

## **General Secretary – Kevin Courtney**

**TUESDAY 3 APRIL 2018**

1. President, Conference
2. I think that short video is such a good example of what is right about our union, its members and this Conference.
3. Our activists Damian Walenta and Mike Whale have been supporting those badly treated workers, the FCC refuse workers and they brought their issue to our Conference. You, in your generosity, have helped. Those workers are, in turn, offering solidarity to us as teachers.
4. Our Conference has been so full of inspiration and hope. From Wilson Soisson, with his passionate call for international solidarity against education privatisation to the British Rohingya and their moving messages - including about the transformation teachers can bring - including our delegate Dean Narayan the first teacher and favourite teacher of our young Rohingya guest.
5. From Kiri's truly fantastic speech about teaching and building and to the parents of the Avenue Primary School fighting academisation and through the very many passionate speeches which will lift us and inspire us for the next year of struggle this Conference has been truly wonderful.
6. It has been the last Conference of the NUT. It has been the first Conference of the NEU.
7. The best is yet to come.
8. A year ago, less than an hour before my speech to Conference, Theresa May went to the steps of Downing Street and announced her snap General Election. Well a year is a long time in politics.

9. Theresa's announcement led to some hurried re-writing for me. And it led to a lot of work for you.
10. But the General Election led to something much more profound. A palpable sense that change can come.
11. That change in education can come, and that our union can be a significant part of making that change happen.
12. Last year I said our union would try to make school funding the centre of the General Election campaign. Well no one can doubt that you and our members, did that.
13. You organised school and town hall meetings. You organised mass leafletting and lobbying of candidates. 3,500 volunteers ordered and distributed over a million leaflets. Our members shared and used our school cuts website. 90,000 people shared our top viewed video which was seen by more than 4 million people.
14. Your campaign had a huge impact. Candidate after candidate told us that school funding was top of voters concerns. Pollsters said education was one of the top issues – more than immigration, more than crime. And Survation said 750,000 people had CHANGED their vote because of education funding.
15. Conference, our union is proudly politically independent. We don't bow down to any Government. We don't tell people who to vote for. But we did tell the truth about school funding and if voters changed their mind because of that – then we are pleased and all politicians should listen.
16. You should have no doubt that your campaign was the fundamental reason Justine Greening announced an extra £1.3 billion pounds for schools in the aftermath of the Election.
17. Some politicians have cried foul. Some don't like head teachers speaking out. Some of them don't like us speaking out.

18. Some of them have objected to the NUT spending £300,000 during the Election. Have objected to the fact we spent more than UKIP.
19. Well I say this.
20. We make no apology.
21. We will do it again.
22. And we now have 100s of thousands more parental supporters.
23. Politicians of all parties should beware. Parents will not forgive education cuts.
24. We spent a third of a million pounds and, with that money and your efforts, we won £1,300 million pounds for schools. Nothing like enough. But every pound of it won by our efforts. And every pound means fewer teacher jobs lost, fewer TA jobs removed, class sizes held just that bit lower and subjects not lost.
25. It's not enough.
26. But every pound was a pound that we won for our children's education.
27. And let's remember that this isn't the only retreat we have forced on this Government.
28. The year before last, Nicky Morgan was introducing plans to academise every school.
29. But after OUR campaign, that plan was DROPPED.
30. Last year Theresa May was planning for her oxymoronic idea of 'Grammar schools for all'.

31. Conference, the result of OUR General Election campaign meant that THOSE plans were also dropped.
32. And whilst we celebrate that success, let's also congratulate NEU members in Guernsey – who, this year, have won THEIR long-lasting campaign against the 11 plus. This January saw the last ever 11 plus on that island - and Guernsey is moving to a fully comprehensive system. Well done Guernsey. Let's hope England and Wales catch up soon.
33. But let me just say this. Our funding campaign is not over.
34. Because there are still huge cuts facing our schools. Because schools in disadvantaged areas are losing the most. But not just our schools. Our nurseries are being cut, our 6<sup>th</sup> form colleges are being cut – and our Special Education and Disability High Needs budgets are being cut.
35. Our research is confirming the impact of these cuts to the High Needs budgets.
36. Conservative controlled Dorset Council is so worried about special needs education that they have set a deficit budget.
37. West Sussex Council are so concerned that they proposed that money was taken from the schools to subsidise the High Needs budget. The Schools Forum rejected that – and the Council appealed to Damian Hinds. Astonishingly, in one of his first acts as Secretary Of State, Damian Hinds agreed that schools in West Sussex would get less than the National Funding Formula that HIS Government is IMPLEMENTING in order that they should subsidise the special needs that HIS Government are IGNORING.
38. Conference, this failure to fund special needs properly, this failure to respect the rights of children with SEND is an absolute scandal. The Government needs to act on it right now – and I am today calling on Damian Hinds to make it clear that action will follow. But I want to say, Damian that action can't be taking even more money from school budgets. Your Government is failing children with special needs – and you and the Chancellor need to fund an emergency cash injection to

close the gaps in the High Needs budgets. We need that announcement, we need it very soon.

39. Parents won't forget or forgive that these cuts are damaging their children's education. A whole generation is affected. Our campaign will ramp up.
40. This generation deserves a wide education that includes arts as well as the sciences, at least as much as previous generations.
41. This generation deserves sports and swimming and design and technology. As much as previous generations did.
42. They deserve individual attention and extra support when they need it.
43. They deserve class sizes as low as those in other European countries.
44. Our children only get one chance to go to school.
45. And whoever caused the economic crash of 2008, it wasn't this generation.
46. It wasn't the five-year olds starting school this September who weren't even born in 2008.
47. It wasn't the 11 years olds starting secondary school who were one year old when Lehman Brothers crashed and the Government bailed out the bankers.
48. Conference, these children only get one chance to go to school – and they really are our future, our country's future. This generation shouldn't be paying the price. Today I urge all politicians to fund our schools properly and I urge all teachers, all head teachers and all parents to join our weekend of action on April 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup>.
49. I want to congratulate the Midland divisions, coordinated by Russ Bragger in Walsall who organised a school banner drop last week that covered 170 schools

in 12 local authorities. Order those banners from our website. Let's spread banner drops around the country.

50. I want to repeat my congratulations to the 3,500 members who ordered leaflets during the General Election. Let's do that again and on an even bigger scale.
51. So, get on the website: [schoolcuts.org.uk](http://schoolcuts.org.uk) and order your leaflets, posters and school banners. Let's make sure that the local elections see candidates being quizzed about their attitude to funding this generation's education properly.
52. But education is far from being just about funding.
53. Let's look at the fundamentals. I want to say some uncomfortable things:
  - Despite teachers working so hard and students putting in so much effort, education in our country is going badly wrong. We are being let down by our politicians.
  - Our country has amongst the most unhappy children in the World.
  - Our children are more anxious about tests than any other country in the developed world.
  - School is now cited as the main cause of stress for 65% of 12-year olds and 82% of 16 year olds. And it didn't used to be like this.
54. Natasha Devon, the ex-Child Mental health czar, sacked for telling the truth about over-testing, reports that academic anxiety now tops the list of young people's worries replacing bullying, higher than social media and body image concerns.
55. But it's not just the students.
56. Teachers in England are reported as having amongst the highest levels of stress of any profession.

57. Suicide risks for primary teachers in England was 42% higher than the general population during the period 2011 to 2015.
58. Our country has an unprecedented teacher recruitment and retention crisis.
59. Many teachers now say that they don't encourage their own children to take up the profession.
60. And is the unhappiness and stress suffered by our children any surprise?
61. Who can be surprised when, in 2016, the government made us tell 47% of 11 year olds in 2016 were told they weren't secondary ready just before they went to secondary school?
62. Who can be surprised when many teenagers who got the equivalent of a C grade in their Maths GCSE last year scored just 17%.
63. Just stop and think that through. The Government made the tests much harder but did practically no preparation. To make it look OK to parents they ensured that roughly the same number of candidates as last year got the equivalent of A\*, A, B, C etc.
64. So the mark equivalent to a C was 17 marks out of a 100 on a paper.
65. The Government tells us you got a C.
66. But they put you through a paper where you got 83% wrong. How do you feel? What does that do to your self-image? Shouldn't someone be resigning over that scandal?
67. And when Nick Gibb was asked about exam stress at the Education Select Committee he makes a flippant remark about children needing to do more tests so they get used to them. Get used to the stress.

68. Really Nick? More tests? More than, Baseline, phonics, KS1 tests, practice SATs, time table tests, practice SATs KS2, SATs, more restrictive GCSEs.
69. If weighing pigs made them fatter, then Nick's pigs would be the fattest pigs of all.
70. **But weighing pigs doesn't work.** The reductive narrow curriculum and testing regime is failing our children. Nick Gibb is failing our children.
71. We have the longest working hours for staff and the most stress on pupils but we aren't top of Pisa. Countries like Finland and Norway and provinces like Ottawa, whose Governments don't behave like ours, fill the top slots.
72. THEY trust their teachers, they don't obsessively test children ALL THE TIME BUT they do better than us.
73. So, when we say we want change, it's not Nirvana we are looking for, it's being more like Norway. It's not a fantasy, it's being more like Finland.
74. That would be a huge change. We need to see huge change because our children are the most unhappy and our teachers the most stressed.
75. We need change because so many children are denied opportunities to study arts, dance, drama, design and technology.
76. We need change because the exam factories culture our schools have been forced into doesn't promote the analytic thinking, the problem-solving and imagination, the life skills and the creativity that our children are going to need heading into an era of automation.
77. And we need change because our children are amongst the most obese but we don't teach them to cook. In many schools we've stopped teaching them to swim and cut back on other physical activities.
78. Testing, obsessive testing has overtaken everything else in our school system.

79. And all of this because politicians want to blame teachers for the effects of poverty and inequality instead of taking responsibility for it themselves.
80. I don't want to be too bleak. Because I tell you.
81. In every school there are teachers fighting for space for real education and creativity. Warwick Mansell told us his kids enjoy their education.
82. Everywhere, there are teachers who say they pay a sacrifice to the great god of data so they can get on with their passion. Many head teachers resist the fear of Ofsted and protect their children and staff.
83. But the truth is all too many teachers have to fight the system to find the space. Head teachers have to be brave to stand up to Ofsted.
84. We need truly fundamental change. So that the space passionate teachers need is there by right. So that teachers can reclaim their professionalism and imagine a future for the profession. So that Heads don't have to be brave to do the right thing.
85. But to get that change, one of the things we have to do is to understand what's gone wrong.
86. Since the 1988 Education Reform Act, we have had 30 years of a political consensus that standardised tests, competition between schools, market methods like performance pay and academisation are the way to improve education.
87. It has been a cross party consensus. And that consensus has failed. It failed our children and it's failed our teachers.
88. Let's just remember some of the essential steps. In 1988 the Conservatives gave us SATs league tables and Ofsted. Oh, and budget cuts.

89. In 1997 Labour were different - they did give schools more money. Real investment that made a real difference.
90. But they also gave us the top down literacy hour, academisation and performance related pay.
91. They did some very positive things like the London Challenge and Sure Start. They started to act on child poverty.
92. But they made no moves against the SATs.
93. They kept on Chris Woodhead as Head of Ofsted. They carried on ploughing the same furrow.
94. And that furrow was eating away at teacher autonomy, eating away at trust in the profession.
95. Then the Tories got in again in 2010 and gave us Michael Gove, souped-up academies, souped-up performance related pay, harder SATs tests and the phonics tests. Oh, and funding cuts. Oh, and the end to the London challenge, the end to the EMA and huge cuts to Sure Start.
96. Gove had his fake concern for disadvantaged children. His claim that we were guilty of the soft bigotry of low expectations.
97. One of his acolytes, Fraser Nelson, tweeted just this week 'Shame that the most articulate voices for social mobility aren't as angry about schools, where the real problem lies.'
98. And maybe there you see the reality underlying these school policies. To blame teachers for poverty in order to distract attention from Government's responsibilities.
99. Well I say it's a shame the articulate voices like Fraser Nelsons aren't as angry as we are about growing child poverty, proposals to reduce free school meal

eligibility and growing income inequality where the real problem lies. I am proud that this Union and its members put the scandal of child poverty on the front pages of newspapers this weekend and made it the lead item across the TV news channels. I am proud we invited Jeremy Corbyn to speak at our conference two years ago.

100. Sometimes the long term nature of the educational consensus makes it hard to realise that things could be different. If you are a teacher aged less than 36, the whole of your school life and the whole of your teaching career has been in a SATs dominated system.
101. It's hard to see from there that the consensus in our country is odd.
102. Other countries are not part of the same consensus.
103. We are an outlier. Us and the United States. We are at the extreme end of the high stakes, low trust systems.
104. So, after 30 years of one policy direction, now is a good time to look back, to compare ourselves internationally and to demand that politicians of all parties introduce a real change of direction.
105. We are beginning to see signs of a new consensus emerge.
106. I went to the Lib Dem's Spring Conference, where Layla Moran for the Lib Dems told Conference that they will abolish Ofsted and abolish league tables and KS1 and KS2 SATs.
107. The Greens have similar proposals and say they will return academies to local authorities.
108. Jeremy and Angela are promising that Labour will found a National Education Service based on collaboration not competition. Their manifesto promised to abandon Baseline and set up a commission to come with alternatives to the SATs.

109. And today, Sir Tim Brighouse, the man behind the London Challenge, called for a new Education Act and a new national consensus. He says “without good teachers we are a lost civilisation”.
110. And do you know it is not true that countries like ours can’t make a change.
111. Here at home, Wales is making significant changes.
112. Changes to the curriculum – because the old curriculum no longer matches the needs of a changing world. Changes to assessment – to emphasise assessment for learning. Changes to teacher education – because it recognises that investment in teachers is the foundation of educational development. We know this is a hard road for the Wales government to take with its big English neighbour. We know we will have tough discussions with them along the way, about timetable, about resources. But this much is plain: they know in Wales, just as educators and policy-makers in Scotland know, that the pressures of social, economic and cultural change on schools cannot be dealt with by parroting a few slogans about knowledge and tradition. As Nick Gibb does.
113. Or further afield, look at New Zealand. Our sister union the NZEI has been campaigning much like us against charter schools and against national standard tests.
114. Well the New Zealand Labour Party has just formed the Government and their Education Minister Chris Hipkins, who I was really pleased to host in Hamilton House a few years ago, has moved decisively to abandon national tests and to bring the charter schools back under democratic control.
115. Change can happen and teacher unions can be at the heart of it.
116. So instead of reductive SATs tests, we are demanding a system that focuses on teacher assessment, professional development, investment in improving diagnostic assessments and rebuilding school to school collaboration and cooperation. We are demanding a national pay scheme for teachers. It is a good

idea and should apply to all state funded schools. We are demanding that local democratic authorities will organise school admissions, exclusions, pupil place planning for all schools in their area.

117. Why don't we say that we won't have privatised structures eating away at public involvement, promoting private voices with private motives. As Warwick Mansell pointed out this week Sir Dan Moynihan, Chief Executive of Harris and best paid person in English Education at £450,000 per year is on 35 governing bodies and is chairing many of them; where's the public accountability in that? Private voices with private motives.
118. Conference, why don't we say that multi academy trusts, if they exist at all, will become elected bodies full of parent and staff governors? Why don't we say each school will have an independent elected governing body that can decide to leave a MAT? Why don't we allow new community schools?
119. And why don't we demand that politicians cease their incessant day-to-day interference in the curriculum and how we assess children - instead building independent bodies to consult widely, with teachers' involvement, and supporting professional excellence?
120. Why don't we say we want an education system than prepares children for life and a good society as well as for work?
121. Why don't we say that happiness is a good thing at school?
122. We know it's not impossible. We know it happens in other countries.
123. So, our strategy is to work with politicians and with parents to look at the best in the world and decide what we want for children here. The best in the world. The best teachers, with the best diagnostic assessments. The best resources the best training.

124. Across the years, Governments have tried to marginalise teacher voices in education and they've tried to marginalise teacher unions. Well they haven't succeeded. We are still here and we are fighting our way back in.
125. And as the NEU, we are going to do that and to shape the future of education.
126. NUT and ATL, together, scored real successes over school funding.
127. We pushed Nicky Morgan back on forced academisation.
128. We de-railed Theresa May on grammar schools.
129. And as the NEU we are making news and setting the terms of the debate. We are going to invest significant resources.
130. On Baseline, our campaign with the More Than a Score coalition is growing. With our motions passed this Conference, we will commit significant resources to this campaign. And we need your help; this campaign must win. And it can win. Of the three organisations which ran Baseline in 2015, one is saying that the Baseline Mark 2 is 'verging on the immoral'. Another – Early Excellence - is more measured in its criticism: Baseline is merely, 'self-contradictory, incoherent, unworkable, and ultimately inaccurate, invalid and unusable'. Statisticians have poured scorn on the notion that you can test four year olds and get a reliable result. Baseline is unloved. It is a test without a future.
131. And I tell you we are in the game on workload. Not that we have won, but we are in the game. Michael Gove said there was no problem with teacher workload and refused to work with the unions. Damian Hinds mentions us in the second sentence of his video saying we are working too much and he gets Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to say there is too much marking.
132. Because of our campaign, they are on the back foot over teacher workload – and now is the time for us to press them much harder. Damian Hinds could introduce the motions we passed at this Conference, a limit on teacher working hours. He

should introduce it. So then Heads would have to talk to teachers about what really matters and teachers could start to get back professional control.

133. And if Damien really wants to do something about the teacher recruitment and retention crisis. If he wants to stop it turning into a catastrophe, then he will have to act on pay as well.
134. As Mary said to you on Saturday afternoon; if he doesn't act, then the National Education Union is big enough to act. I'm going to speak to ATL Conference on Monday and I will give the same message there.
135. If the government don't act – we will act.
136. If they don't act we will consult members, we will take action.
137. But no one should feel they have to wait for a national ballot. We can all be taking action on workload and pay now. Divisions are running workload charter campaigns, school groups are taking action, with union backing to refuse triple marking, photographic evidence etc – and all with the implied backing of the Head of Ofsted. In September, we will launch a national campaign to drive down teacher workload, we will arm all members, reps and officers with brilliant materials backed up by regional officers and organisers. We are determined that our campaign will end the overworking of the teaching profession and we will not rest until it does!
138. I want to congratulate all the teachers up and down the country who are already making a stand for themselves and their children.
139. The NEU in Wales who have forced a review of the school categorisation process and accountability measures and are pushing the Wales Assembly on a better deal for Supply teachers. And just by the way, weather permitting we will soon have the very first NEU Conference for Wales.
140. I want to congratulate the teachers at Avenue Primary school, Keir Hardie Primary School, the Village Special School, Acton High School and many others

who have taken strike action this year against academisation – and where we are winning.

141. The teachers and parents at the Bridge Special School, Ipswich and at St Philip's Church of England Aided Primary School in Romsey, who both fought brilliantly and where we won successful campaigns against academisation. The number of schools that converted last month was lowest in 4 years.
142. The teachers in Doncaster and Wakefield who forced the bad behaviour of WCAT into public view, and those in Cumbria who did the same over the Bright Tribe Whitehaven academy.
143. The teachers in East Sussex and in Warrington preparing to take action against Heads who won't implement the 2% pay rise – and the teachers in Sixth Form Colleges who voted to do so and who won as a result.
144. I want to congratulate the NEU members in Manchester who organised a brilliant More Than A score meeting. The activists in Liverpool and Merseyside who worked with the council to build a big education cuts demo, the teachers in London who organised a huge anti sexism conference, the young activists in the Northern Region who've persuaded a PGCE cohort to run a competition for best education campaign.
145. I want to congratulate all of you for your imagination who have done similar. Those of you who are building our young teachers' networks, our black teachers' networks, our disabled teachers' networks, our trans teachers' group, our work on challenging sexism, and all of you who are doing the unsung work of caseworkers and health and safety reps.
146. They've tried to break us. They have not succeeded. We are still here – and we are growing stronger.
147. In fact we've been here since 1870. This union was set up to fight payment by results and for national pay and a decent pension. The very, very first speech

given at our very first conference castigated the twin evils of ignorance and poverty.

148. Conference, this union has always been on the right side of history.
149. Our union fought for free secondary education, for education for girls, for comprehensive schools.
150. We fought against children being labelled as educationally sub normal.
151. We were the first to demand equal pay for women.
152. Our union was home to suffragettes. To Mary Gawthorpe, an activist in Leeds NUT to Millie Lansbury, a member of East London NUT.
153. Our union and our members, like Michael Dance mentioned in the Guardian, were at the forefront of the movement against Section 28.
154. Our union has always been at the forefront. NUT members led huge campaigns against racism and the marginalisation of black children in our education system.
155. Our members were there at Cable Street to stop the anti-semitic march of Mosely and his fascists.
156. Our brother, Blair Peach, gave his life nearly 40 years ago on a mass peaceful demonstration against the National Front who were trying to divide our society. And today we are pleased to be part of the movement against those who follow them the EDL and the Football Lads' Alliance.
157. Conference, on many, many of these issues we have made enormous progress - but the price of liberty, the price of humanity is eternal vigilance.
158. Conference, I think Blair and those generations of teachers would be proud of the stand that we have taken this week against Islamophobia.

159. Conference, some of our Muslim brothers and sisters went home early yesterday because they or their families were frightened by this evil “punish a Muslim” day.
160. We stand with our Muslim brothers and sisters. We stand up to all racism and bigotry. We oppose all discrimination.
161. And in doing that we make our movement stronger.
162. Next year in Liverpool, we will have the first joint conference of the National Education Union – and we will see the combined voice of nearly half a million education professionals, a majority of all teachers – the game changer for education. We want the NASUWT to join us. We have growing campaigns, we have increased credibility, increased pressure on politicians of all parties.
163. Education is the great liberator. We will make it a force for social justice and we intend to win for the profession and for all children and young people across England and Wales.
164. Good luck this year with your determined efforts to defend teachers, support staff and education. Good luck with your momentous efforts to build parental support and engage with local politicians.
165. I’ll see you in Liverpool next year – unless I see you on a picket line or at a campaign meeting before then.
166. We will be the game changer.
167. VIVA NUT, VIVA NEU!

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