

ELECTION 2016: VOTE FOR A POLICY, NOT A POTHOLE P6

MANDATE TRADE UNION

FEBRUARY 2016

SHOPFLOOR

SCARY REMINDER OF GHOSTS OF BUDGETS PAST P2/3



WE'RE UP FOR IT

TESCO WORKERS VOW TO FIGHT ATTACK ON LIVING STANDARDS



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STRAIGHT TALKING

Tesco's day of shame

WHAT a difference a day makes, at 11am on Tuesday, January 26, the lives and hopes of more than 1,000 long-serving and loyal Tesco employees were turned upside down in an instant.

For on this day, in a co-ordinated announcement across the country, Tesco management informed all these employees that they were not fit for purpose and that there was no future for these employees on their existing contracts in a company they helped to build through good times and bad.

The message was delivered by local managers at precisely 11am, their script was prepared for them, they duly read it out to their colleagues, many of whom they have known for over 20 years, many are friends and neighbours. The human impact and sense of betrayal is impossible to express in words, the anger and sadness quickly turned to strength and resolve to fight this shabby treatment.

These workers who have given the best years of their working lives to Tesco are now seen as a problem rather

than a solution. Their comparatively meagre earnings and benefits gained over the years are described as out of line and inflexible, the subtext is if only these loyal workers would go away the company would return to its former glory.

How more wrong can a multi-national corporate be? A company that does not value its employees, values nothing.

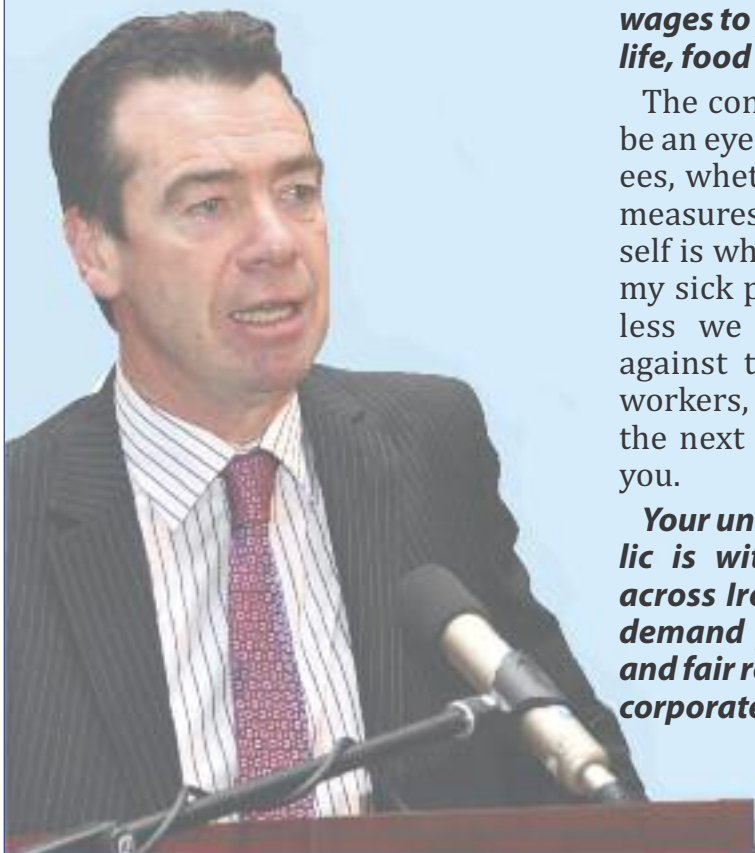
For it was not these workers who inflated profits, not these workers who made global expansion decisions now gone bad, not these workers being sued by investing institutions and under parliamentary scrutiny, not these workers who walked away with multimillion golden handshakes.

No, their only crime was to stay with a company through thick and thin, to serve the Irish public to the best of their ability, to earn a living wage to feed and shelter their families.

At 11am on January 26, all that changed – many had to go home to their families and discuss the very real possibility of not having enough wages to pay for the bare essentials in life, food clothing, rent etc.

The conduct of the company should be an eye-opener for all Tesco employees, whether or not affected by these measures, for all you have to ask yourself is when will my wages, my hours, my sick pay become a problem. Unless we all stand together united against this unwarranted attack on workers, you can be sure of one thing, the next call to the office will be for you.

Your union is with you, the Irish public is with you and retail workers across Ireland are with you, we only demand justice and fairness, a just and fair recovery at national level and corporate level.



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BEWARE!!

This election is a time to remember... and so it begins. The election sales pitches where you're promised the earth, moon and stars by political parties of all hues. Most of which will be broken post-election to the sound of at least 80 shoulder shrugs in Leinster House. As Pat Rabbitte said in reference to making promises and breaking them, "but isn't that what you tend to do during an election". So now's our chance to remember policy decisions and hold all politicians accountable. If we don't hold them accountable, they'll think you're OK with it and do it all over again.

Fianna Fail and Green Party Government

BUDGET 2009

- Medical cards means tested
- Income levy of 1% introduced on income up to €100,000 with 2% on higher
- €10 travel tax
- 20% hike in hospital bed charges
- 50c hike in packet of cigarettes
- VAT increased by 0.5%
- DIRT increased by 3% to 23%
- Excise Duty on cigarettes increased by 50c.
- Excise Duty on wine increased by 50c.
- Petrol increased by 8c.
- Betting tax doubled to 2%.
- Motor tax increased by between 4% and 5%.
- Automatic entitlement to the medical card for over 70's abolished.
- €200 levy on employer-provided parking spaces in urban centres.
- 41 state agencies to be abolished, amalgamated or privatised.
- Stamp duty on ATM cards halved, paid for by an increase in stamp duty on cheques.
- Cervical cancer vaccine withdrawal.

EMERGENCY BUDGET 2009

- Income levies doubled to 2% and 4%
- PRSI ceiling increased.
- Social Welfare Christmas Bonus abolished.
- Jobseeker's allowance reduced, under 20s cut to €100 per week.
- New 1% levy on life assurance premiums.
- Capital gains tax – up from 22% to 25%
- Early Childcare Supplement to be halved to €500 and scrapped in 2010.
- Mortgage interest relief cut to only first seven years
- Health levy doubled to 4% and 5% – entry point for the higher rate reduced to €1,443 per year.
- Excise duty on cigarettes up 25c.
- Excise duty on diesel up by 5c per litre.
- Children's allowance to be means tested or taxed.
- Rent supplement halved to reflect a fall in rental prices.
- Capital expenditure in education cut by €54m
- Higher education budget down by €24m
- €2m saved through delays in recruiting additional educational psychologists.
- Another €2m saved by lowering the level of awards from the Residential Institutions Redress Board.
- Strategic Innovation Fund cut by 50% to €2m.
- Overall education cuts of €134m
- Department of Transport budget cut by €300m.
- NAMA established.

BUDGET 2010

- Jobseekers allowance for those under 21 cut to €100.
- VAT rate cut by 0.5%
- 5%-10% pay cut for public sector workers
- Carbon tax introduced
- Ministers take a 15% pay cut; Taoiseach takes 20% pay cut
- Diesel up 4.9c and petrol up 4.2c.
- Minimum wage cut by €1 per hour.
- 4% cut in social welfare payment, excluding old age pension.
- Child benefit decreased by €16 each month, although welfare dependent

THE GHOSTS OF BUDGETS PAST

- families remain unchanged.
- Prescription charge levy introduced costing 50c per item.
- Arts budget decreased by 6%
- €12m cut from sports budget.
- Water charges to be introduced.
- Irish domicile levy introduced.
- Minister forecasts return to positive growth in 6–9 months.

BUDGET 2011

- Charges for private/semi-private beds up 21%
- €10 cut to child benefit for first & second child
- €20 cut in child benefit for third child
- 4c on petrol and 2c on diesel
- Third-level student charges rise by €500 to €2,000.
- Student grants cut by 4%.
- €8 cut for social welfare, jobseekers payments.
- Air travel tax of €3.
- Public service pensions over €12k cut by 4%.
- Employee PRSI/Health Levy relief gone.
- Income/health levy replaced with universal social charge (USC) at 2% up to €10,036, 4% to €16,016 and 7% above this level.
- Pension contributions subject to PRSI and USC.
- Employee PRSI ceiling removed.
- Increase in PRSI rate for the self-employed, higher earning public servants and office holders.
- 1% tax on residential transactions up to €1m and 2% over €1m.
- All stamp duty exemptions abolished.
- DIRT increased by 2%.
- Online betting to be subject to same betting duty as in bookie shops.
- Carer's allowance for those under 66 to be cut by €8 to €186 per week.
- Passport fees for over 65's introduced.

Fine Gael and Labour Party Government

BUDGET 2012

- VAT increased by 2%
- €100 household charge introduced.
- Child benefit for 3rd and subsequent child cut.
- Disability allowance for new claimants aged 18–21 cut from €188 to €100 per week.
- Drug payment scheme threshold increased from €120 to €132 — a cut of €12m from the scheme.
- JobBridge introduced.
- Minimum contribution by single tenants towards rent supplement to increase from €6 to €30 per week. Minimum contribution by couples will be €35.
- Winter fuel allowance cut by six weeks — or €120 per year.
- Post graduate students will no longer receive maintenance grants.
- Back to school allowance of €200 abolished for two and three year olds.
- Also, back to school allowance to be cut from €305 to €250 (aged 12 plus) and cut from €200 to €150 (11 and under).
- Cigarettes up 25c
- Carbon tax increased from €15 per tonne to €20 per tonne; meaning
- Petrol up 1.4c
- Diesel up 1.6c.
- €17.32 increase on Fuel Oil
- €14.46 increase on Natural gas
- Motor tax up €56 to €160 for band A
- Motor tax up €69 to €225 for band B
- Motor tax up €28 to €330 for band C
- Capital Acquisition Tax up from 25% to 30%.
- DIRT up from 27% to 30%.
- Total cuts to school funding of €24m a year.
- School Transport: Primary charge increased from €50 to €100 and the maximum primary family payment increased from €110 to €220.

- Grant of €635 paid at birth on all multiple births and further grants of €635 paid when the children are 4 years of age and 12 years of age will be abolished.
- Abolition of Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative from 2012.
- 1.3% growth forecast.

BUDGET 2013

- Child benefit cut by €10 per month
- Respite care grant cut by over €300.
- Prescription charge for medical card holders increased from 50c to €1.50 per item.
- Local Property Tax introduced.
- Maternity benefit to be taxed
- Property tax of 0.18% up to €1m; 0.25% on houses over €1m.
- 10c rise on spirits, beer and cider
- 10c on a pack of 20 cigarettes.
- €1 increase in a bottle of wine.
- Minimum PRSI level of annual contribution from self-employed will be raised from €253 to €500.
- PRSI-free allowance has been abolished meaning a loss of €264 per year for employees.
- Over 70's with an income of €600 and €700 per week will have their medical card replaced with a GP card.
- Duration of Jobseekers Benefit cut by 3 months.
- Telephone Allowance Scheme reduced.

BUDGET 2014

- Child benefit for fourth and subsequent child cut to €130 from €140.
- Pension levy increased from 0.6% to 0.75%
- Medical cards for unemployed replaced with GP only card on return to work.
 - Prescription charges for medical card holders to increase from €1.50 to €2.50.
 - Bereavement grant of €850 scrapped.
 - Number of days for entitlement to Illness Benefit increased from three to six days.
 - Telephone allowance for household benefit recipients to be discontinued.
- Income thresholds for over 70's on medical cards to be lowered to €900 per week for couples and €500 for a single person.
- Reduced jobseeker's allowance of €144 to apply to those aged 25.
- €100 Jobseeker's Allowance to apply to people up to age 24
- Increase of 50c on 75cl bottle of wine
 - Increase of 10c on pint of beer/cider
 - 10c increase on a pack of cigarettes.
 - One Parent Family Tax Credit replaced with Single Person Child Carer Tax Credit, available only to principal carer of the child.
 - €25m cut in funding to third level institutions to continue.

BUDGET 2015

- €405m tax cut for top 17% of earners.
- 2% USC rate reduced to 1.5%
 - 4% USC rate reduced to 3.5%.
 - 0.6% pension levy abolished.
 - Double Irish tax loophole to be abolished and replaced with the Knowledge Development Box with a 6.25% corporation tax rate.
- Cigarettes to increase by 40c.
- Water charges introduced.
- Child benefit to increase by €5 per week
- Lone Parent's Allowance cut.
 - No changes to class sizes.
 - Household Benefits Package to allocate €100 payment towards water bill.

BUDGET 2016

- Old age pension to increase by €3 per week
- Christmas bonus for social welfare recipients restored to 75% of the recipients weekly payment.
- Child benefit to increase by €5 per month.
- Respite care grant restored to previous level.
- Fuel allowance increased by €2.50 per week to €22.50.
- Minimum wage increased by 50c.

... and during all that time — Ireland increased the number of millionaires from 16,000 to 92,000

Irish Govt owed **\$19bn** by Apple... that's a bite and a half of anyone's money...

Picture: Dustin Gaffke (CC BY 2.0)



By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

IF YOU OR I owe the Irish government €150, they'll take us to court and spend up to €8,000 sending you to prison. If, however, you owe the Irish government – let's see – \$19,000,000,000.00, they'll spend millions fighting to ensure you don't have to pay it.

That's the obvious conclusion from the ongoing dilemma about whether Apple should have to pay their taxes or not. There is currently an investigation by the European Commission as to whether the tax avoidance by Apple in Ireland equates to the Irish government giving state aid to the business and giving it an unfair ad-

vantage. The probe could result in Apple being forced to pay back between \$9bn and \$19bn, but the Irish government have bizarrely taken the side of Apple.

As the *Washington Post* said: "The Irish government really, really doesn't want to get this money and is fighting as hard as it can to avoid receiving it."

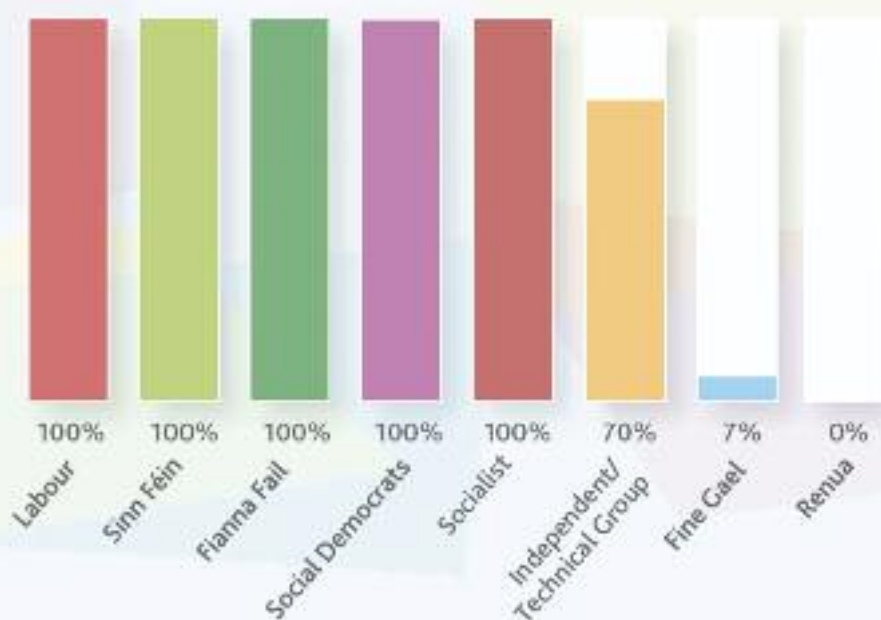
Now that does sound unusual to you or me? With this extra income Ireland could double the spend on healthcare (€13.1bn) this year or treble the investment in education (€8bn) or even multiply our spend on water infrastructure 10 times over and still have enough left to address homelessness, asylum seekers, and many other crisis that we are cur-

rently experiencing. The reason the Irish government is fighting so hard to avoid receiving badly needed funds is because it would damage our reputation as a tax haven. It doesn't matter that 1,500 children spent Christmas in emergency accommodation or that 73 families are losing their homes every single month. It's irrelevant that we now have 80 and 90 year olds waiting 48 hours on trolleys to be seen in a hospital. As long as we can continue to allow multinationals to avoid paying tax here, that's OK.

Both the Irish Government and Apple have said that if the EU finds that Apple owes money to Ireland, they will take action against the ruling.

Party Support for Fair Conditions at Work

We asked all political parties and elected representatives to support the Congress Charter and help make Fair Conditions at Work a reality. These are the results:



Graphic: ICTU

To find out if your TD or Senator supports Fair Conditions at Work go to:
www.ictu.ie/charter/politicians/

'Stark results show clear left/right divide' Look who signed up for ICTU's rights Charter...

THE Irish Congress of Trade Unions has revealed it has found overwhelming support for its *Charter for Fair Conditions at Work* among political parties, with Labour, Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil, the Social Democrats and Socialist deputies signing up, while there was little or no support for the *Charter* in either Fine Gael or Renua.

The Congress *Charter for Fair Conditions at Work* set out five key principles to help make decent work a reality: a Living Wage, Fair Hours of Work, the Right to Union Representation, the Right to Respect in the workplace and Fair Public Procurement.

Over the last number of months, Congress has engaged with all political parties and groupings, along with many individual TDs, Senators and MEPs in order to build support for the *Charter*.

The Labour Party, Sinn Féin, Fianna Fáil, the Social Democrats and Socialist deputies fully supported the *Charter* and signed up to its principles.

However, just 7% (seven) of Fine Gael deputies agreed to support the *Charter* and Renua declined.

Support among the Independents/Technical Group was 77%, with many declining to support.

Congress General Secretary Patricia King commented: "These results are quite stark and show a clear left-right divide in our political system in terms of support for the fundamental rights of people at work.

"When we initiated the *Charter* campaign we did so to raise awareness of what constitutes decent work and to begin a national conversation about how we could make it a reality in every workplace," she said.

Intensive engagement

"We engaged intensively with political parties and groupings over the course of several months, conducting some 130 individual meetings with political representatives.

"For Congress, the results are very clear in terms of where support lies for the creation of decent work in this society – something to which every worker is entitled.

"All parties and representatives were informed in advance that our results would be made public.

"The full results – outlining party support and the support of individual representatives – are available to view at www.ictu.ie/charter

"We will now be advising our affiliate trade unions accordingly, in the context of the General Election," Ms King said.

She said candidates in the current election would also be given the opportunity to sign up to the *Charter*, if they had not already done so or had not already been approached.

The *Charter* campaign is now focussed on local authorities and county councillors across the country.

ICTU Youth Committee: Get the vote out on Feb 26

SEVEN national organisations have joined forces to encourage greater participation by young people in General Election 2016 and to remind all young voters of the need to register NOW, to be eligible to vote on February 26.

The organisations behind the youth vote drive are: Irish Congress of Trade Unions' Youth Committee; Association of Secondary Teachers, Ireland (ASTI); National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI); Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU); Union of Students Ireland (USI); Spunout, a youth information network and National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi).

The seven organisations point out that:

- Any young person aged 18 years of age on or before February 26 is eligible to vote.
- If you are not currently registered, you can do so by filling in the RFA2 form available at www.checktheregister.ie

This form must be stamped at a Garda Station and returned to the local authority before close of business on Tuesday, February 9, 2016.

Anyone who wishes to change their registration address must complete an RFA3 form, get it stamped and return it to the local authority by the same deadline.

ICTU Youth Chair Teresa Walsh told

Shopfloor: "In recent years, young people have been hit hard. From those forced to emigrate or those faced with disappearing opportunities for decent jobs, unpaid internships or precarious employment, it is time that young people came together to make our voice heard.

"We need more investment in education, training and expanded apprenticeship programmes to create decent employment for our youth. But without a strong youth vote we may not get the attention we would like in a new programme for government, so we encourage all young people to engage now."

CWU chief blasts Conduit bosses over ‘despicable’ new toilet break policy

CWU General Secretary Steve Fitzpatrick has slammed chiefs at Conduit/BT following the introduction of a new toilet break policy for emergency call centre employees.

According to the union, the new policy seeks to micro-manage how and when 999 call operators go to the bathroom.

Workers are only allowed a maximum of seven minutes during any single toilet break. If an emergency call operator requires more time, they have to ask for specific permission from their line manager.

The company announced the new policy hours after staff indicated their intention to ballot for industrial action in their pursuit of fairness, decency and respect in the workplace.

Despite the staff being ranked as providing one of the best emergency call answering services in Europe, they now have to ask for permission to use the toilet.

The policy states that staff must report to management before and after going for a toilet break, and that only



one operator is allowed to use the bathroom at one time across the country. Mr Fitzpatrick told *Shopfloor*: “The CWU has come across some despic-



“Outrageous”: CWU General Secretary Steve Fitzpatrick, left, is scathing over the new call centre toilet policy

able policies in call centres over the years but it is genuinely shocking that Conduit feels the need to introduce such an oppressive policy among

workers who already do a very tough and stressful job.

“One could be forgiven for thinking that people who help to save lives

would be treated with more respect and dignity. The emergency call workers are being treated as if they were a bunch of schoolchildren who need permission to use the toilet.”

Pointing out that the call centre workers were “hard-working people delivering a vital public service”, he continued: “It is disgraceful that Conduit/BT believes it is acceptable to discipline staff for using the toilet – to say nothing of the sexist undertones of such a policy that makes no allowance for pregnant women or staff with underlying medical conditions.

“It’s also outrageous that every worker is banned from using the toilet for an hour every day.

“This is an invasion of their privacy and shows total disregard for their dignity at work. It shows that management wants to exert total control over their workforce.”

Mr Fitzpatrick added: “I want to commend the courage of the CWU members in the 999 service who have decided to stand up against this culture by balloting for industrial action.”

High Court ruling: Workers to get one-off 3% bonus

UP TO 750 B&Q workers in eight stores across the Republic of Ireland will receive a once-off 3% bonus worth up to €450 after Mandate challenged the withholding of the payment by the company in the High Court.

In January 2012, B&Q unilaterally removed the workers’ bonus scheme along with a zone allowance, which Mandate argued was an unlawful deduction to their wages and would have a detrimental impact on living standards for their members and their families.

The Judge upheld Mandate’s claim and said the bonus should be paid for the six-month period between August 2011 and January 2012, adding that the union was correct in claiming B&Q workers had an entitlement to the bonus during that period.

However, the judge ruled that the bonus scheme was discretionary and the employer was entitled to terminate it. He also said the company was legally entitled to deduct the Zone Allowance classifying it as an “expense”.

Mandate Divisional Organiser



Jonathan Hogan said: “We’re satisfied that our claim was vindicated by the Court but obviously we’re disappointed that the High Court judgment found that the bonus scheme was discretionary and the zone allowance, which is something many of our members relied on, was considered an expense, meaning the company can withdraw it at their convenience.

“We are somewhat surprised at the decision on the zone allowance,” added Mr Hogan.

“It has always been considered in-



come by Revenue and was never subject to benefit in kind. In fact, our members have always paid the relevant income taxes on it as it was part of their wage, so for it now to be considered an expense is unusual.

Collective

“The outcome of the High Court judgment clearly indicates that the best way for any worker to protect or improve their terms and conditions of employment is to be part of a collective in their trade union,” he pointed out.

Mr Hogan said the union would be organising meetings of its members at B&Q in the near future to discuss the way forward.

“We have written to B&Q lodging a pay claim stating that the loss incurred by our members through the removal of the bonus scheme and zone allowance, factored together with an increase in the cost of living over recent years, means that B&Q workers are now substantially out of pocket.

He continued: “It is the intention of our members that they will re-

coup some, if not all, of the lost income suffered due to the company reducing their incomes. The only way they can do that is to ensure that everybody is a member of Mandate and that they stand together as a collective to demand fair pay and decent jobs for everyone in B&Q Ireland.”

Mr Hogan emphasised that the forthcoming B&Q union meetings would be open to all staff members who wish to join with their colleagues in Mandate.

On Feb 26th, vote for a policy not a pothole...

IN THE COMING days Irish people will be asked to vote for a new government. These elections are important to you and your family so it's essential that you not only get out and vote yourself, but that you encourage all of your family, friends and colleagues to get out and vote too.

This is your chance to hold all of the political parties accountable for the policies they've implemented over the past five years.

Some political parties don't believe you have a right to be represented by a trade union of your choice. Some don't believe you should have a living wage and access to secure hours and decent work. Some want to continue the protection of the elite few who dominate our society and they want to shelter bankers and speculators from the boom they caused, collapsing our economy to such devastating impacts. And some want to reduce your incomes through stealth taxes like

water charges while giving tax breaks to the wealthiest and corporations.

It's a fact that 5,400 people die preventable deaths every single year in Ireland as a result of economic inequality, meaning it's likely somebody you know has been taken from you too soon.

That may be through suicide, inadequate health care, pneumonia as a result of fuel poverty and bad insulation in houses. Instead of tackling economic inequality, our government's have exacerbated it.

There is no ifs or buts about it. The current government, and the previous one, has increased income inequality with their regressive budgets and free market ideology. They have refused to build affordable housing and have relied almost entirely on the private sector for our most fundamental of human rights.

Unless you are earning more than €100,000 it

means that you are now worse off as a result of those decisions. And don't be fooled by tax breaks. They disproportionately benefit the better off, and will inevitably lead to deteriorated public services and social protection, while accelerating another economic crash.

We hear rhetoric about a recovery – but it's not a recovery for all. So many of you are still in mortgage arrears. Others fight poverty from the door every single day while politicians legislate to make that battle even harder. To be fair to the Labour Party, they managed to increase the minimum wage by 50c per hour and strengthened your right to be represented at work, something Fine Gael certainly would not have done on their own, but other policies like cuts to lone parents allowance will devastate many of your fellow Mandate members' living standards.

The elections provide us with an opportunity to have a say and offers you the chance to vote

for a Political Party which has pro-worker policies. Many of you will vote for a politician you know or someone who is a local personality without consideration as to those person's policies.

Mandate Trade Union is recommending that you do not vote based on personality or who turns up to the local GAA game, funeral, christening or which politician claims they can fix the most potholes.

Instead, we are urging you to vote for a politician or a political party that has policies that will benefit you and your family. Vote for a politician or a political party that believes in solidarity, fairness, social justice, workers' rights and economic justice. Vote for a policy and not for a pothole.

To educate yourself on policies that would benefit you and for a list of the candidates who support the Right2Change policies in your area, go to www.right2change.ie

SUPERVALU NEWS UPDATE

Clonmel and Carlow store closures: staff accept redundancy package

MANDATE met with SuperValu management in early January after the company's announcement in the run up to Christmas that it intended to close its stores in Carlow and Clonmel.

At the meeting, union officials were told that both stores had been set to close on January 22, but that due to a number of legal issues, the closure of the Carlow store was being delayed to February 5.

Divisional Organiser Dave Moran told *Shopfloor*: "While there was obvious disappointment and shock among SuperValu workers at the closures, it's clear that they are victims of the near cut-throat nature and immense competition within the grocery sector."

'Extremely difficult'

"It is extremely difficult for our members to get caught up in the notion that we have 'turned the corner' or that the economy is back on track and 'everything is rosy in the garden' – the sort of stuff spun by politicians seeking votes. Try telling that to almost 100 workers who have lost their jobs in these two stores."

Betty Dillion and Bill Kelly, Mandate Divisional Organisers in the South East Division, set about negotiating a redundancy package and, where possible, transfers to other stores for those members affected by the closures.

This package was subsequently put to the members in both stores and overwhelmingly accepted.



Talk restart after store closures

FOLLOWING SuperValu employees' rejection of the union/company proposal document that included a pay freeze for members, talks restarted in December 2014 in a bid to resolve the impasse between both sides.

An enhanced proposal document was finally agreed after a lengthy series of discussions and was to be put before the membership in a ballot in early 2016.

Unfortunately before the vote

was due take place, SuperValu announced it was to close its Carlow and Clonmel stores in early 2016.

Divisional Organiser Dave Moran told *Shopfloor*: "A decision was made by all three unions involved in the discussions to cancel the planned ballot and to re-engage with the company as there was a belief management had acted in bad faith by not revealing the closure plan during the negotiations. Discussions began again

in January on pay and other associated issues and we have sought more information from the company on its financial position and what, if any, consequences arise from the closure of the two stores."

He added: "We are due to meet with the company and the other unions in February and we will keep members updated on any progress."

Night shift to be ended

IN EARLY 2015, SuperValu (MOPI) began doing away with night shift operations from a number of its stores. This followed an agreement between the company and Mandate over the issue and which was subsequently voted on and accepted by members in December 2014.

Unfortunately, in December 2015, Mandate was informed that the remaining night shift operations would be removed from the other SuperValu stores.

Mandate officials met with SuperValu (MOPI) management in January and an agreement on the removal of night shift operations was updated to reflect the current position.

Divisional Organiser Dave Moran told *Shopfloor*: "As with the previous agreement it ensures that those who wish to remain within the business will be offered a day shift position within their store."

"For those where the option of transferring to a day shift does not suit, a redundancy package will be made available. All other terms and conditions of the agreement remain the same with the exception of the opportunity to transfer to a night shift in another store, given that night working has now ceased in the company."

The stores affected and proposed closure dates are: Blackrock, Knockloyn and Swords – February 28, 2016; Ballinteer and Lucan – April 2, 2016; Sutton – July 24, 2016.

**Mandate training courses
April to November Page 17**

Tesco workers contracts under attack again



Brendan O'Hanlon: 'Our members are aware we need to stand together'

Picture: otama (CC BY 2.0)

IN a continued relentless attack on its staff's terms and conditions of employment, Tesco Ireland recently summoned hundreds of workers to meetings across the company.

At the meetings, workers were informed that their employment contracts no longer suited the needs of the business and needed to be replaced with what it described as "modern day contracts".

Despite impacting only about 6% of its 12,200 workforce, the retailer claimed these long-serving loyal employees' working hours and rates of pay hampered its ability to "meet the demands of its customers" and would have to change from April 18, 2016.

Tesco Ireland flatly refuses to disclose any financial information regarding the level of profits it makes from its operations in the Republic of Ireland.

However, it is currently the second largest grocery retailer with 24.8% of the market and has estimated profits

of between €200 million to €300 million a year.

While the behaviour of the parent company in the recent past has been well documented, it is clear that Tesco Ireland intend to get its staff to fill the black hole created by continually trying to reduce terms and conditions and by non-compliance with various collective agreements.

Immediate threat

This latest act follows the retailer's declaration in October 2015 that it was to unilaterally alter the terms and conditions of hundreds of its employees in November.

On that occasion it took the immediate threat of industrial action to force the company to comply with the terms of our collective agreement and to attend conciliation in the Workplace Relations Commission.

Tesco Ireland's plan, which affects all staff employed before 1996 and protected by collective agreement,

would potentially involve a significant loss of earnings – in some cases guaranteed overtime and changes to premiums as well as requiring those employees to be fully flexible.

Mandate has written to the company seeking immediate confirmation of its intention to engage in meaningful negotiations and an assurance that there would be no attempt to unilaterally impose changes. The company has confirmed its intention to engage and negotiations are set to start over the coming weeks and months with all parties committed to using the state machinery in the event that agreement cannot be reached.

Commenting on the move, Divisional Organiser Brendan O'Hanlon expressed serious concerns at not only the ongoing attack on terms and conditions but the obvious strategy to divide workers by targeting specific groups of staff in the hope that their colleagues will not stand together.

Mr O'Hanlon told *Shopfloor*: "Our members working in Tesco will not be fooled by this crude strategy, this insatiable desire to reduce costs and enhance profits will not stop with this latest group workers – and our members know this."

Collective agreements

"Whether affected by the non-payment of a pay increase, the denial of a collectively-agreed share bonus, both of which are due to be heard by the Labour Court on February 10, or a victim of non-compliance with various collective agreements governing annual leave and sick pay arrangements, our members are fully aware of the need to stand together."

"We have commenced a national campaign of engagement through general meetings, written communications and set up a specific website www.tescoworkers.ie to ensure information is freely available to our members."

“Our members working in Tesco will not be fooled by this crude strategy, this insatiable desire to reduce costs and enhance profits will not stop with this latest group of workers – and our members know this”

PERSONAL VIEW Why Mummy has sore eyes **Page 13**



Picture: Mark Hillary (CC BY 2.0)

Mandate hits out at Tesco management's 'solo run'

MANDATE has claimed the Tesco decision to change the contracts will effectively mean long-serving members of staff will face pay cuts, more flexibility and reduced terms of conditions of employment.

The union has vowed to resist the move which affects almost 1,000 members of staff and would mean a cut of €2.35 (16.5%) per hour for workers earning €14.31.

The financial implications of the proposed changes include:

- A minimum reduction in annual income of €6,591.
- The loss of late night allowance.
- The loss of early morning allowance.
- The loss of the guaranteed share bonus scheme.

Speaking on the day after January 26 announcement, Mandate Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light said: "Tesco's antics yesterday led to shock for all of the staff concerned but that shock has quickly turned to anger and now determination as the workers say they will resist any changes that are pushed through without negotiations and

ultimately agreed with the workers concerned."

He added: "The mischievous attempt to attribute these cuts to 'customer services' has gained no traction with anyone. This is quite simply a case of Tesco attempting to increase their profits for the parent company at the expense of their most loyal and long-standing members of staff."

Mr Light said he was extremely disappointed that the retailer had gone on a "solo-run" by making this announcement to the union's members without negotiations.

"We have agreements with Tesco to address such issues as they arise. It's not good industrial relations practice to do business in this way and our members are quite rightly angered by the company's behaviour."

"This is not a struggling company. It is a highly profitable retailer that has one quarter of the entire grocery market in the Republic of Ireland. The company refuses to release their profits but we estimate them to be in the region of €250-€300 million per year."

Penney's staff vote to accept 4.5% pay rise



Gerry Light: 'Greater certainty and security'

MANDATE members in Penney's have voted to accept a 4.5% pay increase. The new deal includes: a 2% pay increase retrospective to June 2015, 1% pay increase from April 1, and a 1.5% pay increase from September 2016. The agreement is due to expire in early 2017.

In addition discussions have been continuing over updating the comprehensive agreement on banded hours concluded in 2013.

Improvements in this agreement include a clause that gives workers the right to be issued with a higher guaranteed hours contract if they have been working hours in excess of their band over an agreed period. It has also been agreed that rosters will be posted two weeks in

advance, allowing people to plan time off and make arrangements further in advance.

Welcoming the 4.5% pay rise, Mandate Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: "This deal enhances the agreement concluded in 2013 that gave members protection of their established weekly earnings through the new banded hours contract.

"We continue to strive for greater certainty and security in relation to our member's weekly income."

Penney's employs approximately 4,500 workers across the Republic.

German union brokers key Primark deal



Alke Boessiger: 'Great victory'

GERMAN trade union ver.di and Primark have brokered a deal meaning that regional collective agreements in the retail sector will apply in future to German employees of the Irish fashion retailer.

The agreement will be introduced in a staggered process until 2018 to allow for step-by-step adjustments.

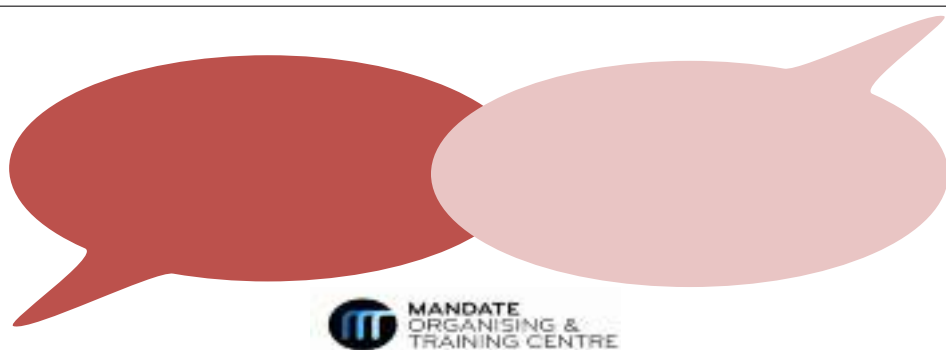
Primark currently operates 19 stores in Germany and about 7,000 workers will benefit from significant wage increases and bonus payments, as well as better and binding regulated working conditions.

On top of this there will be recognition of workers' service years at Primark, which for

many employees will mean a significant pay increase.

"Without the commitment of the employees, this would not have been possible," said Stefanie Nutzenberger, ver.di National Executive Board Member. "It is a great success and a very important signal for the entire sector."

Head of UNI Commerce Alke Boessiger told *Shopfloor*: "This is a great victory for both ver.di and German Primark workers. Together they have created positive change that will improve the lives of 7,000 workers and their families. The UNI family offers its sincere congratulations."



Learn English with Mandate for free!

Mandate, your trade union, is offering English speaking classes for members. The course is for members who while speaking some English have never had the opportunity for formal training. In the course you will learn the basic grammar and improve your vocabulary. You will have the chance to correct those mistakes that your workmates are too polite to tell you about! Improved language skills can add to your confidence and improve your quality of life.

Training is **free** to Mandate members. If there are 10 Mandate members who wish to attend this training, classes will take place in a location near to your workplace.

If you are interested please contact:
Mandate's Training Centre
on **01-8369699**

Places are limited and are allocated on first come, first served basis

This training course is designed for YOU!



Word Processing QQI Level 5

What you'll learn...

- Word processing common uses, for example: document formatting, graphics tables and mail merge.
- Create documents applying a range of processing features.
- Use proofing tools such as spell-check, thesaurus and search/replace.
- Learn File Management facilities.

Training is free to Mandate members. If there are 10 Mandate members who wish to attend this training, classes will take place in a location near to your workplace.

Contact: **Mandate's Training Centre** on **01-8369699** or apply online at **www.mandate.ie**

Places are limited and are allocated on a first come, first served basis.

Heatons talks start over new national agreement

By Bill Kelly
Mandate Divisional Organiser

FOLLOWING a well-attended National Shop Stewards meeting on January 26, discussions started with Heatons management on a new national agreement covering pay and conditions of employment.

The claims served on the company are based on results taken from the Heatons staff survey carried out late last year.

More than 70% of Mandate members working at the retailer took part in the survey. Respondents were drawn from 36 different

locations with service lengths ranging from two months to 36 years. Some 83% indicated they worked part-time. The majority 69.7% said they were available to work over seven days.

The survey found that workers with contracts under 24 hours a week were more likely to work hours in excess of their contracts. Some 56.7% of respondents said that they were seeking more hours with some seeking full-time work. Many of those who completed the survey indicated that they had received extra payments in December 2014 and June 2015 from the sales incentive scheme. If a store achieves the target

set, staff receive an extra payment which is paid out twice yearly.

At the January 26 meeting, shop stewards confirmed that many workers had received significant payments in December 2015. Heatons later confirmed that 36 out of 42 stores achieved the target budget.

Of the other issues raised at the meeting, the most significant was the lack of notice over rosters meaning it is almost impossible for Heatons workers to make hospital appointments or other family arrangements. A total of 51% raised this particular issue in the survey

demonstrating its importance to members.

An initial meeting has taken place with the company and we are seeking to improve the rates of pay and service pay.

We are also seeking a new better system of rostering the working hours of staff which would give staff more notice of their working hours, additional full-time jobs and a review of the contracts of workers which would ensure that every worker has a contract that reflects their actual working hours providing them with more stability.

Further discussions are planned.

2% rise secured at rebranded wholesaler

By Jonathan Hogan
Mandate Divisional Organiser

IN 2013, Britvic Licensed Wholesale, one of Ireland's largest on-trade wholesalers undertook a large scale repositioning programme which resulted in the company rebranding as Counterpoint.

The company has added to its portfolio of soft drinks and packaged beers a host of other products including snacks and spirits.

Mandate represented workers during the 2013/14 changeover ensuring that their terms and conditions were maintained.

And in late 2015, Mandate lodged a pay claim for all workers in Counterpoint, which resulted in the union successfully achieving:

- unfreezing of the increments, and
- 2% pay award for all workers.

Most recently, following a pay claim served on the company in 2015, 12 months after the initial pay claim, Mandate sought an annual review of pay in Counterpoint.

The outcome resulted in an additional 2% pay award for all workers in Counterpoint for 2016. The company also introduced a profit-sharing scheme, which had been pursued by the workers 12 months previously.

Bruton's backing for ISDS

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

MINISTER for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation Richard Bruton added his name to a joint letter calling on the EU Council of Ministers to give the Commission a mandate to include an Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) in the TTIP agreement currently under negotiation.

The call came in a October 2014 letter from a number of EU Trade Ministers to Cecilia Malmstrom, then Commissioner designate for Trade at the Commission. The letter was later leaked to the press.

In the letter, the Ministers write: "One of the issues that has attracted criticism is investment protection... The Council mandate is clear in its inclusion of investor protection mechanisms in the TTIP negotiations; we need to work together on how best to do so."

The ISDS clause would allow multinationals to sue sovereign governments should they implement laws that would interfere with a corporation's ability to make profits.

Mandate General Secretary John Douglas said: "TTIP and ISDS are a massive threat to Irish workers and Irish society. Had Ireland had an ISDS just over a decade ago, we wouldn't



Minister Bruton co-signed letter to EU Trade Commissioner

have been able to implement the workplace smoking ban and thousands of bar workers would now be dying or dead from lung cancer."

He added: "It's shocking that an Irish Minister would write to the EU essentially asking for a corporation to have the ability to sue any country that wants to protect the health and well-being of its citizens."

Veolia, the French company currently installing water meters in Ireland and a shareholder in the Luas transport link in Dublin, has used the ISDS Courts to threaten

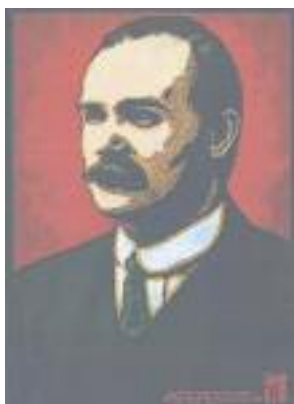


Picture: William Murphy (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Egypt for increasing its minimum wage rate. Egypt has now reversed the minimum wage change.

Further afield, Phillip Morris Tobacco is suing the Australian government for implementing plain package cigarettes as a health and safety measure. Phillip Morris moved their HQ to Hong Kong so it could make use of an ISDS arrangement. To date, the case has cost the Australian government millions of dollars.

You can find out more about TTIP and join the campaign to stop it at www.ttipp.ie



Your chance to get iconic 1916 print

THERE is still a chance for you to get one of these limited edition (250) prints by Jim Fitzpatrick, which we are sure will become as iconic as Jim's Che Guevara print. The edition is printed using the Giclée process using archival inks and museum quality paper. Print size is 30cm x 42cm (sold unframed).

All proceeds go towards Reclaim the Vision of 1916 pageant/parade on the 24th April 2016. We are encouraging everyone to take part, come to Dublin city centre

with your family to join us on this historic day. The theme of the parade will be the Proclamation of the Irish Republic and it will progress through the streets of Dublin in a rousing, unfettered celebration of the vision of 1916, conducted in a lively, colourful, dramatic and musical manner, involving bands, dancers, community groups. If you or your club/community group/organisation would like to be part of the parade please contact Carol at stelmo13@hotmail.com

Connect with Mandate

www.mandate.ie

Picture: Rodrigo Senna (CC BY 2.0)

BLOW THE WHISTLE ON THE BAD BOSSES



10 REASONS TO JOIN MANDATE

1. An organising and campaigning union:

Mandate is focused on building an activist base to protect and improve employment conditions. Through better organised workplaces and the power of the collective strength, we will deliver justice for working people.

2. Modern and effective training:

Mandate provides free courses to help you learn new skills, improve existing skills and develop you and your prospective career. We negotiate agreements with employers to pay for attendance at courses and also to provide reasonable time off for employees to attend them.

3. Campaigning for success:

Mandate is a progressive campaigning union fighting on issues that really matter to our members, their families and society in general. Mandate campaigns challenge social injustice at all levels of Irish society.

4. Protection at work:

Highly trained and skilled Mandate officials provide professional advice and assistance, where appropriate, on a variety of employment issues.

5. Safety at work:

Mandate health & safety representatives are trained to minimise the risk of workplace injuries and ensure that employers meet their legal obligations at all times.

6. Better pay:

Year on year, Mandate campaigns for and wins pay rises for its members. Mandate also campaigns to close the widening gender pay gap in Irish society.

7. Legal protection:

Mandate has won significant legal compensation for members who are injured as a result of an accident at work.

8. Mandatory pensions:

Mandate has secured pension schemes with a variety of retail employers and will campaign to secure mandatory pension schemes for all members working in the private sector, particularly those on low wages.

9. You're less likely to be discriminated against:

Mandate has won agreements with employers on respect and dignity at work policies and procedures. Mandate will continue to campaign for tougher laws to make it illegal to discriminate on the basis of sex, race, age, disability or sexual orientation.

10. You're less likely to be sacked:

Membership of Mandate protects you and strengthens your voice in your workplace.

Together we're stronger



JOIN MANDATE TRADE UNION ONLINE AT <http://www.mandate.ie/Contact/Join.aspx>

NEWS

€6k compo for Shaws worker

MANDATE member Catherine Hanrahan has been awarded €6,000 compensation by the Workplace Relations Commission after it found that she had been discriminated against by her employer, Shaws, Waterford.

Employees at the retailer receive an additional two weeks pay at Christmas each year. This arrangement follows an agreement brokered with the company in 2004 over bringing in Sunday trading throughout the year.

However, in 2012, Catherine Hanrahan was told she would only receive one week because she had been absent during the year for six months while on Maternity Leave.

Divisional Organiser Bill Kelly told Shopfloor: "When the issue was raised with the company it became clear that they regarded Maternity Leave as no different from

any absence or sick leave and believed they were entitled to withhold part of the payment. This was unacceptable and insulting to women and all parents who clearly do not see having children as an illness."

Claims were submitted by Mandate under the Employment Equality Acts to the Workplace Relations Commission on Catherine's behalf.

Subsequently, the Commission found that Catherine had been subjected to discriminatory treatment on the grounds of family status and gender.

She was awarded the payment of the week's pay together with €6,000 in compensation. Shaws has also been told to terminate the practice. As Shopfloor goes to press, a company appeal to the Labour Court is awaited.

2% pay rise at Malahide Golf Club

MANDATE members at Malahide Golf Club have voted to accept a 2% pay increase back-dated to October 2015. The offer followed discussions between the union officials and management at the club for a number of months.

According to the *Irish Golf Desk*, the indus-

try has experienced an upswing reflecting a general economic recovery. Welcoming the pay rise, Industrial Officer David Miskell told Shopfloor: "Staff at the club have been loyal over the years and it was time that this was recognised by the awarding of a pay increase."



Dave Miskell: 'loyal workers'

Usdaw action call after rise in attacks

USDAW General Secretary John Hannett has called for action to prevent violence, threats and abuse against UK shopworkers after new figures revealed a shock 28% increase in incidents during 2015.

Data collected by the British Retail Consortium shows that the human cost of retail crime is growing, with a 28% increase in offences involving abuse or violence against shopworkers; rising to 41 out of every 1,000 crimes committed compared to 32 out of 1,000 reported in 2014.

Meanwhile, results of Usdaw's annual survey of shopworkers show that over half of shopworkers in Britain were verbally abused in the last year, with more than 10% on a weekly or

daily basis, three in 10 were threatened with violence and over 2% were assaulted. Worryingly one in five UK shopworkers did not report to their employer a violent attack by a customer.

John Hannett told Shopfloor: "All too often shopworkers encounter violence, threats and abuse for simply doing their job. So this latest survey from the British Retail Consortium is very worrying.

"Life on the frontline of retail can be pretty tough for many shopworkers and there is still a lot to do to help protect them. We launched our *Freedom From Fear* campaign in the face of growing concerns among retail workers about violence, threats and abuse.

The campaign works with retailers to promote respect and make workplaces safer for staff and customers alike.

"All too often criminals who assault staff are not even sent to court, and those who are can receive derisory sentences. In other cases, where the offender often isn't charged at all victims are left feeling that no one cares that they were assaulted.

"Retail crime remains too high and there needs to be action to protect shopworkers. It is time for the UK Government to act by providing stiffer penalties for those who assault shopworkers. Retail staff have a crucial role in our communities and that role must be valued and respected."

Over and out, Francie...



Francie Callan is finally switching off his walkie-talkie and retiring after 36 years as a security guard having worked at three branches of Penneys in Dundalk. At the sprightly age of 81, Francie certainly deserves to put his feet up...

How do we know when politicians have really got on the equality bus?



Niall Crowley

IMAGINE a Government committed to the value of equality. We know that more equal societies do better for most people in society. So, it should not be a big ask. Claiming Our Future has identified the need for this value of equality to inform politics and political decision making.

However, all we will get is the rhetoric of fairness and equity from most on the campaign trail. We should not be fooled by fairness and equity. They are important values but they do not drive real change for people. Equality does. However, equality is espoused only by the few so far in this election.

In a more equal society the mistreatment of the people with disabilities living in Aras Attracta would not have occurred. This is not only because people are nicer in a more equal society, Aras Attracta would not exist in a more equal society. If we had a Government committed to valuing equality there would have been some response beyond political hand wringing to the RTE investigation.

Committed

We will know if we have a Government committed to equality if they implement the *Congregated Settings Report* of 2011. This recommended a seven-year timescale for deinstitutionalisation and offering community-based care to people with disabilities. This has been costed by the HSE and is ready to go. It just needs a Government interested in equality.

In a more equal society the tragedy of the fire and 10 deaths on the temporary halting site for Travellers in Carrickmines would not have happened. Temporary halting sites that are far from temporary, lasting years, would not be countenanced. The budget for Traveller accommodation would not have been cut by an extraordinary 85%.

We will know we have a Government committed to equality if they implement the *Task Force on the Travelling Community report 1995*. This recommended the replacement of existing temporary halting sites with permanent halting sites. It recommended the provision of 3,100 additional units of Traveller accommodation. This was 20 years ago. The need is still evident, the hardship consequent on failure to implement these recommendations is well



known, and action, based on equality and cultural recognition for Travellers is all that is needed.

In a more equal society we would not accept asylum seekers being confined to direct provision facilities for anything up to a decade. We would not risk the mental health of people in this way or frustrate their potential and talents in this manner. A Government

committed to equality would not have set up a working group to come up with a recommendation that this abuse is alright for five years but must cease after that. It would not have ignored implementing even this shameful recommendation.

We will know we have a Government committed to equality if they abolish direct provision for asylum

seekers. Steps would be taken to return to the previous status quo where asylum seekers were able to live in the community, secure social welfare payments, and participate in and contribute to life in Ireland.

In a more equal society income inequality would not be growing, with over 33% of all income now concentrated in the hands of 10% of earn-

ers. Lone parents are among the poorest groups in Ireland with a deprivation rate of 63%. A Government committed to equality would not have changed the one parent family payment to leave lone parents worse off.

Women on average earn 14.4% less than men. Nothing has been done to respond to EU requirements to make pay systems more transparent so as to reduce this gap. A living wage has been calculated at €11.50 per hour and we have a Government that congratulates itself for increasing the minimum wage to €9.15 per hour for adults.

We will know we have a Government committed to equality if steps are taken to establish the living wage as a minimum, to improve the situation of lone parents, to reduce the gender pay gap, and to raise new lev-

“In a more equal society income inequality would not be growing, with over 33% of all income now concentrated in the hands of 10% of earners... A Government committed to equality would not have changed the one parent family payment to leave lone parents worse off.”

els of taxation on the incomes of high earners.

The current Government introduced a statutory duty on public sector bodies to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality and protect human rights in carrying out their functions. This was ground breaking and reflected some commitment to equality and human rights. However, a Government really committed to equality would have ensured this statutory duty was implemented. Nothing has happened on foot of it. No one seems to know anything about it.

We will know we have a Government committed to equality if this public sector duty is highlighted and vigorously pursued. Real impact should be visible in improved quality of public services, a new culture within public sector bodies, and a reinvigorated leadership for equality and human rights.

Gerry Light

Assistant General Secretary
Mandate Trade Union

VIEW *from the* SHOPFLOOR

Solo runs don't work ...time to join a union!

ONE of the key reasons offered by employers and their representative bodies as to why workers should turn their backs on trade union membership is the growth of significant pieces of employment legislation that can be used in the main by individual employees when they are in dispute with their employer.

Unfortunately and for the wrong reasons this model of employee relations is promoted by many political and indeed some current government representatives. The purpose of the article is to explode the myth that individual workers can somehow simply solve their problems through a solo run by recourse to the law.

I also want to make the case for changes to the current voluntarist system of industrial relations in Ireland and why the introduction of a statutory right to collectively bargain is one of the main changes that needs to happen and that this should be a core demand for all workers as we head into a general election.

Knowing your rights is one thing but vindicating them to a successful outcome is another matter entirely. Once an individual worker stands out from the crowd they clearly understand and experience very quickly not only the feeling of isolation but also the effects as well.

The subtle and, in some instances, not so subtle negative and cynical methods adopted by certain employers are obvious for everyone to see. Rarely can a worker acting alone feel secure in the knowledge that the successful outcome of their case will be the end of their troubles.

In many circumstances they are really just beginning. Any meaningful attempt to achieve a proper balance of power between the employer and employee can only be struck through the worker being part of a larger collective which affords them low-cost professional representation prior to, during and – crucially – after taking a case against their employer.

In many cases when a worker chooses to battle alone they invariably seek the services of a solicitor or, in some cases, a barrister. Contrary to popular belief most

solicitors are not employment law specialists and therefore regularly they require the opinion of a barrister at which stage the costs rise considerably.

In comparative terms the level of costs and quality of service provided by an experienced trade union official compare very favourably. More importantly as a union member the official does not cease to have a relationship with the workers after the case is over. Crucially, they are present to ensure that the worker does not experience any post-case intimidation or harassment.

Remember the third party dispute resolution bodies provided by the State are free so there is no need for any unnecessary additional and painful costs.

It is clear that the evolution of so much employment rights legislation which is rooted in individual rights has had a significant influence on how workplace disputes have been dealt with in recent years. New research carried out by the University of Limerick, titled 'Is Individual Employment Law Displacing the Role of Trade Unions?', points to trends which show that the manner in which disputes in the workplace are being processed is on an increasingly individualistic and legalistic basis.

'Imbalance of power'

Crucially one of the reasons for this is what the authors of the research call the "imbalance of power" That exists not between workers and employers but instead between employers and trade unions. This, they say, is largely due to the absence of statutory union recognition and the reliance on our current voluntarist model which does not provide for a regulatory framework that forces both parties to solve disputes without having to go to a third party.

There can be no doubt that there is a direct correlation between the decline in union density and the significant increase in individual employment law and the way in which it is being practised.

Contrary to the regular protestations by employers which suggest that due to the existence of significant amounts of protective employee legislation the balance has moved away from them in favour of their workers when in fact the opposite is the case at enterprise, sectoral and national level.

Therefore, we must look at ways to correct these imbalances of power that exist. The most effective way of combating this reality is to maintain a strong campaign for the introduction of statutory union recognition and collective bargaining rights.

Clearly the upcoming election offers each one of us the opportunity to test prospective candidates on whether they support this important objective. If they don't they are not worthy of consideration. In the meantime, while we are awaiting this vital development we must ensure that we continue to effectively organise and recruit within the workplace in order to maintain and grow our collective strength which historically has shown to be far more powerful and effective in advancing workers' rights more than any measures which are rooted and practised in the pursuit individual gains.

That is not to suggest that many of the recent pieces of individual-focused workplace legislation are not welcome developments, indeed many of them were fought and won by the trade union movement.

However, it would be ironic to say the least if we allowed the growing dominance of this individualistic legalistic approach to act as a regressive force against the advance of organised labour.

NEWS



Boyers closes its doors after century of trade

FROM Sunday dinners with all the trimmings to unique clothing brands, shoppers and members of staff alike will carry fond memories of Boyers.

Boyers has now become the second department store to stop trading in less than 12 months on North Earl Street following the closure of Clerys last year.

Mandate's Jonathan Hogan told *Shopfloor* that the workers were devastated that the much-loved store had now closed.

He said: "It comes as devastating news that the Boyers department store had to close down. Its impact will be felt by not only the workers but throughout the whole community."

"The wind-down of the department store clearly illustrates how an employer should treat its staff in the

most difficult of circumstances – that is through consultation, discussion and negotiation with employees' trade union representatives. This is in stark contrast to the Clerys scenario."

Mr Hogan added: "The negotiations resulted in a set of proposals which gave staff voluntary options such as redundancy and redeployment to the Arnotts store. Amongst other things, the proposals negotiated with Mandate also provided for expert assistance to be given to all workers in relation to their financial situations and advice in relation to CVs and interview skills."

Mr Hogan visited the store on the closing day and said that, while the mood was sombre, the workers were more confident for their future as a result of the proposals negotiated by Mandate Trade Union.



Tesco Tralee Manor worker **Yvonne Donnelly** details the shock, bewilderment and hurt she felt when her employer moved to scrap her existing pre-1996 contract and move her – and more than 1,000 of her colleagues – on to a new one. She describes this like being punched ‘in the gut’

Why Mummy has sore eyes

I STARTED working in Quinnsnorth on 27th August 1994. I still remember my first day – I was so excited and happy to have a job. I had just done my Leaving Cert and I was hoping to go into nursing.

Well, as you can tell, I never did go into nursing – I loved my job so much that I stayed and here I am 21-and-a-half years later.

Some days I look back and think about what if I had gone into nursing but then I say to myself, ‘Sure, aren’t I doing a job I love and I’m happy doing it.’

That all changed at 11am on Tuesday, January 26th 2016, when our store manager read out the decision made by Tesco to abolish our existing contracts that had been given to us in 1996 to change us (pre-’96) to “modern contracts”.

Hard-working and loyal

To say I was in complete shock is an understatement. I have always been proud to work for Tesco and I am a very hard-working, loyal colleague with 21-and-a-half years service behind me.

I have worked in various departments over the years and still do on a daily basis. I work in fresh foods, front-end, payroll, I do administration, a bit of training now and again, clips trips – you might even find me behind the deli making pizzas.

I have worked in Tesco stores in Cork, Limerick and other Kerry stores and I hired and trained many existing staff in those stores. I even worked in management for four years, which I loved.

If that is not a flexible colleague then I don’t know what is. I can’t remember a day when I didn’t want to get out of bed to go to work. I love going to work and I love my job, but to be honest I had a pain in my stomach this morning and



a feeling of sadness when I was getting up for work.

After the news we got on the 26th, I have never felt more unappreciated, undervalued and disrespected. It was a bitter pill to swallow. I have always shown Tesco loyalty, profession-

alism and respect and I expected the same in return.

To be honest, it was like someone saying to me, ‘Thanks for 21-and-a-half years of your life, but take that’ (a punch in the gut).

I am only one of more than 1,000 colleagues

affected by this news. I can’t imagine the hurt and the anger all over Ireland on Tuesday 26th January.

My family had also been hurt. My husband is more than upset for me, and my children know that there is something wrong with me. I told them, ‘Mummy just has sore eyes’ – and this is only one family.

I have built my life and family life around my job in Tesco. That home/work life balance will now be swept out from under us if my shift pattern changes.

Since 2008 we have all as Irish citizens had to cut the cloth to measure because of our economic climate. I have by no means led a lavish lifestyle before and certainly not after 2008 – and still don’t with three kids and a big mortgage. My husband works part-time so that we didn’t have to pay a child-minder (that we couldn’t afford anyway).

Bonus changes

That all gets even worse now with the proposed rate of pay cut and changes to the share bonus scheme. Most people used this bonus to pay their house insurance /car insurance/ health insurance.

The proposed pay cut will have a detrimental affect on my colleagues’ basic standard of living. If my changed pattern of hours clash with my husband’s, then we will have to pay for a child-minder which is another huge financial burden on my family – not to mention the upset it would cause my children to have a stranger minding them and putting to bed (something they never had to experience).

I love my job and I really hope and pray that I will be able to continue working for Tesco for many happy years to come.



Union Representatives Introductory Course

The Union Representative Introductory Training Course is for new shop stewards/union representatives. The course aims to provide information, skills and knowledge to our shop stewards/union representatives to assist them in their role in the workplace.

COURSE CONTENT:

- Background to Mandate • The role and responsibilities of a Shop Steward/Union Representative • Examining disciplinary/grievance procedures
- Developing negotiating skills • Representing members at local level • Communication skills/solving members’ problems
- Organising, Recruitment and Campaigns • Induction presentations.

CERTIFICATION AND PROGRESSION:

Members who successfully complete this course will obtain a Mandate certificate. They may progress to a Union Representative Advanced Course and to other relevant training courses offered by Mandate.

If you are interested in this course, please contact your Mandate official or Mandate's Training Centre at **01-8369699**. Email: mandateotc@mandate.ie

Poetic, certainly, but also a vision of Ireland run by and for its people

By Donal Fallon

THE CENTENARY of the 1916 Rising has led to a renewed public interest in the history of that event, something that is certainly welcomed. Yet while we are hearing a great deal about the military events of Easter Week, the ideals of its central figures warrant greater attention.

The old cliché tells us that the Easter Rising was “a rebellion of poets and school teachers”. In reality, it was the coming together of a much more diverse collection of people, something that is clearly reflected in the 1916 Proclamation.

The Proclamation stated boldly that “the ownership of Ireland belongs to the people of Ireland.” Rarely highlighted is the fact this line reflects the 1914 constitution of the Irish Citizen Army, which itself proclaimed that “the first and last principle of the Irish Citizen Army is the avowal that the ownership of Ireland, moral and material, is vested of right in the people of Ireland.”

The participation of trade unionists in the insurrection was by no means restricted to the ranks of the ICA, and there were also many union activists in both the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan. Richard O’Carroll, a Labour Party councillor and trade union official, was shot on the first day of the rebellion, dying later of his injuries. Patrick Moran, a trade union activist and later a founding member of the Irish National Union of Vintners, Grocers and Allied Trades, was part of the Jacob’s garrison. He was later executed in March 1921.

Anti-capitalist

The 1916 Proclamation cannot be said to be the most radical proclamation penned by republicans – that honour must surely go to the Fenian proclamation of 1867. Explicitly anti-capitalist, it condemned “the aristocratic locusts, whether English or Irish, who have eaten the verdure of our fields”.

In spite of that, however, the Proclamation was progressive in many ways, not least on gender. Beginning “Irishmen and Irishwomen”, it later states the ambition of the signatories that an Irish government would be elected by “the suffrages of all her men and women.”

While the feminism of James Connolly has been widely noted, Thomas MacDonagh is deserving of praise too in this regard. He criticised the Irish

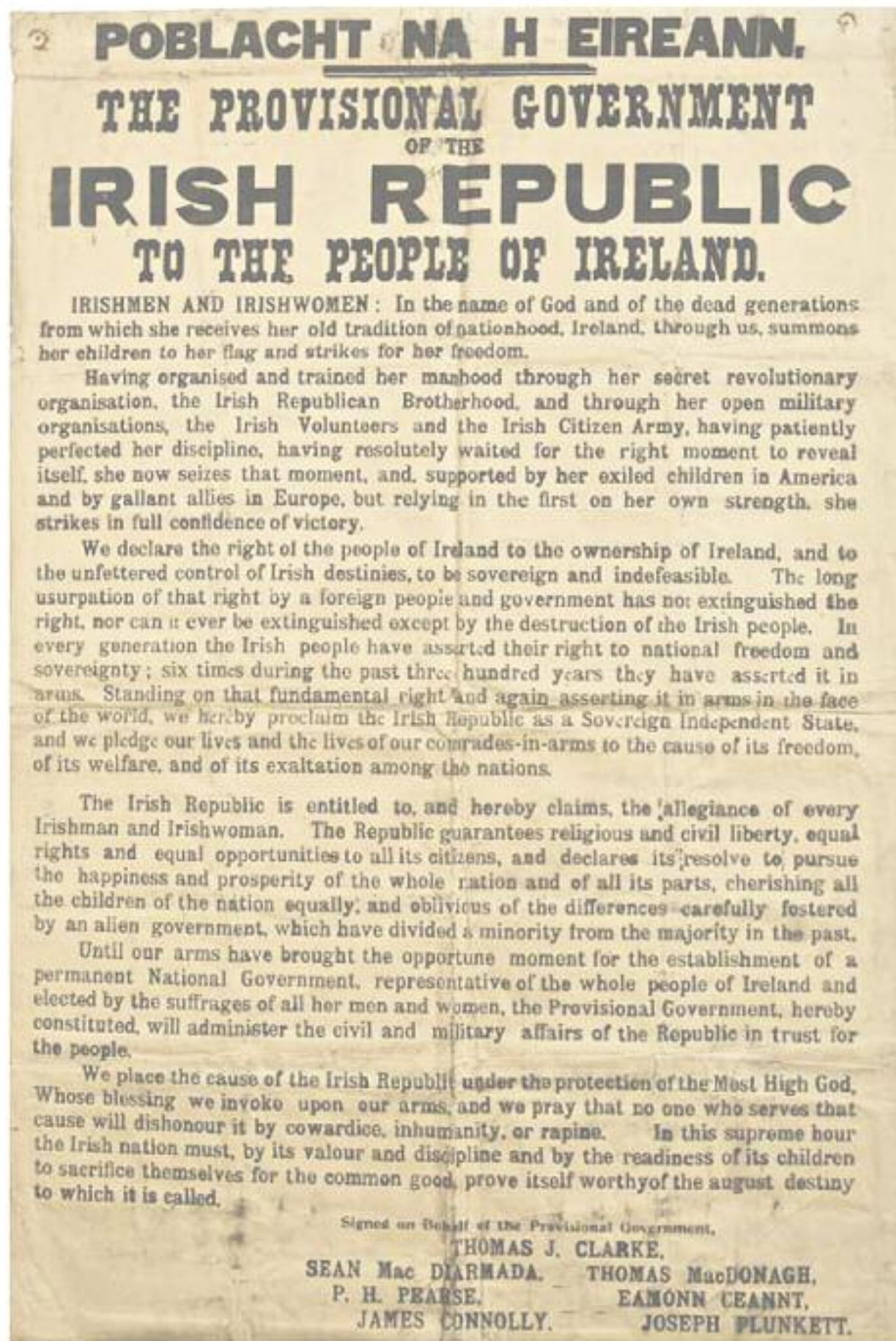


Women’s Franchise League for its heavy dependence and focus on the British suffrage movement, yet his biographer Shane Kenna has detailed that he “became a strong advocate of women’s rights”, and praised the emerging suffrage movement as “a sign of the new times.”

Women participated in the Easter Rising in a variety of roles, ranging from providing first aid to volunteers to actively taking part in the fighting. Margaret Skinnider, a young Glaswegian schoolteacher, fought in the ranks of the Citizen Army and was wounded during the week.

The 1916 document is not an entirely secular document, twice invoking God, but it is resolutely anti-sectarian. PH Pearse was himself the son of an English Unitarian. Theobald Wolfe Tone had proclaimed his vision in 1798 of substituting the “common name of Irishman, in the place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter.” In a similar vein, the Proclamation pledged “religious and civil liberty”, while its reference to “cherishing all the children of the nation equally” is also based on non-sectarian principles.

The very fact that the document proclaimed a republic cannot be overstated. In recent years, revisionists and conservative politicians have attacked the Easter Rising on the basis that



“Undoubtedly, the Irish Free State that emerged in 1922 represented a capitulation on many of the promises and hopes of both the 1916 Proclamation and the Democratic Programme”

Home Rule, a form of limited self-government, would have been introduced into Ireland at the end of the First World War anyway.

This misses the point that the vision of the Proclamation went above and beyond any Home Rule Bill. As the Irish Women’s Franchise League were keen to remind John Redmond at all available opportunities, the Home Rule Bill would not have provided Irishwomen with suffrage rights for example. Beyond the painting of postboxes, Home Rule would change little.

The Proclamation was followed three years later by the Democratic Programme of the First Dáil. Refusing to take their seats in London, separatist MPs met in Dublin’s Mansion House, and endorsed a document (largely penned by labour leader

Thomas Johnson) that boldly proclaimed that “it shall be our duty to promote the development of the Nation’s resources, to increase the productivity of its soil, to exploit its mineral deposits, peat bogs, and fisheries, its waterways and harbours, in the interests and for the benefit of the Irish people.”

Undoubtedly, the Irish Free State that emerged in 1922 represented a capitulation on many of the promises and hopes of both the 1916 Proclamation and the Democratic Programme. One government Minister, Kevin O’Higgins, would famously remark that the Democratic Programme was “mostly poetry.” In this of all years, let us re-examine these crucial documents, and seek to apply them to an Ireland in need of such vision.

Can we use this election to make a new politics?



Illustration: Xoan Bellar (CC BY 2.0)

By Eoin Ó Murchú

ELECTION 2016 is an opportunity for the Irish people to call a halt to the alternation of conservative blocs that always put the interests of the rich above the interests of the rest of us.

It is a chance to at least begin the process of building a new political system in our state, and to end the grip which backward politics and economics have had over our lives.

The choice in this election is clear: it is either more of the same (with Fine Gael/Labour or Fianna Fáil) or the chance to do something different, to end austerity and the policies that put the rich first.

The Right2Change principles agreed by trade unions and left political parties give us the context to do this.

For decades our political system was dominated by a choice between two large conservative blocs. While some were more progressive in sharing the fruits of our economy, the bottom line for every government has been the same: ensuring the prosperity of the rich, and leaving only the crumbs for the majority of the people.

In times of prosperity there were some crumbs, but in times of recession, the two big party blocs – Fine Gael/Labour and Fianna Fáil – made sure that the mass of the population carried the burden, while the rich were cosseted and everything designed to bring back their wealth.

The last five years have once again seen that pattern: workers, jobseekers, people with disabilities, pensioners, the weak and vulnerable – they have all paid a massive price for what the Government likes to call recovery.

Yet, it is the very nature of the capitalist system, that there is always a cycle of boom and bust, of depression and recovery.

There is then nothing to boast about a recovery that has not yet touched the majority of the population, and which leaves us with the highest percentage of emigrants to people born here of any country in the world.

The real question is who paid the costs of this part of the capitalist cycle, and who is reaping the fruits of the 'recovery' now.

Big banks, here and in Europe, were rescued at the expense of the living standards of the majority of our people and of the services we need to ensure fairness and equality for the disadvantaged, and especially the disabled.

And the spineless bowing down of our politicians to the EU elites has meant that we paid an inordinate price not to bail ourselves out but to save the European banking and financial systems. But in addition to squeezing work-

ing people for every penny that could be got out of us, the current government has worsened workers' employment conditions, with contracts that give no security of employment, no certainty of hours to be worked, no protection against arbitrary laying off or reassignment by the bosses. We can change this and we can begin a real fightback to change the entire political system.

But only, if the political parties and independents who oppose austerity and the politics of conservatism, combine together to defeat our common enemy.

We can't afford the luxury of condemning those with whom we have small differences, of fighting among ourselves to the benefit only of those who want to maintain the old system

The Right2Change principles are a context for all genuine opponents of austerity to fight for change. And in doing so, we should transfer to each other, ensuring the maximum number of opponents of austerity in the next Dáil. Of course, there will be problem areas. The

“ Capitalism... a cycle of boom and bust, of depression and recovery... ”

division of our country has weakened our politics in a crucial way, and the job of bringing that division to an end will be a difficult and enduring one.

But as James Connolly pointed out, the working class need national freedom in order to be able to achieve class and social freedom, and that maxim remains valid still today.

Equally, we cannot in the long term allow ourselves to be hamstrung by limitations on what we can do which are imposed by the ruling circles in Europe. We need significant state investment in our economy to overcome the crises of unemployment and peripheral development.

In Connolly's words again, just as he argued that the Citizens' Army would serve neither King nor Kaiser, nor can we tie our future to either Britain or Europe. This is no call to glorious isolation, but a call to put the interests of the mass of the Irish people first, and to use our wealth and productive capacity to meet our needs, not to inflate the bank balances of the European or Irish rich.

For the way forward doesn't lie in getting better people to represent us. It lies in working people getting organised – in trade unions, community associations, campaign groups and political parties – to change the world we live in.

Five doorstep posers for politicians...

With Election 2016 taking place in the coming weeks, here are some questions to ask your local political candidates when they call to your door:

If elected:

1. Will you legislate to outlaw zero and low hour contracts within the first 100 days of a new government
2. Do you support a living wage for all workers?
3. Will you hold a referendum to give full collective bargaining rights?
4. Will you legislate to give trade unions access rights in the workplace?
5. Do you support the Right2Change policies and will you commit to forming a government to have those policies implanted should the numbers allow?

Cut out and keep this handy, just in case you get a knock on the door...

TRAINING

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"I love being able to find Fair Shops on the website"



"A great campaign supporting workers"



www.fairshop.ie

Spend your money where workers count



The following members took part in the Union Representative Introductory course in January (note – pictured but not in order): Anthony Byrne; Patrycja Bomba; Lorna Langan; Joanne Rooney; Stephen Guinan; Henry McDonnell; John Osborne; Mary Mulhall; Siobhan O'Connell; Darren Downing; Stephen Jordan; Derek Kavanagh; Nick O'Connor; Sylvia Leahy; Jacinta Keane



Word Processing QQI Level 4 – back row, left to right: Ollie O'Connor, Mary Deevey, Lorraine Powell, Pamela Doyle, Elaine Shelley, Catherine Boyd, Carol Daly, Paula Cuddy; front row, left to right: Eilish Robb, Daniel Dempsey, Rhonda Hayden, Brenda Fagan



Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5 held in January – back row left to right: Gérard McVeigh, Jimmy O'Rourke, Robert Good, Cian Keogh; front row, left to right: Paul Rocks, Maura Worthington and Kevin Osborne

Shop Stewards Training Programme April to November 2016

Course Title	Course Dates	Duration	Location
Union Representative Introductory	April 4/5/6	3 days	Cork
Union Representative Advanced Senior	May 9/10/11	3 days	OTC Dublin
Union Representative Introductory	May 16/17/18	3 days	OTC Dublin
Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5	May 23/24/25	3 days	Cork
Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5	May 30/31; June 1	3 days	OTC Dublin
Union Representative Introductory	June 13/14/15	3 days	OTC Dublin
Equality and Integration	June 21	1 day	OTC Dublin
Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5	September 5/6/7	3 days	OTC Dublin
Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5	September 12/13/14	3 days	Waterford
Union Representative Introductory	September 19/20/21	3 days	OTC Dublin
Safety Representation for Elected Reps Level 5	September26/27/28/29/30	5 days	OTC Dublin
Union Representative Advanced Senior	October 3/4/5	3 days	OTC Dublin
Union Representative Introductory	October 10/11/12	3 days	OTC Dublin
Training Development 1	October 17/18/19/20/ 21	5 days	OTC Dublin
Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5	October 17/18/19	3 days	OTC Dublin
Union Representative Advanced Senior	November 7/8/9	3 days	Galway
Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5	November 14/15/16	3 days	OTC Dublin

If you are interested in attending any of these courses, please contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Organising & Training Centre on 01-8369699.
OTC = Mandate Organising & Training Centre. Please note venue dates may vary.



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Children at the Christ the King School, in Nairobi's Kibera slum.

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Historic agreements may offer some grounds for optimism on workers' rights

David Joyce

TERRORIST attacks and the refugee crisis during 2015 should not blind us to some of the highly significant and positive developments internationally over the year. The year saw two major international agreements that, if fully implemented, could help stem the rise of both and improve the lives of hundreds of millions of people around the world.

The summits – in New York to set new sustainable development goals and later in Paris where the historic global agreement on climate change was agreed – all offer hope in an otherwise tragic period. Both agreements have trade union fingerprints on them and have huge significance for trade unions and their members.

Decent work

Goal 8 of Agenda 2030 is on Decent Work and inclusive economic development. Globally, the ILO estimate we need to create around 40 million jobs per year and to radically improve conditions for the some 780 million women and men who are working but not earning enough to lift themselves and their families out of \$2 a-day poverty. Ireland can play a significant role in the attainment of Goal 8 abroad through the promotion of decent work in our aid programme and in our economic relations.

The historic Paris deal recognises the reality of the climate change threat, despite the gap between the long-term objective and the aggregate effect of the nationally-determined contributions agreed by countries in advance of the conference.

The Climate Bill also passed through the Dáil in December, meaning that for the first time Ireland has legislation linked to climate change.

Crucially, and due to trade union efforts, there is a reference to human rights and the concept of “just transition” in the Paris text. There is a broad consensus that in order to stabilise the climate we need to make profound changes to our energy systems and to all economic sectors.

Workers have a right to know what



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (second left) leads the celebrations after the historic adoption of Paris Agreement on climate change

Picture: UN Photo (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



Desperate search for survivors after the horrific Rana Plaza factory collapse

Picture: IRLF

their governments' and employers' plans are to decarbonise economies and workplaces and to be equal partners in that process. A just transition will include:

- Wage safeguards and job security for workers involved;
- Skill development and redeployment with decent work alternatives;
- Pension guarantees and social protection measures to support people through the transition, and
- Investment in community renewal including the construction and

services associated with renewable energy.

Warnings have been sounded about the dangers of environmental regulations and poverty reduction measures being sacrificed at the altar of trade deals – such as TTIP – and Congress will continue to resist such deals that threaten our rights.

As 2016 begins, the focus now turns to implementation. An important initiative on promoting decent work in global supply chains will take place in the International Labour Organisation this coming June. Ratification and im-

plementation of International Labour Standards, in particular of the ILO core conventions are key elements of any credible policy on GSC.

We will also be calling for strengthening of trade unions, more global framework agreements at sectoral level and improvement of collective bargaining in GSCs. We know the urgency of promoting decent work from tragic events such as Rana Plaza (which claimed the lives of 1,138 people) and the ongoing scandal of the treatment of migrant labour as Qatar prepares for FIFA World Cup 2022.

A new report from the International Trade Union Confederation estimates that \$15 billion profit will be made by companies working in Qatar and estimates that 7,000 workers will die before a ball is kicked in the 2022 World Cup.

With the treatment of migrant workers in Qatar under such scrutiny, FIFA has appointed a United Nations official to develop a global human rights strategy for the organisation going forward. Harvard professor John Ruggie, the United Nations Secretary-General's special representative for business and human rights, has been commissioned to produce an independent review of how well FIFA's operations measure up to international human rights standards.

How far his recommendations will be implemented remains to be seen, given FIFA's patchy history in acting on task forces and surveys, but Ruggie highlights the opportunity for FIFA to take a lead in the area.

The Irish Government is also in the process of finalising a national action plan on business and human rights

“A new ITUC report estimates that \$15 billion profit will be made by companies working in Qatar and estimates that 7,000 workers will die before a ball is kicked in the 2022 World Cup”

which could prove to be a useful lever to ensure that Irish companies operating abroad are doing all in their power to ensure their operations do not infringe upon the human rights of people.

Mandate has a proud record of shining a light on violations of workers' rights across the world. We are coordinating with the TUC about a possible day of action in March and we know that you will play an active role in any initiatives here in Ireland.

David Joyce is Equality and International Development Officer at ICTU



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Please contact **SHOPFLOOR** at news@mandate.ie or post your article to **Shopfloor, Mandate Trade Union, 9 Cavendish Row, Dublin 1**



Tullamore store is set to close

MANDATE has written to management seeking a meeting in relation to the workers affected by the closure of the Menarys store in Tullamore, Co Offaly.

It followed the announcement that the store in Church Street was to close after many years of trading in the town.

Industrial Officer David Miskell told *Shopfloor*: "Engagement will commence with the relevant parties to discuss redundancies, possible redeployment and other employment options that may be available. We will be giving the workers every support possible at this difficult time."

Menarys, which was founded in Dungannon, Co Tyrone, in 1923, operates 18 stores across Ireland, six under the Tempest brand.

€30,000 award for Mandate member in discrimination case

A MANDATE member has been awarded €30,000 for discrimination on the grounds of disability and the failure of her employer to provide reasonable accommodation that would have allowed a return to work.

In making its findings, the Tribunal held that the behaviour of the company was wholly reprehensible and that it was fundamentally misconceived as to its obligations under the equality legislation.

The company or member cannot be named for legal reasons.

Mandy Kane, who is Divisional Organ-

iser for the Midlands area, described the decision as a "good outcome for someone who had been through a very difficult situation and was treated in a very harsh manner".

She added: "Equality legislation provides trenchant protection for individuals with disability in the workplace – protections we must ensure are afforded to Mandate members."

Ms Kane pointed out the case was especially notable as it served as a guideline for what employers are obligated to do in terms of finding light duties for sales assistants.



Mandy Kane: 'trenchant protection'

SKILLS FOR WORK

Interested in a computer training course?



Do you have a desire to improve your communication through computer skills but never got around to it?

Communications through Computers

Starting from scratch this course helps you to use a computer and builds confidence for communicating on-line.

Mandate Trade Union in conjunction with Skills for Work is offering free training. The courses are to encourage members back into learning and training whilst aiming towards a FETAC level 3 Award.

If you are interested in doing a Communications through Computers course, contact:

Mandate Training Centre
Distillery House
Distillery Road
Dublin 3

Phone: **01- 8369699**

Email: **mandateotc@mandate.ie**

Courses are free and open to members who have not achieved Leaving Certificate or who have an out of date Leaving Certificate. You can also achieve a FETAC Level 3 Award. Skills for Work is funded by the Department of Education & Skills.

Picture: European Parliament

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7% rise for Horse Racing Ireland

MANDATE members employed at Horse Racing Ireland recently voted to accept a 7% pay increase effective from November 2015.

It was welcome news for workers as a pay freeze had been in place for a number of years.

Divisional Organiser Mandy Kane said: "The increase gives due recogni-

tion to the commitment and dedication of employees over the last five years during a period in which the racing industry has faced challenges."

Recent statistics show attendances at race courses are up on previous years as is revenue from on-course betting. The Galway Summer Festival, for example, attracted over 140,000

people in 2015.

Ms Kane added: "While these statistics are to be welcomed, it is vital that loyal staff share appropriately in the gains that come with the recovery of the industry and the economy in general. Mandate remains committed to ensuring that this is the case across all parts of the horse racing industry."



Picture: Florian Christoph (CC BY 2.0)



Lab Court ruling sees supervisor reinstated

THE Labour Court has ruled in favour of a Mandate member employed at Shaws in Drogheda recommending that she be re-instated to her former position as supervisor.

The case was an appeal of the company decision to demote the member as well as the issuing of a warning for taking part in a minor incident involving a stock trolley that lasted only for a few minutes.

Welcoming the decision, Divisional Organiser Mandy Kane told *Shopfloor*: "The decision of the com-

pany [to demote the member concerned and issue a warning] was totally disproportionate in the circumstances. The sanction resulted in a serious and ongoing financial penalty to the member that was unjust having regard to the totality of the situation."

She added: "Conclusions of culpability were drawn by the company that were not supported in the evidence before them. We are satisfied that the outcome corrects an unjust and harsh penalty."

HEALTH SAFETY REPRESENTATION

This course is certified by QQI and offers a Level 5 qualification. The course is approved by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions as training for safety representatives.



AIM OF THE COURSE

The purpose of this course is to equip participants with the knowledge, skills and competence to enable the learner to promote and maintain safety and health in the workplace and represent workers on health and safety issues.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Learners on completion will:

- Understand the concepts of the promotion of safety, health and welfare in the workplace
- Be familiar with the core health and safety legislation
- Describe the role, the rights and the function of the Safety Representative
- Understand the duties of employers and the role of the HSA
- Understand the importance of the safety statement, hazard identification and risk assessment
- Explain the fire hazards, their sources and the requirement for the fire preventions controls
- Understand the communication process and effective participation at meetings
- Outline factors of accident causation, describe prevention strategies and policies

WHO IS THE COURSE FOR?

The course is designed for newly-appointed Safety Representatives in the workplace. It will be appropriate for those already in the role or those interested in taking on the role who may not have had adequate training. The course will also benefit more experienced reps who may want a refresher course.

DATES	VENUES
Feb 22 -26	SIPTU COLLEGE 563 Sth Circular Rd, Kilmainham
Mar 7 - 11	MANDATE OTC Distillery Rd, Dublin 3
Apr 4 - 8	SIPTU Connolly Hall, Lapps Quay, Cork
Apr 8 - 22	IMPACT Roxborough Rd, Limerick
May 9, 10, 16, 23 and 30	SIPTU Forster Centre, Forster St, Galway
June 13 - 17	IMPACT Ice House, Fish Quay, Sligo
Sept 5 - 9	SIPTU Connolly Hall, Summerhill, Waterford
Sept 26 - 30	MANDATE OTC Distillery Rd, Dublin 3
Oct 11, 12, 13 25 and 26	IMPACT Fr. Matthew St, Cork
Nov 7 - 11	SIPTU Church St, Tullamore, Co. Offaly



For further info and booking log on to www.ictu.ie/unionlearning and search courses for HS or contact Pauline Corr at (01) 889 7707 email pauline.corr@ictu.ie

I want a society that is just not a corporate economy

THE General Election 2016 offers us an opportunity to think about what kind of a country we want to see in this centenary year. The decisions that were made throughout the crisis have meant we are on the path towards a corporate economy, not the community-centred society I envision for the future.

Voting in strong, independent voices with a clear vision of how we can achieve this will make this election a pivotal one. My priorities as an Independent candidate during this election reflect this ambition and are closely aligned with the Right2Change principles I pledged to undertake if re-elected.

Right2Change is clear in its demands: we need politicians who will promote a more equal Ireland that benefits all of the people rather than a select few.

The first thing I would do is hold a referendum to enshrine new rights in our Constitution offering greater protection of our water resources and economic, social and cultural rights.

The introduction of a Living Wage is vital in tackling income inequality and child poverty rates, which sadly have doubled since the crisis began. It's a tragic symptom of the corporatized policies that are driving our recovery, an unfair one at that.

Like everyone else I welcome more jobs into



Thomas Pringle

Picture: iyanagek (CC BY-SA 2.0)

the country but not at the expense of workers' rights. Seasonal workers in Donegal have encountered a steady decline in the quality of work over the past number of years and this is increasingly becoming the experience of more and more workers across the country.

Simultaneously workers have experienced less social security as a direct result of cuts made to social welfare entitlements. Workers in Ireland need jobs with greater income security and social supports.

Income supports must be restored to pre-2012 levels including Jobseekers', Farm Assist rates and income disregards which are central to job security and protect people on low incomes from the threat of poverty.

I want to see all corners of Ireland benefit from higher quality jobs including rural-



Universal healthcare... why not?

friendly jobs that reinvest in local communities – something I have continuously called for in my constituency of Donegal.

Teachers should be empowered further through a reduction in the teacher/student ratio and through the provision of adequate SNA supports all of which can help foster a positive learning environment for all.

Finally, I want all our workers and all people

in Ireland to benefit from a universal healthcare system – a system based on need and not ability to pay.

My vision is of a society that respects all our people, no matter where they live, no matter their circumstances and no matter their income. I want to live in an economy that serves the people – not people serving an economy.

Thomas Pringle is an Independent TD in Donegal



Trade Union Representation (QQ1 Level 5)

This course for shop stewards/union representatives who have completed the introductory course or who have relevant experience.

Course content:

- Understanding Mandate's structures
- Overview of Mandate's rules
- Industrial Relations institutions and mechanisms
- Mandate's Organising Model
- Negotiations & Collective Bargaining
- Understanding Equality and Diversity
- Developing induction presentation skills
- Introduction to Employment Law
- Identifying issues and using procedures

Certification and Progression: Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate certificate. They may progress to the QQI Level 5 Certificate in Trade Union studies or other relevant training courses offered by Mandate.

If you are interested in this course, please contact your Mandate official or Mandate's Training Centre at **01-8369699**. Email: mandateotc@mandate.ie



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Picture: Paula Geraghty

By Niall Crowley
Claiming Our Future

IMAGINE a campaign for more taxes. Perfectly justified when you consider what could be done to address poverty, public services, climate change, and global justice with the money. However, in the Irish context, it would come as a surprise after all we have been through to know our Government says no to a campaign demanding more taxes. In any context your eyebrows would be on the rise.

That's what's happening here. The Robin Hood Tax Campaign has just been launched, under the umbrella of Claiming Our Future. Over 40 national civil society groups are signed up to it. Not just Government, but most political parties, however, are failing to get behind the demand being made. People before Profit are up for it and so are the Green Party. Silence from the rest.

How come political parties are saying no to what would be a windfall of €350 million per year?

This is no ordinary tax that is being demanded. It is a tax that would seek redress for the role of the financial sector in the economic crisis, the cost of the bailouts in the sector, and the fact this sector continues to be under-taxed. This is the Financial Transactions Tax.

It is a tax being promoted by international radicals such as Angela Merkel and Bill Gates. However, our own national radical, Michael Noonan, is holding out against it.

The Financial Transactions Tax would be a tax of less than point one per cent on trading in bonds, shares, derivatives and credit default swaps. It is, therefore, a little tax. However, in Ireland these transactions are worth billions of euro every year.

The Nevin Economic Research Institute has estimated that a Financial Transactions Tax would raise €638 million per year. The introduction of the tax would involve abolishing stamp duty. So they estimate that the net tax in-

So why doesn't Ireland join **THIS** Group of 10?

Enhanced Cooperation Procedure nations

Germany
France
Italy
Austria
Belgium

Greece
Portugal
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain

crease would be between €320m and €360m per annum. Still the Government are saying no. You can only wonder at the power of the financial services sector.

The Robin Hood Tax campaign is global at this stage. There is more information about the work in Ireland at www.robinhoodtax.ie

You can even get to sign up to support for campaign and build the demand for an Irish Financial Transactions Tax.

The campaign is making real progress at a European level. Ten countries are involved in what is called an *Enhanced Cooperation Procedure* to bring forward an agreed approach to implementing a Financial Transactions Tax.

These are Germany, France, Italy, Austria, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

In December, they agreed the Financial Transactions Tax would cover shares, derivatives and corporate bonds. It will not cover sovereign bonds which is important for countries, like Ireland, with large debt problems.

They are aiming to agree all the final details by June 2016. After that a European Directive will be published covering the 10 countries and each of the 10 countries will then introduce its own legislation. Ireland has refused to participate in this process.

Boosting investment

The Financial Transactions Tax will raise between €10bn and €20bn for the 10 countries involved. They know it will boost their capacity to invest in poverty, public services, climate change and global justice issues. They understand that the tax will increase transparency in the financial sector and reduce speculative trading. They see that this sector is not paying its way towards the economic recovery of the euro zone. For some reason the Irish Government doesn't. The Department of Finance says there

is a problem with jobs. The financial services sector would migrate to London. This does not take account of the low level of the tax and the favourable tax conditions provided to foreign companies in the financial sector. It would take more than a tiny tax to get them to give up these attractions.

There is also no evidence of the financial services sector moving out of the 10 countries that are signing up for the Financial Transactions Tax and have been expressing their intention to do so for four years now. The Department of Finance makes no allowance for the jobs that would be created by an investment of €350 million.

There is an opportunity to be seized. There is a leadership coming from these 10 EU Member States that is useful. There is hostility from the Irish Government that is extraordinary. We need to see a commitment to Ireland joining the *Enhanced Cooperation Procedure* for a Financial Transactions Tax in the next *Programme for Government*. We need to see this commitment linked to further investment in poverty, public services, climate change and global justice issues.

€24k payout over unfair selection for redundancy

A MANDATE member has been awarded €24,000 at an Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) after it found that she had been unfairly dismissed from her position as book-keeper and secretary manager of Donabate Golf Club in Co Dublin.

Explaining the background, Divisional Organiser Willie Hamilton told *Shopfloor*: "Betty, along with three other Mandate members, were called to a meeting in March 2014 and told that the financial situation was such that the club was seeking a voluntary redundancy. None of our four members expressed an interest in taking up the offer."

However, following the meeting, Betty was informed she was to be made redundant. On previous occasions, the LIFO principle (Last In, First Out) had applied.



Willie Hamilton represented Betty at Tribunal

Later, one of Mandate's other members offered to take up the offer of redundancy instead of Betty – but was informed by management that his de-

cision would make no difference.

Mr Hamilton, who took Betty's claim that she had been unfairly selected for redundancy to the EAT, continued: "The Tribunal found that Betty had put forward a proposal to the club as an alternative to her being made redundant and that the club did not engage in any meaningful way with this proposal which was ultimately rejected by the club."

"It also found that no realistic alternative to redundancy had been explored by the club and that the procedures adopted by the club had been unfair, disjointed and flawed."

"The Tribunal found that Betty was unfairly selected for redundancy and awarded her £24,000 under the unfair dismissal acts. This award was on top of the money she had received in her redundancy."

COMPETITION

Reclaim the Vision of 1916 – the Citizens' Initiative International Poetry Competition
Theme: 'The Vision of 1916: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow'.

Original submissions (not more than 30 lines) will soon be invited from persons over the age of 16, living at home or abroad, and should not have been previously published, including on social media. In line with the competition theme and the inclusive nature of RV1916's broader initiative, entries can be submitted in English, Irish, or any of the languages that are in common use in Ireland today (with English translations).

Judges: Ciaran Carty, Louis de Paor, and Rita Ann Higgins

Professor Michael Cronin will act as an advisor to the competition on poems that have been received in languages other than English and Irish.

A significant prize will be awarded to the author of the winning poem, as adjudicated by the panel of judges.



A €10 fee will be charged for each entry, and we are presently working to install a pay and submit facility on our website, www.reclaim.ie. We will be advertising the competition nationally and internationally to:

- Members of poetry and writing groups, at home and abroad
- Leaving Cert. scholars (via contacts with teachers' unions)
- Universities: all the humanities departments in Ireland, Irish studies departments in Britain, US, etc.
- The Diaspora (present and offspring of 'lost' generations) through Irish- America, Britain, Australia, New Zealand, etc.
- "The world's yer oyster!"

The competition will be formally launched in mid-December 2015 at a press conference and 'photo shoot' hosted by the President of RV1916, Robert Ballagh, along with the panel of judges.

The closing date will be 29 February 2016.

The winning poem and the author's name will be announced on or around the 100th anniversary of the Rising on 24 April 2016.

Michael Quinn, Competition Coordinator, michael.j.quinn.2010@nuim.ie

Along with monetary prizes for winning poems in our poetry competition, the first prize winner will take home this fantastic medal designed by Reclaim President Robert Ballagh featuring one of the seven signatories and poet Tomás Mac Donnchadha.

For details of poetry competition please log on to www.reclaim1916.ie.



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Helping to mend broken minds



HAVING a background in construction doesn't allow me to call myself an expert on medical conditions nor does it allow me speak at length on the issue of mental health.

However, what it does allow me to do is to put pen to paper on what I – and my members – have witnessed over the past few years, as we all suffered at the hands of the recession.

Mental health has become a major issue to us all and most of us have been touched by it in some shape or form.

What is mental health? Mental health Ireland describes it as “an essential part of your overall wellbeing – being comfortable, healthy and happy”.

A person in good health, both mentally and physically, can have a sense of belonging both in a family, community and as a member of Society. The World Health Organisation states that mental health is determined by socio-economic, biological and environmental factors. In other words, our surroundings, our society have major effects on our mental health.

Feel down

Let's not mix it up with someone feeling depressed or down at different stages of their lives when things don't go as you would want them to. Everyone can feel down and this can last for small periods of time. Generally people can discuss these issues with various family members, friends or doctors, if needs be.

Good relationships with family, friends, colleagues and the wider community are important for mental wellbeing. The Right2Water campaign, for example, has helped forge friendships with people from different communities from around the country – and this must be viewed as a positive development on so many different fronts.

The construction industry in Ireland is predominately serviced by men. Over the course of the recession my members have witnessed some horrific scenes on building sites through accidents and, in some instances, fatalities.

What one of our members witnessed one morning after arriving at work was to see a man



Illustration: Rob Sheridan (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

crying on a balcony while holding a rope and a knife in his hand. After some time talking with this man, he was eventually convinced that this wasn't the answer to his problems.

I am not saying that our members are all trained and qualified psychotherapists, but this man needed someone to speak to and didn't know whom he could turn to.

A report, which looked at the level of suicide in the construction industry highlighted a number of key statistics:

- Every week in Ireland 10 people die by suicide;
- Eight out of those 10 are men;
- 6,520 suicides took place in Ireland between 2000 and 2012;
- 1 5,263 of those suicides were by men (81%);
- 2,137 male suicides took place in Ireland between 2008 and 2012; and
- 93% of people working in the construction sector are men.

In recent years, the National Office for Suicide Prevention commissioned the National Suicide Research Foundation to undertake a study and to set up a Suicide Support and Information System (SSIS). In the second phase of that study, some 307 cases of suicide in Cork between September 2008 and June 2012 were examined (275 suicides and 32 open verdicts at inquest).

Of the 307 deaths, 246 (80%) were males. Some 120 of those had been working in the construction/production sector, a total of 49%. This was more than triple the number of deaths accounted for by next highest sector, which was agriculture.

It is clear that mental health sufferers are more likely to be men rather than women. Men working in construction have suffered hugely from the recession when construction jobs were lost overnight and men struggled with how they would pay their way in society with no job.

This was not a big news story, however, if the

loss of jobs was experienced in the pharmaceutical sector it would be headline news. As part of the suffering that's experienced by building workers is the added bonus of being engaged as a bogus self-employed worker. This means that you're entitled to no Social Welfare benefits after working long hours and weekends for a low rates of pay.

This all contributes to low self-esteem and the feeling of total loss of power over one's own life. You can be dropped at a moment's notice.

We cannot let this pain and suffering continue. We must all look out for one another in these times as the recession continues. If you are suffering from any issue that you feel you can't talk to your loves ones about, get in touch with your GP, talk to a friend, don't hold it up inside. Life is not all about different experiences, life is the experience, don't miss out on it for any reason and play your part.

Billy Wall is General Secretary of OPATSI trade union

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Our national shame

By Seamus Farrell
Irish Housing Network

AS WE enter 2016, a year of commemorations and an election, we are facing one of the most severe housing and homeless crises in the history of the Irish State.

There are multiple strands to this – rising rents, mortgage debt, overcrowding, and poor conditions, eviction and homelessness. More than 1,600 children are homeless, in direct provision and evicted from halting sites – children who are the forefront of damaging overcrowding and deprivation.

At its root, this is a crisis of affordability and of housing instability. Government policy has been central to deepening this crisis.

Since the bailout of 2009 and in particular since the formation of the Fine Gael and Labour government, housing policy has been, despite smoke and mirrors, centred on two things – protecting and supporting large investors, banks and landlords and eliminating support and protection for everyone else.

The protection of landlords, investors and developers began with NAMA and bank bailout and has shifted towards a policy of subsidising private developers with taxpayers' money – a wealth transfer to the rich.

The elimination of protection for the majority has centered on doing away with social housing almost completely, pushing more and more people on low incomes into private

rental as well as through the destruction of community, health and education supports. This is, and continues to be, the most right-wing push on housing in a generation.

The impact...

Last year people died on the streets of our towns and cities. Last year we saw more and more housing distress, more and more evictions, more and more rent increases and landlord exploitations, more and more children packed into inadequate housing – be they the new tenements, emergency accommodation, direct provision and refugee centres – or straight on to the streets. Since Christmas we have seen investors attempt to double rents and evict entire apartment blocks, evictions by sledgehammer and private contractor backed by gardai, more and more families bullied, harassed and evicted with no notice from emergency accommodation.

We have seen the crisis worsen and worsen, a national shame in a year are we remember the Proclamation – to cherish all of the children of this nation equally.

The response...

The Irish Housing Network formed in May 2015 when six housing and homeless community action groups came together. We were aware that the crisis was getting worse and this government was making it worse. We believed that those affected by the crisis should lead the fight-back, that groups can and should work together

and that a community and grassroots campaign was central to successfully fighting back. We also believed in direct action.

Over months we have occupied councils, maintained picket lines, occupied and renovated a disused homeless hostel, the Bolt Hostel, taken part in countless protests and events, set up support groups and developed anti-eviction, homelessness and marginalised community campaigns.

The response continued to grow from six to 14 groups – from being a Dublin-centred network, we have started to grow nationally. We are not the only response across the country, groups feed and clothe the homeless, groups open buildings and home those in need, groups develop policy, and ideas for a housing alternative. As the crisis grows, so does our response.

In this election, let's get this government out. Let's win as many steps for those who believe and organise for a right to housing based on need, decent housing for all as well as an end to the madness of housing privatisation.

This battle will not end on election day or when the count comes in so let us all come together to fight for the Right2Housing long into the future.

We will have to face down the Golden Circle, the investors, banks and landlords, the TDs and vultures who profit from housing misery.





We can beat them. This is only the beginning.



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Course content

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Certification and Progression: Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate certificate. They may progress to the FETAC level 5 Certificate in Trade Union studies or other relevant training courses offered by Mandate.

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- Finding the right information that will steer you in the right direction
- The environment in which we live and work
- The social, political and economic landscape of trade unions
- Media ownership – who is telling you what and why
- Social Media – What it is all about
- How to write a good application form and designing a CV
- Strengthening abilities to engage and influence

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Educate, Agitate, Organise...

By Colin Whitston

WE HEAR a lot about union organising today. In Ireland, and across Europe. This is because unions are struggling to get and keep members. It was hard enough before the crash of 2008. It is no easier now.

It's not just the rise in the number of jobless. Employers are making whole areas of the economy union free. It's not just non-union firms, it's new ways of exploiting workers. It's not just employers, it's governments telling us that we must all march to the market's drum.

This is why Mandate puts out Shopfloor. This is why Mandate opened its Training and Organising Centre in 2003. The old slogan 'Educate, Agitate, Organise' is as important as ever. Nobody is going to do this job for working people. They must do it themselves.

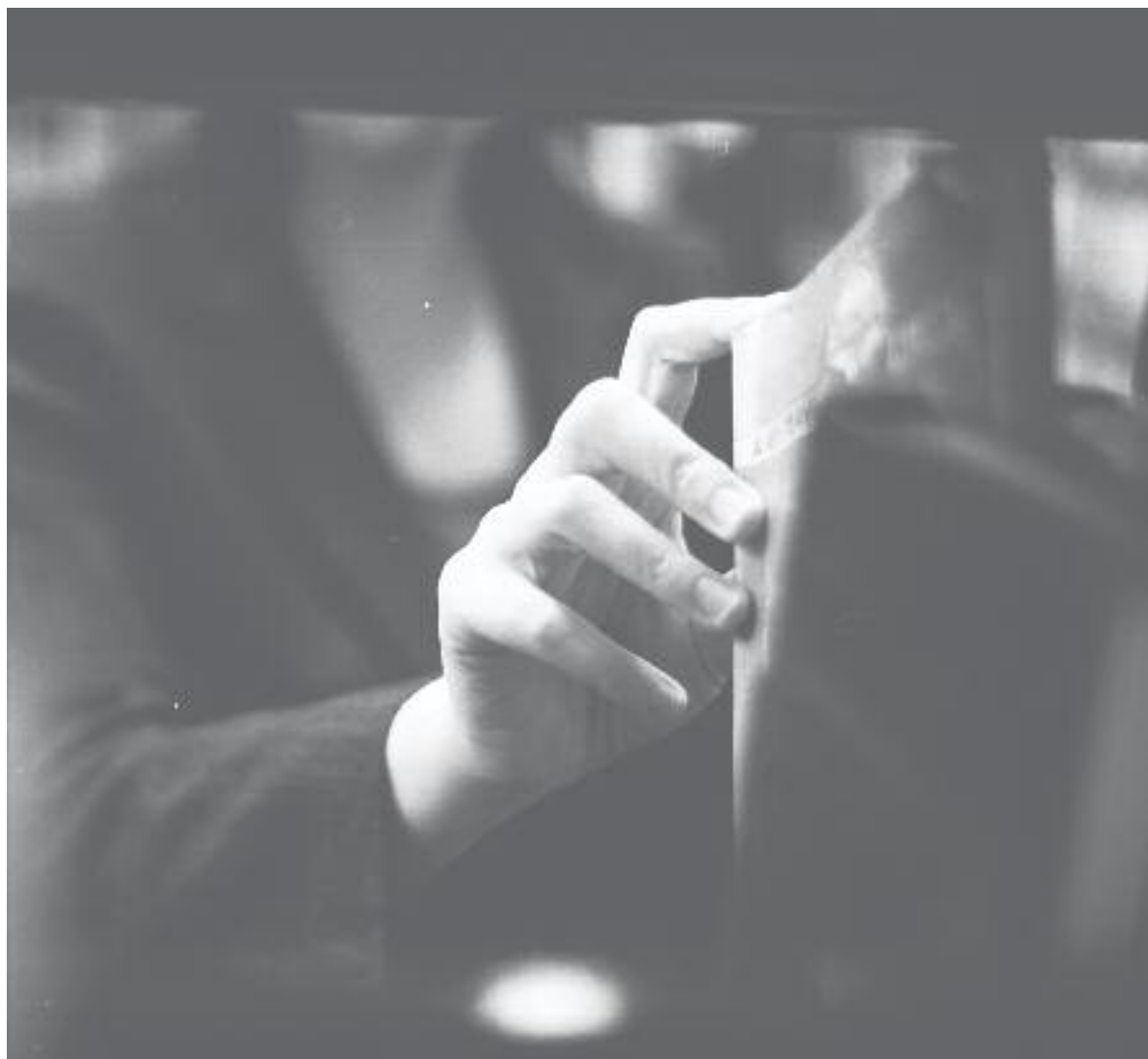
Why join a union?

Why should a worker join a union? To make things better, of course. But first he or she must see that a union is the best way to do this. Even if the employer says it's not. You can't organise without agitating. You can't agitate without educating.

Mandate runs courses for its Reps. It's easy to see why. Reps need guidance. Reps need support. Reps need weapons. Reps need to know the good and bad bits about the law. That's common sense.

But it's not enough. When Reps talk to management, it's not really to convince them. Employers care much more about what a union can do than about what it says. It's to convince the members. Workers must believe that what they want is right. That it can be done. That it can be done by union action.

Employers and their friends in politics and the media want to convince workers that they are wrong. 'More pay destroys jobs.' 'Fairer conditions destroy jobs.' And this is not just between employers and their workers. It happens in politics too... 'JLCs destroy



Union learning: If there's a Smurfit School of Business, why not a Connolly School of Labour?

Picture: Gregory Bodnar (CC BY-SA 2.0)

jobs – they kill the goose that lays the golden egg.' 'What we want is more work – it's just common sense really.'

Common sense too often means that the ideas of employers are sensible, those of unions' and workers are not. If you don't believe me, sign up for a business course at almost any college. Markets work, unions don't. Private healthcare is good business. Public healthcare is a drain on the state. You can't trust public services to

manage water. Private companies are better. (Just Google water privatisation). Governments cannot run banks. Sell them off. (Just remind me why we own banks?)

It's amazing how much money is spent on promoting 'common sense' in business education. It's no accident. Ideas are powerful tools of persuasion. It's also amazing how much of that money comes out of your wages. How much do we spend on union ed-

ucation, and how much of that is supported by the public purse?

We will have a general election soon. Much of it will be a master class in why the interest of Business is in the interests of everybody. Who will put the other side? Unions will do their best – on the web, in the press. But who will speak for workers' interests in the workplace? In the pub? In the GAA club? On the Luas? Activists must know their union rulebook, they

must know the ABC of bargaining. But they need more than this.

At UCD you will find the Smurfit School of Business. Where will you find the Connolly School of Labour?

Some years ago SIPTU's Jack O'Connor raised the idea of a Labour College. Right at the start of the bust. Some unions, Mandate among them, have tried to develop education, but it has been tough. There is little money to spare and education costs money. The ICTU has never done much with union education. Individual unions can't do it on their own.

A Labour College could spread the burden of costs. It can use new technology to reach members all over the country. The classroom can be in your box room, in your union office, in your works canteen (why not?)

Nuts and bolts

It should put economics and politics into Reps education. It should put the nuts and bolts of worker representation into economics and politics. It should bring together workers from public and private employments, from manufacturing and services. It should provide an escalator of learning for union members. It should help workers speak out for the interests of all workers.

If we want to compete. If we want to build. If we want to put workers' interests at the top of the agenda in work, in politics, in life, we have to do better.

Education in unions has to be seen as a whole. It's not a fun add-on. It's not a reward for activists. It's not a way out for workers who have grown out of their jobs. It's a way of building union membership, union strength and union influence. It's a part of what a union is for – putting power in the hands of working people, and using that power for the common good.

Educate, Agitate, Organise.

Colin Whitston is Vice Dean of Undergraduate Studies at the NCI

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Phone: **01-8369699** Email: **mandateotc@mandate.ie**

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