

THE news that teachers are worried about discipline in schools is no surprise.

That they should view the issue as being just as important as their pay is bound to make people sit up and take notice.

Yet that's what the President of the Teachers Union of Ireland, Mr Paddy Healy said at the weekend when he reported that verbal abuse of fellow students and teachers, continuous disruption of classes and persistent low-level

WE SAY

The Echo's viewpoint

harassment of teachers were much more common nowadays.

Cases of bullying and intimidation of other students, threats of violence and actual violence against teachers were being reported to the union with disturbing frequency.

Education Minister Mary Hanafin

Unruly few get a 'D' for discipline

moved quickly to say she is prepared to introduce legislation to guarantee the right of pupils to an education free from disruptions caused by the growing incidence of poor discipline.

The Minister said a fine balance was needed between the rights of the individual and the rights of the majority.

It is clear that there is an imbalance at the moment — and it's not in favour

of the pupils who want to learn and to get on.

Correcting that situation, rather than being too concerned about the rights of individuals who don't seem to care for the rights of their fellow pupils to an education, must be the Minister's priority.

There is also a major responsibility on parents in all of this — and it would be a very good thing for the Minister to remind everyone of their responsibilities.

TALKING HEAD

Modern art going down the toilet

LAST week, while the rest of us were busy trying to figure out whether we would be better or worse off after the budget (single man, no dependents: I'm up €13 a year — woohoo!), 500 of the top art critics in the world at last decided on what were the most influential pieces of modern art in history.

Marcel Duchamp's *Fountain*, created in 1917, beat off Picasso, Matisse, Warhol and all-comers to claim the top spot. Duchamp's masterpiece — the most influential piece of modern art in the world I remind you — is an upside-down urinal.

I suppose if you are going to have a No. 1 you might as well choose a urinal.

You wonder though, would Duchamp have been even more influential if he had used a toilet instead? Surely that might have at least inspired a movement.

Enough of this infantile lavatory humour, I hear you cry. OK, let's turn our attention to tonight's Turner Prize for modern art.

The prize, awarded annually by the Tate Gallery in London since 1984, first caught the public's imagination in the mid-'90s with the emergence of 'Britart'.

Damien Hirst was the



ROBERT O'SHEA on what is and what is not modern art ahead of tonight's Turner Prize

enfant terrible of the British art scene in 1995 and won the prize for cutting a calf in two and placing the halves in two glass cases of formaldehyde. I was impressed by Hirst's work, mainly because I find it difficult to cut a steak at the best of times, so a whole calf seemed like an achievement.

In 2000, the prize went to a man named Martin Creed, who created (in the loosest sense of the word) an empty room with a bare bulb in it that went on and off over five second intervals — more light entertainment than serious art really.

This year sees the move away from 'paint on canvas' complete with four multimedia exhibits, namely video documentaries, making the shortlist.

The most controversial is from a duo named Langlands and Bell and has had to be withdrawn because of possible prejudice in the trial of Faryadi Zardad, currently being heard at the Old Bailey, on crimes allegedly committed in Afghanistan.

Their *House of Osama bin Laden* comprises an interact-

ive video game of the building once occupied by the Al Qaeda leader.

If bin Laden's house is art, then surely the other video game hitting the headlines last week, *JFK: Reloaded*, can be considered educational.

The game's creators claim the product 'brings history to life' and stimulates a younger generation of players — by trying to shoot JFK again — to take an interest in a fascinating episode of American history.

I concur. In fact, I envisage a whole range of educational Kennedy games being released. Next up would be *RFK: Reloaded*. Followed by *Grand Drunk Auto* and *Autopilot 2*. With Arnold Schwarzenegger married into the family it means a whole new vista has opened and I predict that *Terminator vs. The Kennedys* will win the Turner Prize before 2020.

While the Kennedy game may seem to some to be in bad taste, it does not get my vote for the most inappropriate recent re-imagining of a murder of a head of state.

That prize, of course, goes



ART? Marcel Duchamp's famous 1917 work, *Fountain*. The upside-down urinal has been named the most influential modern art work of all time, and has inspired artists from Damien Hirst to Tracey Emin.

to a Turner Prize nominee.

Yes, Nigerian Yinka Shonibare has a film on the shortlist this year that re-enacts the 1792 assassination of Swedish King Gustav III through dance. Yes, you read that correctly.

Wouldn't JMW Turner, after whom the prize is named, be turning in his grave over all this? And what do more traditional artists make of it?

Well, The Stuckists, an angry anti-modern art group, are making their fifth annual protest this year outside the Tate over the absence of paintings on the shortlist. Ah, some sense among all this madness you think, until you learn that The Stuckists protest dressed as clowns.

The last time a body of artwork of only paintings took the Turner was in 1998 when Chris Ofili won for his "dynamic use of colour and originality; for the energy

and complexity of his work with its multi-layered references to contemporary urban culture and awareness of the history of art." So said the jury that year.

Did I mention that Ofili eschewed oils and watercolours in his craft in favour of elephant dung? One of Ofili's paintings was somewhat enigmatically titled: *The Adoration of Captain S**t and the Legend of the Black Stars (Part 2)*.

We are close to my supposition that most modern art is crap. Just one final example.

Piero Manzoni, an Italian artist who died in 1963, filled 90 tin cans with his own faeces near the end of his life. The Tate Gallery paid €40,000 for one of these a few years back.

€40,000! Even with an extra thirteen bob in my back pocket I wouldn't spend a penny on modern art.

Unless I was bursting.

YOU SAY

Poem on Yuletide journey

Christmas
Christmas...

*A special time of year,
Santa delivering toys
In a sleigh pulled by reindeer.*

*And the smile of children
Filled with glee,
When they wake up and run
downstairs
To look under the Christmas tree.*

*How happily they play,
The Christmas spirit filling all,
The holly, mistletoe and tinsel,
Decorating the long hall.*

*But everyone forgets,
The religious side of things,
Like Mary, Jesus and Joseph,
The shepherds and the kings.*

*And walking for 12 days,
Were the three wise kings,
For Jesus they brought gifts,
Like gold and other things.*

*Everyone together,
Each worshipping the Son of God,
And the donkey and the ox,
Making sure he was warm.*

*So remember that Christmas time,
Isn't just about nice toys,
But the happy occasion that is,
The birth of that little boy.*

Graeme Richmond, aged 13
● I DON'T think I would be benefiting by paying a visit to Dr Feelgood (*Evening Echo* makeover, Nov 23). Forking out €299 for said products would leave me off colour. In fact I would be green with rage.

I love gardening, but at 66 years of age I'm going to give the rose bushes a wide berth from now on. Sexy petals would be the death of me.

'Working the room' — are we talking brothels here or what, I'm blushing already.

I get all the colour I need on a Thursday night when I open my bottle of wine, €7.99 on pension day, from Roches Stores. So I say beam me up for now.

Mrs M. O'Driscoll, St Michael's Lawn, Ballinure, Mahon, Cork.

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THE LAST WORD

"What is the first business of one who practices philosophy? To get rid of self-conceit."

Epictetus (55-135 AD)