



A Word From The President

Whatever about other unions' efforts in respect of the ICTU-sponsored day of strike action

planned for 30th March 2009, our members - and our colleagues in ASTI, INTO, and IFUT - are to be congratulated for giving a strong mandate for industrial action, up to and including strike action in response to the government's unilateral withdrawal from the current National Agreement and its imposition, on the public service alone, of tax cuts disguised as a so-called 'pension levy'.

Having conducted our ballots and secured our mandate prior to others, TUI and the other teacher unions agreed to ICTU's request to commit one of our strike days to the ICTU agenda – the re-opening of formal discussions on the overall economic situation. Government issued that invitation on 24 March 2009. In turn, ICTU

recommended to unions that the strike be deferred. In agreeing reluctantly to this course of action, TUI will watch closely the progress and outcome to the renewed discussions and the Budget on 7 April 2009, and our mandate for two days' strike action still remains.

We have already acted on the mandate for industrial action our members gave us by issuing work-to-rule directives at both second and third level. I urge members in all workplaces affected to ensure full adherence to these directives. Also, if the government does not accede to TUI and ASTI's request that Whole-School Evaluation and Subject Inspection be set aside, we will consider bringing them within the current embargo. Additional work-to-rule type action will also be considered over the coming weeks such as the time-intensive paper-pushing exercises required of schools and institutes with which government is fixated, but which add no benefit to teaching and learning.

Parallel to this action, our campaign against the education cuts and the untold damage being inflicted on the education system continues. Members and branches are encouraged to highlight through the County PPEF Committees, and through representations to local political representatives and local media, the impact on schools and colleges of the cutbacks and, in particular, the haemorrhage of teaching jobs and destruction of vital education services at second and third level.

This is a time of serious challenge to the education system and to the trade union movement. Our forthcoming Annual Congress is an opportunity for us to present a coherent, strong and unified defence of our members' working conditions and the education system that we understand and value.

Where we stand

The recent ballot on strike and industrial action has given an overwhelming mandate to the Executive Committee and is a very strong expression of the anger of TUI members at the manner in which the Government is handling the economic crisis.

The original intention of the four teacher unions when they initiated the ballot was that there would be increasing forms of industrial action, culminating if necessary in strike action in accordance with the ballot (ie of up to two days). Shortly after the ballot commenced the Irish Congress of Trade Unions decided to extend its campaign which it had launched in pursuit of its Ten Point Plan 'There is a better, fairer way'. It requested all affiliated unions to ballot on forms of industrial action and strike action with a view to a one day national strike on Monday 30th March.

The teacher unions had at this time already commenced a ballot for industrial action which was very similar to that being requested by the ICTU and accordingly agreed to complete the ballot already commenced. This was done and the outcome as set out elsewhere was the resounding majority favouring the course of action put forward by the Executive Committee.



TUI General Secretary Peter MacMenamin pictured with ASTI General Secretary John White and IFUT General Secretary Mike Jennings.

Second Level/Further Education Action for Schools

The nature of the industrial action was then discussed by the Executive Committee of TUI and following agreement with ASTI joint action was issued recently for second level schools.

For third level colleges the action as determined by the Executive is set out in a letter to college branches. This action is set out in the letter on page 2.

This was issued by way of a directive and compliance with directive is mandatory on all members of the union.

Industrial action – short of strike action

The industrial action (of the work to rule nature) is being taken as a strong expression of the anger that teachers have with the overall manner in which the government is addressing the current economic situation. This includes:

- education cuts announced in the budget of the 14th October;
- the unilateral withdrawal from the National Partnership Agreement and
- the commitment to a pay increase in September 2009
- the unfair way in which the government has to date sought to attack public service by way of a so called pension levy.

It is the intention of the Executive Committee that this industrial action will be ongoing and will be added to by other directives which will be reinforced immediately after Easter, for example class size and teaching hours directives for schools.

The nature of the work to rule industrial action for schools and for the colleges is set out in the next columns

ICTU co-ordinated strike Action

The ICTU strike threat was focussed particularly on the unilateral withdrawal from the National Pay Agreement. A day of national strike action was planned for Monday 30th March.

The strike action is part of a coordinated effort on behalf of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and is in support of the Congress's initiative to reopen discussions with the Government with a view to a fairer way of dealing with the economic situation.

The Executive Committee saw this as being clearly comprehended by the mandate given to it in the ballot and decided to support this day of strike action and on this basis supported the action.

UPDATE

On Wednesday 25th March the ICTU received an invitation from the Government to engage in discussions on the handling of the economic situation. The Executive Council of ICTU considered this invitation and accepted it. ICTU indicated that as far as it was concerned the threat of action had brought about the desired consequences and advised affiliate unions to this end. TUI's Executive Committee then met in emergency session on Wednesday evening and formally withdrew the strike notice thereby deferring the strike. **The other aspects of the industrial action remain in place.**

Directive letter to schools

20th March, 2009

To: All Second Level School reps
Second Level Branch Secretaries
Executive Committee

Re: Strike action – 30th March, Industrial Action

Dear Colleague

A ballot of members of TUI endorsed industrial action and strike action up to two days.

All TUI members are directed:

1. To withdraw their services from all schools, colleges and centres on Monday, March 30th, 2009.
2. To withdraw from the following activities with effect from Tuesday, 31st March:
 - (a) Parent/teacher meetings outside of school time.
 - (b) Staff meetings outside of school time.
 - (c) School development planning meetings.

Public service unions including the teacher unions - ASTI, TUI and INTO - are taking strike action on March 30th to demonstrate their anger at the Government's inequitable and unfair handling of the current economic crisis, the pensions levy and the education cutbacks. 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.

State examinations are designated as essential services and the State Examinations Commission has put in place contingency arrangements to deal with examinations scheduled for that day. Parents and pupils can be assured that the examinations will be implemented this year in the same professional, objective manner as hitherto.

TUI members are taking the same action as ASTI members.

If the Government enters talks with ICTU, it is unlikely that the strike on March 30th will go ahead.

Yours sincerely



Peter MacMenamin
General Secretary

Directive letter to third level colleges

23rd March 2009

Re: Notice of Industrial Action

Dear President

A ballot of members of TUI endorsed industrial action and strike action up to two days. Notice of strike action has been issued separately for 30th March 2009.

All TUI members now are directed to withdraw from the activities set out below with effect from Tuesday, 31st March.

- any work in or for the institute on an unpaid basis.
- local partnership committees
- any new initiatives – including “accelerated” courses - unless and until these are the subject of consultation, negotiation and agreement. In this regard, each initiative proposed should be considered by the union on its merits
- any further extension or development of electronic modes of work unless and until it is the subject of consultation, negotiation and agreement

Assistant Lecturers/Lecturers are directed

- not to accept duties in regard to timetabling

In addition the TUI considers the modernisation agenda is on hold until such time as the suspension of due pay increases is rescinded.

Public service unions including the teacher unions - ASTI, TUI, INTO and IFUT - are taking action to demonstrate their anger at the Government's inequitable and unfair handling of the current economic crisis, including the refusal to pay the national agreement increases in September, the so called “pensions levy” and the education cutbacks. TUI members 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.

Please take this letter as official notice of the industrial action as set out above.

Yours sincerely



Peter MacMenamin
General Secretary

TUI Ballot for Industrial Action

Total Entitled to vote as per TUI schedule	13,833	%
Total Poll	9,207	66.6
Invalid/Spoiled votes	456	3.2
Total Valid Poll	8,751	63.4

Result of the Count

Vote	Count	Result %
Yes	6,084	69.5
No	2,667	30.5
Total	8,751	100.0

25th March, 2009.

TO: All Second Level and Third Level Representatives
All Second Level and Third Level Branch Secretaries
Executive Committee

RE: DEFERRAL OF ONE DAY STRIKE ACTION

Dear Colleague,

An emergency meeting of the TUI Executive Committee yesterday the 25th March decided, in the light of the advice of the Irish Congress of Trade Union, to defer the strike action which had been called for Monday 30th March. This action is also been taken by each of the other teacher unions.

The position of the TUI in regard to this strike is as follows:

The TUI ballot for industrial action, up to and including two days of strike action, was taken in cooperation with the other teacher unions and the mandate for this action was in co-operation with the other teacher unions. After the teachers' ballot the ICTU called on all unions for a one day of strike action to highlight the breakdown of the partnership process and in particular the unilateral withdrawal from agreements in respect of pay increases under the national agreements. The Teacher unions committed one of the strike days to the ICTU agenda.

On Tuesday ICTU received an invitation from Government to engage in discussions in relation to the overall economic situation. This invitation has been accepted by ICTU and it has advised affiliate Unions that the original objective of the strike action has now been met. Accordingly TUI, in co-operation with the other teacher unions, has deferred the strike called for 30th March.

The TUI position remains that industrial action (of a work to rule nature) in both schools and colleges is in place and remains in place. The union's opposition to the way in which the Government is handling the current economic situation remains and the strike mandate which the union has received remains.

The situation will continue to be monitored by the Executive Committee and members will be advised accordingly.

Yours sincerely



Peter MacMenamin
General Secretary

25th March, 2009.

TO: Second Level VEC and C&C Representatives
Second Level VEC and C&C Branch Secretaries
Executive Committee

RE: CLARIFICATION OF DIRECTIVE

Dear Colleague,

On March, 20th, all members were directed:

To withdraw from the following activities with effect from Tuesday, 31st March

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

A number of clarifications have been sought from this office in regard to this directive and the following are intended as clarifications. These clarifications are being given in co-operation with ASTI.

The only parent/teacher meetings referred to in part (a) of the directive are those set out in circular M58/04 i.e. three formal parent/teacher meetings per year which commence at 4.15 p.m. and conclude at 6.45 p.m. There should therefore be no such meetings outside of school time.

The staff meetings referred to in part (b) of the directive are those set out in circular M58/04 i.e. one staff meeting per term held half in and half out of school time. Staff meetings may continue to take place but must conclude at the end of normal school time.

The school development planning meetings referred to in part (c) of the directive refer to meetings additional to timetable hours held with the specific purpose of preparing/developing The School Plan. It does not include inservice days/workshop sessions conducted by the school development planning initiative inservice team for which teachers are freed from normal teaching duties. Post-holders with responsibility for school development planning should continue to carry out their duties.

Whole School Evaluation and Subject Inspections:

The ASTI and TUI have written to the Chief Inspector asking that WSE and subject inspections be set aside for a period of time in the context of the education cutbacks.

The industrial action set out above continues notwithstanding the deferral of the strike called for 30th March. This directive has effect from 31st March, 2009.

Yours sincerely,



Peter MacMenamin
General Secretary

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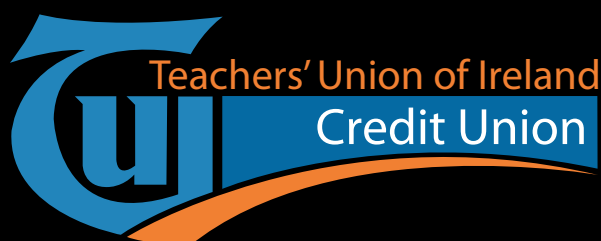
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eMail: info@tuicu.ie Web: www.tuicu.ie

VTOS - the success story that is open-ended

'Unfinished business', 'a work in progress', 'a bold fresh start' –just some of the phrases used in 2009 as we celebrate and reflect on some of the anniversaries this year brings. It is one hundred years since founding of the Transport Union (now SIPTU), ninety years since the first Dáil met and the Limerick soviet was formed. All of these in different ways made a bold claim for fair share, for democracy, for equality, inclusion and empowerment.

Compared to these momentous events, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) is just a youth of twenty summers. VTOS co-ordinators gathered in Castleconnell, Co Limerick during Adult Learner's Week, to celebrate, review and re-envision the programme in a new century. The review featured keynote addresses, a civic reception, panel discussions, workshops, music, songs, a rich ferment of reflection, some serious analysis and pointers for ways to improve the service in the years ahead. This account features some of the issues raised in the presentations and subsequent discussions.

Building Dynamic Learning Communities

This was one of the themes of AONTAS president Marion Duffy in a keynote address where she outlined the "ripple-up" effect of a VTOS student finding a meaningful learning experience with others in a supportive centre. Tracing the transition and growth of a parent, frustrated with being unable to help the children with homework, coming to confront the barriers, finding the voice to tell her story, experiencing the help, solidarity and joy of being with co-learners was, she said the key to building learning families and learning communities. This intergenerational education is also vital, particularly for building new communities that are often without the wider family support structures.

Giving adults the language, analysis and tools to challenge politicians and candidates on their policies, was an ongoing theme of a number of speakers and one of the greatest hopes for meaningful change in the future.

In affirming the learner-centred ethos of VTOS, Ms Duffy quoted Kahlili Gibran:

"No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of your knowledge."

She firmly believed in 'WB Yeats' view that "education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire."

A course at which you will succeed

This was the motto of Helen Keogh the National Co-ordinator of VTOS, who has guided the programme and supported learners throughout the country for several years. Outlining the growth and impact of the programme, some of the key elements of its success she said were its accessibility in over 100 centres around the country, its adult ethos and its professionalism. The centres she said had upskilled people but with an educational focus and over five thousand adults had benefited annually. The flexibility and diversity of its provision was special and this allows VTOS and its learners to respond particularly to the challenges of today. The programme she considered was the "anchor tenant" in a patchwork of provision for adult learners.

Looking beyond the demands of the market

Ms Kathleen Lynch, professor of Equality Studies in UCD, gave a keynote address in which she called for an informed intellectual debate on the kind of society we want to create and the kind we want to avoid.

"We have a choice: we can either create a highly unequal and polarised society with a minority of very wealthy people and a rising number of poor and vulnerable people, or we can create an egalitarian society, where no one will be destitute, where there will be high quality health care and excellent education for all age groups; where each will have a safe and secure home, where there is a well resourced welfare system based on a concept of rights rather than discretion and charity; where there is an accessible and affordable public transport system and proper

supports for both the care of children, and of older and other vulnerable people."

In a wide ranging address Ms Lynch exploded the illusion that we have the most caring society and the best education system in Europe. "We have one of the lowest rates of social expenditures on education, housing, transport and welfare within the EU. Our lack of commitment to the public sphere is evident in many concrete ways, from the lack of public spaces for play for children (especially safe indoor places) to the lack of public sports facilities, to the lack of investment in parks and public amenities in so many towns and villages."

"Learning to think carefully"

This she suggested essential and in calling for a review of the purely economic skills, Ms Lynch emphasized:

"For most of humanity, much of life is lived in a state of profound and deep interdependency and for some prolonged dependency (Kittay, 1999). Humanity may be characterised as homo sapiens or homo economicus but we are also undoubtedly 'homo interdependicus' and at times 'homo dependicus'. It is time to take love, care and solidarity work seriously in education".

The language for a new vision

Calling for more informed political and social education in schools and colleges, Ms Lynch alerted that young people become adults without knowing the difference between left and right, between liberal and conservative, socialist and capitalist, feminist and anti-feminist, egalitarian and anti-egalitarian. All they are exposed to are soundbites and diatribes.

They have no political vocabulary in which to analyse and to speak. And this is why we find it hard to create a new vision, and a new politics. The intellectual ground is arid; people literally do not know what you are talking about. In this vacuum we were reminded that "the view from nowhere is nothing".

In the discussion that followed Ms Lynch outlined the need for all schools and colleges to promote an egalitarian culture among its staff and students. The right of adults to a meaningful education, in a visually stimulating environment, the need for respect and to look out for the most vulnerable was also raised.

The proposed new entrance requirements for mature students to universities were of particular concern in that the criteria was narrowly market focused, expensive and suited only to those with high IT skills.

Future focus

The globalised market has dislocated communities in Ireland and across the world in the name of cheap goods, services and “free trade”. In this climate education must not be considered another commodity to be short-term traded between those who could pay for it.

Quality educational services across Europe had come from long-term investment and many of the outcomes are not immediately quantifiable. The issues of ethical procurement, fair trade and local sourcing were the business of all educational

providers, particularly those which deal in citizenship, democracy and inclusion.

Up-skilling with reflection, was called for particularly in the context of an unstable financial world, diminishing oil energy reserves and accelerating climate change. Attention to building core competencies and skills in communities towards increasing the levels and scope of the “literacies”, including digital and eco-literacies were also considered.

Work/life balance, food, health, learner supports and IT issues were discussed in a range of workshops.

Intercultural diversity was rated as strength of VTOS centers and a well of knowledge to be tapped further in the years ahead. The harvesting of ideas and wisdom from the many cultures which now enrich us, as well as from Irish culture, was seen as a challenge that is only beginning to be explored.

As this conference on VTOS 20 concluded, one was reminded that it was the voters of Limerick East some 40 years earlier, who elected a Minister for Education who declared that Secondary Education would be free to all. A vision and a plan in difficult



Delegates from VTOS conference pictured with Minister Sean Haughey

economic times...still some unfinished business?

It was the Inis Mór poet Máirtín Ó Direáin who advised us of the need to “Coigil Aithinne d’aislinge”. Let’s refuel our vision.

Details of the events of the VTOS 20 conference are available on the website www.navc.ie. VTOS centres around the country may be contacted through the local VEC or through the Department of Education and Science. www.vtos.ie

Jim McNamara is the current chairperson of the National Association of VTOS Co-ordinators and may be contacted at jimm@organiccollege.com

RMA News

As I wrote in the last TUI News, Galway hosts our keynote event this year. I can now confirm that our AGM will be in the Galway Bay Hotel, Salthill and that we have a fantastic offer for this event which is taking place on the 11th and 12th May. The cost will be €55 for bed and breakfast per person sharing per night and €85 for bed and breakfast single and details are being sent to all members. A tour of Brigit’s Gardens is being organized for the afternoon on the 12th May.

By the time you read this we will have returned from our trip to Newcastle, Co Down. All the planning is done and all are looking forward to it, I promise you photos in the next edition.

Many of our members are concerned about the financial situation the uncertainty and lack of clarity at this time. Clarity has been given to the levy applying to the over 70s.

It will not apply to the over 70s, regardless of whether they hold a medical card or not. One reader wrote to clarify the point but as I pointed out to her it was anything but clear at the time of going to print. As Brian Cowen said in the Dáil when referring to the pensions levy: “it does not apply to pensions, for now.”

Many of you have written and phoned about the deduction of 1% from your increase due in December but only paid by many VECs in January and later. We all feel the frustration, annoyance and the unfairness of being deducted for something over which you had no control. It will be possible to reclaim this deduction in 2010.

Anyone with the medical card is exempt from the 1% levy. To claim this it is necessary to provide your previous employer with evidence of your medical card.

I have never marched as often through the capital city as I have in the last six months!

You get a totally different view of the city by walking down the middle of the street than you would ever get by walking on the footpaths. For one thing the brightness in the middle of the street is wonderful and your view of the buildings is also special. You notice details that you would never see by just walking on the footpaths. I recommend the next opportunity you get to walk down the middle of O’Connell Street - take this route for the view whatever the political motive of the march.

See you in Galway.

Christy Conville
Secretary.

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M.A. in Teaching & Learning - Online

Overview

Hibernia College's M.A. in Teaching & Learning provides today's primary and post-primary teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to deal with current issues in the modern classroom. Specific areas covered include additional learning needs; diversity, development and disadvantage; i-learning and contemporary issues in education.

Delivered by experienced educators with a focus on application in the Irish classroom, the programme provides the tools and knowledge to enable teachers bring the latest innovations and best practice into the class setting. Because the content is based on strategies and techniques (rather than a particular classroom curriculum) graduates from the programme will be able to apply their new skills regardless of the age of the students with whom they work.

The programme consists of 12 modules plus a thesis. Each module represents 5 ECTS credits, is completed online and consists of 10 weeks of downloadable multimedia lectures and live online tutorials. A unique aspect of this programme is that each module can also be completed as a stand-alone CDP course.



Modular delivery

Hibernia College's online Master of Arts in Teaching and Learning is designed to be completed in a modular fashion. Three modules combine to form one of four certificates in:

- Additional learning needs
- Diversity, development and disadvantage
- i-Learning
- Contemporary issues in education

On completion of these four certificates, the student is awarded a Higher Diploma in Teaching and Learning. If the student wishes to progress to the Master's award, they must then complete a module in research methods and submit a thesis.

Key Facts

- Assessment by written submitted reports
- Focus on application in the Irish classroom
- Delivered by experienced educators
- Fully HETAC accredited
- Next intake September 2009
- Modules can be completed as stand alone continuing professional development (CPD) courses

For more details and to enrol visit
www.hiberniacollege.net/matl

Hibernia College is a HETAC accredited online college offering quality assured blended and online education programmes



ACT! Demonstration

February 21st 2009

Over 100,000 people marched through Dublin on February 21st to demonstrate their discontent and anger at the Government's handling of the current economic crisis. The demonstration was organised by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the participants were members of both public and private sector unions, including teacher unions TUI, ASTI, INTO and IFUT.



On The Move – TUI Credit Union

TUI Credit Union has taken the opportunity to purchase a new, spacious and well equipped office premises that will enable us to maintain our current service to members and to respond effectively to the demands of providing financial services into the future.

The Credit Union is now located at:
8, The Exchange, Calmount Park, Ballymount, Dublin 12 (easily accessible from the M50 Ballymount exit)
Telephone 01 4266060 Fax 01 4266004
1850 741600 (outside 01 area)
Email: info@tuicu.ie Web: www.tuicu.ie

Info@ncca moves online

info@ncca, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's tri-annual publication for teachers, will be published on 24th April in electronic format only.

The upside of the new production policy is that every teacher will have access to a copy of info@ncca, as opposed to sharing the copies previously received by each school, and, there will be an online survey in the April issue so that readers can record their response to both content and format.

According to the NCCA, the response to info@ncca has been overwhelmingly positive. Teachers, they say, have engaged with the 'teaching and learning in the classroom' approach and appreciate being informed on developments in curriculum and assessment.

In order to receive a copy of the next issue and all following issues, the NCCA is asking teachers to go to www.ncca.ie and subscribe by clicking on the 'Subscribe to Newsletter' banner. This will ensure that an email will be sent to each subscriber on publication.

Royal Irish Academy - An exhibition of treasures spanning 1,500 years of Irish History

Running up to 15th May and from 2nd -19th June 2009

The Academy also offers a free lunch series on Wednesdays that may be of interest to students and teachers.

Interested? Check out the Royal Irish Academy at www.ria.ie or phone 01 6090620

Annual Congress 2009

Congress 2009 takes place at the Rochestown Park Hotel, Douglas, Cork between Tuesday April 14th and Thursday April 16th 2009. Check TUI's website (www.tui.ie) for updates, speeches and press statements over the course of the conference.



Congress Organising Committee

Back (l-r) Donal McElligott, Ger Brennan, Finbarr Loftus, Pat Ahern, Pat Conway, Vivienne MacSweeney, Helen McGrath
Front (l-r) Niall McCarthy, Maureen Harley, Yvonne Bane, Hilary O' Byrne, Fergal McCarthy, Micahael Vaughan
(David O' Mahoney, Gerard Forde and Michael Gillespie not pictured)