

# STRIKING TO STOP TEACHER SHORTAGES

## MAKING A STAND FOR EDUCATION

**O**n March 14, London's teachers are saying loud and clear that enough is enough. Intolerable workload and endless initiatives have been piled on teachers while pay has fallen far behind the escalating cost of living in the capital. Now, at long last, the NUT is making a stand.

For too long, teacher union leaders have held back while their members' pay and conditions have deteriorated. Their caution has not just been at teachers' expense - children have been the real losers. Teachers in London have been quitting their posts in record numbers. Schools are left struggling to fill vacancies. Children end up being taught in split classes or by a succession of temporary teachers or supply cover.

Now, thousands of teachers have responded enthusiastically to the strike call. Inner London NUT Associations returned 90-95% YES votes for action. Schools across the capital will be sending children home for the day. Yet the response from most parents has

been very supportive. Few have been taken in by Estelle Morris' insulting comments about teachers "undermining progress". Parents value their school staff - not the politicians. Staff shortages are what's really threatening education, not strike action.

But we mustn't let our union leaders sell us short again. It's no exaggeration to say that many teachers - especially young staff - are struggling to pay rents and mortgages. Even the Daily Express had to concede that "paltry London weighting allowances are barely half of the £6,000 received by police officers". Why should we settle for less?

It's not that the Government can't afford it. The Independent revealed that the Department of Education underspent by a breathtaking £5 billion in 2000! Instead of making the improvements in pay and conditions needed to really tackle teacher shortages, they propose using classroom assistants as cheap-rate cover. Our action can make them think again.

**March 14 marks the day when teachers start to stem the tide. But this has got to be just the start, not the end, of our campaign. A determined stand can secure a decent London allowance and give teachers the confidence to go on to call a halt to rising workload.**

# BUILD ACTION TO WIN A £6,000 LONDON ALLOWANCE



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## **WHAT NEXT AFTER MARCH 14 ?**

- For joint London-wide strike action by teaching and non-teaching unions
- Implement refusal to cover or take split classes beyond the first day of unforeseen absence.

**T**he strike call has been a huge success. At last the problems facing education have hit the headlines. The morale and confidence of teachers has been given a huge boost. From now on, instead of giving in to the next imposed initiative, teachers should recognise we have the power to stand up for ourselves and education.

Now we have to keep up the momentum. UNISON is carrying out an indicative strike ballot of council staff right across London as part of its campaign on London weighting. If the Government refuses to budge, the NUT should co-ordinate joint action alongside UNISON and the NASUWT.

An ongoing campaign where teachers refused to cover after the first day of absence would expose how often teacher shortages are being covered up - and cut the workload of teachers in the schools worst hit.

Action in London can also be a step towards national action. This should include a joint boycott of performance management to oppose the Government's attempts to ration pay-rises through performance-related pay.

### **Vote for a Union Executive you can rely on**

#### **Vote Linda Taaffe 1 in Outer London**

For months, the controlling majority on the NUT National Executive has resisted calls for action on the London Allowance. Pressure from below has persuaded them to act - this time. But

teachers need a leadership they can rely on. NUT members in Outer London can vote up to March 20th to choose their Executive members for 2002-2004. Vote to re-elect Linda Taaffe and other candidates who have consistently called for the NUT to take action.

### **Build a London Allowance Campaign**

The efforts of NUT members in schools and local associations have helped build this campaign. Reps, new and old, have organised school meetings, made banners, given out leaflets, convinced colleagues to take action. The Union needs to harness these energies into a London Allowance Campaign group that can spread initiatives and information across London.

### **Join the Socialist Party**

Alongside others in London, Socialist Party members in both the NUT and UNISON - like Linda Taaffe on the NUT National Executive and Martin Powell-Davies in Lewisham - have played a key role in convincing the Unions to take action.

While Labour politicians criticise, Socialist Party councillors Ian Page and Sam Dias have backed teachers' action. Their election victories in Lewisham have shown that serious alternative candidates can challenge the main parties. Ian and Sam will be standing for re-election this May alongside parents campaigning against selection and the lack of local school places. Why not join us or find out more about the Socialist Party in your area ?

**get in contact with or better still ... join us**

NUT03/02

I would like to get involved in a London Allowance Campaign Group

I would like to find out more about / join the Socialist Party...

Name

Address

Postcode

Tel No  Email

Simply fill in this form and return to Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London, E11 1YD or email us at the address below

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