

Demonstration, November 27th

December 8th will be too late - protest now

It is vital that ASTI members participate in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions national demonstration on Saturday, November 27th.

The demonstration has been called in support of Congress proposals on alternative ways to tackle the economic crisis, which include a focus on job creation, investment and growth.

We have had three austerity budgets to date and we are now in a worse position than when the process started. The Economic and Social Research Institute has now warned that the Government's austerity plan could damage the economy's potential to grow out of recession.

As public servants and trade union members we must give a clear message to the Government that fairness is not only morally better, it is economically superior as well.

The greater the attendance, the better the chance we have of influencing the fairness and distributional burden of Budget 2011. Your support will help to protect your working conditions and the interests of your students. Protesting on December 8 will be too late!

The demonstration begins at Wood Quay (next to ASTI Head Office and Dublin City Council) at 12 noon. ASTI members should meet at the ASTI banner, Wood Quay (Winetavern Street/ Cooke Street) at 11 a.m. ♦



Pictured at the launch of the 'Future Teachers' Pensions' report are (from left): Peter MacMenamin, TUI General Secretary; Sheila Nunan, INTO General Secretary; and, Pat King, ASTI General Secretary. See page 3 and 8 for more on the pensions report.

Pensions Report

If Government plans to change pensions go ahead, teachers will pay more, work longer and get less.

Read page 3.

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Transfer of pension entitlements from UK/ NI

The Department of Education and Skills is preparing information regarding a new arrangement which allows teachers who have previous experience in the UK to transfer the value of accrued pension entitlements to the teachers' pension scheme in Ireland. Details of the arrangement will be published on teachers' payslips shortly.

ASTI assessment policy

ASTI policy on assessment is based on the principle that the state certificate examination system should be valid, objective and equitable. Teachers should not assess their own pupils for the purpose of awarding them a mark in the state certificate examinations.

While the ASTI supports the view that a variety of techniques of assessment should be used to evaluate students' skill and knowledge, it is vital that oral and aural examinations and practical and project work involve external setting of questions, external administration, and external marking. This is the only way to protect the credibility and validity of our examination system.

The current arrangements for oral and aural examinations in modern languages at Leaving Cert level include a robust national standards system, similar to that of written exams. No such arrangements exist in relation to optional oral and aural exams in Irish at Junior Cert level. For that reason, the ASTI is directing its members not to engage in ad-hoc arrangements for Junior Cert orals in Gaeilge.

The ASTI has secured a commitment from the Department of Education and Skills to set up a working group on this issue. It is hoped that arrangements will be in place before the 2011 Junior Certificate examinations. ♦

Sick leave arrangements

A new circular covering sick leave regulations and procedures has been issued by the Department of Education and Skills.

Uncertified Sick Leave

Effective from 1st September 2010, the maximum number of uncertified sick leave days allowable in a school year is seven. For teachers working in secondary schools and community and comprehensive schools, a medical certificate of illness is required if a teacher on incremental salary is absent for more than four consecutive school days. A medical certificate is required after three days absence for those working in the VEC sector, except where otherwise agreed.

Certified Sick Leave

A medical certificate of illness should refer to the entire period of an illness. A total of 365 days over a 4-year period is the limit for which incremental salary will be paid to a teacher in the event of illness. Weekends and holiday periods will be included in the calculation of this 12 month period. Teachers returning after lengthy illness should provide a medical certificate of fitness to the school in order to protect their sick leave entitlements.

See Circular 0060/2010 on the ASTI website for full details. ♦

ASTI opposes devastating changes to pension scheme

New scheme will force teachers to pay over the odds for pensions

The ASTI is taking part in a joint campaign to vehemently oppose proposed changes to the public service pension scheme, which if implemented will see new teachers pay more in contributions to their pensions than they will get out in pension benefits.

A report prepared by Trident Consulting shows new teachers will be forced to join a pension scheme from which they would expect to receive no net benefit. The ASTI and the other teacher unions - INTO and TUI - are committed to strongly opposing the unfair scheme.

The proposed changes will effectively allow government to stop paying any employer contribution towards public service pensions for teachers. At present "meaningful" employer contributions are required for a private sector scheme to gain Revenue approval. The report says the proposed new public sector scheme does not meet this basic criterion.

Unfair and unnecessary

The teacher unions insist that changes to the scheme are completely unnecessary as significant reductions in the value of pensions made in 1995 and 2004 mean the existing pension terms for teachers are entirely sustainable.

ASTI General Secretary, Pat King said changes to the pension scheme are unfair and unjust: "The proposed scheme amounts to stealing from new teachers. Firstly, new teachers' pension benefits will be drastically reduced when compared to those of their colleagues in the existing scheme. Added to that is the shocking fact that new teachers will be forced to pay more money into a scheme than they will ever get out of it. It's simply not fair and certainly not when changes are unnecessary and viable alternatives are available." ♦

See page 8 for a summary of the report.

Croke Park talks - update

The ASTI rejected the Croke Park Agreement in a Ballot of members in May.

Following a decision by Central Executive Council, the ASTI is now engaged in intensive talks with the Department of Education and Skills on aspects of the Croke Park Agreement with the sole purpose of seeking to protect teachers from threats which are being promoted by many commentators of a worsening of conditions and imposed redundancies. Any outcome of these discussions will be put to Central Executive Council for consideration and then to a ballot of members.

The TUI has now joined the talks, having also suspended its industrial action. Issues under discussion include: review of contract, the extra hour, Supervision and Substitution, and redeployment. Developments will be posted on the ASTI website - www.asti.ie - as soon as they arise. ♦

The campaign of opposition includes:

- Lobby of political parties
- Series of regional meetings

Further steps are planned.

The first regional meetings are planned for:

**The Clarion Hotel, Dublin
November 23rd at 7.30 pm**

**The Silversprings Hotel, Cork
December 13th at 7.30 pm**

New Standing Committee Representative

Peter Keaney is the new Standing Committee representative for Region 11. Peter is a member of the Mullingar Branch and will represent the Longford, Tullamore, Navan, Athlone and Mullingar branches.

One representative from each of the 18 ASTI regions sits on Standing Committee, along with the officers of the union. Standing Committee meets each month and at other intervals as required and looks after the business of the union.

ASTI hosts discussion on review of Junior Cycle

Several hundred teachers in 21 schools have been invited to attend ASTI focus group discussions on proposed changes to the Junior Cycle curriculum over the coming month.

The aim of the discussions is to gather direct feedback from classroom teachers - the education experts - on the models for change in the Junior Cert proposed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). This feedback will shape ASTI policy on what is likely to be the most momentous change in teachers' daily work in the last twenty years.

The NCCA will host a National Symposium on change in the Junior Cycle at the end of the year. The knowledge, experience and expertise of teachers attending the focus groups will be invaluable in informing the ASTI's input to this consultation process.

The NCCA circulated a discussion paper on changes to the Junior Cycle in September. Visit www.ncca.ie to read the full report. You can submit your views on the proposals to the ASTI on the education section of the ASTI website - www.asti.ie. ♦

Seanad candidates - invitation for nominations/ endorsement

The ASTI is inviting applications for:

- ♦ Nominations to the Seanad Cultural and Education Panel (The ASTI has formal nominating rights for candidatures for election to the Seanad Eireann Cultural and Education Panel).
- ♦ Endorsement of candidatures for Seanad Eireann on the NUI and Dublin University panels.

Applications should be forwarded to the General Secretary. Under ASTI rules, ASTI candidates for election to Seanad Eireann must be selected by Convention, except in exceptional circumstances when time constraints do not allow this and in these circumstances CEC or Standing Committee will make the nominations.

Members who are nominated or endorsed can apply to the ASTI Political Fund for a grant towards expenses incurred, in the manner set out in the Rules for the Political Fund.

The closing dates for applications for nominations and endorsement of candidatures for elections to the 24th Seanad is Friday, December 10th. Applications for Political Fund grants must be made by this date also.

For full information see the ASTI website - www.asti.ie (services and benefits/ finances section). ♦

Regulation of teaching profession undermined by Amendment Bill

The ASTI has called on the Minister for Education and Skills to review the recently introduced Education (Amendment) Bill which, if passed, will allow for non-registered teachers to be employed in a teaching capacity.

ASTI President Jack Keane said the amendment comes at a time when hundreds of qualified second-level teachers all over the country are looking for work due to the Budget 2009 decision to cut the number of teachers in second-level schools.

If passed, the amendment will undermine the role of the Teaching Council and the capacity of teacher regulation to protect the educational interests of young people. The ASTI is calling on the Minister to review the Bill as a matter of urgency. The Teaching Council and the other teacher unions are also opposed to the amendment. ♦

Project Maths survey

An ASTI survey on Project Maths is currently underway. More than 250 maths teachers in the 24 Project Maths pilot schools have been asked to submit their views on the revised subject and its impact on the teaching and learning of maths in their schools.

The survey will assess to what extent curriculum objectives are being achieved through Project Maths, it will examine how the revised subject is operating in schools, and will identify issues arising in terms of subject implementation. If you have received a survey, please take the time to complete and return it. Your feedback is valued. ♦



Pictured at an ASTI Know Your Rights meeting in Cork are (from left): Bernard Moynihan, ASTI Industrial Relations Official; Stewart Barry, St. Vincent's Secondary School; and, Niamh Sheehan, Kinsale Community College.

Head Office Staff

Standing Committee has decided to appoint two staff members at the level of Executive Officer. These appointments will be in the areas of industrial relations and union development.

Information will be posted on the ASTI website as soon as possible.

Vetting requirements for teachers

A new circular issued by the Department of Education and Skills updates requirements for Garda vetting as part of the recruitment procedures for all teaching and non-teaching positions in schools.

From December 1st 2010 all teachers appointed to teaching positions of any duration must be vetted prior to commencing employment, unless they have already been vetted. This requirement includes teachers who are changing employment to other schools. If the vetting process is not completed in advance of the appointment being made, the prospective employee must confirm acceptance in writing that his/her appointment is subject to the satisfactory outcome of the vetting process.

Vetting of existing teachers

Vetting of teachers who have been employed prior to the establishment of the Teaching Council in March 2006 will commence in January 2011. The ASTI will publish full information on the procedure for this vetting process at the earliest available date.

For more information see Circular 0063/2010 on the ASTI website. ♦

Attending the Board of Management Training Day held in ASTI Head Office on 4th November are (left to right): Sharon Gunn, Asbourne Community School; Sandra Moran, Loreto College, St. Stephen's Green; and, Ann Marie Smith, Loreto College, Stephen's Green.



Pictured at ASTI School Steward training are (left to right): Maria McAlinden, Asbourne Community College, Navan; Mary Foster, Scoil Mhuire, Kildare; Jane Cassidy, Phobailscoil Isolode, Dublin; Paula Ward, Mount Temple, Dublin; and, Aideen O'Brien, Mount Temple, Dublin.



Update your details for postal ballot

It is likely that talks with the Department of Education and Skills over the next number of weeks will result in a ballot of ASTI members.

It is vital that ASTI Head Office has the correct contact address for each member.

If you have recently changed address or have any reason to believe we have an incorrect address for you, please check with us as soon as possible to ensure you can participate in the next postal ballot of members.

To update your details please email your current address along with your name and membership number to membership@asti.ie. Alternatively you can update your details on the ASTI website (under ASTI Membership section) or by calling 01/ 6040162. ♦



ASTI makes the case for investment in second-level education: pictured following a meeting between ASTI representatives and Labour Education Spokesperson, Ruairi Quinn are (left to right): Diarmaid de Paor, ASTI Deputy General Secretary; Moira Leydon, ASTI Assistant General Secretary; Ruairi Quinn, Labour Education Spokesperson; Pat King, ASTI General Secretary; and, Jack Keane, ASTI President.

Issues discussed at the meeting with Ruairi Quinn included:

- The Croke Park Agreement
- The Moratorium on Posts of Responsibility
- Education (Amendment) Bill
- Funding of second-level schools
- Transition from primary to second-level
- Science and maths education

Trident report on future pension provisions summarised

A report commissioned by the three teacher unions shows changes to the Public Service Pension Scheme proposed by the Government will have a devastating effect on the pensions of new entrants to teaching.

ASTI strongly opposed to pension proposals

The ASTI is taking part in a joint campaign to vehemently oppose proposed changes to the Public Service Pension Scheme.

See page 3 for details

- 1** Previous adjustments (i.e. 1995 and 2004) to the Teachers' Superannuation Scheme, and to public service schemes generally, have reduced benefits and increased the proportion of retirement benefits funded by employees.
- 2** With the pension levy from March 2009, a new member joining the current scheme at age 21 requires only a 3.4% (of salary) contribution from the state as employer to help fund his/her pension costs.
- 3** A new teacher starting today at age 25 requires a 5.7% employer contribution, still less than the private sector average.
- 4** The proposed 2011 changes - to 'career average', later retirement and CPI linkage - mark a drastic disimprovement in retirement benefits for new teachers and public servants generally.
- 5** The value of teachers' contributions under the proposed new scheme will exceed the value of benefits, a situation which may be open to a legal challenge especially since membership is compulsory.
- 6** The new scheme would be less generous than all private sector schemes and (actuarially) less valuable than no pension provision whatsoever.
- 7** If the pension levy was cut in half or abolished from 2011, the employer contribution then required would be just 1.5% or 4.9%, respectively.
- 8** The new scheme would result in a total pension of 44% of final salary after working for 43 years, compared to a 50% pension for working 40 years at present (lump sum falls from 150% to 129%).
- 9** With changes over recent years (including 1995 and 2004) the existing pension terms for teachers are sustainable.
- 10** Alternative approaches to cutting costs, and especially to curbing the gains through final salary linkage for high earners on retirement, are available. These include setting a maximum public service pension or hybrid pension where salary applies up to a certain threshold.
- 11** A single pension scheme for all public servants will be complex to administer, especially where payroll remains decentralised.
- 12** Assumptions used in the Report are standard ones, with a conservative approach to the salary growth assumption.
- 13** The results are sensitive to the salary growth trend; if salary growth is significantly ahead of inflation, the new scheme would compare even more unfavourably to the current terms.
- 14** The value of promotion, especially in later career, would be reduced substantially in pension terms under the new scheme.
- 15** Among categories of teacher who would pay more in than they would get out of the scheme are (a) age 21 joiner, no promotion, unbroken service; (b) age 21 joiner, Special Duties post at age 40, unbroken service; (c) age 25 joiner, no promotion unbroken service; (d) age 25 joiner, no promotion, 5 year career break.

The Trident report is available at www.asti.ie