

50,000+ say “no” to education cuts

Well over 50,000 people participated in the march against the education cuts in Dublin on Saturday, December 6th organised by the teacher unions.

Parents, teachers, school managers and students gave up their time on a busy Saturday in the run up to Christmas to communicate a strong message to the Minister for Education and Science and his Government.

Speaking at the demonstration, ASTI President Pat Hurley said children and young people must not be made to pay for government mismanagement and incompetence. "Young people are the country's most important asset, they are our future. We must protect their right to have a properly-funded education system. This campaign will continue until these cutbacks are reversed."

ASTI General Secretary John White said the economic crisis would not be solved by creating a crisis in our classrooms. "It flies in the face of all reason to diminish education, one of the means by which we can come out of the recession," he said.

Thank you!

The ASTI wishes to thank all members who participated in the demonstration and the march. A special thanks to members who worked behind the scenes to make the day a success, including those who acted as stewards at the demonstration, those who made up placards, organised coaches, set up the stage at Merrion Square and carried ASTI banners .

For details on the continuing campaign against the budget cuts to education, see page 5. ♦

Happy Christmas to all ASTI members

The General Secretary and President wish all ASTI members a peaceful Christmas and happy New Year.

ASTI Head Office will close on Tuesday, December 23rd at 12.30 and re-open on Monday, January 5 2009.



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Right: Schools United - teachers, parents, students and school managers march against the cuts.



Right: John White, ASTI General Secretary and ASTI members gather at Parnell Square, Dublin.



Right: Teachers from St. David's Secondary School, Artane, Dublin prepare placards for the march.





Left: ASTI President, Pat Hurley and General Secretary, John White march with their teacher union colleagues.



Left: March organisers Pat King, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; Billy Sheehan, INTO Assistant General Secretary; and Declan Glynn, TUI Assistant General Secretary meet Sgt. Paul Dolan, Pearse St. Garda Station to discuss arrangements for the march.



Left: John Mulcahy, Cork South Branch pictured at the march.

ASTI Website update

The ASTI has changed its home page to reflect the union's current campaign against the education cuts. The homepage contains all the latest campaign stories plus a link to the ASTI's special Education Cuts web page.

The Education Cuts page includes information on upcoming campaign activities including regional activities organised by local Post-Primary Education Forum committees.

ASTI Diaries and Calendars

The ASTI **members' diary** for 2009 is currently being distributed to schools. School Stewards who do not receive their school's diaries before Tuesday, December 23rd should contact Kate Fitzgerald at 01/6040172 or at kfitzgerald@asti.ie.

A special **Centenary Calendar** for members is being distributed to schools next week. School Stewards who do not receive their school's calendars before Tuesday, December 23rd should contact Kate Fitzgerald at 01/6040172 or at kfitzgerald@asti.ie.

Right: Pat Hurley, ASTI President addressing the crowd at Merrion Square.

Far right: John White, ASTI General Secretary speaking after the march to Merrion Square.

Education cuts – campaign continues

Over the coming weeks and months the ASTI will undertake the following activities:

- 18 Regional information meetings for members will be held to which CEC members, branch officers, board of management representatives, school stewards, principals and deputy principals and all ASTI members will be invited. These meetings will give up to date information and rally support against the education cuts.
- The ASTI will support the work of its representatives on the Post-Primary Education Forum regional committees (see opposite).
- The Education Cutbacks page on the ASTI website will be updated on a frequent basis.
- Nuachts updating members on the campaign will be issued on a regular basis.
- Discussions will be held with education spokespersons from political parties. A commitment will be sought from the main opposition parties to reverse the cutbacks.
- Support for the campaign will be sought from the ICTU and other trade unions
- All ASTI committees will make the campaign a key focus of their work.
- The education cutbacks will be a central focus of ASTI Annual Convention 2009.
- The ASTI will continue to liaise with the other teacher unions (IFUT, INTO, TUI) in order to progress the campaign. This will include regular meetings with the Presidents and General Secretaries of the unions and joint union executive meetings.
- Case studies from individual schools on the effects of the cutbacks will be presented to the media.
- Statements will be issued to national and local media on a regular basis.

For more information on campaign activities visit the Education Cutbacks page on the ASTI website www.asti.ie. ♦



Post-Primary Education Forum committees

The ASTI, together with our colleagues in the TUI, parents' organisations and school managers, have formed committees all over the country to highlight the effects of the education cuts on individual schools and communities. The committees, which are operating under the umbrella group the Post-Primary Education Forum (PPEF) are currently organising activities to highlight the cuts including lobbying of politicians, public meetings and local media coverage. ASTI members are being asked to support these activities as much as possible. Updates on PPEF activities are available on the Education Cuts page of the ASTI website.

Please see list of ASTI PPEF Campaign Representatives on the right.

ASTI meetings on cuts

In the coming weeks, the ASTI will embark on a series of regional campaign meetings for ASTI members. These will be held in the 18 Standing Committee regions. Further information will be made available on the ASTI website.

The truth about teachers' sick leave

The ASTI has expressed its concern about the way teachers' sick leave has been presented to the public in recent times. This followed a statement in the Dail by the Minister for Education and Science Batt O'Keefe concerning the cost of substitution cover for teachers on sick leave and subsequent media reporting of the statement. The data for teachers' sick leave shows that it is low compared to other employees. For example, approximately 50,000 teachers took 59,000 uncertified sick leave days last year. This works out at just over one day uncertified sick leave per teacher for the year. This is well below the average number of days uncertified sick leave in the private sector. The Department of Education and Science has confirmed that there is no issue with inappropriate sick leave absences by teachers.



CARLOW

John O'Donovan

CAVAN

Des Cullen

CLARE

Jack Keane

CORK

Anne Piggott

DONEGAL

Gerry Breslin

DUBLIN CITY

Philip Irwin

DUBLIN SOUTH COUNTY

Brendan Broderick

DUBLIN FINGAL

Margaret Moore

DÚN LAOGHAIRE

Sally Maguire

GALWAY

Sarah Withero

KILDARE

Marian Fingleton

KILKENNY

Michael Stokes

KERRY

Lily Cronin

LAOIS

Colm O'Toole

LEITRIM

Martin Talbot

LIMERICK

Ellis Casey

LONGFORD

Tony Waldron

LOUTH

Elaine Devlin

MAYO

Greta Harrison

MEATH

Jim O'Brien

MONAGHAN

Henry Flack

OFFALY

Richard Egan

ROSCOMMON

Willie Gacquin

SLIGO

Kieran Christie

TIPPERARY

Mary Lysaght

WATERFORD

Liam O'Mahony

WESTMEATH

Michael Moriarty

WEXFORD

John Bourke

WICKLOW

Ray St. John



New Standing Committee member

Colm O'Toole is the new Standing Committee Regional Representative for Laois, Kildare and Carlow. Colm teaches at Patrician College in Portlaoise.

Resources for PLC sector

Following negotiations under the terms of Towards 2016 (Paragraph 31.2.1), an agreement was reached on the provision of resources for the PLC sector in July 2008.

After the conclusion of these negotiations, the Department of Education and Science indicated that it was not in a position to provide the finance necessary to implement this proposed agreement.

It is clear that it is not possible to proceed with new work in the PLC sector until the necessary resources have been provided. In view of this, the ASTI is issuing the following instruction to members on the PLC sector:

All ASTI members involved in programmes leading to a FETAC award should not engage in the following new work until the Department of Education and Science implements the proposed agreement:

- ◆ New assessment processes to include internal verification, external authentication and the results approval process
- ◆ Programme development for validation
- ◆ Recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- ◆ Self evaluation of programmes and services

ASTI retirement course

Due to demand, a third 'Planning for Successful Retirement' professional development seminar has been scheduled. The two-day seminar will run on 10 March and 26 March in ASTI Head Office.

Targeted at

Teachers considering retirement and those who have recently retired

Objectives

- ◆ To identify strategies for dealing with changes in relationships, money, time and identity
- ◆ To provide advice on good management in relation to effective management of pensions, taxation and investments
- ◆ To raise awareness in relation to maintaining physical and mental health

Areas to be addressed

Relationships in the home, health, budgeting, learning opportunities, making a will, making the most of time, social welfare, supports for active retirement

Contact Eileen O'Rourke on 01-6040170 or asti.library@asti.ie for more details or to book a place.

Book early to avoid disappointment!



Mairead Bates, an ASTI member and teacher at Holy Family School in Rathcoole feels strongly about the budget cuts to education - so strongly that she arrived half an hour early to her wedding to support the protest against budget cuts!

Many of her colleagues joined her at the church before going on to the march.

Mike Jennings, General Secretary of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) speaking to the crowd gathered at Merrion Square after the march from Parnell Square.



Ferdia Kelly, General Secretary of the Joint Managerial Body (JMB) addressing crowds at the protest.



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Photographs by Tommy Clancy.