

Lisbon Teachers' Union SPGL conference 5-6th Feb 2015

*Sara Tomlinson **

I am a primary school teacher in South London and the branch secretary for Lambeth, a borough in London with a large population of speakers of Portuguese, where Portuguese is the second language spoken in many schools. I and my colleague Bridget Chapman thank you for the invitation to your conference.

The NUT

The National Union of Teachers is a union in England and Wales and has around 300,000 members. We are a union for school teachers in nursery, primary and secondary schools. We have been very active over the last 5 years of a right wing government that has particularly attacked the teaching profession. We have seen pay freezes, pension cuts, changes to the curriculum, privatisation and the introduction of performance related pay. I have seen my pension age rise from the age of 60 to the age of 67. We have recently been subject to performance related pay which means that teachers compete against each other for a pay rise, going against the ethos of collaborating, working in a team and sharing ideas, planning and resources.

Michael Gove

The secretary of state for most of this period has been Michael Gove. He was a universally disliked politician. If I had mentioned his name in a conference in the UK, there would have been a strong reaction and a lot of booing. He was constantly criticising teachers, and called us the 'enemies of promise'. We went on strike six times against the government's education policies, and in July 2014, Michael Gove lost his job, because the government realised just how unpopular he had become.

No to Austerity

The film I showed at the beginning of the talk, to be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIQCLhTuRxU> shows the way that wealth is distributed in our world. By 2016 1% of the population will own more wealth than the 99%. In the UK trade unions have been campaigning against austerity and have been saying that cuts to the public sector, to wages and privatisation do not benefit an economy. We have pointed out that the wealthy, who have increased their wealth during the recession, should be made to pay taxes fairly. We have campaigned for action against tax evasion and tax avoidance. We

say that there does not need to be any cuts to services, benefits and workers' pay.



**Os desafios
da docência**

perante o recuo dos direitos de cidadania

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fórum Lisboa

Education

We have campaigned not only on the issues of pay pensions and our working conditions, but also on education. Here are some of the key parts of our 'Stand up for Education' campaign, as explained in our education manifesto.

1. Privatisation – we saw charter schools in the US, and in England we have seen academies and free schools. These are schools that are not controlled by a local elected council, but by private and charitable organisation. These have not been accountable and have seen the introduction of allowing profit making from education.
2. Respect our profession – we want schools to trust us. We are constantly being observed, watched, criticised. We have a national inspection body, called Ofsted, who put pressure on schools to teach a certain way. Teachers should be trusted to know how to teach.
3. Testing – our children are some of the most tested in the developed world. Children experience mental health difficulties due to the constant pressure of testing. We test children formally at the age of 6,7,11 and 16. And soon the government want to introduce a formal test for 4 year olds. These tests are used to rank schools and to put pressure on teachers. We think four year olds need to develop through play. We know these tests are not good for children and not good for education.

Conclusion

We need to think about what we came into teaching for. We want to make a difference to children's lives. We want to help children tackle the world that we live in, to be able challenge the way the world is run as seen in the change the world video. In many countries across Europe austerity has led to an increase in racism and fascism. People turn on others instead of turning on those who cause the financial crisis. We in the NUT campaign against racism and fascism and against the scapegoating of immigrants. We want a world where the next generation will change a system dominated by the 1%. We want to work with teachers and trade unions across the world and hope you will share the ideas in our manifesto.

* Primary school teacher and NUT activist, UK