

## TIME TO END SATS! BUT WHY LIMIT THE BALLOT?

### NUT DGS - Kevin wins!

*(Linda Taaffe, Waltham Forest NUT)*

Classroom Teacher welcomes Kevin Courtney's election as NUT Deputy General Secretary. He is a long-standing campaigner who is calling for joint action to oppose cuts and privatisation.

His election means that the NUT now has a General Secretary and Deputy GS, Treasurer, and an incoming President that have all been elected from the Left.

This leadership will have the best chance in years to really set a fighting tone throughout the Union, and turn the tide of workload and SATs that is overwhelming thousands of hardworking teachers.

Many teachers put outrageous workload levels at the top of their list of complaints. For the last two years, delegates at NUT Annual Conference have voted overwhelmingly for the Union to organise a national ballot to call national action. That's because the policy of keeping workload to a reasonable level by just an individual or school-by-school approach is NOT working.

So far those in control of the NUT have not acted on those Conference decisions. That has left classroom teachers ground down by endless demands, in and out of school. They will now be watching and waiting to see how this team at the top faces up to the workload challenge.

*(Louise Cuffaro, Newham NUT)*

At the end of January, I attended an informative London Reps' training. Only a day or two previously, a joint NUT/NAHT press statement had been issued stating that both unions will be balloting for action "to frustrate the administration of SATs".

However, it appears that only NUT leadership group members (together with NAHT members) will in fact be balloted, due to the legality about who is responsible for administering the SATs. Reps held a meeting to discuss our concerns about this.

NUT Conference voted to support a boycott of the 2010 SATs. Most Reps and our members expected strong guidance and support to be issued and publicised in time to enable them to resist all SATs preparation from September. But no such guidance came from the NUT Executive.

Inevitably, Heads have pressurised Year 6 teachers to carry out mock SATs tests, to hold booster classes, to give up P.E., Art, trips... Heads have used Ofsted, League Tables and the lack of any concrete details of the NUT campaign to ensure that the grinding preparation for SATs (which constrains the curriculum and means stress and workload for pupils and teachers alike) has carried on.

The legal difficulties may well be real. But the lack of attempt to guide NUT members to strongly resist the preparation process means reps felt unsure that this ballot will be won. It's not usually the manager members of any union that boldly carry out industrial action! However,

it is possible for NUT Headteachers, together with their NAHT colleagues, to be persuaded to vote and take decisive action so long as a serious and public strategy is embarked on urgently and publicised to staff, parents and governors. For example:

- 1) issue urgent guidance and support to Year 6 staff to help them resist the preparation process.

- 2) all members should be asked to vote that they will be prepared to take action to support anyone who is victimised.

- 3) all members receive FAQs on how to resist if a Head tries to pressure them to administer the SATs.

54 reps at the meeting signed a letter to Christine Blower with our concerns. Teachers should make their views known to the NUT Executive before they meet on Thursday 25 February.

### More news on the blog

Look out for more reports and articles on our blog:  
[classroomteacher.org.uk/weblog](http://classroomteacher.org.uk/weblog)



including reports from a visit to unions in Brasil where teachers face the sack through their own version of a teachers' 'MOT test'

Action and  
Change for  
Teachers

# Whose history do we teach?

*Dan Gillman (Waltham Forest NUT)*

History can be an intensely political subject. This was clearly underlined when Margaret Thatcher took personal charge of writing the first National Curriculum for History.

As we seem to be approaching the onset of a new Tory administration it might be worth reflecting on how History fared under New Labour.

They failed to extend the age range asked to study it to anything like the European average. We've also seen the complete domination of the KS4 curriculum by the great exam board privateers and their stampede towards profit. All non-profit making options at KS4 were removed from the new specifications and all focused on the US victory in the new Cold War specification, a specification by the way that discounts completely the actions of the USA in either Vietnam or Central/South America!

We did at least see a move away from Thatcher's fixation with chronology, although OfSTED continues to underline their infatuation with this particular historical skill.

What would Cameron and the Tories bring? Well much of the same I'm sure, with a good dose of imperialist nostalgia mixed in as well. I'm not sure what's better; a party who eschews history or one who sees it from under the visor of a pith helmet!

# What future for school leavers?

*Jim Thomson (Somerset NUT and 'Youth Fight for Jobs')*

Teachers work their socks off to get students through exams. We are absolutely delighted when our pupils achieve good grades and the day finally arrives when they step out into the wide world to make their fortune - or so the fairy stories go. These days, however, the only people making fortunes are bankers - who got the big banks, and everyone else, into deep trouble, were then bailed out from the public purse - yet still clock up million pound bonuses!

Their "greed is good morality" has led directly to a jobs crisis particularly amongst 16-25 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEETs). Even if school leavers get jobs, they are often low paid. If students manage to get to university, the fees and loans system only means huge debt. Many young teachers are burdened with debts of £20,000 or more to pay back. With the government slicing £900 million off the higher education budget, and with decent jobs draining away, things are not going to get better.

The future could be very bleak for youngsters coming out onto the jobs market. With large scale job losses in the retail sector and across other industries, on top of massive cuts being planned in public services, youth unemployment will soon top 1 million. Demoralisation and even racist divisions could set in. The BNP and the far right hope to exploit the situation facing workers and young people. They aim to get a wider platform for their racist, divisive ideas by standing their leader Nick Griffin in the general election in Barking, an area decimated by lack of housing and jobs. Griffin will pretend to be the champion of ordinary white working class people against the unpopular Labour MP Margaret Hodge.

Recently East London Bus workers went on strike forming picket lines of hundreds - working people of all races and religions united to defend themselves. The BNP will try to drive workers and young people apart. That is why 'Youth Fight for Jobs' has called a demo. on March 13 and is asking for support from trade unions.

'Youth Fight for Jobs' was launched in January 2009 to stand up for young people, and to campaign for our rights in the recession. It is supported by the PCS, RMT and CWU nationally as well as local branches of many unions, including some NUT Local Associations.

We urge you to come to the Barking demo with your colleagues. Let your students know about it too! Visit: [www.youthfightforjobs.com](http://www.youthfightforjobs.com)

**MARCH FOR REAL JOBS \* BARKING \* SAT 13 MARCH**

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