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PPTA NEWS

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John Whitehead...



**The Treasury Grinch
who wants to steal
all your Christmases P5**



PPTA News is the newsletter of the New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association. Approximately 18,000 copies are distributed free to secondary and area schools and other institutions.

Not all the opinions expressed within *PPTA News* reflect those of the PPTA.

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Spirit of the times

Memo to: Executive Director Global Christmas Trust.
From: Reed, Wright and Talley Consultants.
Subject: Efficiency Review.

Having completed our financial and staffing review of the North Pole Division, we make the following recommendations:

1. Practices in the workshop are extremely outmoded. We could sum this up in the famous phrase from Brian Picot, "good elves: bad system". Up until now, management has been hopelessly centralised – allowing the elves to have too much say about the way work is organised, even about the best way to produce the toys. Because they have had a monopoly on the production of Christmas toys there has been no competitive pressure on them to maximise shareholder value. Considerable savings could be made by the introduction of digital technologies which would standardise production and enable us to do more with fewer elves. By our estimates downsizing the workshop by around 700 elves could save us \$50 million. Some of these savings can be used to hire more media and communications staff to counter the negative publicity. Should you wish we can assist you with strategic media advice. We can also scope out possible sites for relocation of the workshop to Asia if the restructuring does not increase profits enough. Elves in China, for example, are not just cheaper but far more biddable.

2. We are not convinced that Santa provides an appropriate image for the Global Christmas Trust. Not to put too fine a point on it, he is old and fat when we live in an age that worships young and thin. We understand that he did make some effort to cut out the Christmas mince pies and the brandy butter while the Mission On programme was running but since that was canned, he has piled the pounds back on.

We would be happy to design a new Christmas brand for you based around a more modern and slimmer celebrity, Paris Hilton, for example comes to mind. This would also assist us in our Equal Employment Opportunity targets.

3. If Santa were downsized, fewer reindeer would be required to pull his sleigh offering considerable savings on food and stabling plus reducing our carbon emissions and then our tax liability. (If you had come to us sooner I am sure we could have got you in on the New Zealand government's plan to subsidise polluters. They have been very pleased with the work we have done for them on national standards so a pay-back is due.) More importantly, the reindeer work only one night of the year so the company is not sweating its assets very effectively. For a small commission we can arrange to contract out the reindeer for other national and international functions such as the Winter Olympics or the Running of the Bulls.

4. The state of the property



"Frankly, Mr Claus, we don't understand - two days ago you had assets worth billions - today, nothing..."



by Kate Gainsford

portfolio at the North Pole is very unsatisfactory – everything could come down in the next blizzard. We suggest you put in a request to the Minister of Education to establish a very small school for the children of the elves (well it would be small wouldn't it ... being as elves are small... oh never mind!) under the Private Schools' Conditional Integration Act the New Zealand taxpayer will pay 85% of the building costs. We can do more work on this for you, sorting out a cheap line in special character etc.

5. Lastly, Global Christmas Trust needs to look to the future and we can help with that too. The fundamental problem with Christmas is that everyone gets gifts for nothing. This presents a serious moral hazard. If people are given things for nothing, they don't value them. Moreover there is an opportunity cost imposed on the company when the elves are producing toys that are then given away – gratis. We have begun working on a campaign plan to lobby politicians and powerful global financial interests like the World Bank to introduce user pays to Christmas. The time

has long gone when a bottle of warm beer and a piece of home-made Christmas cake can cut it as a reasonable return to the shareholder.

Season's Greetings. ▪

The complex nature of information

It may come as a surprise to many that – despite government concerns about poor literacy levels – no school in New Zealand is required to have a library, or qualified library staff.

Sadly, lack of funding and support means an increasing number of schools feel a library is a luxury they cannot afford. This is concerning because access to a school library is a vital way to prepare students to thrive in the information age.

Trained and qualified librarians are leaving the profession in droves because of the lack of financial and professional support for the important work they do.

A school librarian is more than just the guardian of school literature – they are responsible for designing, resourcing and delivering an entire information literacy programme for every class at every level in the school. Today however many have been driven from the profession by poor pay and conditions. As a result, very few school librarians have any teacher training or experience and almost none are registered teachers.

Hutt Valley High School library manager Anne Stephenson Piper was so concerned about the short-sightedness of this practice that she contacted education minister Anne Tolley. Anne had recently attended a School Library Association of New Zealand Aotearoa (SLANZA) conference in Christchurch where Tolley was due to speak, but the minister was unable to keep the appointment, instead sending local National MP Nicky Wagner to deliver her speech. Wagner was surprised to learn that schools were not required to have a library and was unable to address many of the concerns raised by SLANZA members, so Anne took matters into her own hands, writing to the minister directly.

The trained teacher librarian position was piloted more than 20 years ago with tagged funding for more than 50 positions and special funding for libraries themselves.

The position was abolished in 1991 and subsequent staffing changes



“Providing every school with a good library and teacher librarian is not excessive or wasteful use of scarce resources – but rather a fundamental requirement ...”
– Anne Stephenson Piper

meant librarians were no longer paid through schools’ staffing entitlements. Instead – regardless of qualifications – many were employed as support staff, meaning a drop in wages and conditions. By 1996 there were only 18 trained teacher librarians left in secondary and area schools. Today there are as few as five.

The role and management of school libraries is in the hands of boards of trustees and principals, Anne Stephenson Piper wrote.

“Not all of these people have a clear understanding of the complex nature of information, or its importance,” she said.

In spite of NZQA achievement standards requiring the use and understanding of information sources, there are no school library standards and no consequences for library staff, boards of trustees or schools who fail to deliver adequate information literacy programmes.

ERO teams do not examine, or report on, the role or work of the library.

The new curriculum being phased in to New Zealand schools depends on well-resourced, professionally staffed school libraries being available to all students, she said.

“Information literacy is critical to educational success in the 21st century.

“If New Zealand is to compete economically on the world stage, we cannot afford to leave the teaching of information literacy in our schools to chance.”

Many New Zealand children are not being equipped to function well in an information rich age, she said.

“This will affect New Zealand’s performance in education, research, science and technology. It will also undermine our democratic process if citizens do not understand their right to know, or at least have the ability to find out.

“Teaching information literacy ... requires teacher training and experience, additional training in Library Science, knowledge of constantly changing information technologies and broad understanding of both literature and the curriculum. The library is (or should be) the single greatest asset of a school.”

But the current situation makes undertaking library training an unattractive and unviable option for teachers as they take a large cut in salary and status, forfeit their career path and lose most of their sick leave and holiday entitlements. “This situation needs to be urgently remedied.”

Anne understands and supports government concern about wasteful spending of limited public money but is worried about the apparent absence of specific plans for using school libraries.

“Providing every school with a good library and teacher librarian is not excessive or wasteful use of scarce resources – but rather a fundamental requirement of any education system. The investment needed now pales into insignificance when compared with the cost of continuing to avoid the issue.” ▪



Stealing the show

If Treasury secretary John Whitehead gets his way it will be a grim Christmas for the education sector.

Treasury's latest document, *Challenges and Choices: New Zealand's Long-term Fiscal Statement*, calls for bigger classes, fewer non-contact hours and performance pay – all the while failing to acknowledge Treasury's own role in pushing for the expensive and disconnected Tomorrow's Schools system.

Whitehead speaks of "difficult trade-offs" between economic, social and cultural education objectives, and advocates "using limited funding more efficiently to achieve the same or better results."

PPTA president Kate Gainsford is concerned about the document's flaws and has written to Whitehead seeking a meeting.

"I am concerned that a government department would release a blueprint for New Zealand schools with so little regard for background and accuracy," she said.

There was however some comfort in assurances made by education minister Anne Tolley, at PPTA's November executive meeting, that she would take Treasury's advice with a grain of salt.

"Treasury offers a lot of advice, but we don't always listen to it. They look at things with a purely fiscal attitude, and that's what we want them to do ... they are constantly looking at making the numbers add up, but have no cognisance of politics – what's acceptable and what's reasonable ... a major change like that would have to be signalled in an election manifesto, and it wasn't," Tolley said. Kate said she would hold Tolley to that promise in the coming year; however she did not think being "purely fiscal" justified Treasury working with flawed information.

The document shows Treasury has teachers' non-contact time firmly in its sights and Kate warned Whitehead about the significant risks in recommending

wholesale non-contact cutbacks. Damaging long-term costs could be generated through downstream effects on retention and recruitment, she said. Kate said Treasury did not understand the need for more non-contact time had arisen from external events such as:

- the pressures of NCEA and constantly expanding subject options.
- the need for increased pastoral time to assist schools in dealing with an increasing number of troubled students.
- the expectation that students will be provided with more individualised learning programmes.
- the increased expectations for schools to provide a wider range of sporting and cultural experiences.

The document also speaks of

stand that schools are inclined to reduce class sizes if students are more challenging, while allowing bigger numbers in classes of more able students. This practice completely confounds simplistic attempts to correlate student results and class size," she said. "The increased class size policy is one that officials are inclined to recommend for other people's children rather than their own," she said.

The document recommends "more flexible remuneration systems that allow providers to reward high-quality teaching..." that Kate describes as a "rigid adherence to an ideology, rather than a rational response to retention, reward and recruitment in the secondary teaching profession. Research shows that teachers are not that motivated by money and seek intrinsic rewards instead," she said.

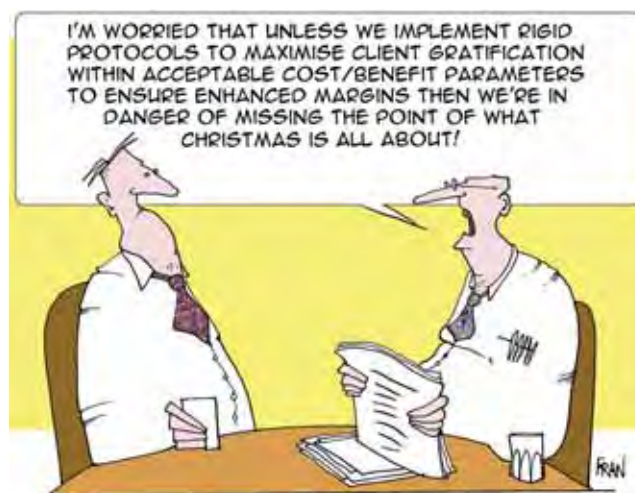
"This sort of commitment may not be readily explained by Treasury modelling of 'homo economicus' but it is nevertheless a reality in the teaching profession.

"It seems somewhat disingenuous for Treasury to recommend the creation of a bonus culture in the face of public outrage at the practice as it operates in the financial sector," she said.

The report also completely missed the

considerable evidence that "choice" simply empowers schools to cherry pick students, leading to polarisation of the school system along ethnic and socio-economic lines. This is likely to be contributing to what the document refers to as the "long tail of under-achievement", she said.

Kate believes a meeting with PPTA and Treasury officials could help the department to understand some of the complexities of secondary education so that its advice might more usefully contribute to lifting productivity in New Zealand. ■



"reducing constraints" on staffing ratios, class size and staff deployment, claiming that "research" shows smaller class sizes are a "relatively expensive and ineffective option."

Kate described this claim as "intellectually dishonest". It is based on a single study, by Dr Eric Hanushek, popular in World Bank circles because it can be used to argue against ever spending any money on education. But the statistical basis of its claims have been questioned, she said.

"Studies which show no effect for smaller classes fail to under-

NZ youth resilience scheme inspires Denmark

A New Zealand resilience-building programme for year nine students has been picked up in Denmark as a tool to help prevent youth suicide.

Dr Lilian Zoellner from the Danish government-funded Centre for Suicide Research gave a talk about the Travellers programme in Wellington last month.

Travellers is a school-based programme aimed at building resilience in young people. It was developed and piloted for the New Zealand Ministry of Health's suicide prevention plan by Skylight – a national not-for-profit organisation that supports children, young people and their families through change, loss and grief.

Travellers is already used in about 80 New Zealand schools, with more joining next year. It is also used in Denmark and has become part of a body of research aimed at suicide prevention.

Although there are differences between countries and cultures, Dr

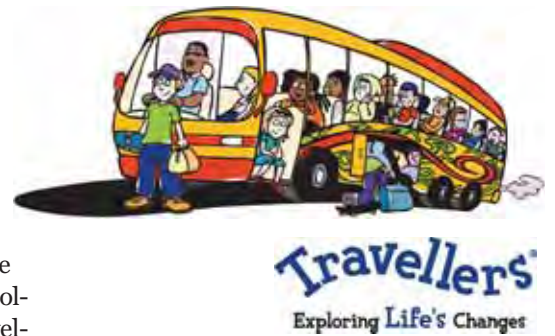
Zoellner plans to build international conversations and databases to help provide information for youth suicide prevention programmes and research.

In Denmark, 3-12% of secondary students exhibit risk factors that require specialised (beyond school) treatment, while 20-30% benefit from targeted, school-based programmes (such as Travellers).

Another theme of Dr Zoellner's presentation was the need to find ways to protect students by better enabling them to seek and accept help when they need it.

Danish research shows that the vast majority of teenagers who consider or attempt suicide tell no one at all, or tell only a few friends.

Dr Zoellner gave a chilling account of a group of four young people from different countries who developed internet friendships and, over a period of months, discussed and ultimately agreed upon the means by which each of them might commit suicide. Apart



from these conversations, there were no outward signs that any of the four were suicidal, yet three of the four went on to kill themselves.

Ultimately, Dr Zoellner sees ongoing research into risk and protective factors as an important facet of the work to prevent youth suicide, and to feed into the development of effective programmes, such as Travellers.

For further information about the travellers programme visit www.travellers.org.nz

Dr Zoellner and the Centre for Suicide Research can be found at www.selvmordsforskning.dk/Web/English. •

National standards vs NZ curriculum

The government's obsession with "the three Rs" poses huge risks to curriculum delivery, student achievement and student engagement, PPTA president Kate Gainsford says.

The introduction of national standards for reading, writing and mathematics for years one to eight begins in 2010 – the same year that schools are required to "fully implement" the new curriculum.

The New Zealand curriculum has been applauded internationally for its breadth, the space it provides for professional judgement, and its focus on core competencies and values. With a focus on national standards the hard work done to create the curriculum, and prepare teachers for it, will go to waste, Kate said.

"The only game in town, for a primary school, will be to have their students perform well against the national standards so the school looks good on the league tables that will inevitably be generated."

Even John Hattie, often a supporter of government initiatives in education, has come out criticising the policy. In his paper *Horizons and whirlpools: The well travelled pathway of national standards*, he says it could be "the most disastrous policy formulated if it turns our attention to narrowing, testing, league tables ..."

Hattie traces the path followed in other countries that have gone this way, and asks why we are introducing a policy that is failing overseas.

"Many countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have walked this path, and the path has ended in limited evidence of any improvement in students' educational achievement ... or a negative effect on student achievement and perverse effects in schools."

With primary schools focusing on "the three Rs", students will come through to secondary seriously short-changed in the rest of the curriculum, Kate says.

"The cuts to advisory services for



primary to nothing but literacy and numeracy are slashing into professional development availability for junior secondary as well," she said.

A further concern will be the increasing number of students coming to secondary schools convinced they are failures, she said.

"They will experience years of being labelled as 'below' or 'well below' the national standard, which will reduce their motivation and increase the likelihood of their being disengaged and disruptive.

"Why are we doomed to repeat the mistakes of other countries instead of learning from them?" she said. •

Members tease out collective claims

The weather may be taking its time to heat up, but the mercury is rising for the collective agreement negotiation process.

November's round of nationwide PPTA paid union meetings marked a crucial step in drawing together the Secondary Teachers' Collective Agreement (STCA) claims to be negotiated next year.

Following on from the term three meetings at which members considered ways that current political, industrial and economic trends will influence the next collective agreement negotiation round, the November meetings provided members with an opportunity to promote their ideas.

PPTA president Kate Gainsford said she was pleased with the high response level of branches and that this was "a clear reflection" of the rising level of membership PPTA had witnessed over the last few years.

Kate said definite trends were emerging about what members wanted put forward at the negotiation table.

"A shorter term is favoured and there is a clear expectation that a pay increase is required given the level of investment in education necessary for rapid economic recovery," she said.

"There's also a lot of interest around reducing maximum class size and securing a fairer number of non-contact hours, particularly for part-time teachers."

She said there were a number of areas in the existing agreement where members thought "unfairnesses" had to be corrected.

"These concerned issues with leave provisions and the value of middle and senior management allowances."

A number of claims passed at this year's PPTA annual conference were already in the package, she said. These included a teacher mentoring scheme, a \$20,000 lump sum home deposit for teachers in their first four years and the re-establishment of senior subject advisors (SSAs).

"Bringing back SSAs would support the implementation of the new New Zealand curriculum and the inevitable workload increase brought about by standards realignment," she said.

All of the information gathered from members will be considered at a meeting of the PPTA executive in February. The executive will use that information to shape a proposed set of claims which will then come back to the whole membership early in 2010 for final approval before being lodged.

"The STCA brings equity and assurance to those charged with delivering education in New Zealand schools, and provides rhyme and reason to the public education system as a whole," she said.

Meanwhile members on the Adult and Community Education (ACE) collective agreement have voted to

roll-over the existing collective agreement for ACE employees in schools for three months. The effect of this is that ACE members have collective coverage for another year. Bargaining resumes early in the New Year. ■

Top 10 claim areas

As we went to print about 33% of branch responses had been collated.

1. A shorter term with annual increases.
2. Workload improvements such as non-contact time and controls on class size.
3. More management units and at higher value.
4. Fairer paternity, sick and domestic leave.
5. Increase to the service increment.
6. Fairer allowances and resources ie meals, overnight trips, cost of laptops.
7. Improved associate teacher allowance.
8. More professional support, ie sabbaticals and study leave for professional learning.
9. More recognition of long service.
10. Immunisations and health insurance. ■

Women "effectively working for free"

"Debt collectors" are on the back of the minister of women's affairs, minister of labour and Business New Zealand.

On 18 November pay equity campaigners dressed as debt collectors publicly unveiled a giant invoice for \$4 billion – the amount they say women in New Zealand are subsidising the economy each year because they are paid on average 12% less than men.

Pay Equity Challenge spokesperson Angela Mcleod said that because 18 November was approxi-



"Debt collectors" wait for \$4 billion.

mately 88% through the year, "women are effectively working for free from now until 2010".

"For many women the pay gap is even greater, however, so some have already been working for free for a while."

Campaigners said payment can be made by making a public commitment to ending gender pay inequity – or in cash.

They invited the ministers, as well as Business New Zealand's Phil O'Reilly and Prime Minister John Key to come and accept the invoice. All declined.

Earlier this year the government scrapped a pay equity investigation and disbanded the pay and employment equity unit at the Department of Labour. ■

Story time with the minister



PPTA executive members could be forgiven for being a little bemused when, instead of a prepared speech, the education minister chose to read them a children's book.

But when Anne Tolley told the November executive meeting the moral of the story, *The Short and Incredibly Happy Life of Riley*, was "you have to be happy with a lot less" reactions at the table turned from puzzlement to concern – and in some cases complete outrage.

Like the book's central character, Riley the rat, Tolley encouraged teachers to "think about the good things that we have in this country and be happy with what we've got."

Despite this ringing alarm bells for some, Tolley insisted it was "hugely important" to keep dialogue open with

the secondary sector and hoped for positive industrial relations next year.

PPTA junior vice president Jill Gray questioned whether Tolley was actually in the right party, with her suggestion that a simpler life should be had by all.

"That would seem to differ from the traditional market-based capitalism espoused by the National party ... and certainly doesn't gel with the messages schools receive every day to lift productivity and do more with fewer resources," she said.

She did however hope that PPTA could have a useful dialogue with the Ministry of Education on issues of concern to teachers, a feeling that the minister appeared to echo.

"There will be a number of changes (such as trades academies and the Youth Guarantee) but I want to work on solving

the issues together," Tolley said.

Tolley said she valued the work teachers did enormously, but also spoke of the pressures on the education budget with young people staying in school longer due to the recession.

Tolley also appeared to be open to discussion on the fraught Tomorrow's Schools governance system. She would like to get PPTA's opinion about what should be run by a central organisation and what should be left for schools to manage for themselves.

"It's a good discussion for us to have," she said.

PPTA president Kate Gainsford joined Jill in thanking the minister for taking the time to open up a dialogue with executive. Both looked forward to meaningful and coherent discussions with Tolley and hope a positive working relationship can be kept up in 2010. •

Significant contributions recognised

Long-serving Auckland PPTA activists Ron Miller (Green Bay High School), Joan Kerr (Balmoral School Manual Training Centre) and Kel Anglesey (Kelston Boys High School) accept three of the association's inaugural service awards at a recent regional meeting.

The awards have been introduced to recognise significant contributions members or former members have made to fellow members and the association through their activism and commitment.

PPTA News extends congratulations to the 12 other 2009 recipients. They are: Norman



(Nelson College for Girls), Val Thomson (Morrinsville College), David Wimms (Taumarunui High School). •

Austin (Fairfield College), Tony Broad (James Cook High School), Derek Bunting (The Correspondence School), Ewan Grant-Mackie (Thames High School), Anna Heinz (Nelson College for Girls), Margie Jarman (Taumarunui High School), Kevin McSweeney (Blue Mountain College), Alan Powdrell (Hastings Girls' High School), Bruce Taylor (The Correspondence School), Robert Taylor

Conflict in schools

NZSPC

NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' COUNCIL
OF THE POST PRIMARY TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

Professional development for principals

One of the more troubling aspects of a principal's job is that of managing conflict within the school. It can take many forms: parental complaints, student behaviour, staff inter-personal relationships to name a few. The board of trustees expects the principal to deal with such conflict both efficiently and effectively and to minimize the risk of litigation. There is little training available for this aspect of the job so PPTA has stepped in with two relevant and popular courses.

The first course is for two days and is run jointly with the School Trustees Association and the mediation service of the Department of Labour. The most recent delivery of this course was in November in Dunedin, led by PPTA field officer David Fowlie. Further courses

are planned for 2010, dependent upon funding. The second course is a one-day course called "Conflict in Schools" and will be offered to principals and senior managers for the first time in February 2010. Led by Ross McSwan, a Queensland barrister and lecturer at Bond University law school, this course covers topics such as natural justice, harassment, querulants and dispute resolution. Enquiries



Ross McSwan

about this course should be addressed to the course administrator, Mychael Stevenson, at Palmerston@ppta.org.nz.

MoE wanted plug pulled from alternative education

After months of official information requests and letters to the Ombudsman, a review of the alternative education system has finally been released to PPTA – and it looks as though its findings may not sit well with the minister of education.

On 30 October Anne Tolley released a statement saying alternative education contracts with schools will be extended for 2010. This is in the face of deeply concerning advice offered by the Ministry of Education suggesting closing down alternative education centres and reintegrating troubled students into secondary schools.

The *Findings of Review of Alternative Education and Future Directions* document suggests school-based intervention instead of alternative education centres but provides little substantive advice on how to achieve this – a fact that concerns New Zealand Secondary Principals' Council (NZSPC) chair Julia Davidson.

"The ministry seems to think that early intervention, high expectations of students, good relation-

ships and national standards will remove the need for alternative education, when those of us on the ground know it will take a lot more than that," she said.

Tolley's release about the roll-over of alternative education contracts says "there will be some changes from next year as a result of the review, but further work is needed to get better outcomes for alternative education students".

The minister was handed the report on 29 May, yet it has taken two requests under the Official Information Act and complaints to the Ombudsman to get the 17-page report by late November. The proposed timeframe for the report's implementation hinged on the minister agreeing to its recommendations.

If she had, the plug would have already been pulled on every alternative education and activity centre in the country. The review also admitted that the alternative education sector has been overlooked in terms of financial support and that a failure to increase funding in the last 10 years had not helped.

"The delay in releasing this review seems to indicate that there are parts of the ministry's advice that she (the minister) does not like, and in this case her opinion is shared by NZSPC," Julia said.

"While the report's focus on intervention early in the life of the problem is an ideal response, in the current context of funding, it's not a response that is available to most schools, most of the time.

"The report speaks of a multi-systemic, multi-agency approach, but provides no detail on how this might be done," she said.

While the alternative education system, as it is, is not an ideal solution, it is better than nothing at all, she said.

"I don't see anything in this review that suggests a better option."

Both PPTA and NZSPC will be keeping a close watch on the alternative education situation in the coming year, Julia said.

"We are going to continue letting the Ministry of Education know that we care about the students and teachers in alternative education and activity centres, and that we want to see some real answers." ■

Scoring a big “C-” for capitalism

Economics for Everyone

Jim Stanford

Pluto Press, 2008

REVIEWED BY RON MILLER

According to Jim Stanford “Workers and poor people get only as much from the economy as they are able to demand, fight for, and win.”

This is a timely reminder for PPTA activists as we move into a period of collective agreement negotiations.

One way that people whose struggles Jim supports can move towards success is by understanding how economic systems work. It is to this end that *Economics for Everyone* was written and why it is such a good read.

One of the beauties of this book is that you can pretty much start with any chapter and get some interesting insights on just how economics works.

In the chapter on investment and growth, for example, in clear

and straight forward language Jim explores the role of investment in an economy including both how the amount and geographic location of investments are determined.

Curiously, where one might expect investments to increase under the neo-liberalism of recent decades, they have actually fallen. It may be, he hypothesises, “that capitalists are content to consume a larger share” of the vast profits and incomes they currently earn “in luxurious style”.

In the chapter on capitalism and the environment he reveals how environmental damage falls on the poor while the rich can afford to live in less degraded areas.

He also poses the question, “Is growth the culprit?” and answers by focusing on the type and quality of growth preferring, for example, to see more investment in environmentally friendly energy production rather than the current highly polluting technologies. Jim has his doubts about the

capacity of capitalism to produce this kind of result. His “Good Growth” table is a good starting point for those enterprises wishing to play their part.

The last three chapters offer a short evaluation and some ideas for improving and replacing capitalism.

The capitalist economic system is evaluated based on various criteria. According to Jim this type of economy gets the highest rating, an A-, for innovation while rating much lower on equality, security and sustainability. An overall grade of C- is not a surprising result.

For those that are interested in improving capitalism Stanford offers a “reformers shopping list” which includes such gems as “regulating and stabilizing financial flows” and “providing high-quality, accessible public services”.

In the closing chapter Jim offers a brief look at socialism and some examples of how it operates in our modern world. ▪

Canadian economist to talk with PPTA activists

Jim Stanford, one of Canada’s best known economists, will be one of the keynote speakers at the PPTA Issues and Organising Seminar in February.

As economist for the Canadian Auto Workers Union and regular column writer for the *Globe and Mail*, Jim speaks regularly to the media on current economic issues, and to audiences of unions, community activists, and others concerned

with building a more democratic, critical approach to economics.

His latest book, *Economics for Everyone*, is reviewed above.

“We’re very pleased to welcome him to the seminar,” said PPTA president Kate Gainsford.

“Jim Stanford has a wealth of experience presenting economics to a wide range of audiences and I’m sure our members will get a lot out of what he has to say.” ▪



Jim Stanford

REGIONAL OFFICERS’ TRAINING DAY 2010

Who should attend?

All regional chairs, secretaries, treasurers, women’s coordinators, Pacific Island co-ordinators, Te Reo-a-Rohe, regional YANTS and support service volunteers.

Where?

The Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie, Wellington.

When?

Friday 26 February 9.30am – 4.30pm

Who pays?

Funded nationally.

ISSUES AND ORGANISING SEMINAR 2010

Who should attend?

All regional officers, plus any member of PPTA who wishes to become actively involved in our union.

Where?

Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie, Wellington

When?

9.30am Saturday 27 February to 1.00pm Sunday, 28 February

Who pays?

Regional officers are paid for nationally, other attendees have to be authorised and paid for by their region.

Futher details

Travel and accommodation details are available from Louise Mortland at lmortland@ppta.org.nz.

Guidance counselling makes a vital contribution

Dear editor,

What an excellent article by Kate Gainsford on the value of school guidance counsellors, (*PPTA News* October) especially her recommendation that ministers read their own Education Act and the appropriate NEGs and NAGs.

The minister needs to be reminded that teaching is a vocation not a product. A number of principals, deputy principals and senior managers have come from a career pathway that included guidance counselling. This suggests the significance and experience of the role makes a vital contribution to education. Removing guidance and counselling from the staffing entitlement removes this rich opportunity.

New Zealand's 350 or so self-governing schools lack clear expectations of any sort about what constitutes quality provision of guidance and counselling.

The danger is that an ad hoc system that meets neither New Zealand standards, or a developed country's standards in general, may be implemented.

The whole trend of the new curriculum is to educate a more holistic person in key competencies which has long been the bread and butter of guidance and counselling work. One of the key competencies, thinking, and the higher level thinking skills of analysing, evaluating, and creating, are something that a school guidance counsellor can offer to facilitate

system change and recognise dysfunction in a school system just as in a family system.

The Education Review Office charges guidance counsellors with a shared responsibility to promote a system of safe schools. Few others in the secondary school system have the opportunity to range across all subjects and all year levels as a school guidance counsellor does.

Perhaps the minister should ask herself a critical thinking question. "What if... I create an ad hoc, part time, low paid guidance and counselling system in New Zealand schools...?"

(abridged)

*G.N.Craig
guidance counsellor
Burnside High School*

Dear editor,

Thank you PPTA for your article in the October *PPTA News* "Tolley unaware of the value of guidance counsellors". It was reassuring to read that PPTA is supporting and advocating for the retention of guidance counsellors as part of a school's staffing entitlement and that PPTA is both fully informed and taking an active part in the discussions. It is imperative that guidance counsellors continue to be paid out of a school's staffing entitlement and be registered as teaching staff, otherwise the position will be lost to schools and

to the large number of students who currently benefit from this support.

The guidance counsellor position covers both educational guidance and counselling components, requiring both teacher training and guidance and counselling qualifications. These components are in fact integral as both involve student learning. Being registered teachers also provides versatility in terms of what the guidance counsellor does in schools. This particularly applies in smaller schools where the guidance counsellor may be working part-time and taking a class(es) to be

in full employment. It also provides a career path to school management positions.

I encourage all guidance counsellors to participate in a letter writing campaign to the minister and Ministry of Education and to lobby your local MPs for the retention of guidance counsellors as part of a school's staffing entitlement. For support with this, visit the PPTA website to read copies of letters already sent.

*Ada Crowe
guidance counsellor
Otago Girls High School*

Dear editor,

Thank you for the article in the October *PPTA News*, this was a pertinent summary of the issues we as guidance counsellors face. Myself and my colleagues have written several letters to the minister of education outlining the issues. In all cases she has replied by sending out the same letter and has not sought to engage with the points raised.

In Anne Tolley's reply to me she states, "I understand that providing school guidance counsellors through staffing entitlements can reduce schools flexibility to employ the most appropriate staff... (this)... is an area that the Ministry of Education will be advising me on."

This offers nothing by way of explanation for the uncertainty we are facing as we try and undertake our

day-to-day employment and contemplate the future of being thrown out of the teaching profession.

One may ask how the minister came to the conclusion that staffing for school guidance counsellors is not flexible enough? Did she undertake a thorough, transparent review of the role of guidance counsellors in schools so principals up and down the country had an opportunity to participate in the process? Or is this simply a case of the minister repeating something often enough that we begin to believe it?

It is interesting that the Ministry of Education is undertaking the process of review and is to report back to the minister. This is the first time since I have been a guidance counsellor (10 years) that the ministry has been involved with any aspect of the work of school counsellors.

I am told that, "The government values the important role that school guidance counsellors play in supporting student wellbeing and achievement in schools". In my view this smacks of tokenism and an agenda that is Orwellian in its implementation and a shame to the National Party. What will be the next victim?

(abridged)

*Jean Andrews
guidance counsellor
Taiari College*

Apology

The poem on the opinion page of November's *PPTA News*, "Ode to night classes", was mistakenly attributed to "Anon". It was in fact penned by Mana College ACE co-ordinator Pam Ringrose and Michael O'Leary. Read the poem at www.ppta.org.nz.

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