

WHERE HAVE THE RADICAL TEACHERS GONE?

By Bubatunde Williams, Deputy MYP for City of London

I am speaking as one of many young people who have entered the state school system and have come out feeling let down as have so many of my contemporaries. In comparison to our private school counterparts we are lagging behind, and it is obvious to see that, however one might phrase it, a price has been put on education. The wealthy will always be able to afford a better form of what is meant to be seen as "priceless". Today I lay the blame for my weaker education at a different door to the Government, for although they are to blame, everyone has forgotten the other culprits. The teachers' unions.

In the Seventies the social militants of the unions fought both for their members' pay packets, and also for social advancement. In my view they have become backward and insular. Since the Seventies, unions, especially the teachers unions (and RMT), have used trade action simply for monetary purposes. I have no dispute with this as teachers were previously paid the minimum in relation to other civil departments. However times have changed. Teachers are offered many monetary advantages (not enough in my mind), from help with housing, to a clear and progressive wage structure, dependant on their length of service, and title. Yet, they refuse to change tack, and pay lip service to issues such as anti-racism campaigns, which the average person is not made

aware of, though when teachers are not being paid enough, you know about it. Looking at a teaching union's website the second link down after "join us" is "lobby your MP on pay," the twelfth link down is education!

The teaching unions have forgotten their voice, and have let the government dictate the terms under which they work. This is to the detriment of the students, who have rigid teachers following rigid guidelines, who are no longer allowed to express themselves through teaching in an individualistic manner. Yet, the

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unions are able to strike and fight if the pay scales do not meet their wishes, though they go unheard when the government shackle their staff and prevent them from doing their jobs to the fullest of their ability. Are their priorities misconstrued? Are they willing to work in their current conditions as long as they are paid adequately?

What annoys me most is that the teachers will moan amongst themselves about government

interference and how it is destroying the most important parts of any young person's life. Parents and students alike have heard the same quote "the Government won't let me do my job" a hundred times. Yet, if the Government tomorrow said they were going to cut teachers' wages, the amount of teachers striking would be phenomenal. Schools would become ghost towns. Yet no one strikes for the futures of the children, no one stands out and is heard nationwide from the unions in regards to overbearing government, and now business interference.

In a politically correct society, teaching should be the one art form that refuses to conform, that breeds radical ideas and questions, that instigates dreamers to make their dreams a reality. If the teachers and their unions remain silent when all that makes what they do beautiful is falling apart, then our education system has no hope. Teachers, unions, decide now, is teaching a job or a profession?

