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1 October 2010

TORY/LIB DEM GOVERNMENT LOOKS SET TO SCRAP NEW SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF NEGOTIATING BODY

Last Friday, 24 September, a national newspaper published a leaked government document that showed a number of public bodies would be scrapped. One of those listed was the School Support Staff Negotiating Body (SSSNB).

The SSSNB was established last year as a statutory body to set a new national pay and conditions framework for school support staff in all maintained schools in England. Its role was intended to be similar to that of the Teachers' Pay Review Body. The SSSNB would provide the opportunity to treat support staff fairly and consistently in all schools and though not without its difficulties it at least gave us the chance to make things better. GMB had led the campaign to establish the SSSNB.

But before the SSSNB even had time to do anything the new government has decided, according to the leaked document, to stop it in its tracks. Another indication of the appalling disregard for school support staff.

What is to be done?

The first thing to note is that the Unison trade union has said it is consulting its members to take strike action. That is not the GMB's position - we do not feel we can ask members to take strike action over the SSSNB when it had not produced anything to judge it by.

However, GMB still believes in all the positive reasons for setting up the SSSNB in the first place and we will be lobbying to persuade the government to give it a chance.

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Indeed, having raised this with the Secretary of State, Michael Gove, he has written to GMB to say that "no final decision has yet been made" and inviting me to meet him to "discuss the future of the SSSNB". I have accepted his invitation although I am under no illusion that this government seems determined to pull the plug on the SSSNB.

Furthermore, I have written to the Cabinet Secretary, Francis Maude and the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg - who are responsible for the leaked list of bodies to be abolished - pointing out that their own parties supported the setting up of the SSSNB when they were in opposition and reminding them that it is actually more costly for each school to do its own thing - as well as resulting in unfairness to school staff.

I will keep making these arguments. And there are two things you can do to help too.

One is to write to your MP (see suggested text attached) and especially write to the Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA. Tell him about what support staff have to do and why they need fair pay and conditions. Why not get a petition going at your school and send it to him!

And at this time more than ever we need to have everyone in the GMB. With the attacks about to come on jobs, pay and pensions our Union must be strong to protect you. So please ask your colleagues at work to join GMB using the link below.

Brian Strutton

Brian Strutton
National Secretary - Public Services Section

Join GMB at www.gmb.org.uk/join