Our Ref: 139/569

Dear Colleague

EDUCATION CUTS

Before Christmas schools were left reeling at the level of cuts that were going to be imposed as a result of the Draft Budget. Some of the education unions, including UTU, INTO and NIPSA, campaigned vigorously in the run up to Christmas, holding public meetings, sending letters to politicians and signing petitions against the cuts. We would like to thank each and every one of you who responded to our call for action – as you now know the Education Budget received an injection of funding. However, we believe that the situation is still critical. The Central Executive Committee at its meeting on 16th January took the decision, after much debate, to proceed with a ballot for action. Full details are outlined on the accompanying information leaflet.

PAY CLAIM

As you are aware, the cost of living claim for September 2014 has not been paid to teachers. Management Side is insisting that the teacher unions enter into negotiations to do away with automatic incremental progression and they will then prepare a business case to fund the 1% that government has agreed will be the maximum payment. The teacher unions have so far not committed to enter into such negotiations.

PENSION ROAD-SHOWS

UTU, INTO, ATL, NAHT and UCU have joined with the Department of Education to jointly run a series of Pension information sessions to explain to teachers and lecturers of all ages the significance of the changes to their pension entitlement following the government’s extensive changes to the scheme from April 2015. If you have not attended one of these Road-Shows you can access the information on the union websites following the last session. Platinum Financial Services continue to offer advice to UTU members at the joint UTU/INTO pre-retirement seminars and are available to provide individual advice as required.

REDUNDANCY

It is unlikely that schools will be able to decide on how many redundancies they will have until the school budgets are sent out, probably in February/March. Any teacher who wishes to volunteer for
transferred redundancy should initially contact their principal and indicate their interest, subject to a satisfactory severance package being made available. Last year the severance arrangements were double the statutory amount – in other words up to 60 weeks salary. We are awaiting confirmation that this arrangement will apply again this year and then we would expect that the employing authorities would inform teachers. Information on the Efficient Discharge Scheme should also be sent to schools soon and it will provide up to 52 weeks salary for those who are approved an exit by these means – contact HQ for further details.

**TNC AGREEMENTS**

There has been considerable work going on within the sub-groups of the Teachers Negotiating Committee. A protocol on eLearning is almost complete and work on drawing up a Social Media Policy is to start in February. The Teacher Health & Wellbeing (THAW) group has just produced a report for the Joint Working Party and this has gone to both Management Side and Teachers’ Side for consideration.

**BRANCH/AREA TRAINING**

The Organisation & Membership Sub-Committee has recommended that now the Branch structure has been amended to accommodate the change to the new Employing Authority it is appropriate that training be given to the new Branch officials. It is planned that the training will take place on the evening of 3rd March, 2015, so if you are a Branch or Area Official – or if you would like to be one – then keep that date free. Full details to follow.

**CONFERENCE**

Our Conference will be held in the Slieve Donard Hotel, Newcastle from 19th to 21st March, 2015. A full list of resolutions will be supplied to Branch Secretaries soon and will be available to download from the UTU website. Branches have already nominated delegates but if you would like to attend and have not had your name put forward to attend please contact Karen at HQ who will advise you what to do.

**SCHOOL REP TRAINING**

A series of training days for School Representatives is to take place starting on 29th January. If you are a new school representative or feel that you would like to update your training then please contact HQ and discuss with either Leigh or Jacquie which course would suit you best. Leadership Seminars are also coming up soon – speak with Lewis or Audrey, Field Officers.

Yours Sincerely,

Avril Hall-Callaghan  
General Secretary