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Irish Regional Secretary
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Republic of Ireland Head Office

Richard Bruton TD
Department of Education & Skills
Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

21st June 2017

Re: English Language Teaching Sector

Dear Minister Bruton,

Unite the Union has previously written to you on 21st March this year to request a meeting to discuss the widespread abuse of employment rights for teachers in the for-profit English language school sector. You replied stating that you felt a meeting was 'not necessary'.

Our members in the ELT sector have mandated us, as their union, to organise this rally outside the department today and once again request that you meet with us and a small delegation of teachers. Your department is centrally involved in the formation of the Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP) and the International Education Mark (IEM). Your department also published, late last year, the International Education Strategy which outlined your plans to increase the value of the sector to the Irish economy to €2.1 billion by 2020.

It is clear that the preparation of these document and policies emerged from extensive consultation your department has had with various stakeholders in the sector over the last few years. Indeed it seems you have consulted with all stakeholders with one notable exception; teachers.

The members of the Unite ELT Branch experience an industry where private enterprises make huge profits, but treat their staff, and employment legislation with barely concealed disdain.

Some of the issues which have been raised with us by our teacher members include: pervasive use and abuse of fixed term contracts; use of low hour contracts; use of bogus self-employment; failure to supply teachers with proper, legal contracts; failure to pay statutory holiday pay; failure to pay sick pay; a failure to award full entitlement to all leave as guaranteed under employment legislation; discrimination in pay between native born speakers and non-native English speakers; a serious deficit in resources and facilities for teachers and students alike.

We do not believe it is tenable for you as Minister to, on the one hand, regulate the ownership and administration of an industry and openly promote an industry overseas, and then wash your hands of this sector when difficult questions are asked. Your department has a responsibility on behalf of all those in this sector - teachers and students alike - to ensure the highest standards apply.

Len McCluskey
General Secretary

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High standards cannot apply when teachers are treated in the manner outlined above by the vast majority of schools. Any regulation of English language schools that does not include an obligation on schools to apply the most basic employment rights to its teachers is a facile and futile exercise.

We ask you once again to listen to the one voice you have ignored in this process: the voice of teachers. We hope you will consent to meet a delegation from the Unite ELT branch and listen first-hand to the concerns and frustrations of those on the front line of this industry.

I look forward to hearing from you and trust that you will acknowledge the injustices which are being inflicted on a daily basis on English Language Teachers.

Yours sincerely

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