

Printout

Irish
National
Teachers'
Organization

Cumann
Múinteoirí
Éireann

June 2009

Putting Pupils First

Recently teachers' union reps with DE and ESAIT visited Montgomery County. Maryland, just outside Washington DC. Very interesting trip. Teachers' basic salaries go to \$95,000. Pensions are 60% of salary after 30 years' service. What the group was exploring was whether unions, ESA and DE could work closer together to improve all children's educational outcomes, maximise the education budget for teaching and learning and improve teachers' salaries and conditions of service.

Everything in Montgomery County is fit for purpose and waste is not tolerated. There is a very strict accountability regime but no Inspectorate or School governors. The education administrative budget is between 2 and 5% - compared to the NI whopping 40% and, of course there is no Department of Education.

A key characteristic is that management and unions share all information and work extremely closely together. This involves every

aspect, how every penny of the education budget is spent to professional development and a joint approach to dealing with unsatisfactory teaching. Initial results show pupils' results are improving enormously with the objective that 80% of pupils will be 'college ready' by 2014.

Dr Jerry Weast, School Superintendent, Montgomery County is of the view that for Northern Ireland pupils to have similar or better outcomes, a revolutionary approach by unions, ESA and DE is required. There is a first time for everything! INTO has decided it would be worthwhile to explore these ideas further. However critical to all this is that workload and bureaucracy is reduced and teachers' and principals' accountability is reduced rather than increased under the outworking of 'Every School a good School.'

More info on Montgomery County check www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org Check INTO website www.into.ie for more detail on this development.

New Northern Committee Reps



Annemarie Conway
WELB Post Primary Rep



Mark McTaggart
NEELB Primary Rep

STOP PRESS

Teachers are to get 2.3% salary award from the 1st September 2009. For more details on this and new conditions of service, contact the INTO website www.into.ie

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INTO Districts 1 & 2 Golf Competition will be held on:

Monday 6th July 2009 in the
Hilton Templepatrick Golf Club

Tea off time:
10:30 – 11:30am

Competition:
Members / Retired Members / Visitors

£30.00 per person

All Welcome

For further information contact:

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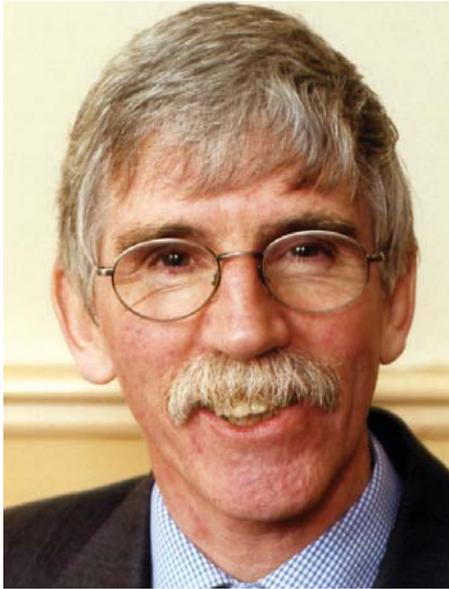
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Kevin Smyth – New INTO Chair



*Kevin Smyth -
Northern Committee Chair*

I am looking forward to the incoming year as Chair of the Northern Committee of INTO. There are a number of issues which I regard as priorities for the union.

Transfer 2010

The debate on selection continues and we must exercise as much pressure as possible in order to bring it to a successful conclusion. INTO welcomed the recommendations of the Burns Report in 2001, to abolish the Eleven Plus and to establish common admissions criteria for post-primary schools. It is regrettable that these recommendations were not adhered to by all interested parties. INTO has always put children rather than institutions at the centre of this debate. We fought to end selection because of the harm the 11+ did to children's morale and self esteem. We saw the introduction of the Revised Curriculum combined with the ending of selection tests as having a very welcome and liberating effect on the Primary School Curriculum. We are now concerned that the Revised Curriculum will become distorted as happened under the 'old 11 plus'. Those who are opposed to change seem to be concerned with preserving grammar schools regardless of the effects on children and regardless of the effects on primary and secondary schools. We now have a 'Catholic,'

selection test and a 'Protestant.' selection test as if we didn't have enough fault lines within our Education System. This issue can be resolved if we focus on the needs of children and not on the needs of institutions.

Pensions and Conditions of Service

Changes in the Pension arrangements for teachers have caused great anger within the profession. The net effect of the changes will be to reduce the number of teachers volunteering for redundancy. In recent year many teachers have availed of the Premature Retirement Compensation Scheme (PRCS). They felt that they had given sufficient years to the profession and the pension scheme meant that they could retire early. The Scheme created job opportunities for young, newly qualified teachers and it ensured that there was a supply of new blood into the profession. It was a mean spirited and short sighted measure by the Department of Education to change these arrangements in the manner done. A priority in the coming year will be to have this renegotiated.

Newly Qualified Teachers

Young teachers are the life blood of the profession. We need their enthusiasm, their new ideas and their dynamism within the classroom. This cannot happen if young teachers cannot get jobs. INTO has for a number of years demanded that the Department introduce a guaranteed year of employment for all new graduates. This scheme works well in Scotland and would not only advantage the young teacher but would also benefit the schools to which they were assigned.

INTO/UTU Links

INTO has always had a good working relationship with UTU. For the past number of years both unions have sought to establish closer links and a joint Board of both Unions meets regularly. I would like to see these links strengthened and the work of the joint board expanded. There is strength in unity and we can do much more together than we can do separately. There are proposals for campaigns on class size, workload, funding and pensions and I hope that we can carry them forward. And building teaching union unity with all our teaching union colleagues remains a key objective.



Vere Foster House

John Carr, General Secretary, Declan Kelleher, INTO President, Melanie Houston, UTU President, Kevin Smyth, Chair, Northern Committee and Frank Bunting Northern Secretary at the official renaming of 23 College Gardens as Vere Foster House

New Equality Policy for schools



Tony Carlin- Senior Official

The review of the **Equal Opportunity Policy** (TNC 2009/2) and procedure has now been completed. As a result of INTO input the revised policy has been updated to take account of changes in equality legislation as well as emphasising the need to ensure protection against discrimination.

The policy states:

"This Policy has been developed within the framework of current employment legislation. The Board is committed to the promotion of equality of opportunity, fair participation and good relations, and the prevention of unlawful discrimination. The Board and the Board of Governors are opposed to all forms of unlawful discrimination, direct or indirect, against any teacher in the recruitment and selection process, in training or in any other way.

The policy emphasises the need to ensure that other procedures and practices are operated in a non discriminatory manner: **This Policy applies to recruitment and selection, training and other benefits and facilities. The Board of Governors will positively promote and rigorously observe the objectives and principles set out in this statement and are committed to implementing policies to**

promote equality of opportunity within school"

To complete the new procedure a **Joint Declaration of Protection** (TNC 2009 /3) has also been agreed. This is a statement by the Teachers' and Management Side of the Teachers' Negotiating Committee to ensure that schools actively promote equality and work to eliminate bullying and harassment. It has been signed by Frank Bunting, Teachers' Side Secretary and Jenny Fryers Management Side Secretary. The policy must now be formally adopted by all schools and should be displayed publicly. Where this does not happen INTO Representatives are urged to ensure that the Governors discharge this responsibility.

Both policies are available to download.

Changes to Flexible working arrangements

A range of revised flexible working arrangements have been agreed by the Teachers' Negotiating Committee. The policies were:

- *Career Break Scheme*
- *Job Share Policy*
- *Part time working*
- *Temporary Variation of Contract*

These policies are now in force and applications for the academic year beginning September 2009 will be managed in accordance with the revised procedures.

The main changes are:

- The right to flexible working now extends to all teaching staff including **Principals and Vice Principals;**
- A new **Flexible Working Scheme** has been developed which acts as the overarching policy to allow Governors to consider flexible working applications;
- Flexible working arrangements can now be offered for a **2 to 3 year trial period** or the teacher can ask for the arrangements to be made permanent from the outset;

- The **temporary variation of contract** now allows teachers to make application to work flexibly for periods up to one year to allow them to balance sudden changes in their domestic circumstances;
- The definition of **"carer"** is now extended to include anyone for whom the teacher has a direct caring responsibility, eg elder care.
- There is an **agreed appeals' mechanism** for all refusals of flexible working which must include the reasons for refusal and the "business case" that the governors relied upon in effecting the refusal to allow a teacher to work flexibly.
- The right to request flexible working in respect of a child still remains at **6 years old**. However Management Side has confirmed that when the legislation changes in Northern Ireland the age limit will be extended to meet the new legislation.

The revised policy also clarifies a number of issues such as directed time, Baker days and the right to hold Teaching Allowances as an individual working flexibly. Teachers who are considering flexible working in the new academic year are encouraged to download the revised policies from the INTO website.

Pensions' Update

The changes to the Teachers' Pensions and Premature Compensation Arrangements (PRC) are now starting to emerge. INTO has agreed a campaign strategy to address this attack on the terms and conditions of serving teachers.

The campaign will consist of:

- An agreed programme of industrial action taken forward on behalf of the NITC unions.
- INTO has obtained authority from the CEC to conduct a ballot of its members and we await the other NITC unions confirming such authority.

- Lobbying of Assembly Education Committee members to seek a halt to the draft legislation
- NITC is also seeking a meeting with the Minister of Education to advise her about these proposals
- An NITC meeting with the Association of the Chief Executives, Education and Library Boards.

INTO has also submitted a response to the draft pensions' arrangement. INTO has highlighted the discretionary nature of any compensation payments, the effect on the teaching profession as a whole and the effect of actuarial reductions on not only the teacher but on their surviving spouses and relatives. INTO is also in discussion with the Equality Commission in respect of possible legal redress, relating to the draft Regulations.

In a recent bulletin INTO encouraged **INTO members, Branches and Districts** to:

- Lobby their MLAs and MPs to ensure that they are fully apprised of the overall effects of the changes to the Premature Compensation Regulations and to urge them to oppose the regulations.
- Respond to the pension consultation document (available from DE website) and highlight their personal and professional concerns about the effect of the proposed changes to the teachers' pension scheme and premature retirement arrangements.

What are the changes?

The changes proposed in the draft legislation will:

- Exclude teachers between 50 and 54 from accessing their pensions and permit only actuarially reduced pension benefits to any teacher who accesses his/her pension before the normal retirement age of 60.
- Introduce a discretionary severance payment of up to 104 weeks pay (**no minimum payment is stipulated**) for those teachers who lose their jobs as a result of redundancy.
- Transfer total financial liability for the costs of premature retirement to the teacher's employer.

Why should I be concerned?

Many young teachers ask why they should be concerned. In the current round of redundancies, most are being borne by young teachers. As older teachers decline to leave the profession promotion will become blocked in schools. Finally the Regulations if adopted by the Northern Ireland Assembly will become the terms and conditions under which all teacher redundancies will be managed.

INTO is concerned that these regulations were imposed without meaningful consultation. It is important that the voice of every member on this.

Join the Campaign. Lobby to ensure these arrangements are not passed by the Assembly and that the employers are only able to effect agreed change negotiated with INTO and the teaching unions.

Surveillance!

Workplace surveillance has increased as employers introduce new technologies to monitor employees.

There are a number of areas where employers might seek to monitor the activities of their employees such as:

- Randomly opening up individual employee's emails or listening to their voicemails to look for evidence of malpractice
- Examining logs of websites visited to check that individual workers are not downloading inappropriate material
- Telephone use in terms of volume and cost.
- Use of CCTV in the workplace
- Video recording workers outside the workplace to collect evidence

Although there is no explicit right to privacy under UK law there are factors that an employer must be wary of when monitoring employees.

Employers are bound to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998. The Information Commissioner has issued an Employment Practices Code which employers should consider and implement. The Code advises that employers should always carry out a

risk assessment before carrying out any monitoring and consider whether surveillance is proportionate, necessary and whether there is any other less intrusive method of achieving the same outcome.

Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights provides for a right to respect for a person's privacy, family life, home and correspondence. The European Convention on Human Rights was incorporated into UK legislation by the Human Rights Act 1998.

If an employer informs an employee that they are being monitored, or if the employer has a clear policy on the use of technology and the monitoring of employees and importantly a legitimate reason for carrying out monitoring, then the employer may not be guilty of a breach of Article 8.

Governors must maintain the relationship of trust and confidence that is implied into every contract of employment. If an employee considers that the method or level of surveillance used by an employer is not justified, they may feel that the employer has breached its duty of trust and confidence towards them and thereafter resign and claim constructive dismissal.

Teachers who feel that they have been unfairly targeted by their employer's monitoring activities may also claim that they have been unlawfully discriminated against as a result of their sex, race, age, disability, religion or sexual orientation.

Teachers have a legitimate expectation that they can keep their personal lives private and that they are entitled to a degree of privacy in their working environment. Teachers' awareness will influence their expectations; therefore they should be aware of the nature, extent and reasons for monitoring.

To avoid falling foul of the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Human Rights Act 1998, a Board of Governors should ensure that the surveillance being used is proportionate by considering whether there is a legitimate objective, and whether the method chosen to accomplish the objective is no more than is necessary.

Northern Conference Resolutions

Selection

Conference continues to support the proposal from the Minister of Education to end the present Transfer System. Conference welcomes the decision of the Department of Education to issue admissions criteria to transfer pupils from Primary to Secondary Schools. Conference calls upon all education sectors to comply with the criteria issued by the Department.

Pensions

Conference:

- [a] condemns the unilateral, ill-conceived and short sighted proposals being brought forward by DENI to the teachers PRC Scheme
- [b] calls on the Northern Committee to seek to establish, in conjunction with the other teachers unions, an agreed campaign of opposition to the changes being proposed to the PRC Scheme, such a campaign to include industrial action options up to and including strike action
- [c] instructs the Northern Committee that, should a joint campaign prove impossible to establish [within a reasonable timeframe], Northern Committee is to proceed with a campaign of opposition to these changes, including balloting members for support for industrial action up to and including strike action

Sustainable Schools

Conference notes with concern the publication of the Policy paper 'Schools for the Future: A Policy for Sustainable Schools', and its implications for the provision of primary and post primary education.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to do all in its power to ensure that teachers who take premature retirement, to obviate compulsory redundancies of younger teachers in

their schools or in situations of school reorganisation/rationalisation, do not suffer actuarial reductions in their retirement benefits.

Academic Selection

Conference continues to support the proposal from the Minister of Education to end the present Transfer System.

Conference condemns the actions by a minority of post primary schools who are putting institutional survival ahead of the needs of the majority of post primary pupils.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to seek to ensure that the Department of Education issue strict and binding Admissions' Criteria and guidance to all schools to be used to transfer pupils from primary to post-primary schools.

School Funding

Conference notes with concern the continued inequalities in funding for schools, where each pupil in a primary school is worth 1.04 of the AWPU, while a pupil in a post-primary school is worth 1.68 of the AWPU, a difference of £1258.34 per pupil.

Conference demands that Northern Committee work tirelessly to ensure that the amount of capita per head be equal, and that this parity be achieved by bringing the primary pupil level up to that of a post primary pupil.

Conference demands that the terms of reference of the forthcoming Fundamental Review of Schools' Funding should be the subject of meaningful consultation with the teachers' unions and other education stakeholders.

PPA Time

Conference notes the increasing demands being placed on teachers to engage in reflective time and to analyse and self evaluate their performance.

Conference calls on DE and the Employing Authorities, immediately to introduce PPA time as recommended by the Curran Committee of Enquiry to facilitate this analysis and self evaluation.

Conference demands that Northern Committee ballot the membership for industrial action should Curran not be fully implemented.

Every School a Good School

Conference welcomes the acknowledgement in the first draft of *Every School a Good School – a Policy for School Improvement* that the professionalism and expertise of classroom and subject teachers are at the heart of a successful school.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to ensure that DE/ESAIT:

- i) Establish a teacher development programme that is teacher centred rather than curriculum driven.
- ii) Delegate to schools a budget for INSET that will guarantee opportunities for high quality professional development throughout teacher's careers.

Conference further demands that such professional development be made available to all members of the school staff.

Assaults on Teachers

Conference recognises the role of Northern Committee in highlighting the issue of violent behaviour by adults against teachers in schools. Conference calls on INTO to ensure that training, guidance and support is made available to teachers who have been assaulted, who witnessed assaults or who have to manage the recording and reporting process arising from violent behaviour.



Mary Hughes
Chair Northern Committee



Kevin Smyth presents a gift to outgoing
Chair Mary Hughes



Mary Cahillane
District 1 CEC Rep

Class Size

Conference notes with concern the safety issues which arise when large numbers of children are involved in activity based learning.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to campaign for a reduction in class size in order to accommodate the needs of our children to a maximum of:

- i) 20 pupils in Foundation and Key Stage 1
- ii) 25 pupils in Key Stage 2

Child Protection

Conference recognises the importance of adequate child protection arrangements to protect all parties involved in the investigation of alleged abuse.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to ensure that the Joint protocol Application process of the Department of Health and Personal Social services is reviewed and joined up with the Department of Education Circular Pastoral Care in Schools with regard to its application to staff in schools.

Teacher Cover

Conference notes with concern the inconsistencies in approach to cover for absent colleagues in post primary schools.

Conference demands that Northern Committee seek to ensure that any time to be allocated to teachers as cover for absent colleagues be incorporated into their timetable at the beginning of the school year.

Where such a policy is not forthcoming members in the school should be balloted for industrial action.

Guaranteed Year for NQTs

Conference calls on the education authorities to provide one year's guaranteed employment in schools for newly qualified teachers in order to allow them a foothold in the profession they have trained for.



Mary Dorman
Northern Committee

School Performance

Conference condemns the use of crude data and statistics to measure the worth of a school. Conference calls on Northern Committee to resist by all means available, including industrial action, any further measures of school effectiveness devised by DE/ESAIT that:

- [i] do not take equal consideration of the qualitative as well as the established quantitative measures in determining a schools success or failure
- [ii] are not transparently equitable both in application and the manner in which they can be interpreted

Child Psychology Provision

Conference calls on the Department of Education/ELBs, to urgently review the allocation of Education Psychology provision in schools so that this provision meets the needs of children in schools.

Transfer at 11+

Conference notes with dismay, the failure of the Northern Ireland Assembly to agree on arrangements for the transfer of pupils from primary to post-primary education on a non-selective basis and calls on all parties to consider the best interests of all children in urgently deciding on the transfer arrangements for the school year (2009/10) and bring forward the necessary legislation to end academic selection at 11.

Consultation with Teachers

Conference calls on Northern Committee to ensure that the Minister of Education engages fully with teachers and INTO before making decisions which impact on our delivery of the Revised Curriculum.

Admin Time for Nursery Principals

Conference calls on Northern Committee to work to ensure that all nursery Principals are given the same entitlement to principal release time as their colleagues in the Primary Sector.

Managing Change



Anne Sands
Derry City Branch

Conference notes the unprecedented level of change and uncertainty in the education system at the present time and the detrimental impact this is having on the professionalism and morale of teachers.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to take whatever action it thinks necessary to protect the professionalism of teachers and to ensure that their views are given due consideration by policy makers.

Leadership

Conference commends the INTO leadership for legally defending individual members when the need arises and calls for such good work to be continued

Vere Foster Commemoration

Conference congratulates those members who attended last year's Vere Foster Commemoration.

Conference welcomes the re-designation of Northern Office as Vere Foster House.

As a result of this Conference demands that some of the art collection currently held in Head Office in Dublin be transferred to an area set aside in Vere Foster House to be designated the Vere Foster Memorial Gallery.

Conference demands that on subsequent Vere Foster commemorations said gallery be opened to the public to promote the values of Vere Foster.

Workload

Conference notes the continuing and harmful level of workload which teachers increasingly have to cope with and the severe implications it has on their health and welfare.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to

- i) Investigate urgently the extent of the problem.
- ii) Increase the campaign on workload and to highlight the negative impact it will have on raising standards if it



Gerry Murphy
Northern Committee



*Paul Kealey
District 2 Secretary*

is not addressed in an immediate and meaningful manner through reducing class sizes, placing an embargo on new initiatives, introducing more manageable assessment arrangements, introducing PPA time and increasing resources for children with barriers to learning.

School Closures

Northern Conference calls upon the Northern Committee to mount an extensive campaign to expose the introduction, of unlimited school closures being foisted upon parents, children, and teachers by the employing authorities, the Department of Education and the N.I. Assembly.

Conference also calls on the Northern Committee to ensure that this campaign

is made the central focus of its work during the coming year and, if necessary, beyond.

INTO-UTU Relations

Conference welcomes the work of the INTO/UTU Board in promoting a spirit of fraternal cooperation between the two unions. Conference calls on Northern Committee and the Central Executive Committee to continue with this close cooperation with a view to creating an agreed federation.



*Susan McNamee
Tyrone Central Branch*



John Carr and Caitriona Ruane

Participation

In an effort to stimulate participation in the INTO and thereby enhance the democratic process, Conference calls on Northern Committee to launch a campaign directed at school representatives that will emphasise the vital role they play in the Union and encourage them to be active participants.

Shortlisting Criteria

Conference notes with concern the lack of transparency in the use of enhanced criteria for the purpose of short listing for employment in schools.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to demand that employing authorities, publish the list of enhanced criteria to be considered prior to the closing date of the applications for posts.

Conference notes with concern the continuation of the inequitable practice of using promotional allowances in short listing for promotion to principal and vice-Principal posts.

Conference calls on Northern Committee to redouble its efforts to bring such practices to an end.

Pupil/Teacher Ratio

Conference notes that despite the decline in pupil numbers over the last ten years that pupil teacher ratio has



*Jean Anne Marner
Newry Branch*



*Barney Magill
Northern Committee*

remained the same.

Conference calls on the Department of Education to:

- a) replace the current method of recording pupil teacher ratio with a method which highlights actual pupil teacher ratios rather than the average.
- b) to give a commitment to introduce a maximum class size of twenty five in Key Stage 1.

Consultation

Conference acknowledges the valuable contribution of the ELB consultative committees and calls on the ESAIT to establish a regional consultative mechanism similar to the consultative committees in the ELBs.

Violent Behaviour

Northern Conference recognises the leadership and direction given by INTO in highlighting the issue of violent behaviour in schools.

Conference calls on INTO to continue this work and to ensure that training, guidance and support is made available to members who have been assaulted, who witnessed assaults or who have to manage the recording and reporting process arising from violent behaviour.



*John McAnulty
Northern Committee*

INTO/UTU Youth Conference

Friday 23rd Saturday 24th October 2009
 Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen

The second INTO Youth Conference is planned as above. It will commence at 6.15pm on the Friday and finish at 2pm on Saturday. It is designed for young teachers who graduated in the zeros i.e. since 2000, who are interested in learning more about the INTO; how it works to improve its members' salaries and conditions of service and how they can get their voice heard in the decision making process.

Each branch should nominate at least 2 members. There is a limit of 50 places. Branches and districts will pay the delegates' fees.

It is important that INTO, as a union and professional organisation, has the widest possible participation by all sections of its membership. Branch secretaries should target young teachers in their branch areas and forward nominations to Northern Office marked for Una McCann or e-mail to umccann@into.ie

Andrea Higgins said "Our first Youth Conference was very entertaining and interesting. There is a big welcome for all teachers to get involved with INTO. See your Northern Committee Rep or branch secretary for more information".



Andrea Higgins
 District 1 Co-ordinator

Cumann na mBunscoil School Finals



St. Colman's PS Lambeg
 hurling winners



Frank Bunting with Team Captain
 Conor Nolen and Rosemary Ward,
 County Antrim PRO



St. Marys' PS Portglenone, Girls' Winners



St. Joseph's PS Crumlin, Girls'
 Football Winners



St. Ciaran's PS Poleglass, Boys'
 Football Winners

New General Secretary Designate

The new General Secretary of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation will be Sheila Nunan, the current Deputy General Secretary. She will replace John Carr when he retires next year. Sheila will hold the post of General Secretary Designate for a year. She becomes the first woman to lead the INTO.

Born in Newbridge, Co Kildare, Sheila now lives in Glencullen, Co Dublin. She is a former teacher and principal teacher in Tallaght and in Bray, Co Wicklow, and has been a full time official of the union for three years.

Sheila attended primary and secondary school in Holy Family School, Newbridge, and then completed a degree in Politics and Sociology in UCD in 1978. The following year she received a post-graduate Diploma in Education from St Patrick's College of Education in Drumcondra. She was elected

President of the union in 2005 and was formerly a member of the CEC.

She secured over sixty percent of the ballots cast, defeating Noel Ward, Senior Official in the union by a margin of 10,113 to 6,212 votes. Sheila said she was deeply honoured and humbled to have been elected by her colleagues. She said there were very serious challenges in the area of protecting teachers' living standards and securing additional resources for schools.

She committed to seeking the support of parents and the general public to ensure that primary education was protected from the economic downturn.

Election for Deputy General Secretary/General Treasurer
Following Sheila's election as General Secretary Designate the CEC will now make arrangements for the election of



Sheila Nunan

a new Deputy General Secretary/General Treasurer. Details of the election process will issue to INTO Staff Representatives and will be posted on the INTO website.

INTO Congress 2009

Batt O'Keefe TD, Minister for Education and Science, Declan Kelleher, INTO President, Caitriona Ruane MLA, Minister for Education, Northern Ireland and John Carr, General Secretary pictured at Congress 2009.



Greetings from the Gambia

Ms Antoinette Corr-Jack, recently appointed General Secretary of the Gambia Teachers' Union, addressed Congress on behalf of the guests. She spoke about the issues facing teachers in her country and thanked the INTO and Comhar Linn INTO Credit Union for their support. Antoinette is the first female General Secretary of the GTU. Her speech is available as a download from the Congress page of the INTO website.



Máire Ní Chuinneagáin

Incoming President 2009-2010

Máire Ní Chuinneagáin is a native of Corofin, Co Galway. She attended Ballinderry National School where both her parents were teachers and Coláiste Muire, Tuar Mhic Éide, where she first became interested in Irish. She qualified as a primary teacher in Mary Immaculate College of Education and she later studied in NUIG where she completed her M.Ed. in 1999.

Máire is Principal of Scoil Fhursa Modhscoil in Galway where she has taught since leaving Mary Immaculate College of Education.

Máire has been an active member and former Cathaoirleach of Galway Branch INTO. She represented District VI (Galway and Roscommon) on the INTO Equality Committee for six years and served as Cathaoirleach of that

Committee. She has represented Galway and Roscommon on the INTO Executive since 1997.

Máire currently represents INTO on the Comhairle Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta (COGG).

Máire is proud to be a public servant and a teacher and is concerned at the current attempts to demonise and damage the Public Service. She believes that a well educated and highly motivated teaching force is crucial to economic development and to giving all children a fair chance and that this teaching force must be adequately rewarded.

She intends to work to build on the partnership between parents, management and teachers to protect the education service given to our children from further cutbacks.



Jim Higgins

Incoming Vice President 2009-2010

Jim Higgins is the new Vice-President of the INTO. Jim was born in Battlefield, Culfadda, Ballymote, Co Sligo, in 1948. He attended Culfadda National School, a two teacher school. In sixth class he was taught by his brother John in Carrowcrany National School. After second level education he went to St Patrick's College of Education, Drumcondra, and qualified as a national teacher with first class honours in 1968.

Jim started his teaching career in Palmerstown Boys' National School in June 1968. He attended UCD and graduated with a B.A. in 1971 and H.Dip. Ed (Hons) in 1972.

From 1974 to 1976 Jim taught Educational Psychology in a Federal Advanced Teachers' College in Pankshin, Nigeria, West Africa under a secondment scheme sponsored by the Department of Education.

He returned to Palmerstown in 1976 and in 1977 was appointed Principal Teacher of Ardkeeran NS, Riverstown, Co Sligo, in September 1977 where he still teaches.

He has been an INTO member all his teaching life— even while in Nigeria. Jim served as Sligo Branch Secretary, Secretary of Sligo Principals' and Deputy Principals' Forum before being elected to the INTO Executive Committee by the teachers of Sligo and Mayo in 2002.

As a teaching principal Jim is anxious to see improvements in time allowed for administration duties.

He is married to Frances and they have one son and four daughters, two grandsons and one granddaughter.



Every School a Good School – revised policy



Brendan Harron - Senior Official

DE has now published its policy *Every School a Good School*. INTO had serious concerns with the draft policy that was issued for consultation last year. Chief concerns were that the draft policy was ultra-managerial in nature, teacher-unfriendly and would demoralise teachers and principals. It was obsessed with crude, measurable data collection and ignored the structural defects in the education such as open enrolment in a selective system, academic selection, the

sustainable schools and under-funding of primary schools. The draft policy proposed a totally unrealistic 'support' and 'challenge' role for school governors and paid little regard to the role of parents and community support for schools. The General Teaching Council did not rate a mention.

Revised Policy

The new policy addresses many INTO concerns. It acknowledges the critical role of the teacher in the classroom. It redefines the characteristics of a successful school as:

- Child-centred provision
- High quality teaching and learning
- Effective leadership
- A school connected to its local community

The six key areas on which school improvement is centred are:

- Effective leadership and an ethos of aspiration and high achievement
- High quality teaching and learning
- Tackling the barriers to learning that many young people face

- Embedding a culture of self-evaluation and self-assessment and of using performance and other information to effect improvement
- Focusing clearly on support to help schools improve – with clarity about the place of more formal interventions where there is a risk that the quality of education offered in a school is not as high as it should be
- Increasing engagement between schools, parents and families, recognising the powerful influence that they and local communities exercise on educational outcomes

DE has agreed that value-added measuring indicators need to be developed to give a true, fair picture of a school's performance. It agrees that value-added outcomes must not be capable of misinterpretation or of being inappropriately manipulated and that they will not mean a return to league tables.

INTO will monitor the rolling out of the new policy which will be most effective with close collaboration between teacher unions and ESA/DE.

Primary Principals Discuss Entrance Tests



David Canning NAHT, Audrey Stewart UTU, Brendan Harron INTO and Kevin Smyth INTO at the meeting of primary principals

A meeting of primary principals from across Northern Ireland was held in Belfast on 28th May 09. The meeting was organised by the teachers' unions. It was chaired by Kevin Smyth, Chair of Northern Committee.

Principals in attendance expressed serious concerns about the potential harmful effects of the proposed, unregulated entrance tests on the revised curriculum and the likely damaging effects on pupils' health and wellbeing.

Kevin Smyth, principal of St Mark's Primary School, Dunmurry said, "Primary principals view the revised curriculum, with its emphasis on skills, as opposed to content, combined with the ending of selection tests, as having a welcome and liberating effect on primary schools. We had hoped that the bad old days, when

the primary curriculum was skewed and distorted by the eleven plus, had gone”.

David Canning, principal of Strabane Primary School and President of NAHT, said that principals were very concerned for the health and wellbeing of the current cohort of primary 6 pupils, many of whom are expected to sit multiple entrance tests in an unfamiliar environment this autumn. “Many of these pupils will find the experience highly stressful and we fear that they will not perform to their true ability”.

Audrey Stewart, Field Officer with UTU, told those present that principals and unions had serious concerns about the validity and reliability of the tests. She also warned of the potential for legal action by parents against principals and teachers who get involved with the unregulated tests.

Following the meeting the teacher unions called on grammar schools to abandon their plans to introduce unregulated entrance tests and to engage with their colleagues in the primary and post-primary sectors to work out an agreed system of transfer for next year. Politicians have been asked to work together and to agree a transfer process that gives every child an equal chance to go to the post-primary school of his/her choice.

The unions pledged to seek meetings with the Education Minister and with the NI Assembly Education Committee on the principals' concern and a further meeting of principals would be organised, in the Autumn term.

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Branch Secretaries Workshop

Branch Secretaries, pictured above, attended a very successful workshop in Northern Office on Saturday 23rd May 09. Areas covered included, the new INTO Officernet system, union participation, school closures, redundancies and grammar school entrance tests

Retirement FAQs

Retiring This Summer?

If you are retiring this summer and you haven't had a chance to make it along to one of the INTO pre-retirement seminars then this article is for you. Jonathan Scott, Partner at Platinum Financial Planning, will answer some of the more frequently asked questions that retiring teachers are currently asking and tell you how he can help.

I have AVCs, what can I do with them?

Unfortunately it isn't possible to just lift all the money held in your AVCs, there are certain things you can and cannot do.

You can take up to 25% of your fund as tax free cash

The balance remaining is then used to purchase an annuity (a pension for the rest of your life)

You have to decide whether to buy a level or increasing pension – this will affect the amount of pension your fund will buy

You can decide to include spouse's benefit or a guarantee period – again this will affect the amount of pension you will receive

Once you have made these decisions it is important to realise that you don't have to purchase your AVC pension from the holding company. If you can obtain better rates elsewhere, you can exercise your 'Open Market Option' and use your AVC account to purchase a pension with that provider.

At Platinum Financial Planning we offer an Open Market Option service to all INTO members – FOR FREE!!

What about my investment options?

We understand the investment issues currently facing teachers, especially at retirement. This is an important time for teachers to make the right financial decisions as this may be the last, or only time that you will receive a lump sum of this nature.

These investment decisions have been made more difficult by the reduction

we have seen in interest rates over the last 9 months and the losses made in equity markets over the last 18 months.

There are answers out there but it may be different for each person depending on their own personal circumstances making it more important now than ever to seek advice. Don't rely on your bank to provide all the answers; they can only sell you their own products. As independent financial advisers we can recommend the right products for you without any provider bias.

The preceding information is of a generic nature only and should not be considered specific financial advice. We would strongly recommend that any INTO member requiring detailed financial advice contact Platinum Financial Planning directly on 02890 655305 or by e-mail jonathan.scott@platinumgroup.co.uk