

Teacher unions take action in protest at Government's handling of economic crisis

ASTI members are taking industrial action at this time with the greatest reluctance. All public service unions including the teacher unions - ASTI TUI and INTO - are taking strike action on March 30th to declare their anger at the Government's inequitable and unfair handling of the current economic crisis. Teachers are at the heart of their communities and fully understand the devastating effect the crisis is having on the lives of those who are losing their jobs. However, we believe that there is a fairer, better way to deal with the crisis which clearly places the greater burden on those most able to bear it.

If the Government enters talks with Congress, it is unlikely that the strike on March 30th will go ahead. The State Examinations Commission has put in place contingency arrangements to deal with oral examinations scheduled for that day. Parents and pupils can be assured that the oral examinations will be implemented this year in the same professional objective manner as hitherto.

ASTI members have also been directed to withdraw from the following activities with effect from Tuesday, 31st March:

- Parent-teacher meetings outside school time;
- Staff meetings outside school time;
- School development planning meetings.

The TUI is also taking the latter action. The INTO is not withdrawing its members from these activities but is considering what activities will not have a potential financial cost for their members.

Standing Committee took the above decisions were taken in the following context: ASTI members, angry at the education cuts which are adversely affecting the well-being of our students and the country as a whole, dismayed at the imposition of inequitable taxation, calls on government to ensure that all taxations and levies are implemented fairly and that the education cuts are reversed, and asks fellow citizens, including parents, to support the ASTI call that government ends its intransigence in respect of equity in taxation and that it reverses the education cuts.

As decisions in relation to the campaign against the Government's handling of the economic crisis are reviewed/ updated on a regular basis members are asked to check the ASTI website - www.asti.ie. ♦

Convention to highlight impact of "savage cuts" on schools

This year's Annual Convention will highlight the impact of what one ASTI branch describes as the "savage cuts which attack the education system at both Junior and Senior Cycle level".

Five separate motions concerning the fallout from the Budget 2008 education cuts will be debated with members using the opportunity to expose the impact of the cuts on the ground. Of particular concern to ASTI members is the effect of the cuts on vulnerable students with one motion stating that the abolition of grants for programmes such as the Leaving Cert Applied, Leaving Cert Vocational and Transition Year will lead to an increase in school drop out.

See pages 7 and 9 for motions for 2009 ASTI Annual Convention. ♦

Ballot on industrial action

ASTI members voted in favour of industrial action over the Government's handling of the economic crisis by 60.4% to 39.6%.

Total Poll
7726

Total Valid Poll
7687

No. of Yes votes
4642 (60.4%)

No. of No votes
3045 (39.6%)

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**Key events at Convention
2009**

Tuesday, 14th

**Election of President and
Vice-President 2009/10**

Address by ASTI President

**Address by Minister for
Education and Science**

Debate on education cuts

Wednesday, 15th

**Election of Trustees and
Honorary Treasurer**

General Secretary's report

Debate on motions

**ASTI Centenary reception for
delegates**

Thursday, 16th

Debate on motions

Convention 2009

Convention 2009 will be held in Killarney, Co Kerry from Tuesday April 14th to Thursday April 16th. Over 500 delegates will attend the event in the Malton Hotel, and will be addressed by the ASTI President, Pat Hurley and the Minister for Education and Science, Batt O'Keefe.

Convention Banquet

A banquet for delegates will be held on the night of Tuesday, April 14th in the Malton Hotel. Tickets are priced at €45 and will be on sale from the Kerry Branch information desk in the conference foyer in the Malton Hotel from 1.00pm to 3.00pm on Tuesday, 14th April. Contact Kate Fitzgerald on 01-6040172 or email Kfitzgerald@asti.ie for further information.

Centenary Reception

A special ASTI Centenary reception to which all delegates are invited will be held in the Malton Hotel on the night of Wednesday, April 15th. Food will be served and music will be provided by the Camembert Quartet.

Convention Business

Each year ASTI branches around the country send motions to ASTI Head Office for inclusion in the Convention programme. The Steering Committee is responsible for timetabling motions to ensure that important decisions can be made, new policy formed and committees established.

Golf Outing

Golf has been booked for Mahony's Point, Killarney from 8.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 14th April, at a cost of €50 per person. To book a place, contact John O'Donovan on 086-8509046 or email: sjsb@ireland.com.



The Kerry Branch Convention Organising Committee

Left to Right: Eileen Revington, Michelle Mangan, Mary Crowley, John O'Donovan, Lily Cronin, Breda Lyons, Sean O'Brien (not pictured).

Candidates for Election

Each year delegates elect a new President and Vice-President.
This year's candidates are:

Candidate for President

Joe Moran

Nominating Branches:

Athlone, Bray, Carbery, Carlow, Carrick-on-Shannon, Cavan, Clare, Cork North, Cork South, Desmond, Donegal, Drogheda Sean Higgins, Dublin North East, Dublin North Central, Dublin South 1, Dublin South 2, Dublin South West, Dungarvan, East Cork, East Galway, Fermoy, Fingal, Galway, Iar Thuaisceart Thir Chonail, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Laois, Limerick South, Longford, Monaghan, Mullingar, Nenagh, New Ross, Roscrea, Sligo, Stillorgan, Tipperary, Tuam, Tullamore, Waterford, West Limerick, West Waterford, Wexford Tony Boland, Wicklow.



Candidates for Vice-President

Brendan Broderick

Nominating Branches:

Bray, Carbery, Cavan, Dublin North West, Dublin South 1, Dublin South 2, Dublin South Central, Dublin South West, Dublin South County, Fingal, Laois, New Ross, Stillorgan, Waterford, West Mayo, Wexford Tony Boland

Jack Keane

Nominating Branches:

Carlow, Carrick-on-Shannon, Clare, Cork North, Cork South, Desmond, Dublin North Central, Dungarvan, East Cork, East Galway, Fermoy, Iar Thuaisceart Thir Chonail, Kerry, Limerick North, Limerick South, Nenagh, Roscrea, Tuam, West Limerick, West Waterford.

Michael Moriarty

Nominating Branches:

Athlone, Longford, Mullingar, Navan

Committees for Election 2009

Steering Committee

5 members

Rules Committee

5 members

Investment Committee

4 members

Education Committee

9 members

Equal Opportunities

Committee 9 members

Standing Committee

Regional Elections

Committee 9 members

Brendan Broderick

Candidate for Vice-Presidency

Brendan Broderick



Profile:

- ◆ A native of Kilkenny
- ◆ Former student of St Kieran's College, Kilkenny
- ◆ Graduate of UCD and NIHE, Limerick
- ◆ Married with a 16 year old son
- ◆ Teaching science in Templeogue College since 1984 (non-permanent teacher in various schools between 1980 - 84)
- ◆ Former school steward
- ◆ Filled most offices at branch level
- ◆ Former regional organiser
- ◆ Member of CEC
- ◆ Member of Standing Committee since 2003
- ◆ Served on several ASTI sub-committees (currently Standing Committee representative on the ASTI Non-Permanent Teachers Sub-Committee)
- ◆ Union advisor to the Posts of Responsibility Arbitrator for voluntary secondary schools.

Goals:

In the short term, I am committed to:

- ◆ Reversing those education cutbacks that will result in the loss of over 1,000 teaching jobs in second-level schools
- ◆ Soliciting support from other public service unions in vigorously opposing the pension levy that was unfairly imposed on public sector workers
- ◆ Developing an alliance with the TUI on issues of common interest

In the longer term, I am committed to:

- ◆ Protecting the terms and conditions of all ASTI members
- ◆ Opposing any attempts to introduce performance management systems into our schools
- ◆ Resolving discipline problems in schools
- ◆ Defending ASTI policy on school-based assessment
- ◆ Protecting the Leaving and Junior Certificate examinations in their current format
- ◆ Highlighting the problems associated with the teaching of science and technology
- ◆ Revitalising our union at school and branch level
- ◆ Converting the long service allowance into a long service increment
- ◆ Protecting pensions which have been eroded in recent years
- ◆ A voluntary winding down scheme that enables long serving teachers to work 11 hours (or more) in the 5 years before retirement age while preserving their previous pension entitlements (such contracts would be almost cost neutral and provide extra hours for younger non-permanent teachers)
- ◆ Continue to campaign for non-permanent teachers
- ◆ Defending the status and dignity of the teaching profession by replacing the new procedures for appointments to POR's with a system more suitable to a vocational profession (this may involve developing CDP programmes which reward not only teachers who wish to go into administration / management positions but also those who wish to commit themselves fully to classroom teaching)

Jack Keane



Profile:

- ◆ Native of Galway. Secondary Education - St. Joseph's College, Galway City
- ◆ B.A and H.Dip. (University College Galway)
- ◆ Teacher of geography and English - Rice College, Ennis, Co. Clare
- ◆ Clare CEC Representative for 25 years
- ◆ Former Standing Committee representative (Clare, Limerick North, Limerick South, Nenagh.)
- ◆ Represents ASTI on NCCA Geography Committee.
- ◆ Former ASTI Education Committee member.
- ◆ Former Chairperson, Clare Branch ASTI
- ◆ Member of the Teaching Council.

Immediate Priorities for the ASTI:

- ◆ The recently imposed pension levy must be vigorously opposed by the ASTI. It is an unfair and inequitable way of dealing with the economic recession. There must be a sustained concerted campaign against this levy by the ASTI in co-operation with TUI, INTO, IFUT and the other public service unions. The teacher unions and public service unions must operate together in a strong and coherent manner. In deciding what action we take, the ASTI must consider all options, up to and including industrial action. The ASTI will play its part to help the country in its current economic crisis, but all sectors of society must share the burden, not just the public service.
- ◆ The increases due under Towards 2016 must be paid.
- ◆ The ASTI must be to the forefront in getting the recent education cutbacks reversed. These education cutbacks will lead to teachers losing their jobs; larger class sizes; and reduced subject choice for students. The abolition or curtailment of various grants and supports affects all schools and students. Sporting activities, cultural events and field trips will not be possible in many schools.
- ◆ The ASTI must challenge and refute the constant media attacks on teachers, public service workers and public service spending.

Other Major Issues for the ASTI:

- ◆ Our salaries, conditions of employment and pension provisions are under constant attack. It is essential that the ASTI protects and progresses the professional salaries, conditions of employment and pension provisions of current teachers and the new entrants to the profession.
- ◆ Non-permanent teachers: casualisation of the teaching profession must cease.
- ◆ Pupil-teacher ratio must be reduced. Class sizes must be reduced.
- ◆ Branch rejuvenation to ensure maximum participation of members.
- ◆ Under-funding of our Education System cannot continue. Spending on education as a proportion of GDP has Ireland languishing at the bottom of the OECD table.
- ◆ Preservation of the Leaving Certificate and external assessment as the fairest and most effective student evaluation models.
- ◆ Implementation of the proposals of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences.

Jack Keane

Candidate for Vice-Presidency

Michael Moriarty

Candidate for Vice-Presidency

Michael Moriarty

Profile:

- ◆ Married to Phil Hogan with three children: Róisín, Eoin and Éanna
- ◆ Born on Valentia Island, Co. Kerry
- ◆ Living in Mount Temple, Westmeath
- ◆ Teaching in Moate Community School since 1975 (maths, computers and science)



Union Activities:

- ◆ School Steward
- ◆ Branch Vice-Chair, Athlone
- ◆ Branch Chair, Athlone
- ◆ Branch trainer
- ◆ Delegate to Annual Convention
- ◆ CEC
- ◆ Standing Committee Region 11
- ◆ Pension Sub-Committee
- ◆ Safety Sub-Committee
- ◆ Science Convenor / Science Subject Committee, NCCA
- ◆ SPHE Convenor / SPHE Subject Committee, NCCA
- ◆ Produced DVD on WSE
- ◆ Produced DVD on Teachers' Pensions

There are many issues in which the ASTI needs to get involved or more involved and I believe that the following list contains some of the most pressing facing the ASTI today.

Pressing issues

1. Defending our students' rights to a decent education
2. Protecting the pay and conditions of employment of members
3. Safeguarding the rights of temporary and part-time teachers
4. Reserving your pension rights and mine
5. Seniority
6. The Teaching Council
7. All out assault on grind schools with a view to their closure
8. Establishing a committee to examine how the ASTI could be more active in the promotion of the Irish language
9. Establishing a commission to examine all aspects of the ASTI with a view to making it more efficient and more responsive to members

Our priorities must be:

- ◆ Defending our students' rights to a decent education
- ◆ Protecting pay and conditions of employment of our members
- ◆ Safeguarding the rights of temporary and part-time teachers
- ◆ Preserving your Pension rights and mine

These areas at least must be ringfenced and the Government informed, in no uncertain terms, that these are non-negotiable and that they face industrial unrest if they tamper with them.

If you elect me as Vice-President, I promise you to be untiring in my work for the good of the ASTI on all issues that effect its members.

Convention Motions 2009

Education cuts - Motion 32

That the ASTI:

- (i) demands that the education cuts announced in the budget be rescinded immediately;
- (ii) deplores these savage cuts that attack the education system at both Junior and Senior level, especially the ones that affect the disadvantaged;
- (iii) highlights the effect of these cuts in public and in the media; and
- (iv) uses all means at its disposal to oppose any future cutbacks in an already under-funded education system.

(Kerry, Dublin South Central, Stillorgan, Cork South, Desmond)

Pupil-teacher ratio - Motion 29

That the ASTI demands that the proposed pupil-teacher ratio changes announced in October 08 be reversed and that the present pupil-teacher ratio be maintained at 18 to 1 for all post-primary schools. (Dundalk, Dublin South County, Cork North)

Early Retirement Strands 1, 2 and 3 - Motion 8

That the ASTI demands the immediate reinstatement on a permanent basis of early retirement strands 1, 2 and 3, which were agreed as part of the PCW.

(New Ross, Dublin South County, Dublin North East, Kerry)

Superannuation Scheme - Motion 11

That the ASTI refuse to negotiate any changes to the Superannuation Scheme that would reduce the entitlements of members. (New Ross)

Part-time contracts - Motion 22 and Amendment

That the ASTI review the range of part-time contracts with a view to ensuring better security of tenure for young teachers.

(Dublin North East)

Amendment

Amend by deletion of the word "young".

(Bray, Drogheda Sean Higgins)

Part-time teachers - Motion 25

That the ASTI would vigorously protect the working conditions of part-time teachers in the light of recent cutbacks in education. (Nenagh)

Whole School Evaluations - Motion 21

That, in the light of teachers' experiences of WSE and subject inspections, the ASTI demands an immediate review of the whole process. (Nenagh)

NEPS - Motion 46

That the ASTI demands that the Department of Education and Science extend the NEPS service in order to ensure that psychological assessments may be fast tracked and that follow-up support may be easily accessed. (Stillorgan)

Education Cuts

Pupil-teacher ratio

Early retirement

Pension scheme

Part-time teachers

Whole School Evaluations

NEPS

Abolition of LCA, LCVP, TY grants

Grants for LCA, LCVP and TY - Motion 43 and Amendments

That the ASTI deplores the removal of the grants for LCA, LCVP and TY which will in turn have the effect of a reduction in the retention level of students at senior level. (Kerry)

Amendment 1

Amend by addition of “In light of new economic challenges” at the beginning and by addition of “with the resulting negative impact on society” at the end.
(Dublin South County)

Amendment 2

Amend by deletion of “deplores the removal of” and replace this by insertion of “demands the reinstatement of”.
(Longford)

Suspension and expulsion

Suspension and expulsion - Motion 52

That the right of students to learn and teachers to teach receive equal emphasis to the rights of students who incur the sanctions of suspension and expulsion in education legislation. (Cork South)

Assesment of pupils

Assesment - Motion 55

In view of the planned changes for post-primary Irish, that the ASTI rejects any proposals that teachers would assess their own pupils. (New Ross)

Science education

Task Force on the Physical Sciences - Motion 54

That the ASTI:

- (i) demands the implementation in full of the recommendations of the Task Force on the Physical Sciences;
- (ii) deplores the removal of grants for physics and chemistry;
- (iii) condemns the continued refusal to provide laboratory technicians in schools; and
- (iv) elects a sub-committee to assess the impact of these matters on the workload of teachers to evaluate the success or otherwise of the new Junior Certificate Science syllabus and draft proposals on courses of action the ASTI can now take to progress these issues.

(Dublin South 2, Kerry, Dublin South West)

Filling of posts

Teaching posts - Motion 26

That the ASTI seek to arrest the erosion of the teaching profession by demanding that all posts vacated by teachers who retire be filled as full-time permanent posts.
(Dublin North East)

Job-sharing, career breaks

Job-sharing and career breaks - Motion 19

That the ASTI enter into immediate negotiations with the Department of Education and Science to negotiate that:

- (i) job-sharing and career breaks should be available to all teachers who wish to avail of them;
- (ii) the over-quota status of a school should not be a factor in the refusal of a career break or job-sharing application;
- (iii) the Department of Education and Science grant replacement temporary cover for those seeking career breaks or job-sharing regardless of whether the school is over-quota or not.

(Cork North, Galway, Clare)

The Teaching Council - Motion 73

That the ASTI set up a sub-committee to examine and make recommendations on the operation of the Teaching Council. (Kilkenny)

Parent-teacher meetings - Motion 17

That the ASTI negotiate that all parent-teacher meetings take place within normal school time. (Stillorgan, Dublin South West)

Parent-teacher meetings - Motion 16

That the ASTI seeks an immediate review of existing procedures for parent-teacher meetings outside school hours. (Nenagh)

Brief absences - Motion 27

That the ASTI demands that teachers' partial daily absences be recorded as such in all related returns to the Department of Education and Science. (Cork North)

A.V.C.s and notional service - Motion 64 and Amendment

In light of the recent television program relating to Cornmarket, that an independent counsellor be hired to examine the relationship of the ASTI with Cornmarket and give independent advice to members relating to investments and pensions especially A.V.C.s and notional service. (Dublin South 2)

Amendment

Amend by deleting the word "counsellor" and replacing it with the word "expert". (Kilkenny)

Teaching Council

Parent-teacher meetings

Brief absences

AVCs / notional service

One in five cannot read this

The Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education is inviting second-level schools to participate in the Big Read this April as part of Global Action Week for Education for All.

Suggested events which schools can organise include creating a book with stories and pictures describing how education can change the world. The aim of Global Action Week for Education for All is to highlight the fact that 774 million adults and 75 million children around the world cannot read or write and to lobby governments to action to ensure that everyone is given access to a basic education. The ASTI is a member of the Irish Coalition for the Global Campaign for Education.

For a full list of ideas of how your class or school can participate in the campaign visit www.campaignforeducation.ie.



The Presidents of the three teacher unions pictured at the ICTU march in February: (from left) Don Ryan, TUI President; Pat Hurley, ASTI President; and Declan Kelleher, INTO President.

Changes in examination remuneration

The State Examinations Commission has informed the ASTI of the following changes in remuneration to examiners and superintendents in 2009.

1. There will be an increase in fees to examiners and superintendents of 5%.
2. The 1% income levy will apply to fees to examiners and superintendents.
3. The pension levy will be applied to fees to examiners and superintendents.
4. There will be a 25% reduction in travel and subsistence payments to examiners and superintendents.

It is important to note the following:

1. The reduction of 25% in Travel and Subsistence Allowance is a budgetary measure. It was not agreed to by the ASTI but was imposed on all public servants, by the Government.
2. The 1% income levy is a budgetary measure. It was not agreed to by the ASTI but was imposed on all public servants, by the Government. The State Examinations Commission will only apply the levy on earnings paid by them of over €18,304 in any one year. (It is then a matter for the individual teacher to reconcile their own tax affairs at the end of the year).

3. The pension levy is a budgetary measure. It was not agreed to by the ASTI but was imposed on all public servants, by the Government. The SEC will apply the pensions levy only on the basis of earnings paid by them. For those who earn less than €15,000 from the SEC (i.e. the vast majority of teachers) the levy will be applied at the lowest rate of 3%.
4. The increase of 5% in fees combines with the effect of the pension levy and 1% levy and means that the earning from fees will increase very slightly (by just under 1%). Unfortunately the big hit for examiners and superintendents is the reduction of 25% in Travel & Subsistence.

The ASTI has opposed these cuts at meetings with the State Examinations Commission. However, these cuts were imposed by central government. The ASTI is engaged with its fellow trade unions in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in opposing the Government's unfair approach to the current economic and fiscal crisis.

Below is the information that is being presented to examiners at exam conferences informing them of the changes in rates for this year's exams.

Information Regarding Payment for Contract Work; Examining, Superintending, etc.

1. Increased Rates of Fees for 2009 Examinations

The rates of fees payable to staff engaged in contract work with the State Examinations Commission have been increased by 5% for the 2009 examinations season.

2. Income Levy

This levy, effective from 1st January 2009, applies to earnings from the State Examinations Commission (SEC). In line with standard practice, as advised by the Revenue Commissioners, the SEC is responsible for collecting the income levy by reference to the gross income arising in employment with the SEC only. The income levy will not be applied by the SEC if an individual's gross earnings with the SEC are less than €18,304 per annum. Once that threshold is reached then the income levy applies to all earnings and not just those over €18,304. We will contact individual contract staff whose payments in any year exceed €18,304 in order to ensure appropriate application of the income levy.

Any income levy deductions made will be clearly identified on payslips and statements of earnings. It is the responsibility of individuals to reconcile their own tax affairs. Please contact your local Revenue office or consult the Revenue website www.revenue.ie for further information.

3. Reduction in Travel and Subsistence Rates

We are advised that existing rates of Travel & Subsistence are to be reduced by 25% with effect from 1st March 2009. All travel expenses and subsistence expenses incurred by contract staff engaged in the operation of the state examinations on or after that date will be at the reduced rates.

4. Public Service Pension Related Deduction

We are advised that the public service pension related deduction applies to earnings in respect of contract work with the SEC. The following Questions and Answers serve to demonstrate how the levy will apply and operate (see next page)

Additional retirement seminars

If you missed the opportunity to attend any of the ASTI retirement seminars held in autumn and spring, you may wish to attend at one of the following venues.

A short (30 minute) talk on retirement options will be given by an ASTI official, followed by a questions and answers session. This will be followed by an opportunity to raise issues on a one-to-one basis.

ASTI Head Office
Tuesday, 21 April at 4.30pm

McWilliam Hotel Clairemorris
Thursday, 23 April at 4.30pm

Hotel Minella, Clonmel
Tuesday, 28 April at 4.30pm

a. Will the public service pension related deduction (PRD) apply to contract work with the State Examinations Commission such as examining and superintending?

In general yes although there are some exceptions. The main determinant of whether the deduction applies to your income from the SEC is if you are otherwise employed in a public service body and you are a member of, or have access to, a public service pension scheme. So if your primary employment is as a teacher, and you are in, or have access to, the teachers' superannuation scheme and you do contract work for the SEC your income will be subject to the PRD.

b. What income is subject to the PRD?

All taxable income is subject to the PRD. Travel expenses and subsistence allowances and other miscellaneous expenses are an exception to this as they are not considered income and so are not subject to the deduction.

c. I am a pensioner who works for the SEC. Is all of my income (pay and pension) subject to the PRD?

No. Your pension is exempt from the PRD. Only your earnings for contract work with the SEC will be subject to the deduction.

d. What is the rate of the PRD?

The rate of deduction is based on your gross income. The rates applicable are as follows:

€0 - €15,000	3%
€15,001 - €20,000	6%
€20,001 +	10%

The SEC is responsible for applying the PRD to gross income arising in employment with the SEC only. The PRD will apply cumulatively to SEC earnings in any one year of account. This means that the rates will change only when the threshold has been exceeded. For the first year, the year of account is from 1/3/2009 - 31/12/2009. For all other years the year of account is the calendar year.

e. Do I get tax relief?

Yes. Pension contributions for PAYE employees, including those in the public sector, are deducted from gross pay before applying income tax, PRSI and the health levy. As a result, the amounts

deducted in respect of the PRD will be exempt for tax, PRSI and health levy purposes. As the income levy (see 1 above) applies to gross pay, this will include the amounts deducted for pension purposes and there will be no reduction in the amount of the income levy paid if any. Tax relief will be at the 41% rate unless you have made individual arrangements to assign tax credits to your SEC employment in which case the advised rates will be applied.

f. Does the PRD affect the overall threshold levels for tax relief on pension contributions?

No. The deduction does not count towards a person's limit to receive tax relief on pension contributions. So, for example, a person aged between 40 and 49 can contribute up to 25% of their gross income towards pension and receive tax relief on those contributions. The PRD will not count towards that 25%.

g. When does the deduction take effect?

The deduction takes effect from 1 March 2009. All payments for contract work with the SEC conducted on or after 1st March 2009 will be liable to the PRD. The PRD will not apply to payments in respect of work conducted before 1st March 2009 which is claimed on or after that date.

h. How will I know how much PRD has been deducted?

The pay-slips and statements of earning issued by the SEC will show the PRD as a separate item.

i. If I am not in, or do not have access to, a Public Service Pension Scheme how will the SEC know not to deduct the PRD from my payment?

The claims forms for payment will be adjusted in order to allow us to collect information to ensure that we apply the PRD appropriately. Revised claims forms will be issued to all contract staff. Refunds will be made in the event that PRD is collected in error.

Source: State Examinations Commission

Part-time teachers and the education cuts

The ASTI has been highlighting how the education cuts are impacting on part-time and non-permanent teachers. For examples of press coverage and ASTI statements visit the Education Cuts page on the ASTI website (click on the link "How the Education Cuts are affecting Part-time teachers").

Volunteering schools competition

Folens Ireland this year celebrates its golden anniversary. To mark the occasion, and to encourage schools to promote a culture of volunteering, the publishing company has launched a competition for schools with a prize fund of €100,000.

First prize comprises €20,000 - €10,000 for the school and a donation of €10,000 for a local registered charity of the school's choice. Regional prizes and consolation prizes will also be awarded.

Schools must outline in 300 words or less how their school currently works with a local charity or how they propose to work with their nominated charity in the future.

The closing date is April 3rd. For more information visit www.folens.ie.

200 second-level schools to get safety inspections

The 2009 Programme of Work published by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) states that 200 second-level schools will be visited by HSA inspectors during 2009.

The inspectors will assess compliance by schools with health and safety legislation. Particular attention will be paid by inspectors to the legal requirement for all schools to have school-specific safety statements with written risk assessment, as well as an anti-bullying policy in line with the HSA's Code of Practice on Bullying.

Other activities planned by the HSA include extending the use of its 'Choose Safety' programme for students preparing for the world of work. The HSA intends to continue working with the NCCA on mainstreaming health and safety in the national curriculum. HSA research shows that over 50% of students at post-primary level have held or currently hold part-time jobs and may work in the high-risk hospitality sector which is characterised by long hours and high levels of injury.

For more information visit the HSA website www.hsa.ie. ♦

Bain Triail As!

Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge has released a guide to the Leaving Cert Irish oral exam on DVD. 'Bain Triail As!' gives practical suggestions and useful tips to students preparing for the oral exam. It highlights ways to practice spoken Irish and to avoid common mistakes. The DVD also contains lessons on grammar. The DVD can be ordered from www.siofa.ie (€20) and is available at a reduced price (€15) for registered members of Comhar na Múinteoirí Gaeilge from the central office.

Visit www.comhar.ie for more information.

855 avail of Employee Assistance Service

2008 saw 855 teachers avail of the teachers' Employee Assistance Service. Of the cases presented to the service, 414 were referred to up to six sessions of face-to-face counselling, 41 were referred to up to six sessions of telephone counselling, 11 availed of couples counselling and 363 cases received direct telephone support.

Of the issues the teachers raised with the service, 71% were personal issues, while 29% were work related.

Teachers contacted the service seeking advice on a range of issues including: concerns about options for retirement; requests for support around moving from urban to rural schools; concerns and worry over family members and work-life pressures; depression and anxiety; and caring for dependents.

The EAS service, which assists primary and second-level teacher and/ or their family members, can be contacted at 1800 44 44 44; eas@vhics.ie. ♦

Right: Members of the Galway and Tuam ASTI branches pictured at the ICTU march in February: (left to right) Maura Greaney; John Duggan; Andrew Kearney; John White, ASTI General Secretary; Sarah Withero, Standing Committee; and Pat Hurley, ASTI President.

