

The White Paper: what to do next

The motion and amendments agreed in opposition to the Government's White Paper on Education reform are to be welcomed.

They are a step in the right direction and a re-engagement with the idea that the Union is most effective when it is willing to use strike action to oppose Tory policy.

Recent industrial action in schools – on pensions, workload etc - failed to stop the Tories, and we should do what we can to avoid the repetition of mistakes made in the past.

So what should be done?

Firstly, our action needs a set of clear, precise, and achievable demands. NUT members and other

workers need to understand what we are fighting for. The demands need to match the felt needs of teachers – if the demands of our action are seen to be sensible, and our campaign strategy as plausible, we will mobilise all our strength.

We should avoid general waffle about 'defending education' in favour of specifics, and we should not strike so our leaders "can talk to the Government". Members want to know what we will be demanding when we negotiate with the Government, and will not be reassured by the idea of striking for our leaders to have a general "chat" with Nicky Morgan.

We suggest these demands:-

- ☑ **A limit on working hours, starting with a maximum 48 hour working week**
- ☑ **A national pay scale with automatic incremental progression and an end to all forms of PRP**
- ☑ **A qualified teacher for every classroom**
- ☑ **A pension/retirement age of 60**
- ☑ **Cancel the student debt of those entering the profession.**

Secondly, we should not allow our strike to be portrayed simply as a strike against forced academisation. Unfortunately this is already happening in the press. Leaving aside legal arguments about such action, more importantly our members in academies will be less likely to be supportive of such action.

Instead the action must be presented as a campaign for a national contract and a levelling up of pay and conditions across all schools.

Thirdly, we should recognise that isolated, single-day strikes which take place every six months - no matter how big they are – will not shift the Government. We should be clear and honest with members: to defeat this government we need to plan a clear programme of strike action that escalates.

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM 2016

CHANGING LABOUR: CHANGING POLITICS

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The advantage of striking now is that we have a good example to follow. The BMA has ramped up the Junior Doctors' action despite the Government imposing a bad contract on them.

Fourthly, we should not tie ourselves to the slowest, least militant and most passive unions. We should urge the NASUWT, for example, to ballot and strike alongside us. If they don't, we should go ahead anyway as the agreed motion says. In the past, the idea of only striking when other education unions do so has been used by some of our leaders – who were not convinced we could win, and were outfaced by the Tories – to hold back, blaming the other unions, but being secretly relieved themselves.

We will be urging LANAC, the rank and file movement for NUT teachers to press for such a strategy.

Finally, we should recognise that we are in a different and better political situation than when we fought the Tories on Pensions.

One by-product of the 2008 banking crisis has been the emergence of new, left political movements across Europe, as well as the Bernie Sanders campaign in the US. Fortunately the political shape the new opposition has taken in Britain has resulted in the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour Party leader.

It is very important that Corbyn is asked to back our strikes and endorse our demands.

And we need a commitment from Labour, written into its next manifesto, to abolish academies and to set a national contract for teachers that is negotiated annually with the unions. That won't come without a fight inside Labour.

Up and down the country there are battles taking place between the Labour left and right on education, Trident, council cuts and nationalisation.

We urge NUT activists to join the Labour Party now, and fight for Labour to back our action. Urge all members to do likewise - we should join in our thousands. Now is the time for close links with the Labour Party.

Reject a left Brexit: Support the Executive amendment, 63.1. Oppose Motion 63

Motion 63 is perverse. In the name of opposing racism, the proposers advocate voting with the right-wing of the Tory Party and UKIP to get out of Europe.

Brexit will mean a sharp and very serious shift the right in British politics. The first victims will be migrants and refugees. Britain will be engulfed by a wave of xenophobia

and racism led by the Daily Express, Boris Johnson and Nigel Farage.

If Motion 63 is passed, NUT activists will have to return to schools and explain to members born in other EU states that the union is backing the right in the referendum. We will have to explain to those members why the union is helping the British far right persecute them, make their

ability to work here harder, and even see some of them kicked out of jobs here.

The idea that Brexit would be a victory for the left is idiotic.

Of course Cameron would resign – to be replaced by someone much worse. Not every crisis for Cameron is good for workers.

The Executive amendment at least avoids that stupidity, and will allow time for debate in the union. That's good. Unfortunately the Exec does not come out clearly to say the NUT should advocate staying in the EU.

We should vote to remain, and advocate workers' unity across Europe and a levelling up of pay, conditions and workers' rights. The EU framework is the best available framework for such campaigning.

Socialists should advocate a federal, united Europe. We should not help erect new, higher border fences. And the last thing we need is an even worse, more right wing Tory Government, and a new and harsher regime against immigrants.

