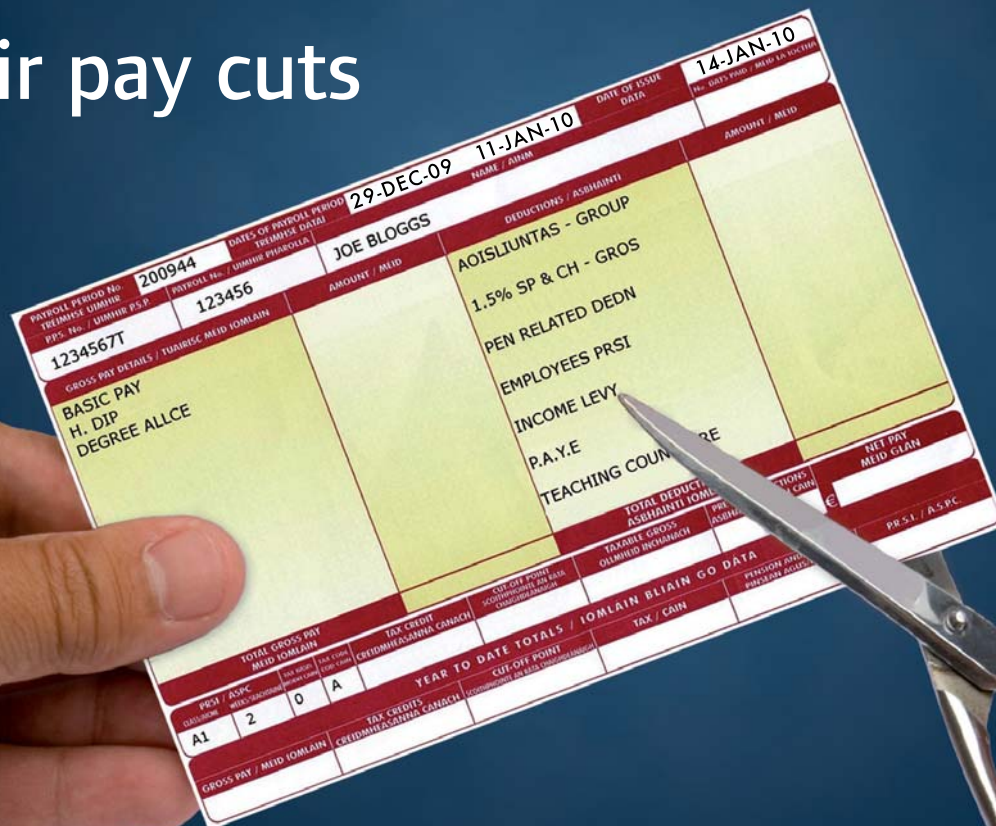


astir

Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland

Unfair pay cuts



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The fight back intensifies

Unfair pay cuts
– the fight back

Teachers' pay and pensions

Schools flooded

Transition Units



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Fighting back

“The human spirit is never finished when it is defeated ... it is finished when it surrenders”

Inspiration

I was recently looking through the new book by Mickey Harte, the Tyrone football manager, and the last chapter begins with the following quotation from Ben Stein: “It is inevitable that some defeat will enter even the most victorious life. The human spirit is never finished when it is defeated ... it is finished when it surrenders”. In our current crisis I found these words inspiring, and such profound truths remind us that the path to recovery is in our own hands and minds.

The fallout from the banking and economic crisis continues to cause severe difficulties for our members. During the past year, education cutbacks and salary cutbacks have hit hard. But these challenges will not weaken the ASTI or other trade unions. There will be NO surrender or loss of solidarity, as trade unions have always flourished in times of adversity. I ask that each member be resolved and determined to succeed.

Pay cuts

The Government's decision to impose a second pay cut on teachers and other public servants will, in the fullness of time, be seen as one of their major errors of judgement. Immediately prior to the budget, the Government rejected a very genuine and generous effort by the public sector unions to forge an agreement.

On December 9, the Government ignored all the long-established conciliation and arbitration processes for public servants and used their salaries to pay for a budgetary crisis caused by bankers, developers and regulators. Even those earning less than €30,000 per annum, including some of our non-permanent teachers on already reduced contract hours, were not exempt.

Pensions

The erosion of public sector pension benefits in the budget proposals, following the extra contributions taken in the pension levy, is absolutely unjust. Existing pension payments were exempted from the parity implications of the pay cuts but this is not in the long-term interests of our retired colleagues. The proposals for new entrants are even worse and show young people the vital importance of being organised in trade unions to defend themselves from such measures.

Cold place

The trade unions representing teachers and public servants will not engage in government proposals for the so-called transformation of the public service. We cannot be expected to deal with a government that terminated the pre-budget negotiations unilaterally and imposed pay cuts. We regret this situation but it is the Government's responsibility.

Vilification

The past year has witnessed a horrendous barrage of abuse and vilification directed at public servants in our media. This orchestrated campaign of lies, half-truths and biased commentary is a disgrace. Surely a free press in a free society should not have its editorial orientation dominated by the interests of a privileged elite. The cultivation of a spurious private sector versus public sector divide will eventually be exposed as a dark chapter of media manipulation.

Your role in political lobbying

The ASTI is not a party political organisation, but every member must realise the political dimensions of our current difficulties. Each TD and political party must be made accountable for the decisions that have been made in relation to pay cuts. Please communicate with your local TDs and ask them to account for their decisions.

Action

Our strike ballot will be used in co-operation with our colleague unions to resist the proposals in the budget. Strike action will be considered and a broad range of work to rule measures will be enforced.

Conclusion

We regret that a campaign of industrial action is now unavoidable. The Government rejected agreement and compromise and they must live with the consequences of that rejection. Our spirit and our resolve in this new year will not be found wanting despite the challenging times ahead.



Joe Moran

ASTI President

Hit back at unfair pay cuts

The Government has played politics with public sector workers, says ASTI Deputy General Secretary DIARMAID DE PAOR, but the voices of these workers and their families can bring about change.

As I write, I have just finished watching the 'Prime Time Investigates' programme on the banking system in Ireland. As you read this you will be suffering the effects of the most savage and divisive budget in Ireland's history. This must leave us wondering, not for the first time, what sort of a country we live in and, more pertinently, what sort of a government do we have? This is not a question of party politics but rather a question of how can ordinary citizens engage with a government that prioritises the very wealthy elite who recklessly brought the economy to its knees, over its own employees who work hard to provide essential services to their fellow citizens? How can ordinary citizens engage with a government that has participated in a calculated and dangerous campaign to divide worker in the public service from worker in the private sector? How can ordinary citizens engage with a government that has decided that dialogue with its employees can be jettisoned in favour of unilateral decisions to worsen pay and conditions, decisions that will have serious and long-lasting consequences for the relationship between public servants and their employers?

How can ordinary citizens engage with a government that has participated in a calculated and dangerous campaign to divide worker in the public service from worker in the private sector?

Long-term damage

The decision taken last month by the Government to bring an abrupt end to talks with the public sector unions, and to unilaterally impose cuts in pay, changes in working conditions and threats to future pensions, was not just damaging to the social partnership process that has been at the centre of Ireland's industrial relations for the past two decades or so. Far more seriously, that decision, and the method of its implementation, have dealt a serious blow to many of the fundamental tenets of how industrial relations have been conducted over a much longer period. The employer–union relationship where agreements on pay and conditions are brokered between employer and employee has been replaced by industrial relations by diktat. While this may seem expedient in the short term, the longer term damage to the stability of industrial relations in this country will make this government rue the day that it decided to treat teachers, nurses, fire fighters, prison officers, local authority workers, civil servants and all other public servants as whipping boys for the crisis in our economy that has been caused by politicians and bankers. Why did the Government take this decision? In part it seems that it was a reaction to the public reaction to the unpaid leave proposal being discussed.

This public reaction led to pressure on backbench TDs, which in turn led to pressure on government ministers to change their minds and back out of the deal. There seems to be evidence that this reaction was, at least in part, orchestrated by elements in the business sector, IBEC and, in particular, its smaller firms. This orchestrated campaign was designed to prevent a deal between Government and unions that did not involve a pay cut, because IBEC want to drive down wages across the economy and the first steps necessary to achieve this were reductions in public sector pay and in social welfare. If there was a campaign to lobby government back benchers then it was a very successful one as the events of early December testify.

A political battle

What all this demonstrates is that our battle is no longer an industrial relations battle but a political one. The events described above show that lobbying of politicians can be very effective. The ASTI has over 18,000 members, the teacher unions together have close to 65,000 and the public sector unions as a whole have approximately 350,000 members. It is now vitally important that these workers make all those TDs who voted for the cuts in their wages feel the heat. Over the coming weeks and months teachers and their families, together with their colleagues in the rest of the public sector, must ensure that every TD's clinic is clogged up with constituents who want these cuts reversed. The anger and betrayal felt by teachers must be communicated to those who made the decisions. The Government has attempted to sideline trade unions and play politics with public sector workers. The response from trade unions will not only define the trade union movement in Ireland for decades to come, it will have a significant influence on the way Irish society develops. Three hundred and fifty thousand voices can achieve a better, fairer way. Add your voice today.

To respond to this article, email: astirfeedback@asti.ie.



Diarmuid de Paor

Diarmuid de Paor, ASTI Deputy General Secretary.

Pay cuts – how much will you lose?

Basic salary

Budget 2010 slashed the pay of all public servants. The new measures mean that basic salary up to €30,000 will be reduced by 5%, the next €40,000 will be reduced by 7.5%, and the next €55,000 will be reduced by 10%.

Allowances

Posts and other allowances, such as degree allowance, will be reduced by 5%.

Gross deduction

Below is a table of average deductions to give you an idea of how much will be deducted from your gross basic salary.

Basic salary	Deduction	%
€30,000	€1,500	5%
€35,000	€1,875	5.4%
€40,000	€2,250	5.6%
€45,000	€2,625	5.8%
€50,000	€3,000	6%
€55,000	€3,375	6.1%
€60,000	€3,750	6.3%
€65,000	€4,125	6.3%
€70,000	€4,500	6.4%
€75,000	€5,000	6.7%
€80,000	€5,500	6.9%
€85,000	€6,000	7.1%
€90,000	€6,500	7.2%
€95,000	€7,000	7.4%
€100,000	€7,500	7.5%

You can work out your exact pay cut by visiting www.taxcalculator.ie. Visit www.asti.ie for revised pay scales and allowance rates.

Net income reduced

Even before this most recent attack on public sector pay, teachers have, over the last year, seen their pay significantly reduced by the imposition of a pension levy and increases in the health and income levies.

Below is a table that gives an idea of the reduction in take-home pay since this time last year, taking into account the pension levy, health and income levy increases, and the Budget 2010 pay cut.

Basic salary	Approx. reduction in take-home pay due to the pension levy, health and income levy increases, and Budget 2010
€30,000	€3,000
€40,000	€4,250
€50,000	€5,000
€60,000	€6,500
€70,000	€8,100

The above calculations are based on basic salary, not including allowances. To calculate the reduction in your net income accurately, you will need to know your tax rate cut-off point, tax credits and PRSI rate. You can find this information on your P60 or tax credit certificate. Alternatively, you can contact your local revenue office, see www.revenue.ie.

November 24 pickets



ASTI President Joe Moran and TUI President Don Ryan join the picket at Tallaght Community School.



Teachers at St Augustine's College, Abbeyside, Waterford, picket on November 24. From left: Noreen Twohig; Olive Fitzsimons; Michael O'Sullivan; Frances Moynihan; Caroline Knightly; and, Don Mulcahy.

Who voted for your pay cut?

The following TDs voted in favour of the public sector pay cut in Budget 2010. The ASTI urges you to lobby your local TDs to let them know how you feel about Budget 2010 and its effects on you and your family.

Fianna Fáil

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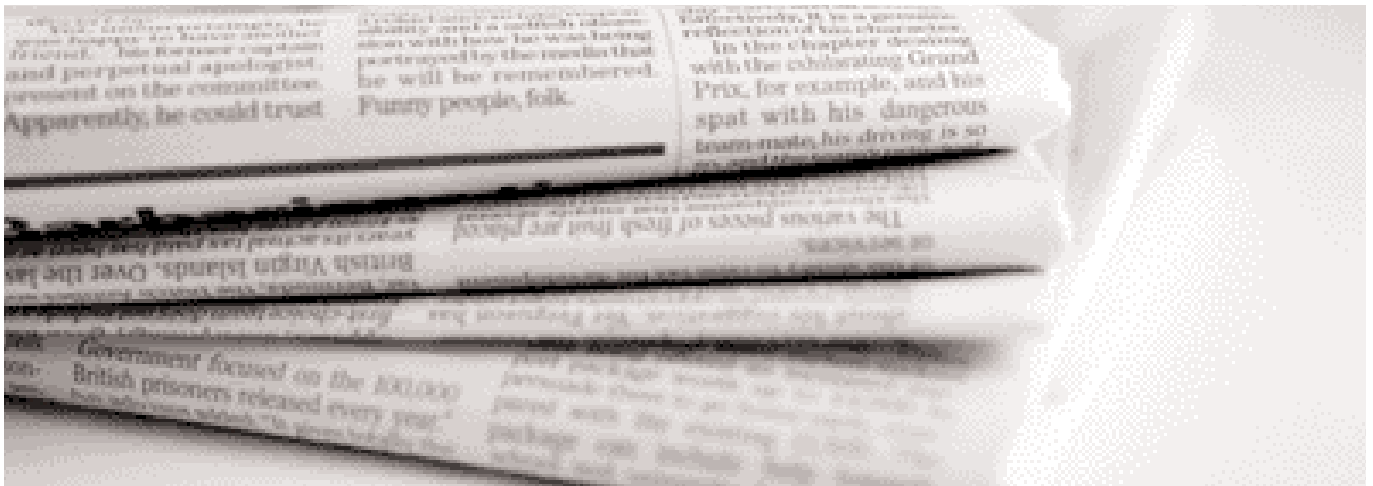
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All TDS have an office in Leinster House, which can be contacted by telephone 01/618 3000.

ASTI in the media

ASTIR gives a flavour of recent media work carried out by ASTI representatives and members.



Irish Times – November 9 **Report on ASTI Education Conference**

"ASTI General Secretary John White told the meeting that teachers were being vilified by 'utterly misleading statements about teachers' sick leave, hours of work, duties and responsibilities'. These statements were being 'repeated *ad nauseam* by the same right-wing economists and commentators who were the cheerleaders for the operation of the raw market'.

"He said teachers were facing worsening conditions, including pay cuts, a longer school day, a longer school year and changed requirements as to attendance. 'I want to say to the Government and the right-wing commentariat that when you damage teachers and the education system, you damage more than the education system, you damage the social good!'"

'Drive Time', RTÉ Radio 1 – November 13 **John White, ASTI General Secretary, tells Mary Wilson why teachers have voted for strike action.**

"We are willing to play our role in seeking a resolution to this extraordinary crisis that the country faces. But no one group should be asked to carry the entire burden of the pain. There needs to be a perception that this crisis is being dealt with in a fair manner, in a reasonable manner, and with some kind of plan over the next three to four years."

The Daily Star – November 11 **John White, ASTI General Secretary, responds to a suggestion that so called 'voluntary contributions' by parents to schools be made compulsory.**

"ASTI General Secretary John White said such a fee payable by parents of second-level pupils would be 'an extraordinary retrograde step' for the Government to take. 'It would wipe out the much-honoured legacy of former Minister for Education Donagh O'Malley, who introduced free

second-level education more than 40 years ago', he said. 'Hundreds of thousands of people have benefited from free second-level education and its introduction was the catalyst for Ireland's development as a modern and dynamic society and economy.'"

'The Last Word', Today FM – November 24 **Susie Hall, former ASTI President and teacher at Malahide Community School, tells Matt Cooper why teachers are on strike.**

S.H.: "The Government has actively promoted enmity against the public service."

M.C.: "In what way?"

S.H.: "By portraying us as an overpaid, inefficient, under-worked workforce. As basically a burden on tax payers – public servants are tax payers too. This is used to distance the Government from the recklessness with which it ran this country onto the rocks. Teachers feel that they did not cause this crisis. They are more than willing to carry their fair share of the burden. However, they have seen the banks' highest executives run rings around the Government and the Government seems absolutely terrified to upset them in any way ... There is a sense of injustice and unfairness and it is this which has driven teachers out onto the streets."

Irish Independent – November 27 **ASTI General Secretary, John White, responds to the publication of college entry tables.**

"Members of the ASTI have attacked league tables of college entry. 'These tables do not tell us about the performance of schools and present a distorted picture of the second-level school system', said General Secretary John White. 'These tables distort the fact that a school which develops a pupil to attain a pass grade may have contributed as much or more as another school which develops a pupil to attain an A grade.'

Mr White also said there was not a scrap of evidence to prove that two pupils of equal academic ability would perform differently if one went to a school at the top of the league tables and the other to another school."

The work of the ASTI – what the union has done for you

Ever asked yourself what the ASTI has done for you?
Here are just 10 of the benefits of union membership.



1. Enforcement of workplace rights

The ASTI represents many individual teachers whose rights are being infringed. ASTI membership means that you have access to professional industrial relations support and to legal support if necessary. ASTI Head Office receives up to 200 calls and emails each day from members regarding their employment rights and entitlements. Where there is a problem, ASTI industrial relations officials are often able to secure individual teachers' rights and entitlements simply by meeting with representatives of school management. In other cases, where local resolution is not possible, industrial relations officials support teachers in cases taken to a Rights Commissioner, Equality Tribunal or the Labour Court.

2. Fighting for education

Unions have been to the forefront of the battle to protect public services, including education and health. Unions have fought budget cuts that erode quality of life in our communities and expose vulnerable people. The ASTI was successful in its lobbying of the Government during the recent renegotiation of the Programme for Government. The ASTI's actions ensured that second-level education was included in the revised

Programme. As a result a key commitment was given that the pupil-teacher ratio at second level would not be worsened during the lifetime of the current Government and a number of the education cutbacks affecting second-level education were reversed. Additional teachers will be appointed to schools over the next two years. One hundred teachers will be appointed to second-level schools in February and a further 150 will be appointed in September 2010. These posts are in addition to posts arising from demographic reasons or because of retirements. This achievement should also be viewed in a context where, in other areas of the public service, there is no filling of vacancies.

A key commitment was given that the pupil-teacher ratio at second level would not be worsened during the lifetime of the current Government and a number of the education cutbacks affecting second-level education were reversed.

3. CIDs for temporary teachers

The ASTI was to the forefront in securing contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs) for thousands of temporary teachers. As a result of this achievement, teachers employed on a fixed-term contract or series of contracts for more than four years are entitled to a CID, unless there is a reasonable objective ground, which the teacher has been informed of in writing.

4. Pro-rata treatment for part-time teachers

The ASTI has worked for and achieved significant improvements in terms and conditions for part-time teachers in recent years. Thanks to the work of the ASTI, education was the first sector to reap the benefits of the implementation of the EU Directive on rights for part-time workers.

5. Information and advice

The ASTI publishes information and guideline documents on a range of professional and trade union issues. These documents are written and published in response to the specific information needs of members. These documents are available on the ASTI website, which provides hundreds of pages of information relevant to your career and entitlements.

The ASTI was to the forefront in securing contracts of indefinite duration (CIDs) for thousands of temporary teachers.

6. A voice for teachers

ASTI membership means you can influence union policy in a number of ways. You get to vote in ballots on pay, conditions and other issues. You can also have your voice heard through the branch network or by participating in local or national committees or attending Annual Convention. Only ASTI members can influence the union's priorities in national negotiations.

Pay increments, paid maternity leave, salary allowances, parental leave, pay for supervision and substitution, study leave, job sharing, reduced hours for teachers with promotional posts and much more were all achieved by the ASTI or the wider trade union movement in Ireland.

7. Shaping education

Members can also influence national education policy through the ASTI. For example, the ASTI is represented on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and has two representatives on each NCCA subject committee. Any member can contact their ASTI subject representative to express their view on the development of any subject area.

The ASTI has worked for and achieved significant improvements in terms and conditions for part-time teachers in recent years.

8. Better pay, conditions

Union members enjoy better pay, better conditions and increased job security. Entitlements many of us take for granted – pay increments, paid maternity leave, salary allowances, parental leave, pay for supervision and substitution, study leave, job sharing, reduced hours for teachers with promotional posts and much more – were all achieved by the ASTI or the wider trade union movement in Ireland.

9. Savings for members

Having 18,000 members means that the ASTI can negotiate special deals for members on a wide range of products including car and house insurance, savings schemes, visa cards and much more.

10. Professional development

The ASTI provides professional development opportunities based on the needs and interests of members. ASTI professional development courses are teacher-led and are often facilitated/presented by classroom teachers.

For a humorous account of the achievements of trade unions view the YouTube video "What Have the Unions Ever Done for Us?" – www.youtube.com (search: Manic Times What Have the Unions Ever Done for Us).

To find out more about the benefits of ASTI membership visit www.asti.ie.



Springboard or trapdoor?

ASTIR reports on a recent seminar on equality in education.

A joint ASTI/SIPTU seminar, entitled 'Springboard or Trapdoor?' was held late last year to commemorate the centenary of both unions. The seminar, which asked the question: 'Is our education system making our children more or less equal?' was addressed by a number of high profile educational researchers and trade unionists.

Difficult times

In his opening address to the seminar, ASTI President Joe Moran said he was delighted to engage in a joint trade union examination of what has been done and what has yet to be done to achieve equality of access and outcome for students and citizens. He looked back to the connected histories of the ASTI and SIPTU, and then to present difficulties, saying: "The battles we face today, to protect schools and students and indeed teachers from the worst ravages of the cutbacks, make our deliberations today all the more worthwhile".

ASTI General Secretary John White spoke of 'Building Blocks for Equality', reporting that, because of public sector cutbacks and the moratorium on posts of responsibility, schools are now operating with fewer teachers. This situation, he said, has the potential to permanently damage our schools, as a whole range of activities are under threat. Such activities, he said, "provide a domain within which a wider range of pupils can realise their potential and thus contribute to that sense of human worth which is the foundation of equality".

Valuing each student

Discussing the need for schools to meet the diverse needs of students from all socio-economic backgrounds, Mr White continued: "The personal dignity and value of each pupil must be at the heart of our education system ... We must recognise that it probably takes more teaching skill to have certain pupils achieve a grade D than it does for others to achieve Grade A. League tables distort this truth and present an entirely false view of the work carried out in schools. They treat pupils like one homogenous group rather than as individuals, each with a unique set of characteristics, talents, abilities, interests and life experiences. This view of the personal dignity of each pupil, regardless of colour, creed, gender or academic ability, is the fundamental building block of equality".



From left: Professor Tom Collins; Mags O'Brien, SIPTU; ASTI President Joe Moran; Noreen Flynn, incoming INTO Vice-President; and, Dr Paul Downes.

Rising to the challenge

The General Secretary went on to discuss how schools have transformed over the last number of years. He praised teachers and schools for their successful integration of students with special needs and international students: "One of the greatest affirmations of the work of Irish second-level teachers and schools is made by the OECD when it states that parents in Ireland can be assured that their children will receive the same high standard of education regardless of the type of second-level school they attend". In conclusion, Mr White said: "One thing we can surely say is that the harsh logic of the raw market ideology has been undermined by this recession. Paradoxically, from the ashes of this demolition can come the major hope for the creation of a society where a sense of social harmony and social cohesion is central and where all our children are treated equally and their diverse talents allowed to flourish". Other speakers at the seminar included Dr Paul Downes of St Patrick's College, who made a presentation on 'Steps, Measures and Programmes for Equality'. Dr Downes discussed teacher unions as key driving forces for new initiatives for equality in education, and made the case for distinct Department of Education funding for mental health to help tackle early school leaving. Jack O'Connor, General President of SIPTU, observed how beneficial the data disclosed at the conference was to trade unions trying to promote equality in education. He observed how the criticisms targeted at teacher trade union members were as much an attack on unionised labour as on teacher unions. He again reminded those present of the uphill struggle currently facing all trade unions interested in fairness for their own members and for those whom they serve. He commended the value of collaborative efforts between the ASTI and SIPTU and recommended that they continue. Dr Tom Collins, Dean of Teaching and Learning at NUI Maynooth, addressed the seminar on the topic 'Equality of Access – are we there yet', and revealed how little had changed in a ten-year period in terms of the most represented postal districts in third-level education. Noreen Flynn, incoming INTO Vice-President, discussed 'Starting on the right track'. A panel response, chaired by Dr Jack McGinley, SIPTU, included contributions from Bernie Judge, Education Officer with the TUI, Mags O'Brien, a tutor with SIPTU college, and Mike Jennings, General Secretary of IFUT.

Full speeches and presentations are available on the events section of the ASTI website.



SIPTU President Jack O'Connor and ASTI President Joe Moran, pictured at the joint ASTI/SIPTU seminar.

Education and the social good

More than 200 teachers attended the recent ASTI Centenary Education Conference.

At the conference, delegates heard a number of eminent speakers, including Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney, Dr Maurice Manning, Chancellor of the NUI, and Susan Hopgood, President of Education International, speak on 'Teachers, Education and the Social Good'.

An extract from Seamus Heaney's address

Any entitlement I might have to appear on this platform is more philosophical than practical. It does not derive from immersion in day-to-day secondary school life in contemporary Ireland, or from any special interest in work practices or staff-student ratios, or awareness of problems that arise for teachers in dealing with an adolescent population in the age of the internet.

Poetry and pedagogy

Whatever entitlement there is derives, on the one hand, from the fact that I have written some poems that continue to find favour in the world and, on the other hand, from the fact that you as educationalists place a value on the aesthetic and imaginative endeavour which produces poems and other works of art. By inviting a poet to address you, you show you are ready to credit that endeavour and are ready to give credit to those who keep it going. So there is that bond between us. But of course poetry and pedagogy have long been seen as allied and complementary, allied in the service of the good at personal and public levels. In fact, much that has been said in famous defences of poetry from classical times until the present could equally well describe the good experience that a teacher and his or her students can share in the course of a successful period in the classroom. "Poetry delights and instructs", said Sir Philip Sidney in the age of the first Queen Elizabeth – and so, we might add, does a good class. It is *dulce et utile*, a pleasure and a practical help, said the Latin poet Horace in the age of the Emperor Augustus, and the comparison of poetry to pedagogy still holds.

A unique role

More recently then, in the age of Soviet indoctrination and samizdat dissidence, the Czech poet Miroslav Holub suggested that poetry and the other arts functioned in the body politic in much the same way as the immune system functions in the physical body: just as the immune system works constantly to maintain the good health of the individual yet cannot provide infallible defences against malignancy and disease, so the arts function as a constant force for the intellectual and imaginative good of individuals and society – and yet it is not within their power to prevent abuses and injustices.

We believe as teachers that the humane aspects of education, the emotional, social and personal attributes, are central to human well-being and thus are central to education.

And again that analogy would seem to hold good for the education which you as secondary teachers provide: in years to come, your influence and effect will have consequences for the body politic. Ideally, the students who go out into society at the end of their school life will be the antibodies in the Ireland of the future. Which is another way of expressing the conviction that gives this conference its theme, the conviction, namely, that education has a unique role to play in the creation and maintenance of social solidarity and enduring social values.



Pictured at the ASTI Education Conference are (from left): ASTI General Secretary John White; Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney; ASTI President Joe Moran; and, NUI Chancellor Maurice Manning.



ASTI members listen to the speeches.

Extracts from the address by John White, ASTI General Secretary

Teachers' trade union

The ASTI, as a teachers' trade union, has always seen itself as being concerned with the terms and conditions of employment of members and also with our professional work as teachers. I believe the member who once asked the rhetorical question "Is the miner concerned with his coal?" was profoundly wrong. The best way to defend our terms and conditions of employment is by providing a quality education to our pupils. And that quality education can only be delivered by well paid, enthusiastic, committed teachers who are provided with the appropriate training and resources. And I want to say to the Government and the right wing commentariat: when you damage teachers and the education system, you damage more than the education system, you damage the social good.

*That is why we, as educators,
will never accept the discredited
league tables so beloved of
our newspapers.*

A public good

Irish teachers have a proud tradition of, firstly, encouraging high academic standards and, secondly, developing the whole individual. With regard to academic standards, in OECD surveys our pupils are right at the top in terms of literacy, we are significantly above average in science and at the average in mathematics. In stating this, we believe as teachers that the humane aspects of education, the emotional, social and personal attributes, are central to

human well-being and thus are central to education and central to the social good, which is the theme of our Conference. We try to develop the potential of all of our pupils and, as everyone here knows, the achievement of a Grade D in the Leaving Certificate by one pupil can be as significant an achievement as a Grade A by another.

*The best way to defend our
terms and conditions of
employment is by providing
a quality education
to our pupils.*

That is why we, as educators, will never accept the discredited league tables so beloved of our newspapers. Indeed, attributes such as creativity, team working, and the capacity to work on one's own are crucial to our recovery from recession.

*When you damage teachers and
the education system, you damage
more than the education system,
you damage the social good.*

We will continue to resist education cuts that lead to the dismantling of the humane education provided by Irish schools, which is central to the creation of the smart economy and the knowledge society.

School flooding

In the recent severe flooding, public services and communities were at the forefront of the relief efforts.



Photographs by Irenses.ie.

It never rains, but it pours. Amid the worst financial crisis in living memory, Ireland was hit in November by the most severe flooding for generations. Areas all over the country were affected and over €250,000 of damage was caused, destroying homes and businesses and leaving some families to face Christmas with everything they owned ruined.

Heavy rain and high tides saw acres of countryside disappear underwater and towns around the country submerged. Areas of the country were completely impassable except by boat, leaving many stranded in their homes and forcing hundreds more to evacuate swamped properties. Roads became rivers, and farmlands became lakes. Businesses were flooded and forced to close, threatening already strapped incomes. Over 20,000 households in Cork and Galway were left without water when supplies became contaminated and were shut off.

Communities rally

In the wake of these devastating and frightening scenes, communities rallied and offers of assistance poured in. Anxious to help in whatever way possible, people contacted local charities to find out what they could do. The Irish Red Cross and other local volunteer organisations worked exhaustively to assist flood victims and prevent further damage. Some tradesmen, architects and engineers gave their time and skills free of charge to repair what damage they could and some businesses offered free services to other firms affected. In financially difficult times, people gave locally to St Vincent de Paul and other charities, offering funds, furniture and supplies. The Irish Farmers' Association co-ordinated donations of livestock feed for affected farms. Neighbours helped neighbours in all manner of ways, from buying groceries for those stranded, to bringing clean water to the elderly, or even offering their homes as accommodation.

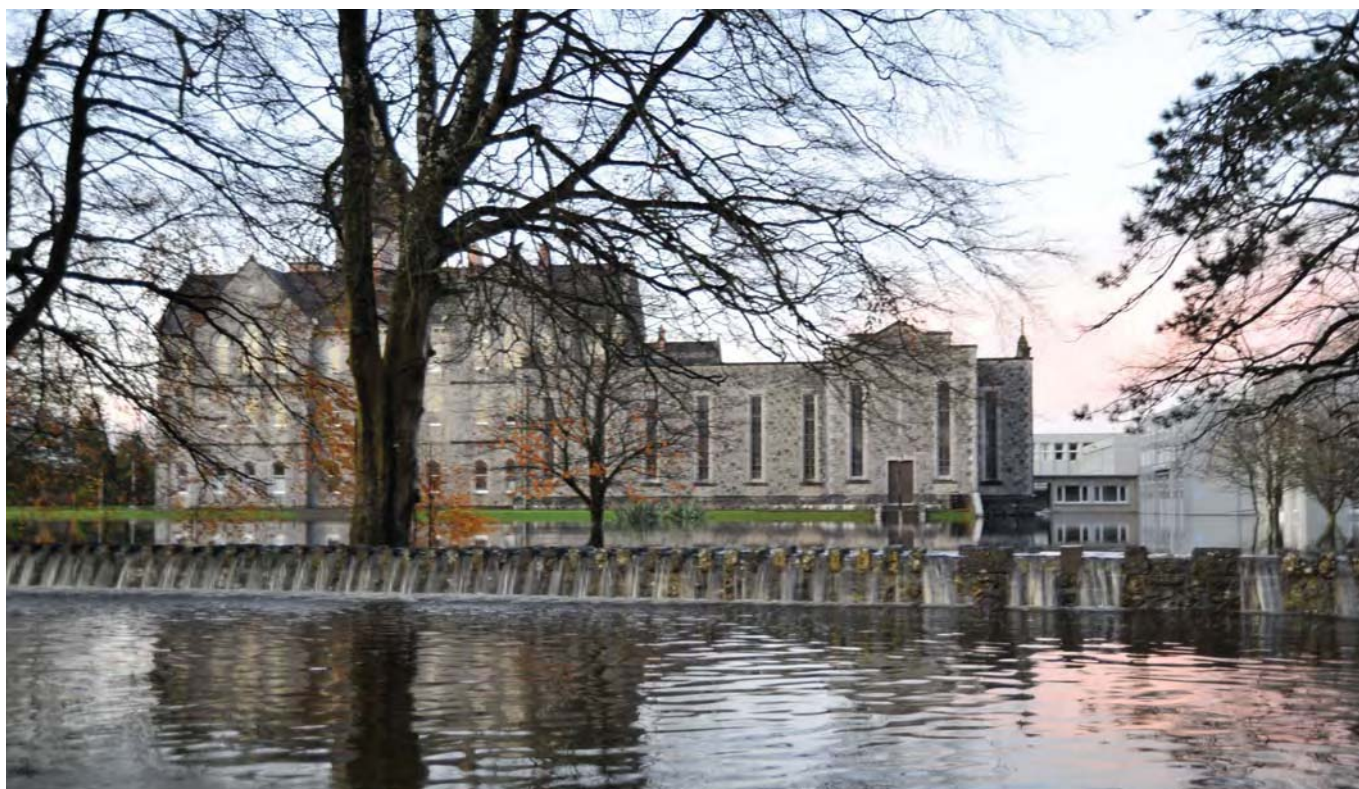
At a time when public servants were preparing for strike to protect their pay and conditions, their value to society was never more evident. Unions called off the strike on November 24 for flood relief staff in affected areas and staff in councils and hospitals, army personnel, Gardaí and the emergency services continued to work around the clock, doing all they could to alleviate the situation.

Other schools, like those in Cork City centre, were forced to close when drinking water became contaminated and the supply was shut off.

Schools shut

Schools in the worst affected areas were closed as a result of the flooding. Some, like Ard Scoil na Trionoide in Athy, were completely inaccessible. When that school's grounds became swamped by a nearby overflowing river, over 800 students had to leave in single file stepping on a makeshift walkway of pallets.

Other schools, like those in Cork City centre, were forced to close when drinking water became contaminated and the supply was shut off. Many, like North Presentation School, did their best to reopen as quickly as possible for exam year students. Third and sixth years returned to school later in the week after a thousand litres of water were delivered to the school. Principal Ciaran Cooke says he saw a real community effort to help those directly affected by the floods but the lack of water really exacerbated the situation in the city, as many thousands of others were indirectly affected. North Presentation distributed some of its water supply to people in the area and allowed students in need to take water home if needed.



Above and below: St Flannan's College, Ennis, was severely damaged by the floods. Photographs by David Crimmins.

Only one school in Ennis could remain open during the flooding and St Flannan's College was particularly badly hit. Water from an overflowing river behind the school filled the grounds, leaving the school's boundary wall to act as a dam from the main road. Students were sent home at 11.30 on Thursday November 19, and soon after there was no access to the school at all. The flood water seeped into the school buildings, destroying the sports hall and the boiler room burners. The school remained closed on Friday, but the following Monday, fifth and sixth year students returned and by the following Thursday all students were back in school.



"It took an awful lot to get to that stage," says Principal Colm McDonagh. "It was a disaster area; people thought it wouldn't be right for six or eight weeks, and we even had offers of alternative accommodation. But we had fantastic help from the whole community; parents, past pupils and neighbours. The solidarity was amazing." Local people offered their time, their expertise and any equipment they had. A local hotelier gave a dehumidifier, generators were donated, and the school received huge numbers of phone calls offering equipment and bodies. "The local fire brigade and council were excellent," says Colm McDonagh. "Public servants, parents, or local industry, I couldn't say enough good things about them. There were some very wet nights and they could easily have stayed home and dry but instead we had more help than we could use."

Water from an overflowing river behind the school filled the grounds, leaving the school's boundary wall to act as a dam from the main road.

Nearly two months later, many families are still not back in their homes and some businesses remain closed. Millions of Euro the country cannot afford will be required to repair the damage and prevent further flooding. Scarcely a day has gone by in the last year when there hasn't been some mention of the phrase 'bail out' in the news. But when the country needed a very literal bail out, it was public services and community solidarity that could really be relied upon and experiences like those of St Flannan's and North Presentation prove that schools really are at the heart of their communities.

Carlow Branch retirement function



The Carlow Branch recently held a centenary retirement function. Twenty retired members joined Branch officers for dinner, at which the guest of honour was ASTI President Joe Moran. Also present, as a special guest, was former President Patrick Gillman, the only Carlow Branch member to have held this position in the ASTI.

Above: The group of retirees honoured on the night are pictured with ASTI President Joe Moran. Front row (from left): Hannah Cotter; Margaret Dennehy; Siobhan Roberts; Mary Dollard; Anne Keating; Breda Lloyd; Leonie Keenan; Maire Fennon; and, Hugh Dolan. Back row (from left): Tony Fingleton; Dave Barron; Michael Roberts; Art O'Leary; ASTI President Joe Moran; John Glynn; Jim Shannon; John Dollard; Paddy Behan; Sean Killoran; Sean McNamara; and, Kevin Collins. Right: (from left): ASTI President 1961, Patrick Gillman; ASTI President Joe Moran; and, Carlow Branch Chairperson John O'Donovan. Photographs by Karl McDonagh.



Honorary Doctorate for ASTI General Secretary

ASTI General Secretary John White was awarded an Honorary Doctorate in Education from the National University of Ireland in December. The honour was awarded in recognition of John's contribution to the ASTI as a driving force behind quality in education and teaching. In conferring the Doctorate, Prof. Mary P. Corcoran of NUI Maynooth said: "The democratisation of Irish education in the 20th century has been one of the greatest achievements of the Irish state, and the ASTI membership played a crucial role in that process". She said: "One of John White's central contributions has been his capacity to maintain the focus of leading the trade union while never losing sight of the broader horizon. While paying careful attention to the quotidian trade union issues concerning pay and conditions of service, John has always recognised the importance of professional education and the development of the discipline of teaching".

Pictured on the occasion of John White's award of an Honorary Doctorate from the National University of Ireland are (from left): ASTI Past-President Pat Hurley; ASTI General Secretary John White; ASTI President Joe Moran; and, ASTI Honorary Treasurer Ray St John.



€50m for ICT in schools



Budget 2010 included a much needed €50m investment to support the integration of information and communications technology (ICT) in teaching and learning in schools. However, this must be seen in the context of an Irish education system that lags far behind other OECD countries in terms of provision of ICT in schools. The Budget allocation followed Minister for Education Batt O'Keeffe's earlier announcement of a €150m plan for 'Smart Schools', which would see every classroom in the country receive a laptop, software and digital projector over the next three years. This is an ambitious aim, given that according to the 'Smart Schools' report, 170,000 computers will be required to match international norms of one computer for every five students. The current supply of computers that are less than six years old in Irish schools could be as low as 30,000. Though the Minister admitted that this investment amounts to playing "catch-up" with other countries, he said: "We have got to recognise that despite difficult economic times there are strategic decisions that have to be made about investing in the future of our children, the future of our students, the future of education". Following the Budget announcement, Moira Leydon, ASTI Education and Research Officer, said: "It is encouraging to see the Minister recognise what the ASTI has long advocated: that investment in the future of our children through education should be a priority, despite other circumstances. Of course, it is not simply a matter of providing the infrastructure. Forward planning and strategic investment in training and resources are also necessary – sooner rather than later. A promised €254m investment for IT in schools unveiled two years ago failed to ever materialise. The ASTI will be vigilant to ensure that this time the promise is kept".

The possibilities

A Meath VEC initiative offers just one example of the potential of ICT to benefit students. This year, video link technology is allowing three students from St Fintina's Post-Primary School, Longwood, to take a chemistry class given in Dunshaughlin Community College without leaving their own school. The school uses the technology to allow students to hear, see and interact with a teacher in the other school, while following teaching material on a PC.

ASTIR welcomes contributions and letters from members. Please send to astir@asti.ie or contact us on 01-604 0160.



3691 mortgage ad ASTIR 12-09

Joan, a teacher in Co. Cork, was feeling the pinch after the budget.

Ireland has higher percentage of temporary teachers



At least one in every four second-level teachers in Ireland is employed in a temporary capacity, according to the recent OECD report 'Teaching and Learning in Society' (TALIS). The ASTI has stated that it is extremely concerned that only 73% of second-level teachers in Ireland are in permanent teaching posts. This is well below the OECD average and compares particularly unfavourably with many European countries. In Denmark, for example, 96% of second-level teachers have permanent posts and in Norway 90% have permanent posts. The ASTI is concerned because a significant number of ASTI members cannot secure permanent teaching posts for many years. The situation has worsened since the education cutbacks were implemented. In Ireland 53.4% of teachers

under the age of 30 are employed on a fixed-term contract of less than one year. The study found a positive relationship between classroom disciplinary climate and full-time permanent teaching employment. The report recommended that the Department of Education and Science "note the relationships found between permanent employment, full-time work and classroom disciplinary climate and take these into account in developing policies relating to the status of teaching positions". The ASTI represents more than 3,000 teachers who are working in a part-time and/or temporary capacity. The vast majority of these teachers are looking for full-time permanent employment.

Retirement planning seminar

The ASTI recently organised a retirement seminar in Cork.



Pictured at the seminar are: Breda O'Riordan, Limerick; and, Moire Hunter, Mallow.



Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Official, and Michael Moynihan, CSN Bishopstown, with Marjorie Moran and Noreen Corbett, Loretto Convent, Fermoy.

New Teaching Council registration regulations

The Minister for Education and Science recently signed into force the Teaching Council Regulations governing the registration of teachers. The regulations set out the requirements for each of the teaching sectors and replace earlier circular letters and previously used instructions. The aim is to bring greater uniformity to the requirements for entry to the teaching profession at primary, post-primary and further education levels. The Council will hold a seminar on the regulations and other registration matters in early February, which representatives of the ASTI will attend. You can download the registration regulations on the Teaching Council's website - www.teachingcouncil.ie.

ASTI membership on the rise

ASTI membership grew to a record high of 18,273 during 2009. Figures calculated in December show that members recognise the importance of trade union membership in turbulent times. The ASTI has been steadily gaining ground in the community and comprehensive sector, where membership has grown by 52% since 1997 to over 3,500 members at present. ASTI membership in this sector has grown by 20% in the last five years alone. Members on part-time hours grew by 12% in the last year, reflecting the worrying number of non-permanent and part-time teaching posts at second level. Trade union protection is essential for this vulnerable group. A recent OECD survey found that only 73% of Irish second-level teachers hold permanent posts. The ASTI is committed to working to reverse this casualisation of the teaching profession and to working on behalf of non-permanent and part-time teachers.



Sean Scully, Colaiste Christ Ri, Cork, and Pat Stack, CBS, Dungarvan, pictured at the Cork seminar.



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Global Campaign for Education resource

Overleaf is a '1 Goal' resource for use in your school before or during the Global Campaign for Education Action Week 2010. The ASTI is a member of the Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education, which is an

international network that promotes action on making education free, public and of high quality for everyone. Global Action Week 2010 starts on Monday April 19.

ASTI rewards top achiever

Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary (left), presents the ASTI prize for top achiever in the NUI Maynooth PGDE class of 2009 to Michelle Gordon.



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The advertisement features a large, stylized graphic of a soccer field with a child in a yellow jersey kicking a ball. The background is white with a green grass border at the bottom. The text is in a bold, sans-serif font.



GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION 1 GOAL-EDUCATION FOR ALL CAMPAIGN 2010 SECONDARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Aim: to use football, and particularly the World Cup 2010 in South Africa, to highlight the Education for All (EFA) Goals

Kit: a football², chalk, copy of the Education for All Goals list, paper or card for posters, art materials
²to see how you can make your own football, see www.campaignforeducation.ie

Start a discussion about Education in general by possibly asking the following questions:

- What do we mean by education?
- What are the benefits of an education?
- What is education like for people in developing countries?

Explain the Global Campaign for Education and its goal of Education for All.

Ask the children to come up with 6 sub goals that put all together would achieve this one overall goal.

These could be what is needed such as teachers, buildings, materials, transport, money etc for education.

Explain the 6 Education For all Goals and put the students into groups to discuss the challenges of reaching each goal.

Ask the students to memorise the goals the best they can.

Ask the students to choose a country in Africa and find out about education and/or the football team in that country.

In the next class session remind students of their previous discussion and the 6 Education For All goals.

- Choose an area outdoors or indoors where you will have space.
- Decide the rules of the game e.g. you can only use your hands or your feet
- Mark a wall, goal or any area with 6 Goals in different places; Goal 1, Goal 2, Goal 3 etc.
- Mark the line where the students need to score from.
- Give the students 6 chances to score each goal-they need to call out the goal while attempting to score e.g. Increase adult literacy by 50%. If the goal is not called the goal can not be counted.
- Tell the students to keep track of their own scores.



When you've finished, discuss how difficult it was to score the goals and explain that not one country has reached all the goals. Ireland scores high on Education For All but at the same time they have a poor record when it comes to Early Childhood Care and 1 in 5 adults can not read or write.

For more information & activities go to www.campaignforeducation.ie or email astl.library@astl.ie

FOR THE INTERNET....

Involve the whole school in Global Action Week for Education!

FAIR GAME

1. Get each class to choose a type of sport the school is involved with i.e. basketball/football/Gaelic.
2. Divide the class or ask the students to form teams.
3. For each match one team will be the developing country and the other a developed country (but do not tell the students this).
4. As the match goes on the referee will blow the whistle and send people on the developing team off because they don't have enough education, their Mom or Dad can't read, no girls are allowed go to school, they have no books or classrooms etc. So gradually the developing world will have little resources and less players on the field and the developed world will have more players and more resources to win the match.
5. Explain & discuss after the game the challenges that developing countries face when it comes to education.

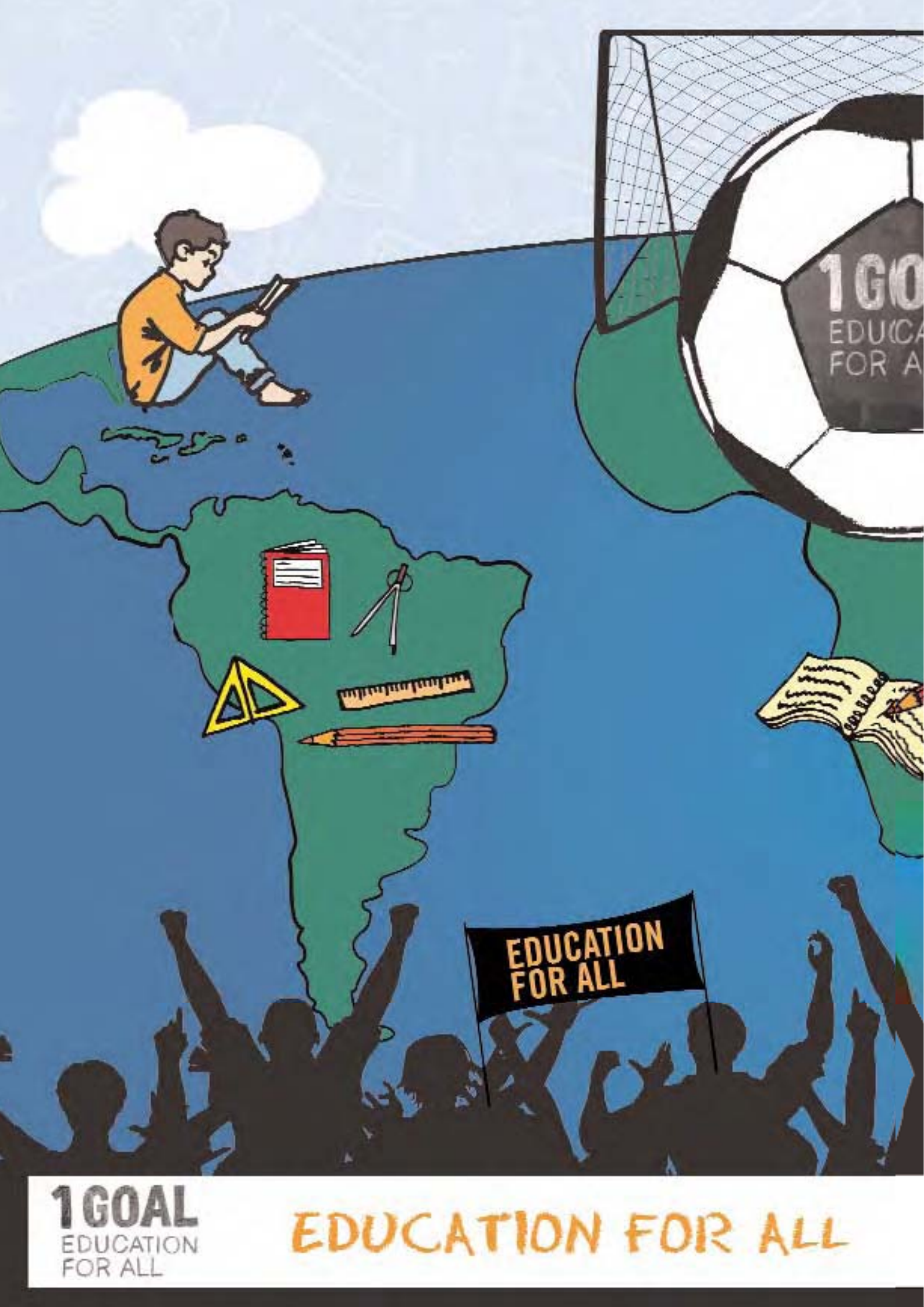


BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Create blockades for students and teachers around the school with the 6 Education for All goals on them. The students & teachers will have to travel the long way to their classes. This creates an awareness of the long distances students in developing countries travel to and from school.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR GLOBAL ACTION WEEK

- Hold a Students vs teacher's soccer match
- Invite a local celebrity from a sports team to come along to the school
- The students can have a penalty shoot out with the celebrity in the goal.
- Invite the local media to cover your event



1 GOAL
EDUCATION
FOR ALL

EDUCATION
FOR ALL

1 GOAL
EDUCATION
FOR ALL

EDUCATION FOR ALL



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1 GOAL - EDUCATION FOR ALL

The Global Campaign for Education (GCE) is a civil society movement that aims to end inequality in global education. The GCE's mission is to ensure that governments act now to deliver the right of every girl, boy, woman and man to free, high quality public education. The Global Campaign for Education advocates at national and international government level, seeking action on their promises made to provide Education for All. GCE also campaigns to raise awareness and promote action in over 200 countries and will continue to campaign until the Education For All goals are achieved.

THE EDUCATION FOR ALL GOALS

In April 2000 in Dakar 164 countries, including Ireland, agreed to an International Framework on Education For All to achieve the following six goals:



1. Expand early childhood care and education
2. Provide free and compulsory primary education for all
3. Promote learning and skills for young people and adults
4. Increase adult literacy by 50%
5. Achieve gender equality by 2015
6. Enhance educational quality

CURRENT EDUCATION STATISTICS

- More than **100 million children** are denied access to education
- For another **140 million children**, the lack of teachers, classrooms and textbooks means that their education is of poor quality.
- **1 in every 4 adults** cannot read or write.
- **60% of all children** denied an education are girls.



GCE CAMPAIGN 2010

The 2010 campaign teams up with FIFA celebrating the first World Cup final to be held in the continent of Africa. The theme is a simple but forceful one: **1 Goal: Education for ALL**. The Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education is asking you to get active towards **1 Goal: Education for ALL**. By getting involved in this campaign you can help people in developing countries change their lives by supporting their need for life long education. The highlight of the campaign is the Global Action Week for Education, 19th-25th of April, 2010. During this week everyone can take part in activities and focus on raising awareness in local communities and reminding the Irish government of its Education for All commitments.

See our website www.campaignforeducation.ie for more information & lots of fun 1 Goal-Education for All activities.

BE PART OF THIS EXCITING CAMPAIGN THAT WILL CHANGE LIVES FOREVER!

Carbery Branch retirement function



Joe Moran, President of ASTI, is pictured with Carbery Branch retirees for the years 2008 and 2009 at a recent function held in Clonakilty.

Ombudsman for Children praises teachers

A recently released report on separated children living in Ireland has shown that education ranks as the number one priority for the majority of these children. Speaking about the report, Ombudsman for Children Emily Logan praised teachers' supportive role, saying: "In the midst of a report which raises many challenging issues in relation to the experience of separated children in Ireland, the young people's enthusiasm for education and the support of encouraging teachers and principals is something that is very much worth noting".

As part of the report, a group of separated children from a wide range of countries, who are now living in Ireland, discussed education and raised a number of issues. Some of the issues raised include:

- the young people felt that having supportive and encouraging teachers made a big difference and spoke of the kindness and generosity of their principals and teachers;
- there were mixed views about what year of schooling the young people should be placed in;
- some separated children feel isolated not only from Irish students but from other international students;
- it was pointed out that other options in education, aside from the Leaving Cert, should be emphasised; and,
- the young people were concerned about being moved to a different school if they turned 18 before they finished their Leaving Certificate.

Department payroll queries

The Payroll Division of the Department of Education is no longer taking telephone queries on Tuesday mornings. The division is available by phone at all other times during office hours, Monday to Friday.

The Payroll Division receives an average of 14,500 telephone queries per week. To ensure that staff have adequate time to check critical payroll reports and monitor the payrolls, it has become necessary to restrict telephone access.

Thank you from the Stillorgan Branch

The Stillorgan Branch and Cathal McCarthy would like to thank all those who contributed to the fundraising for Cathal. A total of €20,000 was raised. A special thanks to all the school stewards who organised the coffee mornings.

Irish students take home F1 in Schools World Championship

Four students from St David's Secondary School, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, beat competition from 31 international teams to win the fifth Formula One in Schools Technology Challenge World Championships. The Formula One in Schools competition challenges students to draw upon their technology, engineering, marketing, sales and communication skills to compete to design, build and test a model F1 car of the future.



Andrew Denford, Founder and Chairman, F1 in Schools (left), and The Koni Kats team – Sean Cleary; Conor Daly; Eoin O'Connell; and, Adam Gammell – are pictured with former F1 Champion Lewis Hamilton.

The facts about teachers' pay and pensions

BERNADINE O'SULLIVAN outlines some important points about pay and pensions for teachers.

Budget 2010

Budget 2010 did not impose any cuts to public service pensions. Public servants retiring in 2010 will not have the imposed pay cuts included in the calculation of their pension or lump sum entitlements. While this may seem like good news, for next year's pensioners this breach of pension parity could have long-term damaging consequences.

New entrants to the public service from 2010 are to have a revised pension scheme, which is based on career average earnings rather than retirement salary. The retirement age for new entrants is also to be increased to 66. A suggestion that pension be linked to the Consumer Price Index would represent a worsening of conditions. The ASTI will work to reverse this unfair damage to pension parity.

Teachers pay for their pensions

Teachers contribute 6.5% of gross salary towards their pension. This has always been the case. With the pension levy imposed last year, teachers now contribute an additional 7.5%, on average, and receive no additional pension benefits. This means that teachers now contribute an average of 14% of salary towards their pension.

Like private sector employees, all teachers pay PRSI. Different rates of contribution apply to different categories of employment. All teachers who joined the profession after 1995 pay the A rate, which is the normal rate applicable to most private sector workers.

A significant number of teachers enter the profession late and full-time employment even later.

What we're paying for

Despite paying PRSI, public sector workers do not receive the €230 per week contributory old-age pension paid to all other workers on retirement. This means that, in effect, a public sector worker on a pension of €600 per week pays a pension contribution and pension levy, totalling an average of 14% of salary, and receives just €370 of the €600 in return for this contribution.

Not all teachers receive full pensions

Public sector pensions in Ireland are normally based on a calculation of one-eightieth of retiring salary for each year of pensionable service. A full pension is 50% of final salary – modest by European standards where, according to the Trinity College Pension Research Group, the retirement ratio of pension to final salary can be as high as 70%. So to obtain a full pension, a teacher would have to subscribe for 40 years. Because of the length of service required, many public sector workers – and this applies particularly to teachers – do not receive full pension on retirement.

A significant number of teachers enter the profession late and full-time employment even later. This means that teachers often retire on a fraction of a full pension and/or have to make substantial additional contributions.



Pensions are deferred salary

The value of pensions has always been taken into account when calculating wage increases in the public sector. The Second Benchmarking Report, published in December 2007, applied a discount of up to 12% for pension entitlements in the public sector. The result was that over 300,000 serving and up to 70,000 retired public servants received no increase whatsoever in the second benchmarking exercise.

Only those in the higher echelons of the public and civil service were awarded significant increases under the Review Body on Higher Remuneration in the Public Sector. It is interesting to note that politicians, who advocated the removal of relativities for most of the public service, in fact established relativities for themselves with higher paid public and civil servants.

Benefits lost

In 1997 all teachers gave up a 3% salary increase in order to obtain an early retirement scheme, reducing the age at which second-level teachers could retire from 60 to 55. In 2004 the retirement age for new entrants to the profession was raised by a full 10 years from 55 to 65. If these teachers retire before 65 a severe financial penalty will be imposed. In October 2008 the Early Retirement Scheme for teachers was suspended. Teachers are still forgoing the 3% increase, although they have lost its benefit.

The strategy of dividing public and private sector low and middle-income employees has been hugely successful and it has deflected attention from those who never paid their fair share in society.

Public service workers pay tax

Teachers and public servants are subject to the same tax system as private sector employees. This is noteworthy in the light of concerns raised by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the underpayment of self-assessed taxes. Like all PAYE workers, public servants are subject to the income and health levies. The income levy is applied even to earnings of retired workers.

Private pensions are also subsidised by the State

It is not only public sector pensions that cost the State. Tax relief afforded to private sector pension contributions amounts to €2 billion per annum. While it is to be welcomed that workers in the private sector receive this support, it should be remembered that very wealthy individuals, many of whom are leading the attacks on the public sector, benefit disproportionately from this relief.

Public sector jobs are not secure

Those in the public sector are not immune from job losses – nearly 1,000 second-level teachers lost their jobs last summer as part of the cutbacks in education announced in October 2008. This is in stark contrast to the often promulgated myth that public servants all have jobs for life.

The strategy of dividing public and private sector low and middle-income employees has been hugely successful and it has deflected attention from those who never paid their fair share in society. It is the entitlement of any worker who commits a lifetime to performing a job diligently and well to be able to retire from that job with a modicum of dignity and comfort.

Like all PAYE workers, public servants are subject to the income and health levies. The income levy is applied even to earnings of retired workers.



Bernadine O'Sullivan

Bernadine O'Sullivan is Chairperson of the ASTI Pensions Sub-Committee.

Teacher unity

A new book tracing the history of the ASTI and its contribution to education has been launched. The book's author, JOHN CUNNINGHAM, looks back 25 years to a time when, like today, teaching unions were united in a common cause.



A high point of teachers' trade unionism in Ireland was Thursday, December 5, 1985, the day an unprecedented number of teachers came together in one place for a common purpose. The cause of the mobilisation was the government's decision to withhold an arbitrated pay award of 10%, on the grounds that the public finances could not bear the cost. News of the decision in August 1985 followed an announcement that there was to be a public sector pay freeze. Widespread resentment had greeted that decision – the ICTU's Donal Nevin memorably commented that it "out-Thatchers anything that has been done by the present British Government" – but teachers were doubly indignant because they stood to lose out twice.

The sense of elation triggered by the enormously successful joint endeavour of December 1985 raised hopes that co-operation between the three unions might be deepened, and that this might lead eventually to organisational unity.

Indignation

Their indignation was deepened by the insensitivity of the Minister for Education, Gemma Hussey, in communicating the decision to block their special award. Scolding teachers, she urged them to "address themselves to the morality of what they are about", and alleged that their representatives were "so bound up in self-justification and media attention" that they were unable to "stand back for the sake of the country". In September, a national co-ordinating committee of the teachers' unions announced the establishment of a 'Teachers United' campaign to secure the 10% arbitration award. 'Teachers United' bulletins were published, local co-ordinating groups were formed with

representatives from each union, a series of one-day regional stoppages was organised, and a national one-day strike was announced for December 5. That an estimated 20,000 men and women, drawn from the ASTI, the TUI and the INTO, were prepared to travel on a cold winter's day to Croke Park by car, coach, and special train from all corners of the country – and by boat from several off-shore islands – testified both to the depth of feeling and to the effectiveness of the preparations. And the attention to detail on the day impressed journalists covering the event. For the *Irish Times*, Christina Murphy wrote: "Organisation was superb. There seemed to be stewards everywhere muttering into walkie-talkies: 'Croke Park to Heuston Station. Come in Heuston! 'Molesworth Street to HQ; come in HQ'... Croke Park looked like All-Ireland day".

Some of the protestors, evidently, were lured to Dublin by the opportunity presented of spending a few post-rally hours doing Christmas shopping, but overwhelmingly, the mood was of good-humoured determination. Not surprisingly, in the rhetoric and banter of the day, sporting analogies were drawn, beginning with ASTI president Louis O'Flaherty, who opened proceedings by welcoming the crowd in the manner of sports commentator Micheál Ó hEithir: "Fáilte romhaibh go léir, a chairde Gaeil". In the interval between O'Flaherty's welcome and the march from Croke Park to Dáil Éireann, which concluded proceedings, the freezing protestors were treated to more than a dozen speeches, and to a rousing musical performance. The next day, the *Irish Independent* showed Kieran Mulvey and the INTO's Gerry Quigley singing along with Connolly Folk, who had composed the following chorus for the occasion: "We are the gentle, angry teachers, and we're singing for our rights/Where are the teaching TDs today – are they marching for their rights?/Garret and Gemma are you listening?"

The sense of elation triggered by the enormously successful joint endeavour of December 1985 raised hopes that co-operation between the three unions might be deepened, and that this might lead eventually to organisational unity.



After a decade of explosive growth in their individual memberships, and of necessary co-operation in respect of conciliation and arbitration, these were years of increasing cohesion among the teachers' unions. It was a cohesion that was assisted by a generational shift at leadership level. Kieran Mulvey's assumption of an influential role in the ASTI in April 1980 came shortly after Gerry Quigley's election as INTO General Secretary and just before Jim Dorney's appointment to the same role in the TUI. The working relationship between Mulvey and Quigley in particular reprised in some respects that of their long-ago predecessors, T.J. Burke and T.J. O'Connell, although a more equal partnership was possible in the 1980s.

As a professional body, when they moved politically, [the teachers' unions] were akin to the IFA.

Government climb down

In the immediate aftermath of the December 1985 demonstration, the government sought to enter negotiations on the disputed award in the context of a new pay round. The Minister offered the teachers' unions the 7% offered to other public service workers on condition that they agreed to a postponement of their own arbitrator's special 10%. Refusing to concede, the three unions continued their campaigns, lobbying individual TDs at their clinics and elsewhere, and encouraging individual members to initiate a correspondence on the issue with TDs in their own constituencies. That the combined membership of the three unions was a formidable force when mobilised is confirmed by several of those involved at the time. According to Kieran Mulvey: "The teachers' unions collectively, between them, had become the most powerful group in Congress – notwithstanding the industrial power of the ITGWU and the FWUI. As a professional body, when they moved politically, they were akin to the IFA [Irish Farmers Association]".

Their experience of 'Teachers United' persuaded these new activists of the advantages of unity and, for a period, a single union for teachers seemed a real possibility.

The successful mobilisation of the teachers in the three unions would soon lead to a 'climb down' on the part of the Government, in the words of the then Taoiseach, Garret FitzGerald. It was a 'climb-down' that was signalled in a cabinet reshuffle of mid-February 1986, in which Gemma Hussey was moved to the Department of Social Welfare. For Christina Murphy of the *Irish Times*, it was her handling of the conflict with the teachers' unions that brought about the downfall of this most "energetic" of Ministers for Education. Faced with regional teacher strikes, a threatened examination boycott, school student protests, parent pressure, and a Dáil motion from the opposition, Hussey's successor, Patrick Cooney, agreed in April 1986 to join talks with the teachers' unions under the auspices of the Employer-Labour Conference. The outcome was a government offer of concessions in respect of the phasing of the arbitration award, along with a series of *ex gratia* payments to partly compensate for the delayed phasing.

These were accepted by the teachers' negotiators and were put to ballot along with the general public service pay offer. The package was accepted by large majorities in all three unions, the largest, in the order of four to one, being in the ASTI. It was less than had been offered by the arbitrator the previous August, but it was seen as a good compromise by teachers who had fought an academic-year-long campaign.



Then ASTI President Louis O'Flaherty addresses the united teachers in Croke Park.

Hopes of unity dashed

The most salient effect of the 'Teachers United' campaign of 1985-'86 was that it served to show the impact of co-ordinated action by teachers. At all levels and in all parts of the country, teachers in the different unions had met together, protested together, and had got to know one another. It was the impression of Tony McKernan, who became active in the ASTI in Limerick, that many previously passive members were drawn into activity and pressed into accepting positions at branch and national level in the course of the great mobilisations of 1985-'86. Their experience of 'Teachers United' persuaded these new activists of the advantages of unity and, for a period, a single union for teachers seemed a real possibility. Donal Nevin of the ICTU, who had been involved in a similar way in the 1970s, was invited in May 1989 by

the three unions to facilitate discussions between them. The outcome was the establishment of the Council of Teachers' Unions (CTU) in 1990, with its own chief executive and representation from each union in proportion to its membership. It would be significant that the inaugural meeting of the CTU took place in the same month that Kieran Mulvey informed members of Standing Committee that he would soon be leaving the ASTI to take the position of Chief Executive of the Labour Relations Commission. His resignation coincided with the unexpected retirement of the INTO's Gerry Quigley, removing from the arena a second key promoter of co-operation between the three unions. Senior figures from different union backgrounds suggest that the changed circumstances now made unity more difficult to achieve for two main reasons – influential individuals feared that their own prospects might be damaged in a post-merger configuration, and the capacity to overcome the inevitable obstacles was reduced by the dissolution of the Quigley–Mulvey partnership.



The presidents of the three teachers' unions walk across a crowded Croke Park during the demonstration on December 5, 1985.



John Cunningham

John Cunningham lectures at NUI Galway and is author of Unlikely Radicals: Irish Post-Primary Education and the ASTI 1909-2009, which is available from Cork University Press – www.corkuniversitypress.com.

Positive decisions on CIDs

Two recent decisions in favour of ASTI members spell good news for members seeking contracts of indefinite duration.

Labour Court appeal upheld

An ASTI member successfully appealed a Rights Commissioner decision to the Labour Court, resulting in an improvement in the terms of her CID and significant financial compensation.

The member was employed under a series of one-year fixed-term contracts between 2000 and 2007. She was not offered a CID when her contract expired in September 2007 and her contract was not renewed. In her original claim to the Rights Commissioner the member claimed that she should have been offered a CID at that time and that the non-renewal of her fixed-term contract was contrary to the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003, as it was for the purpose of avoiding her contract being deemed to be a CID under the same Act. The Rights Commissioner found that the school had erred in failing to issue a CID to the member in September 2004. The Commissioner awarded financial compensation for this breach and stated that the teacher should be reinstated from September 2007 on terms no less favourable than those applied during the school year 2003/2004. While the Commissioner found that there was a breach of the Act in relation to the teacher's dismissal, compensation was not awarded in respect of this breach.

The teacher appealed the Rights Commissioner decision to the Labour Court on the grounds that she should have been entitled to a CID with the terms and conditions she had been working under in 2006/2007, during which time she was covering for a teacher on sick leave and working 18 hours per week. Secondly, she contended that the decision not to award her any compensation for dismissal was in error. The Labour Court determined that the teacher should be reinstated on a CID, but that it should be based on the terms and conditions of her contract at the date she originally became entitled to such a contract, i.e., her contract for 2004/2005 of five hours and 20 minutes. Reinstatement means that an employee who has been unfairly dismissed is awarded their position back, as if they were never dismissed. This means that lost earnings must also be paid to the employee. The Court also considered the level of detriment the teacher suffered as a result of the non-renewal of her contract and awarded compensation of €12,000.

Decision on reckonable service

A Rights Commissioner has judged that a year spent substituting for a colleague on leave is reckonable for the award of a contract of indefinite duration (CID).

At the time the claim was lodged, the member had worked in the school for five years. The third year – the disputed year in question – was funded by the salary of the teacher on study leave but paid to the teacher by the school.

The Board of Management rejected the teacher's initial request for a CID, believing themselves constrained by the terms of circular letter CL 055/2008, which sets out the requirements for the award of a CID. The member took the claim to the Adjudicator, who applied the terms of the circular letter, as was his brief, and did not uphold the claim. Backed by the ASTI, the member took a claim to the Rights Commissioner under the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act, 2003. The ASTI argued that irrespective of the source of the salary, the teacher was employed at all times by the school and, therefore, satisfied the requirement to have four years' continuous service with the employer.

The Rights Commissioner found that the teacher on leave did not employ the claimant to replace him while he was on leave. The fact that he was required to return some or all of his salary to the school while on leave did not make him the claimant's employer. The Commissioner, therefore, determined that the school employed the member on a continuous basis through all seven periods of her employment, including the disputed 2005/2006 period.

The Rights Commissioner found that as the aggregate duration of the claimant's contract of employment exceeded four years in January 2008, the claimant's contract as and from that date is deemed to be a CID.

The ASTI is available to assist members in pursuing contracts of indefinite duration, or to explore whether or not grounds for an appeal exist. See www.asti.ie for more information.

Transition Units

ASTIR looks at some interesting Transition Units developed by teachers.

Transition Units offer teachers the chance to lead curriculum innovation directly. Developed as one of the new curriculum components at senior cycle, the units allow teachers and schools to design a learning programme from scratch, or adapt one from an existing Transition Year module.

The idea behind Transition Units is to broaden the range of educational options available to students, as well as the range of teaching methodologies. Schools can tailor subjects to their student group or teachers can develop units based on their particular interests and expertise.

Supported learning

The 45-hour units are not intended to be exam courses, but students are assessed in a variety of ways in order to support their learning and encourage the development of their self-assessment skills.

Each unit should incorporate the development of five key skills identified by the NCCA as being important in helping senior cycle students to become effective learners: information processing; critical and creative thinking; communicating; working with others; and, being personally effective.

The idea behind Transition Units is to broaden the range of educational options available to students, as well as the range of teaching methodologies.

Examples of established Transition Units

■ Road safety

Building on existing links with CSPE and SPHE, this unit teaches students about road safety, including practical information, information on driver behaviour, the emergency services, and preparing to drive. Road accidents, basic first aid and research skills are all covered and students can even complete their driver theory test as part of the unit. The overall aim of the unit is to allow students to explore their own attitudes to road safety and to increase road safety awareness among the wider school community.

■ Sports coaching

A unit on sports coaching was developed by Michael Carey from Glanmire Community College; Michael had been running a similar course as a Transition Module. The Unit develops students' basic coaching skills and allows them to use their skills in coaching local primary school students. As well as practical coaching skills, students learn the theoretical aspects of coaching, including safety, organisation, communication and motivation skills.

Schools can tailor subjects to their student group or teachers can develop units based on their particular interests and expertise.

■ Soap operas and popular culture

This two-part unit works on students' critical analysis skills and allows them to learn a little about the practicalities of making a soap opera. Part one of the unit asks students to look at contemporary themes from modern culture, as conveyed through soaps and aspects of cinematography.

In part two of the unit, students learn to produce, create and act in a mini soap, including learning about camera work, sound techniques and scriptwriting.

■ Lost in translation

Exploring the diversity of cultures, religions, and customs, this unit aims to foster respect for diversity and further students' language skills. The programme links to a number of related curriculum areas such as languages, religious education, geography and history. Students learn about linguistic diversity and origins; they explore religious diversity in their locality and learn some useful vocabulary in European languages.

You can find lots more sample Transition Units on the NCCA website – www.ncca.ie/transitionunits. To find out more about what's involved in creating your own unit, download the Transition Units template and handbook for teachers from the NCCA website.

The art of learning

GERRI ROCHE recently took part in a Comenius in-service course for art teachers in Florence. She gives ASTIR an account of her experience.

After 27 years teaching art, I felt it was time to refresh my knowledge and develop new skills. The course 'Art Education and New Technologies' immediately attracted my attention, as my school was at the time embarking on a programme of investment in IT and development of teachers' e-learning skills. The fact that the course was taking place in Florence, the cradle of Renaissance Art, was an added attraction!

Application and preparation

I discovered the course through the Second Level Support Service, which provided me with information on such courses because of my special duties post in staff professional development. Two important factors made my application to the course possible: the generous financial support provided by Leargas and the support of my school community.

It was with a strange sense of unreality that I left my third-year art class on Monday, September 21, knowing that a few hours later I would be on a flight to Pisa. I had practised computer programmes such as PowerPoint presentations and Movie Director and followed a CD course in conversational Italian over the summer months but I wondered would my skills be adequate for the course?

Pixel, the host organisation, had put all arrangements in place. Pixel is a non-profit organisation offering a variety of educational programmes for EU Member States. Participants on this course included members from Bulgaria, Greece, Germany, Portugal, Lichtenstein, the UK, Italy and Ireland. Our trainers were Dr Marco Clerici and Dr Melissa Provezza from the University of the Arts, Brera, Milan. Their research is focused on developing educational products that will engage students in learning about the history of art.

The course

The course was delivered in English and was presented in a variety of ways – lectures with illustration using PowerPoint presentations, followed by hands-on practice on the laptops provided for each participant.

The educational values and goals for e-learning were presented and discussed. Our trainers pointed out how well students engage when material is presented in a visually attractive and entertaining way. The University at Brera is creating educational products in art history that work in the same way as video games. In this context, the teacher is absent as the student is self-learning. However, the trainers also emphasised that students will always need the guidance of the teacher and that 'blended' learning is the way forward. In this way teachers have



Gerri Roche (sixth from left) and her classmates go back to school.

both a traditional and 'virtual' role. It was interesting at this point to note that even those participants experienced in e-learning expressed concern about the social development of students. I think this issue will be the subject of major debates in education in the future. Over the six-day course, we were given many 'evaluated' websites for art learning, as well as some for other educational areas. We were informed about software for the production of art e-learning content and had practice in multimedia for the creation of such content. In addition, we learned about portals for e-learning platforms such as 'Moodle'.

The educational values and goals for e-learning were presented and discussed. Our trainers pointed out how well students engage when material is presented in a visually attractive and entertaining way.

Down time

The course ran until two o'clock each day. After that we were free to explore the wonderful city of Florence. The interaction between participants during this time was an important aspect of the experience. It was stimulating to share the Renaissance history of Florence with fellow art teachers and to discover how art teaching varies between countries. I linked up with a Portuguese teacher for most excursions, including a visit to the medieval city of Sienna where I was especially interested to see the marble mosaic floor in the Duomo with its intricate stucco work. It was wonderful to behold in reality and we had time to enjoy a spell of people watching in the Campo as well!

For more information on continuous professional development programmes visit www.leargas.ie or www.slss.ie.

Gerri Roche

Gerri Roche teaches art at Loreto Secondary School, Wexford.



Paddy Mulcahy

Sunday September 13 was a beautiful autumn day, a perfect day for Paddy Mulcahy to enjoy his favourite pastime of hill walking. He set off that morning with his wife Terry and their friends Dolores and Ted. Their destination was Musher Mountain, five miles from Macroom, Co. Cork, whose rugged terrain attracts walkers from near and far. It is a spiritual place rich in history and tradition. Paddy and Terry had been there many times. They enjoyed the sacred solitude and the beauty of the countryside when viewed from the upper slopes. The tranquil peaceful landscape offered a refuge from the strains of the working week.

In mid-afternoon I received a phone call from Paddy's son Seamus. He told me that Paddy had taken a turn during the climb and the outlook was grim. Ten minutes later Seamus rang again, whereupon he uttered the words I thought I would never hear said about my friend: "Mick, he's gone". My thoughts immediately turned to his wife Terry, his children, his brothers and sisters. One cannot imagine how they felt at that moment. A husband, father and brother they loved unreservedly, was taken from them with no chance to say goodbye – no hugs, no kisses, just a feeling of desolation and emptiness.

Once word of Paddy's death emerged into the public domain the sense of disbelief was palpable. Paddy was always seen as indestructible to those of us who knew him. His passing was as unimaginable as it was unforeseen.

George Bernard Shaw once said that: "reminiscences make one feel so deliciously old and sad". The opposite is the case when we reminisce about Paddy. He was a wonderful presence in our lives. His warmth and general bonhomie was immediately apparent to all. It is ironic that his life was so full that it could be said of him as the poet Dickinson said: "because I could not stop for death, he kindly stopped for me".

Paddy was first and foremost a loving and devoted husband to Terry, and a kind and committed father to Tomas, Seamus, Eoin and Brid. His granddaughter Elizabeth was the apple of his eye. He regaled me every Monday night with the weekly ritual of their trip to town on Saturday morning, their lunch in Coffee Central, and the agonising over how she was going to spend her five Euro pocket money, which of course he always topped up with a cautionary note "don't tell your mother". Unfortunately he left us without being given adequate time to enjoy his newly born granddaughter Aoife.

Paddy was an advisor and confidante to many people. No difficulty was too great or too small to discuss with him. He epitomised Ralph Waldo Emerson's definition: "a friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I think aloud".

People valued his opinion. They had absolute trust in him because they knew his knowledge came from long years of experience. Crucially, they knew he cared and wanted to help them in any way he could. Paddy's life was about service. His dedication to his students was unrivalled. The teaching staff in Deerpark where Paddy taught for 30 years were devastated at his passing. His term as principal of the North Monastery ended prematurely. The staff and students there were still getting to know him, but they recognised his unique qualities and both staff and students were shattered at his untimely death. His service to his community as Chairman of the Credit Union, together with other community organisations, was deeply appreciated by the people of Mayfield. His pivotal role as one of the leaders of the Householders Against Service Charges Movement served to highlight taxation issues that would have serious financial implications for working people.

His service to his teaching colleagues highlights a lifelong commitment to the trade union movement. He acted as school steward, branch officer, and Member of CEC and Standing Committee, and sat as a member of various sub-committees. He also had the honour of being elected to the position of President of the Cork Council of Trade Unions.

Paddy's life can again be appropriately summed up by the philosopher Emerson:

"To laugh often and to love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest critics; to appreciate beauty; to give of one's self, to leave the world a bit better; whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know even one life has breathed easier knowing you have lived – that is to have succeeded".

Paddy can rest easy now as he has achieved all that has been asked of him.

The ASTI community extends its deepest sympathy to his wife Terry, his sons Tomas, Seamus and Eoin, his daughter Brid, granddaughters Elizabeth and Aoife, daughters-in-law Sally and Nicola, son-in-law Adrian, and also his brothers and sisters and extended family.

Go dtuga Dia suaimhneas síoraí dó

Mick Evans

Exciting plans for 2010

News from RSTA branches around the country.

Congratulations

The RSTA sends its warmest congratulations to John White, General Secretary of the ASTI, who was recently conferred with an honorary Doctorate from the National University of Ireland.

Date for your diary

The Annual General Meeting of the Association will be held on Wednesday May 5 in ASTI Head Office, Thomas MacDonagh House, Winetavern Street, Dublin 8. Branches are advised that motions must be submitted by the end of March to the National Secretary, Eileen Kelly, 17 Acorn Road, Ballinteer, Dublin 16. Nominations of Officers and Members to the National Committee can be submitted at the same time.

New RSTA branch

We wish the Midland Branch every success and encourage members to join. There is an enthusiastic committee working on behalf of the retired teachers in the area. Please address all enquiries to Rosemary Kiernan, Tel: 043-668 6101, or 087-758 9287.

New members

If you are thinking of joining the RSTA, please contact the National Treasurer, Sarah Scott, 3 Portmarnock Grove, Portmarnock, Co Dublin, Tel: 01-846 2088/086-402 7684.

Book launch

Tuesday, November 17, was an important day for former RSTA President Louis O'Flaherty. The Lord Mayor of Dublin, Cllr. Emer Costello, formally launched his new book *Drumcondra and its Environs*. The event took place in the Oak Room of the Mansion House, Dublin, before a distinguished gathering of teachers, educationalists and local historians. Speaking at the launch the Lord Mayor noted that Louis was a Dubliner, having been born between the canals and reared in Drumcondra on the north side of the city. Louis embarked on the project when he realised that very little had been written about Drumcondra.

The book is a handsome hardback volume and is the first book to be devoted to this well-known Dublin suburb. Commenting on the book, the Irish Heritage Council said: "From the very first page, the reader is impressed by the depth of his research and perhaps even more so by the professionalism, adroitness and clarity with which the material is presented. Indeed one is left with the feeling that the author, if he so wished, could without difficulty expand each chapter into a worthwhile book in its own right".

The book is available from Hughes and Hughes and from local bookshops in the Dublin area priced at €20.

Mayo Branch promotes road safety

The Mayo Branch of the RSTA has joined forces with the Road Safety Authority (RSA) to promote road safety. Declan Naughton, Director of the RSA, presented high visibility vests to Mayo Branch Chairperson Denis O'Boyle for members of the Branch to wear. This is part of the RSA's ongoing commitment to raise awareness of the need for road users to be visible and stay safe on our roads and they are delighted that the members of the Mayo Branch of the RSTA are assisting them in this regard.

From left: Bernie Johnson, Treasurer, Mayo RSTA; Denis O'Boyle, Chairperson, Mayo RSTA; Declan Naughton, Director, Road Safety Authority; Carmel Heneghan, Secretary, Mayo RSTA; and Josephine Conway, Vice-Chairperson, Mayo RSTA.



European trip 2010

A group trip to Oberammergau including Vienna, Salzburg and Munich will take place from September 14-21.

Day 1 5.00am: Check-in at Cork Airport for Aer Lingus flight to Munich departing at 6.40am and arriving at 10.00am. Drive to Alotting to visit the famous Chapel of Mercy, credited with many miraculous cures. Here also, silver urns contain the hearts of several monarchs of Bavaria. Mid-afternoon: drive to Vienna and check into hotel for three nights, dinner, bed and breakfast.

Days 2-3 Vienna: See St Stephens Cathedral, the Imperial Palace, the National Theatre, City Hall, St Rupert's Church, Parliament, the Athena Fountain, Stephansplatz, and Sissi Museum. We will also enjoy a Strauss concert evening during our stay.

Day 4 Morning: Drive to Salzburg. See the great Fortress, Cathedral, Mozart Square, Mozart's birthplace, and Leopoldskron Palace (*The Sound of Music*). Check into hotel for one night, dinner, bed and breakfast.

Day 5 Morning: Optional visit to Eagles Nest for fantastic views. Afternoon: Drive to Oberammergau area, and check into our accommodation for two nights.

Day 6 Day in Oberammergau: Morning free to stroll around the small town. Afternoon and evening: Attend the world famous Passion Play. Over 2,000 participants bring the story of Jesus of Nazareth to the audience in a five-hour presentation on an open air stage. The play covers the period of Jesus entering Jerusalem and continues to his death on the cross and resurrection. Lunch and dinner are included on this day.

Day 7 Morning: Drive to the nearby church of Weiss Kirche, followed by a short drive to Neuschwanstein to see the Castle of King Ludwig. Afternoon: Drive to Munich for panoramic tour. See the Cathedral, St Peter's Church, the Town Hall, the Bavarian State Opera House, Hofbrauhouse, Ruhmeshalle and the Olympic Stadium. Check into hotel for one night's dinner, bed and breakfast.

Day 8 Transfer to Munich airport for return flight to Cork, departing at 10.35am, and arriving at 12.10hrs.

Cost per person: €1,650
Single room supplement: €200 (five nights)

Cost includes: Return flights; three nights in Vienna (dinner, bed and breakfast); one night in Salzburg (dinner, bed and breakfast); two nights in the Oberammergau area with two dinners and one lunch; one night in Munich, with dinner, bed and breakfast; all coach transfers and travel as per itinerary; admission to Passion Play, Museum and programme book; Irish guide with the group throughout; tips; airport and local taxes; and, holiday insurance. If you are interested in joining us for this trip, please contact Pat Browne, Tel: 021-429 4783, or Email: pat.browne@email.com.

RSTA Christmas party

Thank you

Thank you to the President, Joe Moran, the Officers of the ASTI, and all who were involved in the successful get together in ASTI House on December 15. It is one of the social highlights of the year.



At the RSTA Christmas party in Thomas McDonagh House were: Vourneen Gallagher; Maire Finan; Brendan Duggan; Tom Gilligan; Maurice Flannigan; Aveen Kilduff; and, Hugh MacGonigle.



At the RSTA Christmas party in Thomas McDonagh House were: Pierce Purcell; Peter Kerr; and, Pat Cahill.



At the RSTA Christmas party in Thomas McDonagh House were: Joan O'Halloran; and, Renee O'Dwyer.

Enhancing positive mental health in students

With youth mental health problems on the rise in Ireland, we look at a project aiming to improve coping strategies through listening to students' views.



Early findings from a recent national study paint an alarming picture of youth mental health in Ireland. Only 40% of young people surveyed felt they could cope well with their problems and one in three felt they were generally not happy. One in ten of those surveyed reported having serious problems for which they did not seek professional help, and 50% said they experience moderate to severe stress. According to Mike Power, Project Leader with Mater Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service, clinicians are reporting higher levels of eating disorders, body image problems, self-harming, alcoholism and substance abuse among teenagers. School is a very important part of the social mix that young people are exposed to and, as professionals who interact with adolescents on a daily basis, teachers are at the frontline in confronting these and other mental health issues.

Working Things Out

Recognising this, Mike and his team developed a resource called Working Things Out (WTO) through SPHE, which is designed to help students to confront issues that may be causing them stress. The nine-DVD resource is based on the stories of young people who presented to the Mater Clinic with youth mental health issues such as bullying, family conflict, eating disorders and suicide ideation. These young people were interviewed about their most successful coping strategies, and their positive mental health messages form the content of the DVD stories and an accompanying resource book.

One in ten of those surveyed reported having serious problems for which they did not seek professional help.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the programme, a study of some 1,400 15-year-olds in 17 schools that used the resource is currently underway. The study examines levels of emotional distress, mental health literacy, coping skills, and attitudes to seeking help. Students completed standardised questionnaires before taking part in the programme, afterwards, and at six-month follow-up. This scientific data provides a fascinating insight into how teenagers today cope with life problems and which particular coping strategies they find useful.

Results

While analysis is in the early stages, some broad trends are clear. "While adolescents do tend firstly to reach out to parents with their personal problems, the influence of the peer group – especially for girls – is huge. It was clear that some students resist confiding in their parents because they don't want to worry them. While there now exists a plethora of youth mental health agencies, young students tend not to use them due to lack of awareness, misinformation or embarrassment", says Mike.

Despite legitimate concern in many educational circles about issues like deliberate self-harm, eating disorders or suicidal thoughts, Mike and his colleagues also found high levels of emotional resiliency, positivity and hope in the psychological profiles of many 'pathfinder' students. He is convinced that listening closely to young people is an essential prerequisite for the implementation of any effective overall youth mental health programme.

Colaiste Eoin in Finglas is one of the schools involved in Mike's research programme. Katherine Hawkes, who teaches SPHE in the school, agrees that confronting mental health issues in school can be very effective in developing children's coping and communication skills. Rather than address the students' own issues directly, she finds that general discussion of topics works best. She uses case studies, like those in the WTO resource as well as from the news, in her classes, which she said helps to ensure that students remain engaged and interested. Some topics work and others don't, she says; it is important to review and adapt to the student group, both in terms of their interests and their capabilities.

When Mike returned to Katherine's school as part of his follow-up study into how the students he had worked with were doing, he found them to be very positive about life and very open to discussion of mental health issues. Katherine's own on-the-ground experience of in-school initiatives shows similar results. Since the school carried out an anti-bullying programme last year, Katherine says students are much more open about the issue and about reporting instances to teachers or parents.

For more information on the WTO resource, visit www.workingthingsout.ie.

Online science and maths resources

YTeach.ie is a new website offering online resources for science and maths classes. The site offers stimulating, practical and informative assistance to second-level students and teachers. Try it out at www.yteach.ie.

Phones for boards

The Jack and Jill Foundation is running a 'Phones for Boards' scheme, which allows schools to trade in old mobile phones for interactive whiteboards, while helping to raise funds for the children's foundation. Visit www.jackandjill.ie/phonesforboards for more information.

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Info: 041-9837969 or fkelly@intervac.ie

New books

A number of books that may be of interest to teachers or their students have recently been published.



Blood upon the Rose is a new graphic novel based on the events of the 1916 Rising. The book brings the story to life through illustration and lively text and could be a great resource to engage history students' interest in that period in Irish history. The book is available from www.obrien.ie.

Former ASTI member Maurice McMahon has recently published a memoir of his teaching experience. *Mr. Mac* is a frank and humorous account of what the author calls "the inner workings of the teaching process" and charts the author's experiences from inexperienced young teacher to mature committed professional. The book is available to purchase for €15 by emailing mrmacbenildus@gmail.com or by phoning 01-2894079.

Peig uncut! The events of Peig Sayer's life are known to generations, but a new selection of previously unpublished stories, *I will speak to you all*, tells a funnier, more dramatic story. Featuring a collection of interviews with Peig recorded by the Irish Folklore Commission, the book contains transcripts in Irish and English and is accompanied by two CDs of the original recordings. The book is available from www.newisland.ie.

ASTI member Áine Uí Fhoghlú has just published a novella, *Crúba na Cinniúna* (the Hooves of Fate). The book is part of an emerging genre of writing in Irish aimed at adult learners of the Irish language. The text on each page has footnotes explaining words with which learners might not be familiar and has a complete glossary at the back. *Crúba na Cinniúna* could also make ideal reading material for senior students who would like to improve their command of Irish. See www.coisceim.ie for more information.

Human rights education website

www.humanrightseducation.info is a new website for human rights education compiled by the UN Regional Information Centre. The wide-ranging resource supports human rights education at primary, secondary and third level. There is also a forum where teachers can share ideas and good practice.

Junior Spider Awards



The Junior Spider Awards 2009, which recognise schools' and students' efforts in web design, were held in late December. Pictured above is ASTI Immediate Past President Pat Hurley, who acted as one of the Junior Spider judges, with the winners of the post-primary Irish Language website category and their teacher Linda McCumiskey from St Vincent's Secondary School, Dundalk.

English language support resource

The English Language Support Programme (ELSP) has sent a CD containing some of its free materials and resources to 450 second-level schools nationwide. The resources – which are free to download from www.elsp.ie – are aimed at students with English as a second language, are based on specific curriculum topics and provide access to relevant areas of language learning, making a connection between English language learning and the challenges of the subject classroom.

Music resources for teachers

The Contemporary Music Centre (CMC) has produced a set of composition resources for the classroom. New Music Alive! is a set of eight lesson plans designed as a practical and fun introduction to the principles of music composition, suitable for use with secondary students up to Transition Year. The resources are free to download online from the Education and Outreach section of the CMC's website – www.cmc.ie.

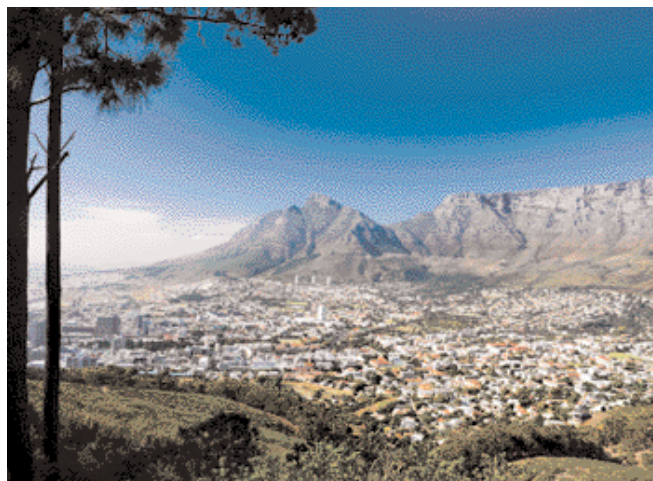
Meningitis information for teachers

The Meningitis Trust has produced a new teachers' pack, which offers information, support and reassurance for teachers and their pupils who have been affected by meningitis, and also raises awareness of the symptoms of the disease and advises what to look out for. The pack is available to download from the Meningitis Trust's website – www.meningitis-trust.ie.

Calling music teachers!

The Musical Youth Foundation provides musical instruments and tuition for underprivileged children. The charity will shortly launch its 'Guitars for Kids' programme and is on the look out for volunteer guitar or music teachers to help out. More information is available at www.musicalyouthfoundation.com.

Cairo to Cape Town



On March 26, 2010, you can cross Africa without leaving your schoolyard and raise money for schools in Africa! Link Community Development is organising the 'Cairo to Cape Town Challenge', in which school groups fundraise in any way they wish and use an interactive map of Africa to keep track of the money raised. Schools who register will receive a pack including suggestions on fundraising activities and ways to integrate the fundraiser into a Transition Year module or CSPE Action Project. Schools may retain 15% of the total funds raised and everyone will be in with a chance of winning prizes. To register or find out more about the Challenge, Email: info@lcd.ie, or text "CCC" to 087-969 7623 with your name and contact details.

Obituary

Sean O'Brien

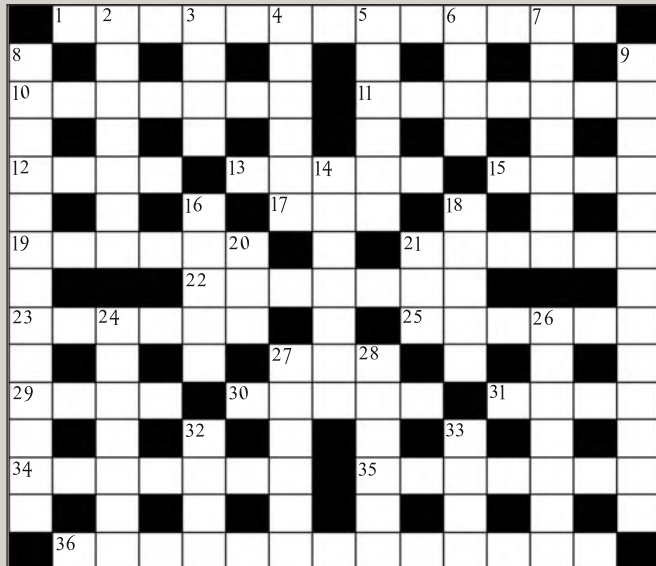
A long-time committed trade unionist, ASTI activist and Deputy Principal of CBS, The Green, Tralee, Sean O'Brien passed away on September 30, 2009. He had been ill for some time and had retired on March 31, 2009. Seán represented the teaching staff on the Board of Management for a number of years. As a teacher of honours maths and chemistry, his reputation spread far and wide. Seán served the ASTI as Branch Chairman and on the Central Executive Committee. The graveside oration was delivered by his friend and long-time colleague in the ASTI, Mr Tim Lynch. The union was represented at his funeral by the President, Joe Moran. Many tributes were paid to Seán by fellow teachers, students, former students and those who benefited from his work with the Tralee Centre for the Unemployed. He is survived by his wife, Maureen, sons John, Fergal and Kieran, and daughter, Aoifa.
Requiescant in Pace.



ASTIR CROSSWORD NO. 1001

€200 prize for the first fully correct answer drawn from the entries.

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The winner will receive €200

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If you wish to keep your copy of *ASTIR* intact you may send a photocopy of the crossword. One entry only per member.

Name

School

Address

ASTI Branch

Entries to: **Astir Crossword No. 1001, Think Media, The Malthouse, 537 NCR, Dublin 1.**

To arrive by: **Friday, February 5, 2010.**

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 & 13 across: Ability matures well in this poet (7,6,5)
- 10 Ocean promoting peace (7)
- 11 An ongoing rift erupts with a swindler (7)
- 12, 30,18 down, 23 across: ... but Italians may wonder! (4,5,5,2,1,3)
- 13 See 1 across
- 15 The sister of your father or mother (4)
- 17 Carries genetic information (3)
- 19 Us poor can absorb floods (6)
- 21 A familiar name for 15 across (6)
- 22 Small squares or circles of pasta with any of various fillings (7)
- 23 See 12 across
- 25 All of them could be one of 32 down! (6)
- 27 With cry it could be a public clamor (3)
- 29 A tame co-operative unit? (4)
- 30 See 12 across
- 31 Mussolini was called II ... (4)
- 34 I ran too much to make a speech! (7)
- 35 Could be a nickname (7)
- 36 See 20 down

CLUES DOWN

- 2 No crime by this immigrant (7)
- 3 "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, And our little ... is rounded with a sleep" (4) (Shakespeare: *The Tempest*)
- 4 Formed a curve (6)
- 5 Go by boat to the Colombian capital! (6)
- 6 Target rims closely (4)
- 7 Commit to nutters (7)
- 8 Deliberate act of acquisition (13)
- 9 Does she belong to the Presbyterians? (7,6)
- 14 "Love is full of fears" (Ovid) (7)
- 16 Laura relates to her sense of hearing (5)
- 18 See 12 across
- 20 & 36 across: We flirt so this way! (3,2,4,7)
- 21 This vestment can be found in the lab (3)
- 24 Madam Antonia is not susceptible to persuasion (7)
- 26 One of the periods of play in a polo match (7)
- 27 Hindquarter (6)
- 28 Paint on your tooth or your nail, maybe! (6)
- 32 One of all 25 across! (4)
- 33 Colloquial cocaine (4)

Solution to ASTIR crossword No. 0905

Across

- 8. Jennifer
- 9. Assail
- 10. Quotas
- 11. Bed sheet
- 12. Legato
- 13. Educator
- 15. Onto
- 17. Alberta
- 19. Lychees
- 22. Sale
- 24. Plebeian
- 27. Alpaca
- 29. Disrupts
- 30. Ballad
- 31. Musing
- 32. Opossums

Down

- 1. Defuse
- 2. Initiate
- 3. Offshoot
- 4. Driblet
- 5. Landau
- 6. Asthma
- 7. Tiresome
- 14. Doll
- 16. NASA
- 18. Lilliput
- 20. Yearbook
- 21. Hip flask
- 23. Aniston
- 25. Barbie
- 26. Impugn
- 28. Charms

Congratulations to the winner of Crossword No. 0905:
Jenny Harte, Colaiste Mhichil CBS, Sexton Street, Limerick, Limerick Branch member.

CONVENTION 2010

WELCOME TO GALWAY



An invitation from the President to attend ASTI Annual Convention 2010

Dear ASTI member,

I look forward to welcoming all delegates to ASTI Annual Convention 2010, which will take place from April 6 to 8 at the Radisson Blu Hotel and Spa, Galway.

Annual Convention is where ASTI policy is decided and gives members a chance to discuss and make decisions on issues of importance to them, to their schools and to education and trade unionism. Debate at Convention is often lively and you will have the chance to meet colleagues from all over the country, learn more about your union and contribute to developments in education.

Of course there is always time for fun too. The Convention venue is located in the heart of Galway City and there will be plenty of opportunities to explore the city and see the sights. I would like to thank the Galway Branch for offering to host this year's Convention.

I would like to encourage all members to consider attending as branch delegates. Hopefully this year we will see some members attending Convention for the first time.

If you are interested in attending Convention, go to your next branch meeting and put yourself forward as a delegate.

A Convention Banquet will be held on the first night of Convention. This event always proves to be a very enjoyable evening so please come along. Details on ticket prices are available overleaf.

Looking forward to meeting you at Convention

Joe Moran, ASTI President

Some comments from delegates on previous conventions:

"It's my first time at Convention and I'm really enjoying it. I find many of the motions very interesting."

Jo Ann O'Connor,
St Mary's Secondary School,
Mallow

"It's brilliant, it's not what I expected; it's surprisingly relaxed, yet there is a lot of important work going on."

John Galligan,
The Royal School, Cavan.

"I've been coming to Convention for a few years. Every year I come, I learn about my profession and my union."

Patrick Andrews,
Colaiste Christ Ri, Cork City

CONVENTION 2010

WELCOME TO GALWAY



The Galway Branch is very happy to host the ASTI Annual Convention on Tuesday 6, Wednesday 7 and Thursday 8 April 2010.

VENUE:

Convention will be held in The Radisson Blu Hotel & Spa, Galway.

ACCOMMODATION:

Accommodation will be provided at The Radisson Blu Hotel, Galway. It will be allocated on a 'first come, first served' basis. Delegates are asked to book in pairs or at least to indicate the person with whom they have agreed to share. A family room costs €120.00 (up to two children under 12 years will be included at no extra charge sharing with parents). Please note that there are a limited number of single rooms available.

Further information relating to hotels, guesthouses and bed and breakfasts in the area can be found on our website – www.asti.ie.

CRECHE:

Facilities will be available each day during Convention hours in the crèche located off site. Places must be reserved in advance but not later than Friday March 26, 2010.

Further information relating to crèche facilities can be found on our Website – www.asti.ie.

ADMINISTRATION FEE:

There is a registration fee of €30 per person, for all delegates, CEC members and Standing Committee members. Branches are no longer required to pay the registration fee directly. This will be offset against the branch's April quarterly cheque.

BANQUET DINNER:

The Banquet Dinner will take place on Tuesday April 6, in the Conference Hall. Tickets will be on sale from the Galway Branch Information Desk, hotel foyer, The Radisson Blu Hotel, Galway, from 1.00pm to 3.00pm on Tuesday April 6.

The cost of a Banquet ticket is normally €45, but if your Branch books a table of ten before Friday March 26, it will cost you only €350 – a saving of €100. If your Branch wishes to join with another Branch for a table, please book under one Branch's name by emailing info@asti.ie, reference 'Annual Convention'.

Payment for tables must reach the ASTI Accounts Department on or before Wednesday March 31, 2010. Book early to avoid disappointment.

Lunches are available on a cash basis in The Radisson Blu Hotel, Galway each day

BOOKING FORM FOR CONVENTION 2010

Arrival date:

Departure date:

Please tick whichever room you require

Double/twin €120

Single €110

Family room €120 Apartment €160
(as outlined above)

Please reserve one room for:

Name

Name

Address

Address

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PLEASE SEND COMPLETED BOOKING FORM WITH DEPOSIT TO: ASTI ANNUAL CONVENTION RESERVATIONS DEPARTMENT, RADISSON BLU HOTEL, GALWAY. CREDIT CARD NUMBER IS ESSENTIAL TO GUARANTEE BOOKING

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