Scottish Socialist Party

EIS MEMBERS VOICE

UNITE & STRIKE AGAINST CUTS

The Scottish Socialist Party extends warmest solidarity to EIS AGM delegates and observers. We are proud to be Scotland's trade union party, with members in every sector of education, trade unionists across the public and private sector, and a track record of supporting every group of workers in struggle since our formation 10 years ago.

The EIS meets at a critical time, with the onslaught on school budgets; the imposition of outrageous pay cuts over 3 years; rising class sizes in contrast to promises of the opposite; job losses and lack of jobs for newly qualified teachers; galloping privatisation in all sectors of education; and entirely unjustified school closures.

SSP members in EIS wish to unite with other trade unionists in decisive campaigns – **including coordinated industrial action** – to defend jobs, pay, educational expenditure, and national action to enforce maximum class sizes of 20 across the board, as a pre-requisite to improved education and better conditions of work.

A raft of local authorities has announced savage budget cuts, including in education. They variously blame underfunding by the Scottish government and the cost of implementing equal pay. For over 30 years these councils underpaid female staff, in flagrant breach of Equal Pay legislation. Now they seek to carry out their legal obligations on the cheap – resulting in cuts to services, and pay cuts for many council staff (men AND women!).

The Scottish Socialist Party pioneered the persistent campaign to abolish the unfair, unequal Council Tax, but simultaneously fought for the introduction of a new, progressive Scottish Service Tax, based on income, on ability to pay. Our alternative would make 80% of Scots better off – and still raise at least £100m more in funds for local services than the iniquitous Council Tax does.

Most people would welcome the SNP government's freeze on the spiralling Council Tax bills, but by stopping half way, not going for immediate abolition and its replacement by a progressive tax, they have added pressure towards council cuts. And the SNP want to slash all public sector budgets by 2%.

TWENTY'S PLENTY!

The SSP fully endorses the call for EIS to launch a major national campaign to demand that local authorities, COSLA and the Scottish government cough up the funding required to defend every teacher's job; guarantee jobs for newly qualified teachers, and to implement the widely welcomed promise of smaller class sizes.

We strongly believe national unity across every local authority is critical to success; it would be suicidal to just leave each separate EIS association to go it alone in conflict with each separate local authority – when central government underfunding and the consistent failure of COSLA to fight for additional funding are at the root of the problem besieging teachers and pupils. Alongside a concerted publicity campaign exposing the impact of budget cuts (fewer teachers, larger classes, fewer resources, regressive attacks on education), EIS leadership need to build for NATIONAL industrial action.

This message is reinforced by the experience of our members in Further and Higher Education. The loss of national bargaining and national conditions in FE and HE has ushered in a race to the bottom by college and University authorities – who seek to drag pay and conditions downwards rather than harmonise them upwards, with job losses and cuts to courses as each institution tries to operate as a profit-making business.
The SSP has always fought for the restoration of national bargaining and conditions, and for the democratisation of Boards of Management – to include elected staff union reps, local councils, student reps and the wider community, rather than the inbuilt, legally enforced majority for business interests.

Education is not alone in suffering assaults by government. The entire public sector is facing a conscious, ideologically driven set of attacks by New Labour. Privatisation has gone far further under Blair and Brown than even the Tories dared to tread. Now Alistair Darling and Brown want to impose a 2% ceiling and 3-year deals on public sector pay – as Retail Price Inflation reaches 4.2%, food prices rise by their fastest in 14 years, fuel and energy costs rocket.

These 3-year pay cutting deals should be rejected on principle – with public sector-wide coordination of action to defeat Labour's pay cuts. Instead of just accepting the imposition of a 3-year deal that falls drastically short of inflation, the EIS should muster members' active opposition, join up with local government workers who have rejected similar deals by over 80% and are

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now preparing for strike ballots in July; NHS staff rejecting 3-year cuts in pay; plus civil servants in PCS union who are ramping up their opposition to any pay offer below 4.2%. **EIS should join the local authority unions who will lobby the Scottish parliament later in June – and then seek to link up with them in action next term.**

The government in Westminster is at its most vulnerable for years. The SNP crave continued popularity whilst cutting every public sector budget by at least 2%. United action – where possible alongside other public sector unions – could defeat the employers' pay cuts, which are inspired by the pro-market, anti-public sector dogma of the government.

The SSP shares the desire of other EIS members to build unity against poverty, deprivation, underfunding of services and profiteering for the few.
We oppose all forms of racism, support the rights of Asylum Seekers to work; the rights of Scotland's Gypsy Travellers to recognition as an ethnic minority. EIS should help champion measures that combat the deprivation that is then exploited by racists and fascists to whip up division.
Unite against poverty, for peace and socialism. Join the SSP.

SSP FIGHTS FOR:

- £8 minimum wage for all workers and trainees over 16 - based on two-thirds male median wages - end age wage discrimination
- equal pay for women workers - without a penny off the pay of any worker
- a 35-hour maximum working week for all, without any loss of earnings - as a step towards a 4-day week
- abolition of all anti-trade union laws - for a positive charter of workers' rights, including the right to strike, to take solidarity strike action, to be in a union - without fear of victimisation
- for workers' control of health and safety
- a minimum of 1 years' maternity leave on full pay - with the job protected for return, and the choice of returning part-time or full-time without loss of benefits. At least 1 month's paternity leave on full pay - and the option of exchanging part of the maternity/paternity leave
- scrap all prescription charges - stop taxing sickness
- free school meals for all children in state schools - nursery, primary and secondary - permanently
- scrap the Council Tax - for the Scottish Service Tax, based on income, on ability to pay, raising more funds for jobs and services, and making 8 out of 10 Scots better off
- tax the rich and the big Corporations - no to the tax havens of New Labour AND the SNP
- reverse all PPP/PFI and privatisations
- public ownership of all services, transport, construction, banks, energy, telecomms, big industries, North Sea Oil - under democratic control and management
- an independent socialist Scotland that stands for people not profit, the millions not the millionaires.

"An example of the schools crisis is that our school books budget is £4,000, compared with £10,000 eight years ago! We need to expose the myth that cuts are due to reduced class sizes - it's a reallocation of cuts. We need to combine with other public sector unions to win central and local funding for smaller classes AND increased investment in staff and materials."
A Lanarkshire EIS rep

"Cuts in my school mean all classes are composite classes. The government has made a complete mess of planning for retirement. Vastly increased numbers of teachers have been trained recently - but most of them can't get a job after probation.
The new SNP government promised smaller class sizes for P1, P2 and P3. Contrary to that, classes are getting bigger. **I think EIS should put up a ferocious campaign - including industrial action - if these promises are not fulfilled by August 2009.** And I strongly believe maximum classes of 20 should apply across the board - to enhance children's education and create jobs for teachers, whose talents are being wasted."
Neil Scott, Glasgow EIS delegate

Privatisation of education is happening before our very eyes, with dire consequences for public sector education and its staff. A current example is the planned privatisation of overseas students' education by bosses of Glasgow Caledonia University – who want to hand this service over to a shady, untested private company (INTO) which has one single shareholder, no record in education, and is to be gifted state-of-the art buildings and facilities, plus £500,000!
The combined unions at Caley Uni have fought this ferociously, and the management's response has been to threaten disciplinary action against the unions' convener, in a crude attempt to abolish free speech and crush trade union rights. Every EIS member – and the national conference – should join the condemnation of these measures, in defence of public sector education, union rights, civil rights, and to keep the INTO privateers out.
{email N.McKerrell@gcal.ac.uk for more info}

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