

NORFOLK NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE NORFOLK DIVISION OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS

ISSUE 13

Spring 2002

Editorial

This edition of Norfolk News brings you the latest information from those in the NUT who work for your interests at national as well as county level. There are articles from your executive member, Glenys Shepherd, from Pete Eldridge, the Divisional Secretary, and from Ray Russell for the Retired Teachers Association. In addition, Letitia Willins sends the latest information from the TBF and Glenys also updates us on the activities of the Joint Consultative Committee locally. Reorganisation continues to be a major concern within the County. Pete Eldridge has written a useful guide for all those whose schools are affected. Broadland is particularly targeted in the current discussions and Peter Ayres, Secretary of the Broadland Association, reports on recent events and reviews the situation.

For the many teachers who feel government changes have gone too far, the article about Sue Palmer's initiative called 'Time to Teach' will be welcome. Then, if you've never claimed tax relief on your Union subs, look for the guidance on how to do it! Finally, we have a couple of *classroom quips* to keep you smiling as you draw breath for the final few weeks of term.

If there are items you would like to see in the Newsletter, I am always happy to consider them. Letters sharing your views on current issues are also welcome, as are humorous anecdotes from the chalk face. Please send any contributions to:

Linda Brown - email: beck@weston278.freemove.co.uk

Tel and Fax: 01603 872762

Beck House, Lyng Road, Weston Longville, Norwich, NR9 5LP.

The views expressed in this Newsletter are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the NUT either locally or nationally.

Let the teachers teach!

Whenever teachers gather together there is no shortage of conversation, for the latest government initiative will always provide a talking point. In the last ten to fifteen years change has been the norm. Whether as a teacher you have welcomed some of those changes, is now almost irrelevant. For most of us the constant pressure and demands have left us exhausted. Despite the declaration of a five year moratorium on change during Gillian Shepherd's term of office as Minister for Education, barely a year had passed before literacy and numeracy initiatives were gathering pace. After the Labour Government's introduction of challenging targets for 2002, teachers might have been forgiven for hoping that the new term of office would see some space and relief from the pressure. But no! New, tougher, more challenging targets for 2004 were brought in.

One teacher who has had enough is Sue Palmer. She has set up a 'rallying point' (completely independent of any organisation, financed out of her own pocket) for anyone who agrees with two simple aims:

- * to stop the introduction of the 2004 targets;

- * to reinstate the moratorium on change in the primary school, for at least three years.

She writes: "If you want the Government to stop interfering and start trusting teachers to get on with the job, please visit www.timetoteach.org.uk or send an SAE to Time to Teach, 11 St George's Road, Truro TR1 3JE. And please tell other primary teachers about it."

Pete Eldridge makes his Annual Report for 2001 as Secretary of the Norfolk County Division

Once again the Division has seen an increase in membership, both in-service and retired. On behalf of the division I would like to thank school representatives and local association officers for their hard work in recruiting new members.

During the year there has been an increase in casework. Much of this can be dealt with by giving advice on the telephone or via email, or by going into schools with colleagues from other unions to speak to staff meetings about what is happening in their schools and how the union can help to overcome any problems. One of the greatest areas of growth has been in the number of primary school teachers contacting the union over the behaviour of pupils, in particular, where staff have been attacked by youngsters. As you will be aware, this problem has been identified by Warwick University as one of the main reasons for people leaving the profession.

Once again the STRB has failed to provide the increase in salaries that is needed if we are to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of teachers to

provide the quality education pupils deserve. We now need to see what this body recommends with regard to the conditions of service of teachers. In Norfolk we have the added problem that house prices are rising at 19%, especially in the Norwich/A11 corridor. County are looking at ways of making sure that there are enough teachers, but it is becoming a struggle.

At County level there have been a range of negotiations going on around performance management and open references for central staff and Solbury paid colleagues. We believe that this, together with the data protection act and county's anti-harassment policies, will provide good protection for members.

We are now in a period of potential change to the First/Middle/High School system across the county and Glenys Shepherd, Tony Mulgrew, Peter Ayres and I have been attending meetings across the county to gauge members' opinions and give reassurance on their employment position. This review of school organisation is being linked with a PFI bid of £90 million across 85 schools. We will need to keep a very careful eye on this bid as there are numerous horror stories emerging across the country, and I don't need to mention the Norfolk and Norwich fiasco!

If colleagues in schools want an officer to come in please feel free to contact me so we can arrange a date.

Finally, I'd like to thank all at Regional Office for their advice and support.

OUR AIM: ONE UNION FOR ALL TEACHERS

Are you claiming your tax relief?

Have you claimed tax relief on your Union subscriptions each year? If not, then you can claim tax relief back to 1995/6, as long as you apply before 5th April, 2002. You are eligible for 66% tax relief on your NUT subscription. Ask your local tax office for form P358 or write a simple letter giving details of your Union membership number and amounts paid for the last six years, together with your current tax code. The regional office can help you find out details of your past Union payments. Many teachers who have not claimed before are now receiving rebates.

Local tax offices will also provide information on other allowances teachers can claim.

Increase in Pensions

Based on the cost of living index figure for September 2001, there will be an increase of 1.7% in teachers' occupational pensions, effective from 8th April, 2001. Those who have retired since 23rd April, 2001 will receive a proportionate increase. At a time when very substantial council tax increases are forecast for many parts of Norfolk and residential and nursing home fees are spiralling, an increase in occupational pension of 1.7%

can provide little cheer for older colleagues, whose pensions have been depressed by Government income policies and who retired before the significant increases in salaries resulting from independent pay reviews, such as those conducted by Houghton and Clegg.

Last year, the Norfolk Division Retired Members' Committee drew attention to the need for automatic upgrading of public service pensions for older retired colleagues to bring them more in line with pensions of colleagues retiring today. There is a need for national recognition that the long term growth in the country's economy and standards of living owes much to the efforts of those who are now retired and who deserve a fairer share of the nation's prosperity.

Concerned at the lack of debate in some recent years at annual conference on pension matters, the Norfolk Retired Members' Committee has asked for 'Superannuation' to be split away from 'Salaries' and given a separate slot on the Conference agenda. This recommendation received the unanimous support of the Union's National Advisory Committee for Retired Members at its last meeting. Conference Business Committee please note!

Remember, for pensioners, "today dies quicker than yesterday and we may not dawdle with impunity."

Ray Russell

NUT Pride in Education Conference

Much of this conference was concerned with the issue of homophobic bullying in schools and how to deal with it. The NUT has various policy statements, guidelines and action plans that can be utilised to help in school situations.

In December, 2000 the Department of Education and Employment reissued its Anti-bullying Pack, "Don't Suffer in Silence." The pack comes with a video for teachers to use in class as a curriculum resource. The video covers most forms of bullying except homophobic bullying, an omission which is regrettable since it makes it easier for teachers to avoid confronting the issue.

School roles

Schools have a legal duty of care to protect all children from harm, including bullying.

Homophobic bullying in secondary school has its roots in the primary years.

PSHE could address culture, difference and respect.

Literacy hour sessions could explore the use of vocabulary and stereotypes.

Homophobic bullying has an extra dimension because the victim often does not want to admit why s/he is being bullied.

The effects of bullying can last a lifetime.
Recognition of the specific problem of homophobic bullying is slowly growing.
Several pieces of legislation put the onus on schools to eliminate bullying.

It was clear listening to the speakers at the conference that there is much that remains to be done, both in schools and in society at large.

Letitia Willins

Review of School Organisation

Peter Ayres, Secretary of Broadland District Association, reports on a meeting in the Broadland area.

The School Organisation Review in Norfolk is currently looking at Caister, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Loddon, Martham and Stalham, all of which are covered by the Broadland Association. Recently we organised, in conjunction with two other teachers' organisations, ATL and NASUWT, an Open Meeting for all teachers within the area, to discuss the Review. It was a well attended meeting and there were teachers from all phases of education, including teachers, deputy heads and head teachers. The views expressed at the meeting are not those of the NUT or any particular teachers' association, but it is my view that they are a representative view of teacher within the above areas. Here is a summary of the main points expressed at the meeting.

1. It was the unanimous view that the consultation documents were “not clear, misleading and inaccurate”.
2. It was the unanimous view that “in all of the six areas” (see above) “that the present organisation of schools should remain the same and that there should be no reorganisation.”
3. The assumption in the document that the completion of a key stage in one school is an improvement on completing a key stage after transfer is not based on any sound argument. Assessment is a continuous process and not a cycle lasting for a number of years coinciding with a whole key stage.
4. The statement that high schools can give year 7 children access to more specialist staff and accommodation suitable for teaching key stage 3 curriculum than middle schools has no foundation in fact.
5. The expansion of secondary schools may exacerbate the current teacher shortage within the secondary sector in this part of the county. The plans for reorganisation depend on additional teachers being employed in secondary schools. Most teachers surplus to requirements in first and middle schools are not likely to wish to be redeployed in high schools.
6. There was concern expressed that it may not be possible to provide pupils moving schools as a result of reorganisation with as good accommodation as they had in their previous schools. Inferior accommodation is certainly not acceptable to either parents or teachers.
7. It would seem that PFI is an essential requirement of reorganisation. Although the consultation documents state that a successful bid has been made for money to improve facilities and buildings, they also suggest there is an element of doubt as to whether it can be used for this purpose. If funding were to come from the County Council's budget this would prove very costly for council tax payers. It was also feared that the cost of

running schools under a PFI scheme would be much higher than the current system and this would reflect adversely on school budgets.

8. The meeting concluded that there were no clear educational reasons for changing the organisation of schools within the area.

Peter Ayres

Glenys Shepherd reports from the National Executive

Professional Unity - Co-operation between the TUC affiliated unions has been on an unprecedented scale this year, since the historic events last Easter when the NUT, NAS/UWT and ATL passed identical motions at their respective conferences on salaries and workload. There has been joint union guidance and action on the teacher shortage, joint motions to TUC, joint submissions to the review body on salaries and conditions of service, and condemnation of the threshold process, closer co-operation in consultations with Government and Government agencies.

At the meeting on 7th February, the National Executive passed a motion welcoming the progress made and, in particular, the publication of Eamon O'Kane's paper, "The Future Direction of the NAS/UWT". This progress is particularly welcome to me, as vice-chair of the NUT's National Professional Unity Committee and as Secretary of Norfolk's Joint Consultative Committee, where there is excellent co-operation between the unions in negotiations with the LEA.

We now know the results of the school Teacher Review Body recommendations. The shorter scale for new entrants is welcome but teachers are still disadvantaged compared with other graduate professions. Particularly disappointing is the government's refusal to pay in full the costs of progression up the Upper Pay Spine despite the STRB's recommendation. At the time of writing, the situation regarding the upper pay spine is still unclear. Talks are continuing.

GTC Fee - **Don't pay this yet!** The money has been added to the pay amount but the government wants to consolidate the amount into the pay range which is unfair to part-time and supply teachers.

The Executive also passed motions reiterating Union policy opposing the expansion of faith schools and condemning the implication that those who oppose the involvement of private finance in the public services are "wreckers".

PLEASE USE YOUR VOTE IN THE EXECUTIVE ELECTIONS.

Report from the Joint Consultative Committee

from Glenys Shepherd, Secretary of the Teachers' Panel.

It has been a busy year so far for the Teachers' Panel. On our current agenda we have reorganisation, Private Finance Initiative, Child Protection Procedures, school holidays, malicious allegations and school budgets. In addition, our priorities of teacher workload and teacher retention are major issues.

Panel members have been attending meetings in areas where reorganisation is under consultation. An agreement has been negotiated with the LEA to provide protection for teachers whose schools may be reorganised and this was made available at the meetings. Any NUT member who has concerns should contact the NUT.

One of the invited speakers to the last meeting was Diana Malden, appointed by Norfolk and Suffolk LEA's as one of the new "Regional Investigation and Referral Support Co-ordinators". You may recall that these posts were announced by David Blunkett at last year's NUT Conference, following such cases as Marjorie Evans, an NUT headteacher in Wales. Diana will be making another visit to JCC specifically to hear evidence about the handling of allegations made against Norfolk teachers.

We have been consulting with the LEA about performance management for centrally employed teachers. It has become apparent that we must remind managers and teachers that NUT members are protected by the ballot on Bureaucracy that no more than three objectives should be set for each reviewee. Again, please contact the NUT if there is a problem.

The LEA is seeking to rationalise the representation on its working groups and committees. It is likely that the JCC will be increasingly asked to nominate teachers to take part. Anyone interested in being involved should contact their association secretary or me, c/o Aylsham High School. Please indicate your school, post and particular interests. Supply cover will be paid by the LEA. Please get in touch.

Review of School Organisation

The Union Perspective

By Pete Eldridge, Norfolk County Secretary

By now many of you will know that your school is part of the review being carried out by the county. You will have had a copy of the consultation questionnaire and will no doubt be wondering how you should fill it in and what advice the Union can give you on this issue. This is where you may think at first the Union is failing you. The Union is YOU and everyone of you will have different views on what should happen to the schools in your area. Are first and middles better than primaries? Is 11 + better than 12 +, and are three-year juniors a good idea? These questions are for you and your colleagues in different schools and areas to answer. What is good for Yarmouth and Gorleston may not be what is right for Swaffam.

Having made up your mind about what you want to see in your area, then we can help, by supporting campaigns to get the result that you believe to be best for your school. As well as supporting campaigns to save schools from closure and/or amalgamation, we will also be working to ensure that no teacher is made compulsorily redundant and that where staff are redeployed they go to a school where they would wish to teach.

An added complication to these reviews is the controversial proposal for PFI funded schools' extensions and modernisations. The government is saying that PFI is a good deal and some of you may have heard John Prescott's speech. One of the main attractions for the government in going down this route is that it does not appear on the public sector borrowing requirement figures (PSBR) and hence they do not get into trouble with

the IMF and OECD. They could, however, allow Local Government to borrow via bond issues and this way they would get the money at a much cheaper rate and would have more control over the process than under the PFI route. A question at a recent conference was, what happens if the PFI contractor fails to deliver its obligations? The answer was clear. Even if you get rid of the contractor the banks who lent the money will still want paying. Already concerns are emerging from the PFI funded N&N Hospital. Members should consider whether they would want to have to pay to park at their own school and do heads and governors have the expertise and time to deal with a telephone-directory sized contract?

If you would like a member of the Association or Division to come into your school to talk about these issues, then please contact us to arrange a date.

Dereham and Fakenham Association
Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, 12th. March, 7.30pm.

At the Committee Room
Dereham Town Football Club
(by the Little Chef)

Come along, meet PETE ELDRIDGE, Divisional
Secretary, and other NUT members, share
Your problems and enjoy
Free food and drink!

Teachers Benevolent Fund

an up-date taken from a letter from the Chair, Colin Tarrant

“The teacher support network has been conducting an extensive and on-going review of all its activities. This has naturally included the operation of our homes, formerly the main area of activity after the orphanages were closed in the sixties.

New services have been developed in recent years to meet the needs of today’s teacher and the welfare department has expanded its activity to include money advice (debt counselling) and a collection of services specifically for retired teachers, available wherever in the country they may live, and accessed through a head office-based telephone help-line.

In 1998, the TBF had three homes and was jointly responsible for a fourth. All four of them were at that time in significant financial difficulty and were having to be heavily subsidised from the charity’s fund raising activities. This money should have been used to support ‘teachers in need’ in accordance with our charitable objects, but the residents of the homes were often not teachers and of those who were, only small numbers were in actual financial distress. It was clear that subsidising the homes into the future was therefore not an option acceptable to the Charity Commissioners or ourselves as Trustees.”

Individual solutions were found for each of the homes, involving the sale of them, either as continuing concerns or for re-building as new care homes, and this has ensured that our retired teacher colleagues continue to have access to all the original homes. In most cases the dedicated staff have been able to continue working.”

Colin Tarrant concludes: “We, the Trustees of the Charity, believe that we have provided the best possible solution to a difficult problem.”

Classroom Quips!

This term's winner comes from a supply teacher who has chosen to remain anonymous. He chooses from a bottle of wine or box of chocolates.

The supply teacher was reviewing work the children had done with the class teacher the previous week on areas with different climates.

“Who can name some of the hot regions in the world?” he asked.

Replies came thick and fast.

“The Sahara Desert.”

“Parts of Australia.”

“The Middle East.”

Finally, one small child at the back of the class put her hand up.

“Yes?” asked the supply teacher encouragingly.

“The Lesbian Desert, Sir.”

Thanks to Ray Russell for this little gem!

It was the sixtieth birthday of the head teacher who, despite his efforts to conceal the news, was showered with congratulations and cards by staff and pupils at the end of morning assembly, and then made to wear a large badge proclaiming his age. With the event occurring some time before the imposition of SATS and the National Curriculum, one teacher later that morning seized on the opportunity to extend the vocabulary of the children in her class by introducing a whole lot of unusual words associated with age. She then asked the children to use the words in sentences of their own. With her thoughts still centred on the morning assembly, one eight year old girl eventually wrote, “Today is the sixtieth birthday of our head teacher. I don't think that is particularly old because Miss Johnson says he's a real sexy genarian!”

