

Report of the last NUT Conference

Delegates from the National Union of Teachers (NUT) section of the National Education Union (NEU) met in Brighton at the end of March for our union's last national conference before merger. Delegates debated motions on a range of topics, including testing and teachers' pay.

Conference passed policy to demand a 5% pay rise, alongside other public-sector unions, with a commitment to ballot all members for strike action in the 2018/19 school year if our demands are not met. The initial motion on school pay was weak and evasive, calling for a ballot 'if internal polling suggests that there would be sufficient support', a formulation that would allow the union executive to slip out of its responsibility to organise and agitate amongst union members for a decent campaign on pay. Fortunately, an amendment from Coventry Association made the commitment to a ballot clear and suggested internal polling as a means of identifying areas of weakness that would require more effort and union resources to build action on pay.

Nevertheless, the union executive has a habit of 'forgetting' its responsibilities, for instance failing to carry out an indicative ballot on boycotting SATs last year, ignoring conference policy. It is unlikely the NEU will be able to so easily back out of action on pay, but the motion only commits the executive to put forward the strategy to the Joint

Executive Council, a combined NUT and ATL group which exists until the final merger of the NUT in January next year. Workers in schools should be clear that avoiding action, taking single days here and there or mothballing the whole process in consultation will not win us a pay rise. Action on the model demonstrated by UCU members defending their pensions is the sort of strategy we should push for.

Whilst Conference voted for an action strategy on pay, it failed to do so in relation to the continuing crisis in schools generated by SATs. A significant number of tub-thumping speeches against the damaging system of primary testing couldn't disguise the lack of any serious action to actually protect staff and children from the psychological and educational damage of testing.

The mood of conference was often one of cheering consensus, which is worrying in some ways but perhaps not surprising since this was the last Conference involving only delegates from the NUT section of the NEU. Next year will see the first conference of the united union, with delegates coming from both the former NUT and the ATL.

There was, as always, some good meetings on the fringe of Conference. I attended an excellent meeting on how to work effectively with autistic

Notts NEU - NUT Section
General Members' Meeting

THURSDAY
MAY 3

5.30pm The Vale Pub,
Mansfield Rd, Woodthorpe,
NG5 3GG



children, at which the ideas and experiences of autistic students was given a prominent airing.

Another inspiring meeting was on the life and politics of Minnie Lansbury, addressed by the author, Janine Booth. Minnie was an outspoken advocate of women's rights, in particular the rights of working class women. As a teacher and member of the NUT, Minnie, as we do today, had to stand up to a union that was refusing to act, in this case, staggeringly, refusing to demand votes for women.

The Education Solidarity Network, which is supported by Notts NEU, held two fringe meetings, both attended by around 60 delegates. We heard from activists leading anti-academy struggles across the country and discussed the strategies we need over testing and workload.



Education Solidarity Network meeting on Friday March 30

Liam Conway, Editor

Inspiring first meeting of Notts NEU Women's Network

Notts NEU Women's Network organised an evening to celebrate International Women's day. The event focused on stories of 'women and courage' locally, nationally and internationally. The Mogal Azam restaurant was crowded with nearly 60 people, who enjoyed a nice meal in the company of other women listening to powerful speeches.

Joanne Ratcliffe of the Nottingham Women's Centre spoke about the support for women locally, especially those through a vulnerable phase in their lives. The secretaries of Nottingham city and Nottinghamshire NUT sections spoke about sexism in schools, the role teachers' play in fighting it and educating young people. They also touched on women teachers working conditions and the difficulties facing them.

The audience was moved to tears during the international speeches. Amra Mukanovic, from Remembering Srebrenica, talked about the Bosnian war, giving graphic insight into the genocides against Bosnian Muslims and the importance of tolerance and acceptance of others in making a healthy society. The stories of women's courage in the Bosnian war was highlighted by Melissa Mukanovic, an English secondary school teacher from Leicester, who came to the UK as a refugee, fleeing the genocide with her mother and sister. Melissa's talk was poignant as she shared harrowing stories about her courageous mother



who did everything to protect her daughters as they were placed in concentration camps. "My mum had to cut my hair and my sister's hair short so that we look like boys to protect us from being raped!" said Melissa invoking painful memories.

The stories of war refugees, particularly women and children, was then continued by Caroline Kerr the founder of the local charity 'Bras Not Bombs'. Caroline talked about the work the charity does in supporting refugees, in particular women and girls.

Kelly Da Silva, the founder of 'The Dovecote' and a school teacher, spoke about involuntary childlessness. Kelly shared her amazing story of courage describing how she went from being vulnerable and emotionally broke as a result of involuntary childlessness, to setting up an organisation that reaches out not only to women but families that are going through the same difficulties.

The evening was concluded with a special guest speaker from London, Leanne Mohamed. Leanne is a human rights activist who gave a heartfelt speech about the Palestinian resistance and the role of women. She talked about the Ahd Tameem, the teenage Palestinian girl who was arrested by the Israeli army and how she symbolises the courage of young women who know no fear to make their voices heard.

If you feel affected by any of the stories shared or you want to contribute to future events please email the equalities officer, Houda, at h.medjdoub@nottsnut.co.uk.

To find out more about the topics covered in the evening please visit the following websites:

<https://www.srebrenica.org.uk>

<http://www.nottinghamwomenscentre.com>

<http://www.thedovecote.org>

NEU begins mobilisation to stop huge cuts to school budgets

On Saturday, April 21, the NEU launched a national day of action against school cuts. 285 schools across Nottinghamshire still face £16,357,081 of government cuts. Nottinghamshire NEU held a stall in Mansfield to engage the general public, including parents and



children, highlighting the need for action to overcome the funding crisis. The division officers spoke to many members of the public, including several teachers. It was clear that there was serious concern about the impact of cuts on the working and learning environments of staff and students.

Leaflets explaining our concerns were eagerly snapped up by family groups seriously clearly surprised by about the shocking reality of what their children experience in schools, a reality in which funding cuts translate into bigger class sizes, fewer teaching assistants and fewer resources to support learning and over stressed staff.

If you want to find out how your school is affected by the cuts please visit www.schoolcuts.org.uk.