



The Editor
Daily Telegraph

23rd April 2008

Dear Sir,

How extraordinary that an erstwhile senior advisor to a Conservative politician who seeks election to the highest political office should write under the headline "**Time To Crush The National Union of Teachers**" (*George Bridges, Telegraph, 22nd April 2008*). I wonder how Telegraph readers would react to something similar emanating from the NUT with the title "Time To Crush The Conservative Party".

But then we in the NUT are democrats, proud of our role in the struggle to extend democratic rights to education for all, and we would never dream of using the language or the methods of those who seek to "crush" democratic institutions.

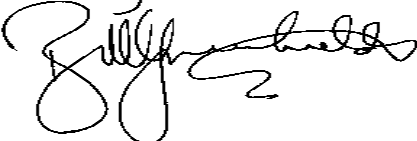
The NUT has a membership of 270,000. The Union recruits only qualified teachers in England & Wales, of whom, according to Government figures there are 435,200 full time equivalent. The Conservative Party claims roughly the same membership, out of a potential recruitment pool of the adult UK population of just over 49,000,000. Draw your own conclusions about the comparative representative nature of each.

Teachers have suffered below RPI inflation pay impositions for the last three years. Now we are promised more of the same for the next three years. The effects, which we have seen before in similar situations, would be a teacher recruitment crisis, teacher shortages and rising class sizes in our schools - at a time when the demands on teachers and schools have never been higher.

All of our carefully researched arguments on the damaging effects of such a pay policy have fallen on deaf ears. And when our members vote, as last resort, to pursue our legal right to strike in order to focus attention on the situation, we face calls for the "crushing" of our organisation.

Why stop there? Why not ban all dissent, in order to "conserve" our democratic way of life?

I think that, in any battle for public support and confidence between the Conservative Party and the nation's teachers, the outcome would be very decisively in favour of my colleagues in the teaching profession.

Sincerely,


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