

# **News Release**

## **Association of Teachers and Lecturers**

### **Annual Conference \* 21 - 24 March 2005 \* Torquay**

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#### **Give us answers if you want our votes, demands ATL**

##### ***For education correspondents / newsdesks***

As the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) launches its powerful campaign for the general election, it is urging its 160,000 members to pin down our would-be leaders on four key issues: disruptive behaviour, league tables, teachers' pensions and child poverty.

Why, asks ATL, does every child have to take 113 statutory tests and assessments by the age of 14? What's the point of putting teachers and pupils through the stress of continuous assessment when its educational value is largely unproven? ATL is campaigning against relentless testing and for real learning to be restored to the education system.

Why, asks ATL, do teachers and pupils have to put up with disruptive students in class and in the wider school environment? A teacher is assaulted every seven minutes in the UK. Many teachers entering the profession are soon disillusioned. Experienced teachers are deciding it's not worth the hassle and are voting with their feet.

Why, asks ATL, does Britain in the third millennium have more child poverty than any nation of comparable size and income? If all the children in poverty were to link arms they would stretch from London to Glasgow and back again. Poverty is a major barrier to educational attainment. ATL members are campaigning against child poverty so that all our children have a chance to achieve their potential.

Why, asks ATL, when politicians of all hues claim to recognise the importance of attracting good calibre teachers to safeguard the future of the UK's skills and educational base, do they stand by and watch teachers' pensions being eroded? A teacher joining the profession from 2006 will be £100,000 worse off in retirement. And, as an added insult, they may have to work longer - until 65 - for a more measly pension.

Mary Bousted, ATL's general secretary, who is launching the campaign at Conference said: "Teachers and lecturers are going to ask searching questions of all parties in the run up to the election. They can neither run nor hide.

"On a personal level teachers want to be free from assault and free from an impoverished old age. On a professional level we want undisrupted classrooms, properly fed, rested and healthy pupils who are then more receptive to learning. We want a curriculum where meaningful and creative education flourishes instead of a relentless and narrow testing regime. Not too much to ask is it?"