



NEU Redbridge Retired Teachers` Newsletter Spring 2019



Catholic parents oppose academies plan for Brentwood diocese

Our Lady Of Lourdes Primary School pupils make their views on academy plans clear

RAA – Redbridge Against Academisation – has been revived by Catholic parents opposing plans by Brentwood diocese to take all Catholic schools in four East London boroughs and swathes of Essex into Catholic Multi-Academy Trusts.

Parents argue that there has been no meaningful consultation over the plans.

They point out that the future of the academy policy is uncertain, that the educational arguments don't add up, that the parent voice will be reduced, vital local-authority support will be lost, and that there will be no increase in funding from academisation.

Parents and their supporters lobbied the Governors' Meeting at Our Lady of Lourdes Primary School in Wanstead on 14 March to voice their concerns.

They were joined by trade union banners from Redbridge NEU and GMB. NEU Joint National Secretary Kevin Courtney attended to show our union's full support for the campaign.

Over the past 18 months, Redbridge parents have fought off attempts to privatise Highlands and William Torbitt Primary Schools. The parents' campaigns have received strong backing from Redbridge local councillors and resolutions of the whole council.

All over East London and neighbouring areas of Essex there have been strong and often successful campaigns to block attempts to academise local schools. The mood is starting to swing against the whole academy school policy as serious problems with academy chains and their management have started to emerge.

How to Retire Well: thoughts on retirement



Retirement for teachers is never quite the same shock to the system as it is for those who are at work one day and “at leisure” the next. We always have the cushion of a school holiday before the day when we are no longer obliged to turn up to teach. Our working life was built round the alternation of school and home. School holidays were a time for reassessing our teaching, our approach to pupils and curriculum, as well as for recharging our batteries.

Changing Roles

The roles we occupy throughout our lives help to shape the way we conduct ourselves. While working we had a distinct role that was recognised by society. It was a role that not only defined who we were and described precisely what we did, but was also a validation of our usefulness – a label. We do not want now to be thought of as simply part of an amorphous group of “pensioners”, without further differentiation.

At this stage of our lives, we are as diverse as working people. So should we develop alternative labels? Or could we simply be ourselves? We don't automatically lose that accumulated wisdom and experience, that sense of being part of a community that belonged to our previous identity as teachers. We can't ignore what we have learnt about the business of living. We have already evolved as human beings and will continue to see our attitudes and expertise change and develop during the `third age`. In considering how we might want to spend the rest of our lives we can now take stock, negotiating between the person we were and the person we are going to be in the future as we adjust to what might at first seem a perpetual holiday.

Challenging New Freedoms

Retirement gives us freedom: we are now at the top of our personal chain of command, we are not bound by rules and regulations, we do not have to put up with the frustrations of other people's expectations. Freedom can be exhilarating, but also daunting and our time could all too easily be spent aimlessly and without companionship, so we create patterns of activity, set ourselves goals and embark on long-term projects (sometimes rather unrealistic!). We offer our services as volunteers, carers, campaigners, we embrace friendships and other social groups.

I like to think of retirement as a challenge, an opportunity, a blank canvas, offering unlimited scope for new discoveries as we embark on uncharted waters.

Liz Dolan

NEU Retired Members` Social Activity

Wednesday 24th April from 10.30am

Meet at The Gardener's Cafe, Valentine's Park

(IG1 4UA) (Emerson Rd entrance, beside the Mansion) for coffee and chat, followed by walk in the park or visit to the Mansion



Letter from America : Teaching in American Schools

A teacher's life is honorable, involving important work - and it does not matter where one teaches. Educators make more decisions than a doctor in any given day. My career in the classroom has been extensive. I will share some of my experiences and thoughts.

I started teaching in rural Florida, when Special Education was segregated. I remember working in trailers with a small group of Elementary Special Education boys. They were bright in many ways but when it came to learning, they struggled, so I tried to apply the learning they were doing to their lives, so as to make what went on inside the classroom more relevant.

When I moved to New Hampshire, I taught in a variety of school districts. In one district I spent 18 years as a Special Education Teacher. The city in which I taught had more than 30,000 people and consisted of seven elementary schools, one middle and one high school. Elementary school is grade K-5, middle is grade 6-8 and high school is grade 9-12. To start in elementary school, a child must be 5 years old by the 30th. of September.

Work-Load

I taught at a school that was built in 1880. It is a two- storey white building with huge wooden stairs - now carpeted. There was an old school bell, that is now enclosed, on top of the building, There were 45 students in the school and I was the only Special Education Teacher, with responsibility for team-meetings, meetings with teachers individually, behavior teams, Special Education testing of students, accommodation, writing-evaluations and communication with parents. The paperwork was taxing but I managed to follow through. Work was brought home at night and on weekends. I was also involved with annual State Testing, which consisted of the assessment of Math, Reading and Writing. Since the school was small, with only five teachers, we had more to do. However, small class sizes meant that the students received a better quality of education. As a teacher in the district, I was required to attend meetings after school. Even in a small school we had students who had behavior issues and who had experienced poor living conditions and homelessness. Drugs and death among family members were not uncommon.

Most recently, I have been teaching Reading to at-risk Middle Schoolers in a different district. This school has 1,300 students and four administrators. Although the economic make-up of the district is slightly different than previously, teachers face similar issues. They still worry about grading, curriculum alignment to state testing, lesson plans, time to eat lunch, papers to grade, meetings, behavior problems, violence and parental communication. There is a percentage of students who are refugees.

Continuity and Change

Technology has replaced paper, pen and pencil. Students now have their own chrome books to use from elementary through to high school and White boards have replaced chalk boards. There is an expression 'What Goes Around Comes Around' - ideas become all the rage and then fizzle out. Ten years on, the same idea, with a new name, suddenly works.

After all my years of teaching, I am still trying to meet the learning needs of each student, the challenges of a diverse student population and the requirement to teach a curriculum aligned with school goals. Students need to be taught the value of an education and today they need a global perspective for the world of their future.

Laura Harwood

Please send contributions to the Newsletter to mikepeters1@ntlworld.com

Report from 2018 Black Teachers' Conference

Reclaiming the dream

The Conference is an annual event in the Equalities Calendar. As the numbers attending has increased significantly year on year, with a record 300 delegates in 2018, we needed a hotel in Bristol large enough with sufficient capacity.

A major topic was reflection and historic perspectives on the journey of the black teacher over time and the issue of progression over a career.

I was allocated a workshop on Black History in the Curriculum and delivered this with Ivy Scott, BTC Steering Committee and NOF delegate.

The Friday evening started with a session with Gary Younge, a Guardian journalist, and a local politician from Bristol (Marvin Rees). Gary gave a good account of how his mother steered him through a school system, where teachers saw his colour as invisible. He also guided us through his development as a university student to becoming a top journalist.

After the reception buffet we had an open mic session, allowing those who had rehearsed performances to demonstrate their talents.

The main business was on Saturday, with key speakers and workshops, which were received enthusiastically. Saturday was also the chance for delegates to see and hear from the St. Paul's carnival. This group has grown from a handful of players to one of the UK's biggest 'mass bands'. A feature of the Saturday was the celebration of the work of Roger King – a national executive member, who retires from active full-time service this year. He was treated to a series of 'this is your life' film clips from people who knew and loved working with him.

Sunday morning started with a local history event in which residents recounted some of their personal and trades union experiences, including bus strikes and boycotts, for which Bristol became renowned.

Conference ended with addresses from Kevin Courtney and Faiza Shahan, (prospective parliamentary Labour candidate for Woodford). It was altogether a highly successful conference with lots of young people in attendance.

Barbara Roymacauley

Xmas Social

On the 6th of December the Retired Teachers Association met at the Belgique, Wanstead for our annual Christmas get together. We had our largest turnout to date, with some 14+ members coming along. It was lovely to meet up with colleagues we had not seen for a while and with members who had joined us for the first time. We enjoyed our beverages, along with some wonderful pastries. Lots of talking and as ever, putting the world to rights.

If you have never attended a retired teachers' social event before please come along the next time we have one. We are a very friendly group and would like more members to attend.

NO TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION?

For those of us who were NUT members, our situation has now changed significantly due to the merger with ATL. How has this come about?

Unlike the NUT, the ATL, apparently, did not have a retired teachers' section, so decisions had to be made about our status in the new union. Unfortunately, it was the NUT Executive who gave way and thus we have lost many of our rights, principally our voting rights. We are no longer eligible to vote for Executive members, thus reducing our ability to play an **active** part in the new union. Also, after the third union conference has been held, retired members will no longer be able to vote on behalf of our local districts, reducing our role to that of spectators. Adding insult to injury, the cost of membership is substantially increasing.

The changes have provoked anger among former NUT members. A number have resigned in protest; others have decided to "fight from within". Two motions have been put forward at Conference to rectify the situation. Changing the rights of retired members has been an Executive own-goal. We play an important role in supporting the union in various ways, so to lose retired members will lead to a loss of experience and enthusiasm.

I look forward to hearing good news from the Conference delegates on their return from Liverpool next month! **Maureen McCarthy**