

# eis

The Educational  
Institute of Scotland



## **Perth & Kinross Local Association**

# **NEWSLETTER**

January 2011

## **Dear Member,**

Many Perth & Kinross members attended the EIS march and rally, “Why Must Our Children Pay,” in Glasgow on Saturday 6th March last year. This was despite the fact that Education & Children Services in Perth & Kinross had not experienced any significant cuts in its front line budget over the last three school years. This was most evident in the area of teacher numbers. The number of teachers employed in Scottish schools has fallen by 3000 since the SNP came to power in 2007. In that time the number of teachers employed by Perth & Kinross has remained relatively stable and other cuts in services have occurred mostly at the centre, not at the chalkface.

However, as we begin a new year it is clear that the process of implementing cuts in our area is gathering pace. The announcements last term regarding the phasing out of the use of Expressive Arts specialists for RCCT cover and the proposed removal of the majority of nursery teachers

from nursery classes are only the first steps in what will be a difficult road ahead. It is yet unclear as to what will remain of the Expressive Arts service or how many nursery pupils will still have a full-time nursery teacher at the end of this process.

In December we also saw the offer from PKC to certain Principal Teachers (Subject) to express interest in the Council’s Voluntary Severance Scheme. The only way that any expression of interest will result in a package being offered would be if it was possible for faculty arrangements to be put in place and potential savings made by not replacing the retiring Principal Teacher. These offers were made despite, in our view, there being a local agreement from 2006 that Principal Teachers (Subject) were to be retained and current faculty arrangements remain as they stood in 2006. This agreement was based on the recognition that subject leadership and expertise were vital in the promotion of effective learning and teaching and developing curricular change. It is

our view that, in light of the existing local agreement, that all Principal Teachers (Subject) who are allowed to go should be replaced and the expansion of any faculty arrangements be abandoned.

There are also presently a number of teachers who are on temporary or fixed term contracts and there must be concern over their future employment. However, the EIS will be pressing the authority to meet the requirements set out in the local agreement from 2003 where the conditions for the use of temporary and fixed term contracts were laid out. Where the post is one of continuing need and not for temporary cover of substantive post holders, then a request for a permanent contract should be considered and in most circumstances granted.

There were also moves by the Council before Christmas for the EIS to accept a policy entitled, "Framework for Managing Transformation, Change and Improvement," which in reality was a policy that included the

option of compulsory redundancy for teachers. This was rejected by the EIS and the other professional associations. The EIS policy on compulsory redundancy for teachers is very clear. If Perth & Kinross Council were to move to enforcing compulsory redundancies on our members, despite previous assurances on their part, a local ballot on industrial action by all EIS members in Perth & Kinross would follow immediately.

Not only are EIS members coming under pressure locally, but there is a mood nationally that reflects an anti-teacher attitude resulting in many calls for changes to our conditions of service contained within "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century." The Scottish Government's offer of the 17th November 2010 gave the 32 local authorities a choice of achieving government targets in education, police numbers and free personal care which would result in councils receiving support to achieve a lower level of cuts. A major condition set by the Scottish Government was that local authorities had to agree to

the continuation of the Council Tax freeze that currently operates. The conditions that relate specifically to education are as follows;

- Maintain the pupil teacher ratio in P1 – 3.
- Protect the number of teacher posts as far as possible in order to secure places for all probationers in the Induction Year with sufficient number of posts to accommodate the current intake of probationers once they achieve the Standard for Full Registration and generally attempt to reduce teacher unemployment.
- Remove salary conservation.
- Move the Teacher Leave Year to 40 days per annum for the calculation of family leave entitlements.
- Freeze entry into the Chartered Teacher Scheme.
- Create an independently chaired review of the McCrone Agreement ('A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century') that will report by June 2011.

In return the Scottish Government would seek, by the end of January 2011, to initiate the following;

- A pay freeze for teachers in years 2011 / 2012 and 2012 / 2013.
- Commit to an increase in contact time for probationers to 0.9 FTE
- Place all supply teachers on Point 1 of the Main Grade Scale and pay them only for actual hours worked.

In this way sufficient savings could be made to allow councils to be supported and suffer a lower level of cuts than previously indicated. All 32 local authorities have signed this deal with John Swinney, the Finance Minister.

It is the EIS view that the agreement in 2001 was a result of the three parties; the Scottish Government, COSLA and the Professional Associations coming together to set out the way forward for Scottish Education. Not everyone achieved what they would have wished, but signed the agreement in good faith. For one of the parties to set up an independent review of the

agreement without the involvement of teachers through negotiations at the SNCT is extremely regrettable and does not bode well for the future. It seems that, for Scottish Education to stagger on after the implementation of these proposed budget cuts, teachers will have to carry the burden of a personal financial cost as well as endure deteriorations to their working conditions.

There is also a move to reduce the wider cost of Education by hitting teachers' pensions. The Hutton Review into pensions suggests that teachers will be expected to pay more into their pensions whilst at the same time receiving less. For those teachers in Perth & Kinross who are approaching retirement there is no need to consider 'jumping ship' as all payments into the pension scheme are protected up to the point where any possible changes would come into effect. However, the EIS is mounting a vigorous defence against such proposals, but Hutton's recommendation that the index link for pensions should

be the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and not the previously used Retail Price Index (RPI) for annual pension increases has already been enacted by the government. This means an immediate loss of around £150 per annum for all members of the Scottish Teachers' Superannuation Scheme (SSTS).

With regard to the impending proposal for a pay freeze for the coming two years, the EIS submitted a narrative claim for a pay increase at a meeting of the SNCT on Wednesday 19th January. COSLA and the Scottish Government intimated that they would be imposing a pay freeze for 2001 / 2012 and 2012 / 2013. They also outlined their wish list described above with an unspecified commitment to teacher numbers. The EIS has not agreed to any of these changes to our conditions of service and the SNCT will meet again on Wednesday 9th February.

The whole of the cuts agenda is wrapped up in a barrage of anti-teacher propaganda both in the media and through the utterances

of certain sectors of the political classes. If the cuts are to be softened, it seems that teachers will be required to drop their living standards and work in even more stressful conditions while carrying a higher level of workload that currently exists. Some politicians have suggested in recent weeks that the abolition of non-contact time would be an excellent money saver. The fact that it does not appear in the current proposals does not mean that it, or other equally extreme measures, cannot re-surface in the future when cuts for years 2 and 3 of current austerity process are discussed.

This mood is clearly evident in the suggestions that supply teachers be paid at the lowest point of the scale and only for actual hours worked and that probationers should have more class contact during their Induction Year. The freeze on the numbers of Chartered Teachers casts doubt on the whole idea of encouraging teachers to stay in the classroom and not to opt for promotion as the only route to increase their earning power and enhance their career.

2011 will be a critical year for Scottish teachers and for Scottish Education. Although the Coalition Government in Westminster appears determined to remain in power for as long as possible, the Scottish Parliament faces elections this May. Nationally, the EIS will launch its own 'Manifesto for Education' in February which will set out the case for the continued investment in Education that Scotland needs. Individually, EIS members in Perth & Kinross can contact their own MP and MSP to register their concerns over the proposed changes to our pension scheme and the potential cuts to our local education budget. There may also be the need for a local ballot for targeted, industrial action if Perth & Kinross decide to go down the road of compulsory redundancies for teachers. Correspondingly, there may also be the need to hold national ballots with regard to any proposed changes in teachers' current national conditions of service and pension arrangements.

We have all enjoyed a long period of stability in terms of our employment and working conditions. There has been some slippage in our salary levels since 2001, but in general the 2001 Agreement has served teachers and our pupils well. There have been no teacher strikes for a considerable period of time and, indeed, many in the profession will not have experienced taking strike action. However, the time is fast approaching when decisions will have to be made on whether we, as a profession, accept or reject these changes to our conditions of service, our standard of living and the level of service we would wish to provide for our pupils in Perth & Kinross. The circumstances surrounding the rush for huge cuts to public expenditure were not caused by the vast majority of people working and living in Perth & Kinross (A past Chief Executive of the Royal Bank of Scotland did attend Perth Academy and bankers' bonuses may have bought property here!). Yet it is the young people in our schools, their parents and the staff that work unstintingly to providing a high quality education

for all pupils that are going to suffer the consequences of unrestrained greed in our financial institutions.

Politicians should remember that the money spent on equipping the next generation with the skills they need to survive in this global economy of ours is not a cost, but an investment. Failure to maintain that investment will consign this country to a perpetual, economic backwater where mediocrity will reign supreme, as it seems to do with our politicians by the manner in which they have responded to the current financial crisis. We all need to continue to ask the question – Why must our children pay?

Douglas Stewart

Local Association Secretary