

Together we can win ...

EVERYONE OUT

ON NOVEMBER 30!

October 26:

Let's deliver a final notice to Westminster:

HANDS OFF OUR PENSIONS OR WE STRIKE!

Join the Joint Union March and Lobby:

ASSEMBLE at midday, Victoria Gardens, Westminster, SW1;

MARCH to the Dept. of Education to hand in the mass petition.

All of the main teaching unions - ASCL, ATL, NAHT, NASUWT, NUT, UCAC and UCU are backing this joint march & lobby on Wednesday October 26. Every school is being asked to try and send at least one representative to give Government a final warning - back off or face the consequences.

The march gives us a chance to dust off the flags and banners from June 30 once more. Media coverage of the event will be a timely reminder to union members that are balloting to return their 'YES' vote for action as well!

SIGN THE PETITION!

Even if you can't make it to London in half-term, make sure everyone in your school signs the mass petition. More details on: www.decentpensions.org.uk

The battle lines have finally been drawn - on 30 November (N30), between two and three million public sector workers will be on strike to defend their pensions.

(from the National Shop Stewards Network www.shopstewards.net)

In every meeting, the message has to be hammered home that we shouldn't pay the price for the bankers' crisis. As well as hundreds of thousands of workers in both the public and private sectors losing their jobs, millions have seen their income hammered by pay freezes and changes to contracts. Now Cameron and Co. want public sector workers to take another pay cut by increasing pension contributions!

The first job is to win the ballots with an overwhelming vote. Joint meetings have to be organised in every workplace. Members of PCS, NUT, UCU and ATL unions that were out on 30 June and have live strike mandates (i.e. they DON'T need to ballot again) should give confidence to others to vote YES.

These can be supplemented by public meetings and rallies in towns and cities to draw in others, particularly workers in the private sector, who also face job losses and cuts to their pensions and pay.

These events should also begin the debate about what happens after N30 to ensure that the mood is built on rather than dissipated after one day. The government

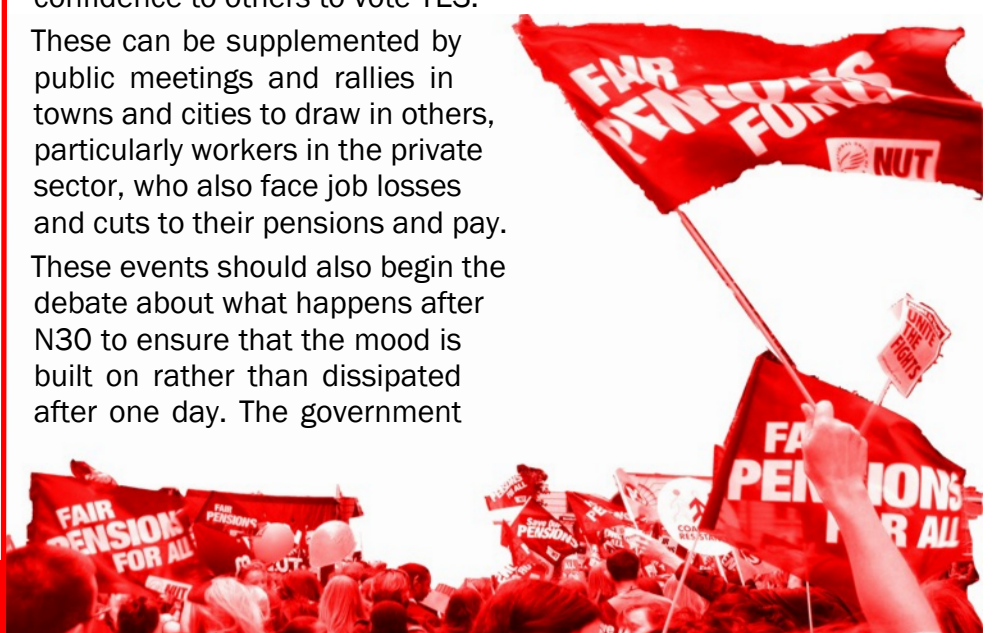
should be warned that further co-ordinated strike action is planned if they don't back off.

On 30 November every town and city should be filled with pickets and huge strike demonstrations. These should reach out to all workers and their families, friends and their communities, including young people and pensioners.

A victory for public sector workers would raise the confidence of all workers that it's possible to win.

*** HOLD A MEETING IN YOUR SCHOOL - Encourage all staff in NAHT, NASUWT, UNISON, UNITE and GMB to vote for strike action so that we can all be out together on N30.**

*** WE CAN'T AFFORD NOT TO STRIKE - Winning this battle will mean giving up pay when we take action - but losing it will mean pay being stolen away every single month in extra pension contributions.**



'FREE' SCHOOLS = FREEDOM to PRIVATISE EDUCATION

(Martin Powell-Davies, Lewisham NUT)

Free schools are a new kind of Academy school. Like Academies, they receive state-funding directly from Westminster but are independent of an elected Local Authority. Instead, they will be run by unaccountable sponsors, predominantly big businesses.

Rather than being converted from existing schools, free schools will typically rely on available accommodation such as empty office blocks. As a result, in Sweden, where free schools were first tested out, many lacked facilities such as libraries and play space.

Government legislation presumes that where new schools are opened, they will be free schools, not Local Authority community schools. This is a real threat in areas like London where there is a growing shortage of pupil places.

Freedom to make profits out of tax-payers' money

We know that when Tory ministers talk about 'freedom,' they usually mean freedom for big business to make profits at our expense. Free schools will be no different. Five of the 24 initial free schools will be run by existing Academy chains from the start. As Sweden has also shown, eventually most free schools will end up being taken over by these big edu-businesses.

Academies have not been allowed to be run for a profit but free schools will be different. Under pressure, Gove has stated that free schools are not going to be able to make profit – but only 'at the moment'. But that won't be good enough for the private sector vultures.

Freedom to cut costs and quality

The privateers plan to cut costs by attacking pay and conditions and employing cheaper staff. That's why free school legislation means they won't have to employ qualified teachers. Nor, like all Academies, will they have to abide by national terms and conditions.

Claims that free schools will offer 'smaller class sizes' are inevitably an illusion. Swedish free schools have worse pupil teacher ratios than municipal schools. They also employ a far lower proportion of qualified teaching staff. Even if the Government throws some additional bribes at Free Schools and Academies in the first-place, that money is at the expense of other schools as the Con-Dems cut overall expenditure. The £130 million start-up costs for the first free schools have been found by the money saved by cutting the BSF funds that were desperately needed to rebuild underfunded Local Authority schools.

Freedom from democratic control

Free schools are part and parcel of the Government's agenda to cut and privatise public services. They hope to remove so many schools and services from local council

control that Local Authorities effectively cease to exist. When all the main parties in our Town Halls are voting for cuts, some parents may ask why we should bother to defend elected Councils. However, local councillors are still accountable to voters, even if most try to ignore our wishes between elections. Councils are also able to plan for provision for all pupils across a local area.

Free schools & Academies will create a chaotic 'free-for-all' where unaccountable businesses put their interests first. Vital Local Authority support services will be lost. The Academy and Free School 'free-market place' may create a few lucky winners – but most families will lose out.

Freedom over how schools are run?

Parents and teachers are rightly angry at the way both Labour and Con-Dem Governments have used tests and league tables to put schools into an educational strait-jacket. But free schools are no solution.

Some are offering extended opening hours, an attractive option for parents working long hours and unable to afford childcare. But many community schools also try to offer breakfast clubs and after-school activities. But free schools want to do it on the cheap by making teachers work longer hours instead of paying for additional staff to run the extended provision.

Parents, staff and students should have more say in how schools are run. But 'free schools' will hand real control to big business sponsors, not local parents. Where free schools are making changes, these are mainly to attract a more privileged clientele – for example Latin classes.

Freedom to select

Despite underfunding and all the pressures on families and young people, most schools are successfully supporting their students. But the Tories and the right-wing press are deliberately trying to undermine comprehensive schools, whipping up parents' fears to get their support for free schools as a 'safe haven' for their children.

Gove has even tried to steal the NUT's own slogan by claiming that free schools are about offering every parent 'a good local school' for their child. In reality, his policy will achieve the opposite, widening division between schools. Their 'business plan' aims to enrol middle-class pupils that can secure the highest exam results at the lowest costs. Local Authority schools will be left to support the youth with the greatest needs.

Analysis for the Guardian confirms that the first wave of free schools have predominantly middle-class catchment areas, even those sited in poorer authorities. The dangers of segregation are increased by the numbers of faith groups that have already - or are proposing to - set up free schools. Sweden's experience confirms that free schools lead to a widening class divide between schools.

For further details - and additional articles that wouldn't fit in this newsletter - visit www.classroomteacher.org.uk

Classroom Teacher

... is an initiative ...
by, and for, classroom teachers
... voicing the concerns and
experiences of classroom teachers
... so we can build action to win
change for classroom teachers

If you want :

... help organising a strong Union group in your school
... to share your views about the pressures teachers face
... to take action to defend teachers and education ...

Get in touch :

<http://classroomteachers.blogspot.com/>
classroom.teacher@yahoo.co.uk
Martin Powell-Davies - 020 8659 8478