

Speech given by Ian Scott at a dinner to mark his recent retiral

Thank you, Colin; that was an impressive combination of the skills of two Classical characters, one real and one largely fictional - *Cicero* and *Midas*.

Cicero of course was the outstanding orator of his day. And Midas? Well, he could make gold from any old material – no matter how unpromising!

As for my own attempt at oratory, you will all be relieved to see how short my speech is going to be.

But beware! In my long experience of speeches and reports in the EIS I have found that promises of brevity are rarely delivered!

I am very grateful to those of you who arranged this evening and to all of you for being here. I am especially appreciative as having been virtually moribund in the EIS for quite some time now I am not so sure I deserve it – or maybe just the starter and half the main course!

I am also aware of the strangeness of saying thank you and farewell to colleagues whose professional world I began to lose contact with some time ago. I can't say – to paraphrase normal retirees - "*It HAS been good working with you and farewell.*" More like in my case "*It WAS good working with you and – I'm not kidding - it really is farewell this time!*"

Graeme summed it up quite well some time ago, about a year now, when referring to my arrival at a meeting he mentioned "*the ghost of Banquo*". So tonight is a good chance to assure you that the ghost is making its last appearance and that it will not haunt you any more! Well, not this particular ghost anyway – there may be another one lurking about!

Probably I am as much a dinosaur as a ghost, a role I am used to after years spent teaching dead languages as the march of technology and vocationalism and all sorts of educational developments tried to sweep me away, eventually succeeding and depositing me in the backwaters of the private sector!

So, as this sort of occasion usually requires a bit of biography and some sort of reflection on the past, make yourselves comfortable, here is the potted history of a pedagogic and trade union dinosaur turned ghost. Necessarily to give me something to say I have to reach quite far back into the past, so to the older ones among you it may bring a few moments of nostalgia, and almost certainly some minutes of boredom; to the younger ones I apologise for the use of strange obsolete technical terms like "Houghton", or "TVEI", or "strike committee" or "Classics teacher". . .

To begin, I had my first brush with teaching in the late 60s, a time of teacher shortage when you could get a job as a “*temporary, unqualified teacher*”, or to give me my full official title at the time: “*temporary unqualified teacher of English, Geography and History*”. When I actually got to the school I found that this also included Drama and Modern Studies! With this last one, Modern Studies, that was me, coming from the English education system and a flirtation with the priesthood in Ireland, teaching a subject which I had never even heard of before! Basically, with no training and having just spent three or four years studying Latin, Greek and philosophy, I was given a pile of textbooks, a timetable and a belt and told to get on with it. This was at Beath Junior High in Fife and I have often wondered why the experience did not put me off teaching for ever.

But it didn't and four years later I finally entered teaching proper - if you could ever describe teaching Classics as teaching proper. You would have to search very hard the length and breadth of Scotland to find evidence of any Classics teaching now in the state system; back then it was a different situation. I was offered three jobs by Fife Council, told to go round the schools, and let the Director know which one I wanted! In this way I ended up in Buckhaven High School simply because the PT there said I could have all the Greek teaching – all five of them! Pupils, that is, not classes!

By this stage I have to confess I had made a mistake, a mistake quite a few others had made – including, I know for sure, two in this room - while still at Moray House I had naively joined the SSTA! . . . Hands up the rest of you! . . . It took me just over a year to suss the SSTA out, and the catalyst was the campaign which led to the Houghton settlement in 1974 which began when I was now PT Classics in the Anderson High in Shetland. It was clear to me that the EIS members in the school and nationally were committed to solving a serious salaries crisis while the SSTA members in the school shilly shallied and did nothing or very little. I left the SSTA, joined the EIS and immediately became convenor of the “strike committee” determined to make a programme of rolling strikes as effective as possible. We played our small but proportionate part in the EIS hugely successful campaign in achieving the Houghton settlement of 31% rise in salaries. It has often been said that that was the first time teachers felt reasonably well paid – as you probably do now!

But back then the feeling didn't last; wage inflation took its toll, standards were soon eroded and we were back on the campaign trail again under the charismatic leadership of John Pollock, and this led to the Clegg report in 1980 which gave us rises of 17 – 25%, depending on who you were.

In some ways these were preliminary skirmishes and the big crunch came in 1984-86 when, again led by John Pollock and a very talented national Executive, or rather a small cabal within the Executive, we conducted what has often been described as the longest, most sustained campaign in the history of Scottish education and succeeded despite the Thatcher government. This was the Rose Galts, the Peter Andrews, the Tom Devaneys, the Les Fultons and the George Rubienskys of the EIS at their best.

By then I had moved from Shetland and was at Blairgowrie High and had become active in this Local Association and on Tayside Regional Executive. Bill Henderson was of course also at Blair, a bright-eyed, youthful and active member of the SSTA – but, I like to think under my influence, he left the SSTA one week and virtually the next, pushed by me, he was our Treasurer – probably the best single favour I have done this Local Association. Certainly it has been long-lasting, as Bill has been Treasurer now for 23 years, a runaway record in the annals of this Local Association.

This period holds my most colourful memories of my time in the EIS – the marches and rallies in Edinburgh and Glasgow and Ayr, our banner fluttering amid scores of others, John Pollock's powerful speeches to huge gatherings of teachers and supporters, targeted strikes, curricular and extra-curricular boycotts, even packed and passionate LA general meetings – EIS trade unionism of a bygone age – and I must say I revelled in it!

Things seemed to become more settled in the late 80s and 90s. I ascribe this to two important factors: one, the SJNC at last began to function more efficiently and, two, Colin Mackie started off on his record-breaking 16-year reign as Secretary of this Local Association. So, Douglas, your target is another 14 years!

By now I was on National Council and the Law and Tenure Committee. Council and AGMs were still places of heated debate – curriculum developments especially Standard Grade, TVEI, promoted post structures, equal opportunities etc.

But, to cut a long story short, my gradual protracted demise and transition to ghosthood began in the mid-1990s. I had what many might, unkindly, and quite wrongly, see as a three year virtual holiday doing Italian at Strathclyde. The end of the course coincided with changes at Blairgowrie High and I found myself with sudden unexpected early retirement – the negotiation of which was largely managed expertly by Colin – followed by part-time teaching in the private sector backwater of Butterstone and Kilgraston – where I found Graeme popping up occasionally as active as he is in the state system. And while at Butterstone I found it amusingly significant the way they always referred to the SJNC pay scales as the “EIS scales” – that was the label constantly used in documents such as contracts and all discussions about pay. I eventually escaped the private sector with the help of Graham and the EIS lawyers, by taking voluntary redundancy (not because the subject was redundant but because they had too many Latin teachers!).

Now after two years of determined inactivity on the supply list I have to recognise that my demise is complete and I am reluctantly giving up my active involvement with the EIS. I am now fading away into a twilight of DIYing, voluntary work, jogging, learning Arabic and hopefully making the odd visit to Italy and Greece.

Maybe surprisingly, the EIS has probably been the aspect of my strange and curtailed career I have most enjoyed. Why? – something to do with the rich tapestry of plotting, backstabbing, horse-trading and ego-trips?

No, we all know that that's not what the EIS is about. On the contrary, the nights in Edinburgh in jovial company in the days of weekend Council meetings – concentrating hard to follow Alec Munro's fast heavily accented dialogue as he downed whiskies with no apparent detrimental affect on mind or body, or the equally good company and drinks consumed in Oban, those in Stirling, more in Inverness, the many in Perth and Dundee – but never as many as Bill Henderson; but above all the main qualities of the EIS which are its liberal framework, its all-inclusiveness and its members, the many examples of professionalism, talent, integrity and real friendliness which characterises so many of its activists – nationally and locally – including so many here now and some sadly no longer with us.

In fact as I look around me here I do not feel the pessimism that some have voiced for the future of an active EIS. I am glad the website is in much more capable hands (and its new format looks fantastic) and that there is so much ability and commitment among the office bearers and on the Executive. Thank you again for this evening – it is a very pleasant way to finally lay to rest what remains of my active connection with the EIS, and I wish you all the best for the future, a future which probably includes a Tory government and certainly public service cuts. I hope you weather any storm as well as we weathered Thatcher's storm. Thank you.