailt, Pól Mag Uidhir, Edel Ní Chorráin and the publisher Pádraig Ó Snodaigh from Coiscéim.

Aedín's next project is to try to lose weight as she ate everything in the book with help from her family - all recipes have been tried and tested! Bainigí Sult as!

"Gourmet Ní Ghadhra" can be bought in the Cultúrlann in Belfast and Derry, An Siopa Leabhar Dublin, and An Café Liteartha Dingle.



Size Doesn't Matter

Area Planning as a concept has been with us for a few years now. As the process has become more familiar to the education community and indeed communities in general across the North, two issues are arising that need to be addressed fairly quickly. These are the questions of school size and whether what are described as “small” rural schools can deliver a quality education.

It is the Minister’s stated position [Department of Education Press Release 14th May 2013] that he wishes to ensure” that children in rural areas have access to the same high quality education as those living in urban areas.” This is a reasonable position and that rarest of things in education, something that all the interested parties in the field can agree upon. This consensus needs to be nurtured and developed.

In the North, approximately 55% of the total number of primary schools and 20% of post primary schools are located in rural areas. Unfortunately much of the commentary around these schools is related to size and the adjective “small” is increasingly being used in a pejorative sense to describe them. The clear implication being that small equals bad. This concept needs to be stopped as it reduces the argument to a single issue when in fact the real issue is that highlighted by the Minister of the quality of the education on offer. Reducing the argument to one of size ignores a further number of complexities, relating to the school’s place in the community it serves.

The Minister is clear in his statement of 14th May 2013 “that schools will not close simply because they fall below thresholds” and that the “Sustainable Schools Policy does not seek a one-model-fits-all solution to the problem of demographic decline”. INTO shares the Minister’s



St. John's Primary School and Nursery Unit, Middletown

view that each school should be approached on a school by school basis, with due consideration of local circumstances. This clearly implies the 105 pupils established by Bain as a threshold for a rural school, is no longer relevant and the Department needs now, as a matter of priority, to confirm that is the case. A clarification of this issue will lift a huge additional burden from the shoulders of a large number of already hard pressed teaching principals and their colleagues in a significant number of rural schools.

INTO would urge all parties to this on- going discussion to focus the debate on the quality of the educational experience available to the children and young people who attend our schools. Innovation and success are not simply characteristics to be found in urban schools. If anyone is in any doubt then we refer them to the recent inspection reports of St. John’s P.S. Middletown in rural South Armagh or the very recent positive report in regard to St. Mary’s P.S. on Rathin

Island. Equally, what is interesting and exciting about these two examples, and there are many more, is both schools are central to their communities’ welfare and wellbeing.

Planning is defined as “thought before action”. Perhaps it would be helpful if some bodies adopted this approach and avoided the anger and frustration that many school communities face when area plans are announced.

INTO is in no doubt that our rural schools are providing a quality education in the vast majority of cases and we recognise and appreciate the educational experience they offer our children. We further appreciate the vital role they play in sustaining communities and providing local employment. It’s time those leading the area planning debate took greater cognisance of the old maxim around size not really being all-important.

GERRY MURPHY, *Northern Secretary*



IMPORTANT NOTICE FOR ALL INTO MEMBERS

Update Your Contact Details

Have you recently changed school? Changed job or been promoted? Have you moved house? Changed your phone number or email address?

If you answered YES to any of the above we need you to update your PERSONAL DETAILS in order that we can keep you up-to-date with the latest news and developments in education.

We would particularly ask that members provide us with email addresses and mobile phone numbers. Please be assured that your PERSONAL DETAILS will remain confidential to INTO.

You can update your PERSONAL DETAILS through our website

- ✦ Go to www.into.ie and click on the Northern Ireland site icon
- ✦ Click on the 'Members' Area' button at the top right hand side
- ✦ First time users will need to register in one-off process (this should take no longer than 5 minutes)

To register enter the following information

1. Date Of Birth
2. Teacher Reference Number
3. School Reference Number (if you are employed in a permanent position)
4. Surname (Use the name on your INTO Membership Card – if this name is incorrect you will have the opportunity to change it once you log in)
5. Membership Number (Found on your INTO Membership Card)
6. Create Password (min of 6 and max of 12 characters)
 - ✦ Read the Terms and Conditions and click YES to accept them
 - ✦ Click SUBMIT

Once you have accessed the Members' Area click on the MY DETAILS button on the right hand side of the screen to view and amend your PERSONAL DETAILS.

If you experience any difficulty registering or logging in please contact Northern Office on: 9038 1455 for assistance.

Congratulations



Mr Mark Mc Taggart presented the Vere Foster Award to Sinead Lagan, awarded for the highest marks on School Experience on behalf of the INTO.



Mr Mark Murtagh presented the John Cull Award to Laura Anne Murray, the mature student with the highest grades in Education Studies.



Congratulations to our colleague Trevor Leonard, on the occasion of his civil partnership with Brian Adams. Photo: Gerry Murphy, Northern Secretary, presenting a gift from staff and Northern Committee to Trevor and Brian.

INTO working with St Mary's



INTO has had a long and significant history of involvement with St Mary's University College. Every year the INTO awards the Vere Foster Medal to a final year student in recognition of their performance during teaching practice. The John Cull Medal is also awarded by INTO District 2 to a mature student with the highest grades in Education Studies.

However our involvement with the students begins long before graduation and their first teaching post. Students register for membership of INTO during Freshers' Week each year. As student members they receive free membership of INTO along with an INTO USB pen drive and folder but more importantly they gain access to the information and support that INTO can provide.

Each year INTO offers a series of workshops for student members, including behaviour management, preparing for teaching practice. From September this year INTO has delivered three workshops for students designed to help provide them with the tools, skills and information they will need during school placements, working as a supply teacher and completing job application forms.

During this semester we will be providing help, support and advice to students

who are on placement in schools. INTO provides these services through our members who have student teachers in their classrooms. Our school reps should also make themselves known to any student teachers. Placement can be a rewarding but challenging time for students and we can all remember being there!

In the final term our focus will turn to final year students. Last term we provided our student members with a workshop on applying for jobs and in May 2014 these students will have the opportunity to take part in a mock interview conducted by a serving principal. Thanks

to a significant and varied INTO Principal/Vice Principal membership we are able to provide interviews for final year students that reflect the diversity of the schools they will be applying to.

INTO wishes all students a successful and happy teaching practice. Any student experiencing difficulty can contact the INTO representative in the school for advice and support.

Student members are also encouraged to access the student section of the INTO website for further information and advice, <http://www.into.ie/NI/INTOStudentCentre/>.



Union Solidarity

During October Mr Michael Mulgrew and Mr Rob Weil visited Northern Office. Michael is currently the President of the United Federation of Teachers in New York City. This Union represents 75,000 thousand teachers and 19,000 classroom paraprofessionals including school secretaries, psychologists and social workers. The UFT is affiliated to the 1.4 million member American Federation of Teachers. Michael is concerned mainly with industrial relations and conditions.

Rob, who is based in Washington DC, is the Director of Field Programmes in the AFT's Education Department. He deals mainly with professional and educational issues.

While here they visited St Patrick's Primary School, Pim Street, Belfast where Mark Mc Taggart is Principal and Edmund Rice College, Glengormley where Seamus Hanna is a senior teacher. As neither had visited Belfast before they took the opportunity of having a quick trip around the city and visited some places which have often featured in the news headlines. Mark acting as chauffeur.

Rob, in his role as Director of Educational Issues, has visited many of the countries/cities which have featured in the OECD sponsored Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) league tables. He would encourage all to look beyond the raw scores as these do not tell the whole story. Other influences such as motivation, family expectations, cultural influences, social deprivation and respect for teachers have to be considered as contributing factors.

Bob cautions that more emphasis on testing and preparing for tests will not necessarily raise standards. He referred to the "No Child Left Behind Act" which was introduced in the US in 2002. Since then



Left to right: Mark McTaggart, Rob Weil, Rita fox, Michael Mulgrew and Gerry Murphy

pupils in the Public Education System have been subjects to a never ending round of standardised testing, in an attempt to raise standards and monitor the system.

"The current test-and- punish accountability system has squeezed out vital parts of the curriculum that are not subjected to accountability testing, sacrificed student learning time to testing and test preparation, and focused teachers—particularly those teaching our most vulnerable students—to focus their attention on students achieving just below the pass score. That is not what countries with high-performing education systems do" (Randi Weingarten President ATF)

After eleven years of continual, concentrated testing and associated accountability measures the US has in fact slid down the PISA league table. Our American colleagues would caution that testing is a multi-pound/dollar industry and like any

industry it makes sense to produce, market and sell more product. Some have a vested interest in sustaining such a system.

Bob and Michael said that there is a growing backlash against testing which is just designed as a system check and a move towards diagnostic testing which addresses the needs of the individual pupil. The AFT supports the proper use of standardised testing and sensible accountability measures. They have recently launched a campaign to restore the balance between teaching and testing. The campaign known as "Learning Is More Than a Test Score" is supported by a very informative publication called "Testing More, Teaching Less. What America's Obsession with Student Testing Costs in Money and Lost Instructional Time".

I can't say if our visitors learnt anything from us but I think they gave us plenty of food for thought.



Left to right: Seamus Hanna, Michael Mulgrew, Rita Fox, Brendan O'Sullivan, Rob Weil, Mark McTaggart, Peter Friel

2013/14 Art Competition



Now is the time to put your new year's resolve into action!

You could be the winner of this year's Art Competition – enter now!

This is the second year of the Art Competition, which at present is open to all members across the North. Members are invited to submit up to three original, two-dimensional works, all entries will be judged by a panel, all entries will be returned to their owner with the exception of the winning piece which will become part of the Northern Office art collection and £800 will be awarded to the winning artist

What next?

Complete and Return Your Application Form by Friday 24 January 2014.

All entrants will be contacted with details of when to hand in their work to Northern Office.

Our winner will be announced at Northern Conference, Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen, 28 February – 1 March 2014.

For further information including application forms please see the NI homepage, Members Area, or contact Trevor Leonard at tleonard@into.ie

INTO is delighted to have the expertise of Eimear Maguire and Julian Friers on the judging panel.

Eimear Maguire is a Belfast based artist living near the famous Cave Hill. Inspired by the local birdlife, Eimear set up Dollybirds in 2013, creating and selling a range of original oil paintings, prints, Dollybird houses and feeders. Upcycling is very important part of Dollybirds Art. Each print is hand finished using a 'Dollycycled' vintage frame. Bird houses, feeders and holders are made using reclaimed wood. Eimear is the first artist to have their work stocked by major Irish retailer Avoca. A large batch of original Dollybird paintings has also travelled to a gallery in Burford, Oxford.

Julian Friers shares an interest in wildlife and has been painting birds and nature since childhood. Today Julian's paintings are to be found in art collections in the United States, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia,

Morocco, Ireland and the UK. Julian

designed the first Irish Duck stamp for the American conservation programme and also provided the paintings to illustrate 'Gifts of the Desert', a lavishly produced book commissioned by the

International Foundation for the Conservation and Development of Wildlife. Julian is a past President of the Royal Ulster Academy.



Pen Pictures

Principals' / Deputy Principals' Committee – representing over 500 School Leaders

Mario Gribbon (District 2 PDC)



From Portadown – lived there all my life!
Principal of St. John the Baptist PS, Portadown since January 1997. Principal of St. James's PS Tandragee from September 1993 – December 1996. Teacher in St. John the Baptist PS, Portadown from September 1986 – August 1993.

I am interested in all school leadership issues
I am married to Maura and have four children; Martin, Paul, Amy & Cara and one grandson, Aaron.
Life long Manchester United aficionado!
I am also Co-ordinator of Ulster Project, Portadown and Chairman of St. Mary's Youth Centre Portadown.

Martin Short (District 1 PDC)

I am born and reared in Andersonstown in Belfast and still live in Andersonstown. I attended Holy Child PS and I am now Principal of the school. I attended St. Mary's CBGS on the Glen Road. I trained as a teacher in St. Joseph's Training College. I taught in St. Kieran's PS Poleglass for 13 years. I was VP and Principal of St. Oliver Plunkett's PS Toome. I have also worked as an adviser for the BELB and CCMS. I have been Principal of Holy Child PS for the past 8 years.

I am a member of the Principal and Deputy Principal Committee of the INTO. I am working to establish fora for Principals and VPs in the north to try to ensure that leadership issues and concerns are brought to the attention of the INTO so that we, as a union, ensure our professional rights are upheld and that the teachers that we lead can focus their time and energy on the children's learning. We are trying to



ensure that workload is manageable and that there is no unnecessary bureaucracy but at the same time, as a professional body, helping to raise standards.

I have been involved in Cumann na mBunscol in Antrim over the years and enjoy playing folk music. I am an avid supporter of the Republic of Ireland soccer team.

Equality Committee



Seamus Hanna (District 1 Equality Committee)

Seamus Hanna is originally from Newry but now lives in Carnmoney. He studied at both The Mater Dei Institute in Dublin, St. Mary's College and Queens University. He plays Bodhran, enjoys traditional Irish music, kayaking and hill walking.

Seamus is currently employed at Edmund Rice College in Glengormley. He is the ICT Coordinator, Head of Year 12 and the Extended Schools Coordinator. He has completed a Master Degree in Curriculum Design and Development focusing on Assessment and Evaluation. He has also completed his PQH plus diplomas in both Theology and Information Technology.

Seamus has worked within the INTO as chair of his local branch, deputy chair of District One and a

member of Standing Orders. He has been a member of the Education Committee and has been appointed to the ICT steering group for the NITC. His particular areas of interest are curriculum based and in particular post primary assessment and ICT development. He has attended several professional development courses organised by the INTO and believes that the outstanding quality of these courses reflects the quality of experience and talent that is present within our membership

Seamus is the District One Representative on the Equality Committee. He is particularly interested in developing Teacher Support within the area of Mental Health and Disability. He is keen to bring Equality issues that are particular to Northern Ireland to the Equality Committee and has recently joined the NITC LGBT committee. He enjoys French culture and is undertaking a French conversational course.

Sheila McCarron (District 2 Equality Committee)

Education Committee

Geraldine McGowan

Geraldine lives in North Belfast with her husband, William, four children, Mary, Matthew, Catherine and Jane, and possibly the world's most vicious cat, Waistcoat. She has very happy memories of her seven years at Rathmore Grammar School. After completing a BEd in Dramatic Art with English at St Mary's College, Geraldine graduated with an MA in Modern Literature and Drama from UUC.

She was SENCo and INTO staff rep in St Vincent de Paul PS, Ligoniel for many years, during which time trained as a Reading Recovery teacher and used the subsequent data as the basis for her MEd dissertation. She moved to the Literacy Teaching and Support Service in NEELB ten years ago, and has been Senior Teacher for the last three. The service provides a bespoke teaching programme to individual pupils with reading difficulties, who have been referred by the Educational Psychologist.

Geraldine joined the INTO in 1986 and began attending Branch meetings after a joint Belfast/Belfast West Christmas function. She has been Vice Chair, Chair and Secretary of Belfast Branch. Representing District 1 on the Education Committee for the past year has been both engaging and challenging. She is delighted that the venue for next year's Education Conference will be in the North for the first time.

She likes getting lost in a book, and drinking tea (but only if it has been brewed in a teapot). Her dislikes include getting lost, tea made with a teabag in a cup and unnecessary punctuation!!!!!! She is Stage Manager for CentreStage youth company. Her two favourite plays are 'Drama at Inish' by Lennox Robinson and 'All Souls Night' by Joseph Tomelty.



Tommy McGlone

I live in West Belfast and make the daily commute to Lurgan where I have taught English for over twenty years.

My journey to becoming a teacher took a seriously circuitous route. I left school at 16 without any formal qualifications to become a printer-machine operator. I stayed in this job for five years during which time I both joined and was active in the Transport & general workers' union. My spare time was spent studiously attending O'Level classes in the evenings. I continued this part-time study during the day at the college of Business Studies and I was a member of the Communication Workers' Union when I worked at night for the Post Office before retiring aged 23 to pursue full time education at the University of Ulster, University of Tennessee and then Queen's for my PGCE.

I immediately joined the INTO as soon as I started to teach and not long after became a school representative. I am primarily interested with Teacher well-being and general conditions of employment. Before joining the Education committee I also served the union in the SELB/WELB Secondary Consultative Committee and as North Armagh Branch secretary.

I have a love of classic cars and regularly push and drive my aging Citroen 2CV. I also enjoy travelling and visiting areas of historical importance. Last summer I had the pleasure of visiting the ruined town of Belchite that was left as a monument by Franco at the end of The Spanish Civil war.

District Secretaries



Andrea Higgins (District 1)

I am from North Belfast and live in Mallusk.

I am Head of Irish in St Dominic's Grammar School for Girls; I previously taught in Bunscoil an tSléibhe Dhuibh and Bunscoil Phobal Feirste.

I am interested in Irish-medium issues and employment rights.

I love Grey's Anatomy and shoe shopping.

Paul Kealey (District 2)

I was born in Derry. Studied in St. Mary's College in Belfast and returned to Derry in 1988.

I secured a post in St. Joseph's Boys' School in September 1988 and continue to work there. As a member of SMT and current Vice Principal I have responsibility for curriculum, LMS, Timetabling and C2K.

I am the current District 2 Secretary and active member of Derry City branch. Areas of interest include: Curriculum development, School finance / budget, assessment arrangements at KS3 and KS4.

A life long supporter of Scunthorpe United!



Information Evening for local Councillors

The idea was put forward at my local branch meeting (South Armagh). In attendance that evening in September were 3 principals, heartsore and weary with the never-ending deluge of paperwork and the constant demands involved in managing a school nowadays.

The latest blow had been the news that their budgets were going to be cut by as much as £10,000 for 3 consecutive years; in real terms this would mean losing a classroom assistant, or indeed a teacher. Morale, needless to say, was at an all-time low. Out of the heated discussion which followed I was asked if I would arrange a meeting for them with the local councillors, so that they could voice their concerns on this and other current educational issues.

In concurrence with this request I contacted all the local councillors, inviting them to an "Information Evening" at which presentations would be made by local Principals on the Common Funding Scheme, Area planning and Assessment. The event was to take place at the Armagh City Hotel on Wednesday 6th November and the secretaries for South Armagh and Armagh City branches – Mrs. Paula McAvoy and Mrs. Paula Donaghy – duly sent out letters to our members to let



L. to R. Cathal Boylan, Thomas O'Hanlon, Rita, Gerry Mone, Gary Farrell, Terry McWilliams

them know about the meeting.

On the night itself (much to my relief) a good cross-section of the Armagh councillors turned up; Cathal Boylan, MLA and Roy McCartney (Sinn Fein), Terry McWilliams (DUP) and Thomas O'Hanlon (SDLP). The seats were filled out with our members and included 2 of my colleagues on the Northern Committee – Post-Primary Rep Mr. Kevin Daly and our Chair Mrs. Rita Fox, who came along to lend their support.

The presentations given by both principals were superb. Mr. Gary Farrell, principal of Our Lady's and St. Mochua's P.S.

Derrynoose, spoke about Assessment, in which he highlighted concerns such as the validity of reporting of levels. Mr. Gerry Mone, principal of St. John's P.S. Middletown, gave a comprehensive overview of the Common Funding Scheme and also addressed the issue of Area Planning.

The second part of the evening took on a life of its own as councillors offered feedback on what they'd heard and members contributed their views on the issues raised. There was a lively discussion in this manner for three quarters of an hour and then as the tea was served there was an opportunity to mingle and chat informally.

Both the councillors and members felt that the evening had been a very worthwhile experience. It is hoped that other branches will follow the lead given by South Armagh and host a similar evening.

My thanks to Gary and Gerry for taking time out of their busy schedules to put together the presentations and then deliver them on the night – without their effort and commitment there would have been no "Information Evening"! Also thanks to the Branch Secretaries for their help with organising the event.

CATHY CROZIER (NC Rep)

"A School Environment Where Everyone is Respected"

The NITC LGBT Group is a sub group of the Northern Ireland Teachers' Council working to promote awareness of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) issues and equality within education.

Each year the group makes an award to a school or individual in recognition of outstanding work in LGBT equality. The award for 2013 was made to St Joseph's High School, Crossmaglen and was accepted by Geraldine Rock on behalf of the school. The 2013 award was made in memory of PA Mag Lochlainn who passed away in November 2012. PA was a tireless equal rights campaigner, having been President of the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association for 20 years.

Co-ordinated by Geraldine, students from St Joseph's worked with The Rainbow Project to look at the importance of

challenging homophobia. The workshops offered by The Rainbow Project provide teachers with the skills to recognise and respond to homophobia within their schools. Students looked at the issues around bullying and in particular the forms and effects of homophobic bullying, they used their experiences to create posters promoting dignity and equality and at the end of the project their posters



Geraldine Rock – St Joseph's Crossmaglen, Karen Sims – NASUWT, Gavin Boyd – Rainbow Project

were put on display. Through efforts of teachers like Geraldine and the enthusiasm of the young people of St Joseph's it is possible to help create a school environment where everyone is respected and all pupils feel valued and included.

Anyone interested in becoming involved with the NITC LGBT Group should contact their union office for further details. Meetings are informal and the group is respectful of the varying levels of commitment members can make. INTO members can request further details by emailing lgbt@into.ie

Should principals or other staff be interested in accessing training and support free of charge from The Rainbow Project please contact Education Equality Officer Gavin Boyd on 028 90 31 90 30 or gavin@rainbow-project.org.

Delegation from the Netherlands

Towards the end of October a delegation from CNV Onderwijs (CNV Education) came to meet with UTU/INTO.

CNV is the Christian teachers union in the Netherlands. The Union is a result of a merger between a Catholic teachers union and a Protestant Christian Union in 2000. CNV now represents approximately 53,000 members in all sections of education. Membership includes Principals, auxiliary staff and other educational personnel. CNV is affiliated to the worldwide Trade Union Confederation.

The delegation consisted of Mrs Helen van den Berg, President CNV, Mrs Joany Krijt, Vice President, Mr Cees Kuiper, Board Member, Mr Willem Jelle Berg, Treasurer, Mr Leon Meijer, Secretary to the Board and Ms Isabel Gaisbauer, Advisor European Affairs.

In their short time here they had many questions regarding school organisation, funding, working conditions, the political situation and the economy to mention a few. Some of the group had previously visited Dublin but had never been in Belfast or beyond.

They told us that in the Netherlands each school had a school council and this



Dutch Delegation with INTO and UTU

was the forum used to discuss many day to day issues and resolve individual problems.

With regard to educational outcomes in the Netherlands the group reported that they did not have very high achievers nor did they have very low achievers, most pupils performed to their potential. The vast majority of students studied English and Leon said his own daughter was studying for a Cambridge English exami-

nation which required her to learn two thousand words in English in two months.

There was also some humour when our visitors presented us with samples of their recruitment pack which included the usual pen, notebook and packets of mints. Reflecting their love of cycling the pack also contained Cat Eye lights and lastly an orange rubber duck with a crown on its head!

INTO Principals and Vice-principals Consultative Conference

Dunsilly Hotel Antrim, 26 November 2013

At the recent Principals and Vice-principals Consultative Conference in Antrim INTO principal and vice-principal members discussed a number of current issues, the INTO industrial action on Assessment, the Assembly Education Committee Inquiry into ETI and the Review of the Common Funding Scheme.

The members also received an update on how the INTO has progressed the issues raised at the previous conference in January. This update, along with the other papers for the conference, are available in the Leadership Group Members' Area of the INTO website – you will need your INTO membership number to access this section of the website, as it is for members only. If you do not know your membership number please contact INTO Northern Office.

The principals and vice principals also received an update from Martin Short, District 1 and Mario Gribbon, District 2 on the work of the INTO National Principals' and Deputy Principals' Committee.

There were then workshop sessions where members had the opportunity to raise issues of concern to them. The issues raised were fairly consistent across the workshops, concentrating mainly on Assessment, including the transfer system, the



Members attending the INTO Principals and Vice-principals Consultative Conference

current Inspection process and the role of the District Inspector and Efficient Discharge or similar mechanism for principals and Vice principals,

Further meetings of INTO principals and vice-principals will be organised through the districts to support INTO school leaders. It was agreed that for the foreseeable future it would be better to have joint district meetings and alternate the venues between the districts. It was also agreed that there

should be one meeting per term, October/February/May of each year with opportunities for principal and vice principal members to contribute to the agendas. Details of the times and dates of the meetings will be emailed out to principal and vice-principal members in the near future. All INTO school leaders are encouraged to attend these meetings to raise and progress issues affecting education and schools currently.

INTO Northern Conference

FRIDAY 28 FEBRUARY – SATURDAY 1 MARCH 2014

KILLYHEVLIN HOTEL, ENNISKILLEN

The Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen is this year's venue for Northern Conference.

The Conference starts on Friday 28 February at 10.00am and closes at 1.30pm on Saturday 1 March 2014.

Delegates to Northern Conference and Congress are nominated at their Branch Annual General Meeting, which is held in January each year.

Further details of Branch Meetings can be found in the 'Events' section of our website or by contacting your Branch Secretary (details in the 'About INTO' section of our website).

All Branches and Districts are entitled to submit motions to both Northern Conference and Congress to determine the Organisation's policy for the incoming year.

Over 150 members will attend Northern Conference as delegates over the weekend to discuss the current issues in education. This year some of the issues to be debated include assessment, pensions, inspections and conditions of service issues.

As well as the serious business of Conference, delegates also enjoy a dinner dance on Friday night with entertainment provided by Enniskillen Branch.

The dinner dance is open to non-delegates and attracts around 200 members, spouses and friends.

Any member who is not a delegate should contact their Branch Secretary or Northern Office to secure tickets if they wish to attend.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Adelaide Insurance

Over 46 000 British motorists had their say in the Auto Express Driver Power 2013 survey – just released to help drivers pick the best dealer, insurer and breakdown operator to use.

The annual poll asked motorists to rate their insurance company in five areas: Communication, speed to settle a claim, helpfulness and attitude, value for money and overall service.

An overall score was then given to each of the car insurers who made it into the Top 40, based on an average of the ratings in these five categories.

Britain's number one ranking for VALUE FOR MONEY went to Adelaide Insurance Services car insurance scheme – IAM Surety, for the second consecutive year. IAM Surety offers cover to members of the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM).

Here's what Auto Express said:

Has retained last year's rankings (including a brilliant number one for value), plus gained a place for its speed at settling claims. Customers only had good things to say about IAM Surety, telling us the provider was "very reputable" and praising

the "good value and excellent service". 97.4% would renew their current policy.

Sam Geddis, Founder and Director of Adelaide Insurance Services commented:

"For Adelaide this underlines the first class service our staff continues to deliver to IAM Surety customers and all our other insurance schemes. I am absolutely delighted that such a prestigious, UK wide and independent poll has recognised the high standards that we in Northern Ireland can achieve and deliver."

In addition, the study mystery shoppers each company to identify the insurer with the cheapest premiums.

Interestingly the insurer that topped this ranked 31 out of the Top 40 insurers demonstrating that price although an important factor, is not the only consideration when buying insurance. One of the top10 buying tips from the survey also highlights this:

Don't be drawn by the cheapest since some providers will trim the benefits and increase the excess in order to get a low enough premium.

The full findings of the Driver Power 2013 survey are in the August edition of Auto Express magazine on sale now.



William Kennedy Piping Festival



A year ago I was asked to support a request to branches in the area I represent for INTO sponsorship for the William Kennedy Piping Festival Schools Concerts. It seemed like an excellent way to promote the INTO and to get us some positive publicity and so it has proved, with a number of articles about our sponsorship in the Irish News and local Armagh papers and of course materials on the Festival invitations which went out to dozens of schools to notify them of the concerts and to the thousands of people who lifted festival brochures and thumbed through them to see the INTO logo and details of the concerts we were sponsoring.

For a fairly modest outlay the branches involved managed to get the INTO a decent return in visible, positive publicity, provided a meaningful musical and cultural outing for nearly a thousand students and made ourselves visible, in a positive way, to Teachers and Principals. But I think such events achieve much more than just good publicity for INTO and I firmly believe that we as an organisation should be actively seeking at Branch, District and National levels to support the arts where we can because as Trade Unionists it is an important part of what we are supposed to do, that is, promote and support the culture of working people.

There is an important link between what we do in our day to day efforts as Trade Union Activists and the ability of the Arts, in all its forms, to support, promote and sustain the ideas of equality and justice which led most of us in to activism in the first place. It has often been said that many people come to social activism as a result of a song they heard, a book they read or a film they watched – rarely if ever do people come to the arts because of their activism. Whether it be Steinbeck, Tressell, Marley, Guthrie, Springsteen or The Clash I would hazard a guess that most of us have been inspired in some way by the works of socially conscious artists.

It is within the gift of most branches and Districts collectively and the organisation nationally to support financially the artistic pursuits of the young people we teach and the communities they live in and serve. We cannot of course be seen to be supporting any particular school while leaving out others but we are a creative and intelligent group and it is not beyond us to seek out or even develop events to promote our values as Trade Unionists and Educationalists.

Every £1 spent on promoting the arts and culture generates £4 for the local economy according to Local Government

Association research means a little bit of our support provides at least some employment and local spending. For instance, when Newry Branch hired caterers for their 1913 Lockout event this put money in the pockets of a small local business and their staff who had supported striking workers on the 30th November 2011 by providing free soup and sandwiches to them. Newry Branch were also able to support local musicians on the night, pay a local printer for posters, put up visiting speakers in a local hotel and so on. It might not be much in the scheme of things but collectively our Union Subscriptions could be working much harder to promote what we do for the benefit of our members and in the process give support to the communities we come from.

We have branches with very healthy bank balances and perhaps it is time for more branches to start getting creative in putting it to good use. There are plenty of community festivals, summer schools, concerts, exhibitions and more out there across the country, all looking for funding and support from an ever decreasing public pot and few of them would turn down INTO support. The benefits of doing so are many.

KEVIN DALY (NC Rep)

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