

MANDATE TRADE UNION

DECEMBER 2016

SHOPFLOOR



HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS

**HERE'S OUR
NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION...**

LET'S MAKE

2017

THE YEAR OF

▶ **SECURE HOURS**

▶ **PAY INCREASES**

▶ **DECENT WORK**

STRAIGHT TALKING

The year past, the year ahead

THE SYMBOLIC importance of the centenary of 1916 was not lost on the citizens of Ireland. During the year they looked on in disbelief at our Government's lack of social solidarity and its failure to implement the values and ideals of a Republic.

Previous governments had saddled over €64 billion of banking debt on the backs of the people – now this Government was selling the hopes and dreams of distressed mortgage holders to international vulture funds and stood idly by as thousands of families were evicted from their homes, adding to the army of those already homeless. Our city streets are full of homeless rough sleepers, our cheap hotels and B&Bs are full of homeless families forced to merely exist, pushed from billy to jack night after night. The pockets of private landlords and hoteliers are being lined with our taxes which should be invested in decent social housing.

On countless occasions our Government has stood with the bankers, with international capital and with the carpetbaggers against its own people. In Budget 2016 the Government choose to give another €600 million in a reduced VAT rate to the hospitality sector so that the very same hotels could charge exorbitant room rates and continue to pay their employees the minimum wage.

The Government told the EU that we did not want the €13 billion of taxes awarded against Apple – in fact, it went further, it is going to spend millions of tax payers money on legal fees defending Apple. Our Taoiseach on a recent visit to the US met the CEO of Apple to reassure him that the Irish government was in his corner.

But who is in the corner of the homeless, the poor, the sick, and those struggling to survive? Our Government should be, but – alas – they are not.

Our Government supported by our lacky media continually beat out the lie that there is not enough money for schools, hospitals, childcare and for decent wages for workers. They attempt to turn private sector workers against public sector workers, those with jobs against the unemployed. Our bogus self-employed radio and TV presenters – some of whom I'd suggest pay little or no tax themselves – lecture unions, water protestors and work-

ers while crying crocodile tears on phone-in shows for the lack of social services, the homeless crisis etc, all the time deflecting from their own role in starving the State of vital resources to tackle the problems.

But there is a growing movement of opposition and resistance to this axis of powerful elites. A movement has grown in every community in Ireland, a movement given expression in the Right2Water movement but not confined to water. A movement based on a network of volunteers and activists who have created an open space for discussion and education that the traditional elites in government, the media and business can't control or censor.

More people are asking why does it have to be like this? Why can't we build homes? Why do we give away our natural resources? Why do we allow our seas to be plundered by Dutch factory ships?

But more importantly they are reaching the conclusion that it does not have to be like this and the reason it is, is because those in control and with the most to gain have fixed the game – they have stacked the cards against the people and in favour of capital and wealth.

The Right2Water movement stripped bare their dirty agenda of privatisation of water, of handing over our natural water resources to big business to bleed massive profits from what is a basic human right. Our governments present and past were co-conspirators. They ran our water infrastructure into the ground so that the private sector vulture funds could step in – big profits for consultants, big money for meter installation companies, big money for billing companies, and ultimately huge profits for the companies who would run the private water companies.

This approach is a classic tactic of neo-liberal governments – they deliberately under-invest in social infrastructure, such as hospitals, schools, transport, childcare etc, then they proclaim that the State and the public sector is inefficient and unable to deliver and that then only option open is to give the service to the private sector, who will invite private investors and vulture funds to invest in social services based not on need but on the profit motive. Hence we have private hospitals, private schools, private transport etc. all driven by profits. Those who can afford to pay will be forced to – the rest of our citizens can languish on trollies or in cheap B&Bs or sleep in doorways.

The Right2Water and Right2Change movements can be the blueprint and catalyst for change. We can win back our country and our democracy and create a real Republic. Mandate Trade Union is proud to be a founding member of the Right2Water movement. We are proud to be driving a campaign for decent contracts and a living wage and an end to zero hour contracts. We are proud to be at the forefront of the rent control and end homelessness campaigns. Yes, we will also fight the important fight for decent wages and conditions in employment, for respect and equality at work. All of these struggles are for a decent society, for a future for our children and grandchildren.

We have made powerful enemies – some have moved against us and others are waiting their opportunity but, lest there be a doubt, we are not going to be silenced, we have the truth on our side, we have fairness on our side and the Irish public is opening its eyes, and we will let the light in.

Let's make 2017 the Year of Decency at Work, Decency in Society. A decent job and a home for all.

And a Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year to all Mandate members, activists and their families.



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NEWS

Mandate members help to win cross-party support for water referendum

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

THE Right2Water campaign has arguably been one of the most successful trade union led campaigns in the modern era.

In November 2014, after only just over a month since it was launched, the Government rolled back on its plans for regressive water charges and instead brought in a set-charge. Since then the campaign has gone from strength to strength.

After eight national demonstrations and a very successful election campaign where two-thirds of all TDs were elected with a mandate to scrap the charges, the Government kicked the can down the road with an 'expert water commission'.

In the meantime, however, the five Right2Water unions – including Mandate – were helping to develop a Bill that would give the Irish public a referendum to ensure that water ownership and management could never be privatised in the future.

The wording for the 35th Amendment to the Constitution (Water in Public Services Bill 2016) was prepared by the Right2Water Trade Unions and was given support by all Right2Water supporting TDs entering the Dail, including Sinn Féin, AAA/PBP, Social Democrats.

It was Joan Collins from Independents4Change who moved the bill and did the hard work of pulling together the political parties and Independent

TDs in support of it which isolated Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, who were left with no other option but to support the Bill, but with a caveat, that they want to make amendments.

The unanimous passing of the Bill is a massive achievement when you consider how opposed the previous government was to guaranteed public ownership.

There is no doubt that the plans to bring in water charges were in order to privatise the system in the future. This was confirmed by Eurostat in their ruling last year.

Water poverty

And no matter what part of the world you're in, privatisation of water has only led to economic and social destruction, including in the UK, where 24% of the population now live in water poverty.

Water is now three times more profitable than oil or gas and the dividends to the owners of private water companies are double that of any other non-financial services companies.

Winning a referendum on water ownership is a massive achievement and all Mandate members as well as other supporters of the campaign will be thanked by future generations.

Now we must ensure that the Government don't renege on the promise or make amendments to the referendum wording...

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Overwhelming vote in favour of Arcadia pay deal

WORKERS employed by Arcadia Multiples Ireland Limited and Topman Topshop Ireland Limited have overwhelmingly voted in favour of pay proposals following a national ballot.

The companies cover retail brands Dorothy Perkins, Wallis, Evans, Topman Topshop, Burtons and Miss Selfridge.

The proposals introduced one new national pay scale which will replace the various scales introduced in 2009 and see workers receive an increase of anything between 1.5% and up to 4% depending on where they are placed on their existing pay scale.

The agreement comes very soon after a deal was brokered which

gave members greater certainty over working hours due to the fact that their hours are averaged four times per year.

Under the terms of the proposals, members in stores outside the greater Dublin area who have since 2009 been on a rate for the job, will be moved to a rate on the new national pay scale commensurate with their service, and which delivers real increases for the members concerned.

Divisional Organiser Brendan O'Hanlon told Shopfloor: "This pay increase is long overdue and I welcome the fact this is happening despite the challenging trading position the company finds itself in."

● Court's decision sets important precedent for striking workers



Strikers on the picket line outside the Blanchardstown store – later, after the action ended, four of their colleagues were denied access to the workplace

Labour Court victory for Dunnes night-shift workers

THE Labour Court has found Dunnes Stores to be in breach of the *Payment of Wages Act 1991* over a case involving four workers from its Blanchardstown store who were denied access to their place of work immediately after the industrial action in April 2015.

In what is considered to be a precedent case, the Court determined that Dunnes Stores was in breach of Section 5 of the Act and awarded each of the members involved €300 in compensation.

The case was taken on behalf of the four night workers whose rostered working hours straddled the start and finishing time of the planned day of industrial action in April 2015. The workers reported for work at the end of the industrial action – 12 midnight on April 3. However, rather than allow them to start their work, the company refused access to the store on the basis that they were only partially performing their rostered shift.

Claims were initially pursued under the *Payment of Wages Act* to the Adjudicator Service in the Workplace Relations Commission. However, the WRC later found against the workers.

This decision was appealed to the Labour Court where the company argued through its legal team that it had a right to prevent the workers starting work due to the fact that they were only partially working



their rostered shift and consequently there was no claim for wages properly due as they had not worked any hours.

The Labour Court dismissed the various legal cases relied upon by the retailer as precedents on the matter and found "that the Court cannot accept that the participation by the worker in a strike results in a situation whereby the Act permits an employer to make deductions from that worker's wages thereafter at any time without restriction on account of the fact that the worker took part in a strike.

"The import of such a meaning to the Act would neither be rational or reasonable. In all circumstances therefore the Court finds the claim of an unlawful deduction of €64.56 from the wages of the claimant is made out."

Following the Court's decision the workers thanked the union for all

the help and support they had received during and after the dispute. One said: "It is important for all workers to stand up for what they believe in and the outcome of this case proves it."

Far-reaching

Commenting on the Court's decision, Divisional Organiser Brendan O'Hanlon told *Shopfloor*: "I very much welcome the determination of the Court as the consequences of an alternative decision would have been far-reaching for workers in similar situations and not just those in circumstances of an industrial dispute.

"In essence the company was arguing that an employer could prevent a worker recommencing work for an indefinite duration on the basis that they had only partially performed their rostered shift – the precedent this would have established would have had far-reaching consequences if successful."

Mr O'Hanlon praised the workers for having the courage of their convictions and for seeing their case through to the end despite the initial findings.

Another important aspect to this case is that the employer contrary to normal practice of engaging in an expensive and frustrating legal appeal have decided to pay the members in question the amount awarded to them by the Labour Court.

Brown Thomas: new pay talks set for early 2017

BROWN Thomas continues to perform as a successful and profitable retailer. During the past year, it has successfully acquired its main rival in Dublin, Arnotts department store.

Mandate Divisional Organiser Dave Moran told *Shopfloor*: "This is a welcome development as Brown Thomas' parent, the Weston Group, are at least committed to the retail business and will, we believe, return Arnotts to its former glory."

Meanwhile, the second phase of the June 2015 pay deal of 3% over 18 months was implemented as agreed in August of this year.

Mr Moran said: "Discussions on a new pay deal are due to start in early 2017 and it is intended to call a meeting of the National Negotiating Team in January to agree our strategy for those talks."

He continued: "The issue of individual commission versus group commission has caused some anxiety for some of our members at the company

and it continues to be closely monitored by the union to ensure that where members are employed in group commission areas and wish to remain so, their wishes are honoured by the retailer.

"We are mindful of the growing trend towards the ever increasing use of concessions in this and other department stores and are currently along with the Organising and Training Department devising a strategy to increase the union's profile among this group of workers.

"It is essential that Brown Thomas shop stewards and activists reach out to these workers and encourage them to take up union membership."

Mr Moran added: "Finally, on behalf of your National Negotiating team in Brown Thomas we would like to wish all members a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year and can assure you that we will continue to pursue our members' interests throughout 2017."

Buying power for workers' rights

ALL Mandate members are encouraged to spend their money in a Fair Shop this Christmas. The Fair Shop campaign is about promoting decent work and rewarding employers who voluntarily recognise the right of their employees to be represented by their trade union for collective bargaining purposes.

General Secretary John Douglas said: "It's important that we all remain committed to decent work and to a workers' right to have a say in their workplace. That's why our union is calling on all trade union members across Ireland to support the Fair Shop campaign when they're purchasing presents this Christmas. But don't forget, Fair Shopping isn't just for Christmas, it's for life."

Sign the Fair Shop pledge by going to www.fairshop.ie



'Securing and improving income levels'

AGREEMENT was reached during the year to increase the pay of members employed in Heatons by 4.5%. 2.5% was paid from July 1, 2016 with a further 2% due from March 1, 2017.

Divisional Organiser Bill Kelly told *Shopfloor*: "The aim of the agreement was to secure and improve the income levels of members and with this in mind the average working hours of

part-time staff in the company are being maintained in line with last year. In addition, Heatons agreed to guarantee an extra 1,000 hours in the contracts of staff.

"One of the most important issues raised by staff in the workers' survey carried out before discussions was the requirement for additional notice of working hours and a small im-

provement was agreed. This remains an important issue for workers and a review of the roster arrangements will take place in 2017."

He added: "Up to three service days were also introduced along with changes to the sales incentive scheme, staff discount and a relaunch of the pension scheme."



Tesco worker wins right to full-time contract

A MANDATE member working at Tesco's Clarehall store has had an Adjudicating Officer at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) rule in her favour over her right to a full-time contract.

The WRC found that the worker had satisfied criteria set out in a 2006 agreement between Tesco and MANDATE to have the number of working hours permanently increased from 30 to 39 hours per week.

The worker had initially asked that her hours be increased in February 2015, following a 27-week period during which she had consistently worked 39 hours.

The retailer refused her request despite the terms of an agreement brokered between the company and the union stating that workers have the option of increasing their band provided they worked consistently in excess of their band of hours for more than 16 weeks.

On appeal, Tesco increased the worker's number of hours to 35 plus. However, the worker pursued her claim to the WRC.

The case was heard in February 2016 where the company argued that the additional hours worked were "for genuine business reasons only" and "due to seasonal requirements" and that it was at its discretion whether the hours were now available or not. However, the Adjudicating Officer did not accept the company's arguments and found in favour of the member.

In his recommendation, the Adjudicator stated: "Having reviewed all of the submissions and the documentation. I believe that the complainant is entitled to a 39-hour contract at the time of her grievance on February 5, 2015. I recommend that the complainant be backdated a 39-hour week contract to February 2015."

The further element to the complaint lodged was that the member's hours were reduced be-



Picture: ctama (CC BY 2.0)

cause of the grievance she pursued. The union argued that the member had been penalised because she had made the complaint. Tesco denied this and provided an alternative explanation for the reduction in hours, which was that the work was no longer available.

The Adjudicator found that "It is not readily discernible whether there is a causal link between the reduction in hours and the grievance, in particular in hearing a dispute arising from the *Industrial Relations Act*."

"It is clear that from the outset, the complainant had a prima facie entitlement to the 39-hour a week contract, which she has had to pursue, first, with partial success on appeal, and, second, to advance the matter via this complaint. For this, recommend that the respondent pay the complainant €500 as redress".

Divisional Organiser Brendan O'Hanlon told *Shopfloor*: "The importance of this case within the context of protecting the terms of an extremely important aspect of a national collective agreement cannot be overstated."

"The company has of late made significant play out of the number of staff who have an increase in additional hours since other staff have left the company under various circumstances."

"However, abundantly clear from the efforts that the company went to deny this worker her entitlement for a permanent increase in her working hours is its real approach to this issue."

Member unfairly dismissed due to her disability – EAT

By Willie Hamilton
Divisional Organiser

MANDATE member Sharon O'Toole has been awarded more than €3,700 against her former employer, Shaws of Drogheda, by the Employment Appeals Tribunal.

The Tribunal found that she had suffered discrimination on the grounds of her disability after she was dismissed from her job in April 2013.

Mandate later took a case of unfair dismissal on the grounds of her disability against the company. The union also claimed the retailer had failed to provide their employee with reasonable accommodation.

Sharon had been diagnosed with a back problem and had later undergone surgery. She had four operations in total to correct the problem and, as a result, was absent from work for two years.

In 2013, Shaws asked Sharon to provide a date for her return to work and was sent to see an occupational health assessor. The assessor reported back to the company claiming Sharon would be in no position to return to work for "the foreseeable future".

Sharon claimed the assessor, who had not requested any information from her GP, had used too broad a

term in referring to the "the foreseeable future" over her possible return to work.

Subsequently, she was called to meeting under the firm's disciplinary policy. Mandate complained that it was inappropriate for Shaws to use its disciplinary mechanisms to assess Sharon's situation.

At the meeting, Sharon informed her manager of a forthcoming appointment with her consultant, scheduled for May 9, 2013. On April 30, she received a letter from Shaws stating she was being dismissed on the grounds of capability.

Subsequently, the case was heard at the Employment Appeals Tribunal where it was found that the dismissal had been discriminatory on the grounds of Sharon's disability.

In assessing redress, the EAT took into account that Sharon had exhausted her entitlement to sick pay and that she was unable to work until the first quarter of 2014.

The EAT said Shaws had terminated her employment prematurely and without having the full facts. As Sharon had been a part-time employee, earning €145 gross per week, taking these factors into account, the EAT awarded her the equivalent of six months remuneration, totalling €3,770.

'1 in 10 UK retail workers assaulted'

BRITISH retail union Usdaw has claimed that one in 10 shopworkers in the UK have been assaulted and nearly one-third of these don't report the incident. The shocking statistics from a Usdaw-commissioned survey were revealed at the start of the union's *Respect for Shopworkers* week, held in mid-November each year.

Udaw General Secretary John Hannett said: "Violence, threats and abuse against workers is one of the great scourges of our society. The sta-

tistics are shocking and show that urgent action is required. Many UK workers are on the frontline of dealing with the public and that can mean they end up on the wrong side of a verbal or physical assault."

"All too often criminals who assault staff are not even sent to court, those who are can receive derisory sentences."

"In other cases, where the offender isn't even charged, victims are left feeling that no one cares that they were assaulted."

So proud of our Daniel



Mandate activist from Penneys in Cork Daniel McCarthy received his Certificate in Trade Union Studies from the National College of Ireland posthumously after he tragically lost his battle following a short illness earlier this year. Pictured accepting his certificate from President of NCI Gina Quin, second from left, is Daniel's father Don, mother Patricia and brother Luke.

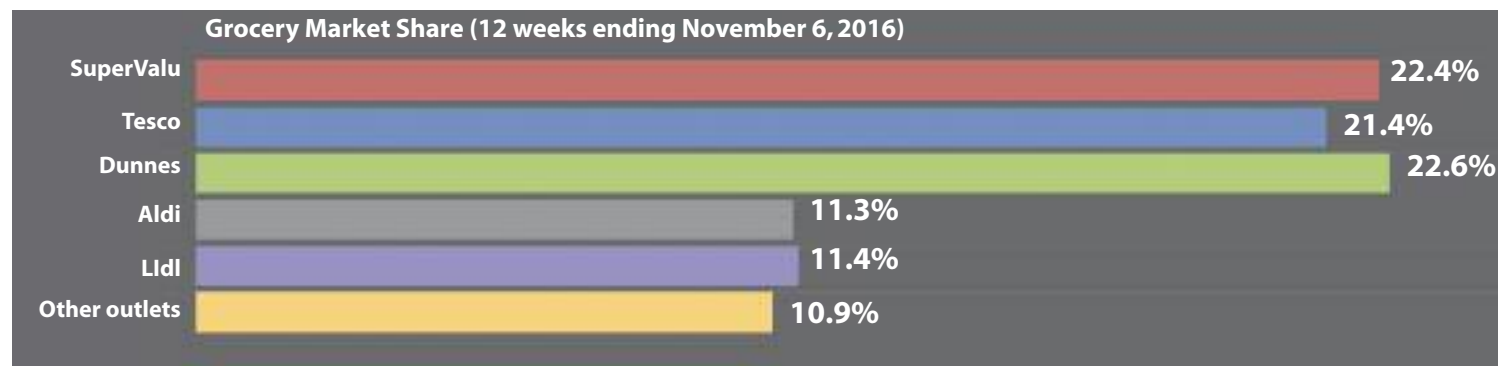
WHY THIS TRADE UNION STUDIES CERTIFICATE MEANS SO MUCH TO ME P10

Dunnes becomes Ireland's biggest supermarket

THE latest supermarket share figures from Kantar Worldpanel in Ireland, published for the 12 weeks ending November 6, 2016, show Dunnes Stores is now Ireland's largest grocery retailer. The retailer increased its market share to 22.6% during the past 12 weeks to clinch the top spot – up from 22.0% this time last year.

David Berry, director at Kantar Worldpanel, explains: "Dunnes' strong performance is largely down to its continued success in encouraging larger shopping trips via its innovative 'Shop & Save' promotional campaign. Persuading shoppers to add one extra item to every basket – worth €3.20 on average – may not sound like much, but across the country this adds up to an additional €2.8 million each week. Growth across a wide range of categories has contributed to the retailer's overall sales increase of 6.7% year on year, with toiletries, alcohol, frozen food and confectionery performing particularly well."

Mandate General Secretary John Douglas said the figures show Dunnes can afford to implement secure hour contracts and a de-



cent weekly income for all staff.

He told *Shopfloor*: "If Dunnes market share is growing then it makes sense that the workers, without whom there couldn't be any success in Dunnes, should share in that growth. It isn't too much to ask that workers are afforded their fair share."

Now capturing 22.4% of grocery spending, SuperValu continues to enjoy a positive performance with an increase in sales of

2.3% year-on-year. More shoppers have chosen to visit the retailer this year but they have also spent more, parting with an additional 80c per trip on average.

Tesco remains on an upward trajectory, with value sales falling by just 0.6% in the past 12 weeks and volume sales increasing compared with last year: the grocer's market share now stands at 21.4%.

David Berry continues: "Lidl's share of the

market has increased slightly to 11.4%, with sales growth of 5.3%. Aldi's strong performance continues with sales growing by 6.6% year on year – leading to a healthy increase in market share from 11.1% last year to 11.3% in the past 12 weeks. Aldi has seen the biggest boost to its shopper numbers during the latest quarter with an extra 40,000 households visiting the retailer and also returning more often."

SOAPBOX

Unscramble your brain, don't play their game...



David Gibney

RTE contacted me a few Fridays ago to ask if Mandate could provide the *Claire Byrne Show* with workers from the private sector (retail or bar workers) who hadn't had a pay increase since the economic collapse.

I told them: "That might be difficult because 90% of Mandate members had won at least one pay increase in recent years, with some winning three of them, or a total of 9% in three years."

I then added: "In fact, 40,000 Mandate members had won approximately €41 million in pay increases in the last four years."

The researcher was a little shocked, naturally, because no media outlet bothered to cover those pay increases, but he continued: "Well, do you think there's any workers you could supply that haven't won a pay increase?"

I replied: "I'll try," but I added, "unless you guys are planning on pitching private sector workers against public sector workers like you did in 2008-2010? Mandate will not be facilitating that sort of false debate."

Well, the researcher fumbled and stuttered and couldn't find any words to respond with. The natural instinct would ordinarily be, "that's not the agenda at all. We just want to highlight the fact that some workers haven't had a pay increase and maybe everyone deserves one." But,



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

“If you believe that Ireland's economy crashed because the wages of public sector workers were too high, you need to deconstruct your mind and look at the facts...”

to me, it seemed they had already had a discussion among the production team about how they were going to play that card on the night.

They did this in 2009 on the *Frontline* programme hosted by Pat Kenny and a decision was taken that no trade union would supply that show with spokespersons.

The concept is simple. The more we point fingers at each other saying, "I haven't had a pay increase, so they shouldn't either", the less likely it is that you can win one too. We need to stand behind each other instead.

I fully support public pay restoration but I believe it should start at the

bottom. The workers who are on the lowest wages, such as nurses and young teachers, should have their pay prioritised, instead of giving more than €5,400 to TDs and Principal Officers, and more to Ministers and the Taoiseach.

Sure didn't those guys benefit the most from the cuts to the USC (€1,255) over the last two Budgets meaning they'll be better off to the tune of about €6,655 a year. That's obscene while 2,000 children remain homeless.

The narrative from the mainstream media and the so-called 'experts' has been that it was workers and their

wage demands that crashed the economy.

They'd have you believe it had nothing to do with the heaping of private banking debt on to the State's balance sheet and bailing out the insiders who occupy the corridors of Leinster House!

If you believe that Ireland's economy crashed because the wages of public sector workers were too high, you need to deconstruct your mind and look at the facts.

Ireland has the second highest prevalence of low pay in the entire OECD. About 16% of those at work are already in poverty, and that includes public servants. If you hear anyone saying, "we simply cannot afford pay increases for public sector workers", you should immediately ask yourself why they're saying that when it's patently false.

Another tactic that will be employed by those opposed to workers achieving a pay increase is to say, "if we pay workers a pay increase, we won't be able to hire more staff meaning services will suffer". Absolute nonsense.

In the last three Budgets the Government has given tax cuts in excess of €2.5 billion, mostly aimed at the top 20%, and then they say they don't have the funds to pay nurses, teachers and low paid public servants...

The refusal to pay workers a fair increase and the refusal to hire more workers is a political choice. This Government and the last one chose tax cuts for the highest earners instead of pay restoration and the hiring of badly needed frontline staff.

Don't fall for the false narrative. Educate yourself and support each other in seeking fair pay increases.

Uncertain hours Bill passes second stage

MANDATE has welcomed the passing of the second stage of the *Protection of Employment (Uncertain Hours) Bill* in the Seanad on November 25 – and claimed it would help thousands of retail workers in their working lives and prevent exploitation.

The Bill, which comes on the back of the *Decency for Dunnes Workers* campaign, was drafted and tabled by Labour Party Senator Ged Nash.

It seeks to provide workers on 'If & When' contracts with more certainty over working hours as well as better income security and legal protections.

Welcoming the cross-party support for the initiative, Senator Nash told *Shopfloor*: "This is the first meaningful step that the Oireachtas has taken

during this term to fix the gaps in our employment laws and regulations to better protect the growing army of atypical workers who go to bed on a Sunday night not knowing how many hours they will work that week, or how much they will earn."

It is understood the Bill will now go to Committee Stage, where it will be considered in more detail within 10 'sitting' weeks.

Mr Nash added: "This important milestone takes us a significant step closer to making the changes working people need to see in this area."

General Secretary John Douglas said: "We welcome, in particular, the provision whereby a worker would receive a new contract which reflects the hours they actually work after a

six-month 'look-back' period.

"This would give thousands of workers in Dunnes Stores and other retail companies certainty over their weekly income and prevent exploitation."

Key features of the Bill include:

- An entitlement to request an employer to correct employment terms so that the stated particulars of weekly hours of work accurately reflect the pattern of work actually done per week in the previous six months.

- New rules whereby periods of 'lay-off' between fixed-term contracts will be deemed to represent continuity of service, rather than broken service.

- Where an employer registers an



Ged Nash: Bill marks 'important milestone'

employee under the PAYE system, then the employee will be regarded as continuing in employment until the date specified in a notice to Revenue of cessation of employment.

- Important measures to include

casual work in the calculation of continuous employment

- A Workplace Relations Commission complaints procedure to ensure fair and equitable application of cases under the legislation.

- An important anti-victimisation measure protecting workers from invoking their rights under the legislation.

- An exemption from the legislation in cases where employers and trade unions have negotiated Sectoral Employment Orders or Registered Employment Agreements (under the terms of *Industrial Relations Act, 2015*) or where an Employment Regulation Order has been signed as a result of a Joint Labour Committee initiative.



Ciaran Campbell: We argued move to day shift was temporary

€4k payout for ex-night crew worker

MANDATE has won an Adjudication Officer's decision at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) on behalf of one of its members at the Tesco store in Sligo.

General Sales Assistant Martina Melly had previously worked as part of the store's night crew but was temporarily moved on to day-working on Health and Safety grounds.

In early 2015, Tesco decided to close the store's night crew operations and exercised the appropriate company's 2014 night crew agreement with Mandate.

However, Ms Melly was not invited nor included in the exercise, so losing out on any of the available compensatory payments.

Divisional Organiser Ciaran Campbell told *Shopfloor*: "Mandate on Ms Melly's behalf unsuccessfully exhausted the company's grievance procedures in trying to redress the situation.

"We argued that Ms Melly's move to the day shift was temporary and that the company de facto had recognised this by not issuing her with a day contract."

He continued: "We then lodged a case with the WRC under Section 13 of the Industrial Relations Act, 1969, where it was heard by an Adjudication Officer following which Ms Melly's case was upheld and she was awarded a full and final settlement of €4,000."



SuperValu staff get first pay hike since 2008

By Caroline Clifford
Industrial Officer

MANDATE members working in Twohig's SuperValu stores in Abbeyfeale and Askeaton, Co Limerick, have received their first across-the-board increase since 2008.

Staff got a 1.5% pay rise, from September 2016 in Abbeyfeale and from October 2016 in

Askeaton. The pay agreement runs for 12 months in both locations. However, an incremental freeze implemented in both stores in 2013 remains in place for a further 12 months.

Meanwhile, staff at Garvey's SuperValu in Castleisland, Co Kerry, received a 2% pay increase, implemented in November 2016. This is the first pay increase received by staff since 2008.

ICTU holds inaugural LGBT conference in Belfast

THE Irish Congress of Trade Unions has held its first-ever LGBT conference in Belfast on November 30.

Speaking in advance of the event, Clare Moore, who is ICTU Equality Officer in the North, told *Shopfloor*: "We should be proud of the important strides which have been taken in relation to LGBT equality.

"However, research carried out by the [Belfast-based] Rainbow Project in 2011 showed that far too many lesbian, gay and bi-

sexual people were still hiding their sexuality at their workplace for fear of being bullied or losing out in career opportunities.

Unfair

"This is unfair and inefficient and why it is so important that trade unions continue work with employers to champion equality and diversity across all workplaces.

"Workplaces without fear means workers who are happier and more productive."

She added: "Trade unions are also campaigning for equal rights for LGBT people in all aspects of their lives and this is why Congress is a member of the *Love Equality* campaign for civil marriage equality in Northern Ireland."

David Joyce, Congress Equality Officer in the Republic, added: "We are proud of the positive role that trade unions played in the successful *Marriage Equality* campaign [in the South] and will work to achieve marriage equality for all citizens in Northern Ireland."

Unions in pro-choice demo over repealing the 8th

THE Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th staged a protest on Rosie Hackett Bridge in Dublin on November 23 as part of its call for a referendum to repeal the 8th Amendment.

Set up in September 2014, the campaign is supported by both ICTU and the TUC as well as a number of unions, including Mandate, Unite and the CWU.

Mary Diskin, Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th, told *Shopfloor*: "Abortion is a reality in Ireland: between 1980 and 2014, at least 163,514 women registered for terminations abroad; many others gave no personal details.

"Young women and those on low or welfare-dependent incomes have the fewest options: they cannot afford to leave the state let alone pay for abortions elsewhere. Travel restrictions prevent refugee and asylum seekers from availing of terminations abroad."

Mandate General Secretary **John Douglas** said: "Mandate recognises that the 8th Amendment continues to obstruct progress on women's right to bodily integrity. Without



access to reproductive autonomy women do not have full social, economic, political and workplace equality. The 8th Amendment denies them this.

"We stand in solidarity with *Women Rising 2016* and join with them in their call for a referendum to remove Article 40.3.3 from the constitution."

ICTU Equality officer **David Joyce** said: "ICTU opposed this amendment in 1983 and opposes it 33 years later. It was bad policy then and nothing has changed in 2016. As the largest civil society body on the island, Congress stands with *Women Rising 2016* in its demand for repeal of Article 40.3.3.

"Women comprise more than half of the trade union membership in Ire-

land and it is unacceptable that they live in a country where the law puts their health and lives at risk, criminalises them and forces them to travel abroad to avail of safe and legal abortion services."

Unite Regional Secretary **Jimmy Kelly** said: "Last year, over 3,400 women travelled from the Republic to Britain to access abortion. As a pro-choice union, Unite has consistently argued that the Eighth Amendment must be repealed as a first step to enabling women to access safe, legal and affordable terminations in Ireland.

"Solidarity is one of the most powerful weapons ordinary people have in their struggle for progress. We know the power of that weapon in the trade union movement, and

Women Rising 2016 is another example of solidarity, as voices around the world are raised in support of each other's struggle for women's rights.

"In Ireland, one of the most pressing issues for women is the struggle for bodily autonomy and repeal of the Eighth Amendment."

CWU General Secretary **Steve Fitzpatrick** said: "The CWU is proud to be associated with the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment."

USI vice president **Síona Cahill** said: "The shuffling away and around this issue needs to end. Students are affected by it every day, and are being failed not only by the system, but the state when it comes to responsibility for their healthcare.

"We cannot keep thinking it's legit-

imate to force people overseas when an issue doesn't suit us, further condemning so many young people into shame and secrecy when they should be able to make an informed, supported choice with their own body - and their own lives."

Mags O'Brien, Global Solidarity committee, ICTU said: "While this is an important issue for all women those in direct provision are doubly affected as they are without the funds to travel and may lose their place in the centre they live in, but also would be afraid to leave the country for fear that they would be denied re-entry."

TEEU President **Frank Keoghan** said: "The TEEU calls on the Government to immediately repeal the 8th Amendment to the Constitution and to hold a referendum in 2017 to finally provide for the protection and health of Irish women."

Lily Kerr, former lead bargainer with Unison, said: "As a retired senior trade union official, I am both proud and saddened by the fact that this action is taking place today.

"Sad that in Ireland today women still are not trusted with their own reproductive rights, and proud that another generation of women are willing to engage in the struggle to win those rights."

“Mandate recognises that the 8th Amendment continues to obstruct progress on women's right to bodily integrity. Without access to reproductive autonomy women do not have full social, economic, political and workplace equality”



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



Willie Hamilton: Member suffered loss of earnings

Supervisory role restored

IN NOVEMBER 2014, a Mandate member working at Shaws, Drogheda, took part in a prank with two other members of staff. This involved her being pushed around the shop floor in a stock trolley.

The incident lasted for about a minute but it resulted in the three pranksters being disciplined. The two

staff members received a written warning but the other was demoted from her position as a supervisor and given a written warning.

Divisional Organiser Willie Hamilton took up the story. "The union appealed the company's decision to the Rights Commissioner which was subsequently overturned," he told

Shopfloor. "She was reinstated to the position of supervisor and had her salary restored with effect from the date of the Rights Commissioner's recommendation.

"However, on her return to work as a supervisor, she was informed by the store manager that she would no longer be a keyholder nor would she

be allowed to carry out management cover for Sundays, both of which she previously did, in common with all the other supervisors before her demotion."

According to the union, the reason given by her manager for the withdrawal of these duties was she had lost trust in her.

Mr Hamilton continued: "The union appealed the decision on the basis that the company had sought to undermine her position and status as a supervisor not worthy of trust. The company's position also involved a significant loss of earnings for our member."

In September 2016, the Rights Commissioner ordered the company to reinstate the woman to the supervisory role she had previously held.

"He stated that for the avoidance of any doubt, this role included keyholding duties as well as supervisory duties for Sunday working.

"He also ordered the company to pay our member all loss of earnings due to her as a result of the actions of the company in discontinuing her role as a keyholder and removing her from the roster for Sunday working."

Co Mayo SuperValu workers get 3.25% rise

FOLLOWING a recent round of intensive negotiations, Mandate successfully won a 3.25% pay increase for close on 70 of its members working in the Kavanagh Group SuperValu outlets in Co. Mayo located in Castlebar, Westport, Kiltimagh and Claremorris.

Paid in three instalments of 1% from April 1, 2016, 1% from October 1, 2016 and a further 1.25% from April 1, 2017, the pay agreement concludes December 31, 2017.

This follows on from a previous 15-month pay agreement brokered at the start of 2015 when a new pay scale was agreed and due pay assimilation on to the same.

Divisional Organiser Ciaran Campbell told *Shopfloor*: "In some cases as a result of the agreement there were pay increases of 10% and 15% for many low-paid Mandate members, and for those members where the pay assimilation exercise didn't apply received a minimum of a 1.75% pay increase."

225,000: Keep shutters down on December 26

UK SHOPWORKERS union Usdaw has welcomed renewed debate over the issue of Boxing Day/St Stephen's Day trading.

It follows the gathering of more than 225,000 signatures in an online petition, hosted by change.org, calling for shops to remain closed on the day.

Last year the UK Government responded to a similar petition by stating that they had no plans to ban retailers opening on the day after Christmas.

Udaw General Secretary John Hannett said: "Staff in retail work very long hours in the run-up to Christmas. Our members tell us that they need time off to recuperate as well as to spend time with their family and friends. That is especially important when they have children for whom Christmas is such a special time."

He added: "Udaw is seeking the longest possible break for retail staff over the Christmas and New Year period, to provide shopworkers with a breather during this very busy time."

Picture: I See Modern Britain (CC BY 2.0)

GOT A MANDATE-THEMED STORY?

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

Union welcome for new Penneys store

MANDATE has welcomed the opening of a new Penneys store in Liffey Valley along with the creation of hundreds of new retail jobs.

The store, which opened on December 6, is the 37th Penneys store in Ireland and comprises of 53,900 sq ft of retail space.

Divisional Organiser Jonathan Hogan, who will be representing workers there, told *Shopfloor* he was looking forward to the job.

He said: "Mandate represents more than 5,000 Penneys workers in Ireland and it is because of a long and constructive relationship between the employer and Mandate that results in Penneys workers having among the best conditions of employment in the retail sector in Ireland."

2017: an eventful and traumatic year for Debenhams

By Robert McNamara
Industrial Officer

AS THE centenary year of 2016 draws to a close, Debenhams members will look back on what was a very eventful and in many ways a traumatic year of employment.

2015 ended on a relatively positive note with the conclusion of a pay agreement for 1% and the possibility of a further 1% dependent on reaching certain sales growth targets during the Christmas trading period.

The positivity continued into January 2016 when it was announced that the retailer had achieved the sales growth as outlined in the Mandate proposal and that members would receive the additional 1%.

March saw the introduction of the new Debenhams National Forum process. The Forum was set up to deal with non-core Industrial relations issues and the first meeting dealt with a number of such issues in a very system-

atic way. One of these was the introduction of Tax Saver/Bike To Work schemes. Following representations from Mandate shop stewards, the retailer committed itself to introducing the schemes in the near future.

Then came May and the shock announcement the Debenhams had sought the appointment of an Examiner. Subsequently, the High Court appointed Mr Kieran Wallace of KPMG as Examiner.

Given that we were dealing with a business that was essentially insolvent and with a court-appointed Examiner who had the power to repudiate employment contracts, what ensued was turned out to be a very tough set of negotiations.

Nevertheless to their absolute credit, the Debenhams shop stewards and representatives stepped up to the mark and robustly defended members' terms and conditions from the outset. The National Negotiating Team determined

that Mandate's main priority during the talks was to retain as many quality retail jobs in Debenhams as possible while minimising the impact of the Examinership process on members' terms and conditions.

Hopefully, the Debenhams business in Ireland has turned a corner and we can look forward to sustainable sales growth on the back of which we will continue to enhance our members' terms and conditions of employment and earnings.

One of the obvious benefits that emerged from such a challenging year was how the National Negotiating Team combined so effectively in largely delivering the objectives that they set for themselves and on behalf of their fellow members.

If nothing else the experience they have gained during the Examinership process will make them a more effective and stronger representative body going forward.

Think before you drink...

● Whose pulling your pint this Christmas? Don't take him or her for granted... chances are – as Mandate survey reveals – they are on very low pay, working on split shifts, and having to skip their legally required breaks...

By Dave Moran
Divisional Organiser

MOST people take the man or woman that is serving them behind the bar for granted, never stopping to think that they may have been working a 12-hour shift or more, for the minimum wage.

And with regard to breaks, what are they when the bars are packed, the tills are ringing and your boss tells you to "just keep going"? You don't have much choice in the matter if you want to keep your job.

The bar trade has gone from being a proud profession with employees having to serve an apprenticeship to now one of the most precarious of jobs in a relatively short space of time.

Initial findings from a survey of bar workers conducted by Mandate has shown that they are facing some of the most horrendous and exploitative terms and conditions

in the labour market and that many are not even receiving their basic employment rights.

Among the findings uncovered in the survey is that bar workers face:

- Very low pay with the minimum wage the norm in many bars;
- No allowances for unsociable hours, cleaning up time or Sunday premiums;
- No pay scales and few opportunities for career advancement;
- Low hour or zero-hour contracts; and
- Split shifts, unfair rostering and, in many cases, legally required breaks not been given.

'What recession?'

Yet when you visit many of the bar this Christmas, you will probably have to ask yourself 'Recession? What recession?' as it certainly appears – judging by the packed bars and, in some cases, queues at doors to get in – that the good times for the bar trade are back.

Yet the barman or woman serving you is suffering the type of exploitation the survey of workers in the trade has highlighted.

Mandate, the trade union for bar workers, is determined to turn this situation around and the survey is only one step in a campaign we intend to launch in 2017, with a view to resolving the real issues that are common throughout the bar trade.

The union intends to launch the survey in spring 2017 at an event involving all stakeholders in the

trade, including workers, the Licensed Vintners Association (LVA), politicians and other interested bodies in a bid to resolve the issues that exist in the industry.

This industry is one of the principal drivers in the astonishing increase in tourism numbers into the country with many of these visitors stating that the Irish pub is one of the reasons they chose when deciding to visit Ireland.

But now the time has come for the industry at all levels to consider the people who work in it and with profits increasing ensure that they get terms and conditions of employment that reflect the work and commitment they have shown to achieve this turnaround in the trade.

In order for this happen barworkers will have to organise and the best way to this is to join a union. Mandate is the union of the bar workers. It has a proven history of fighting to protect and enhance the terms and conditions of all bar workers over a long period of time.

So while many are out this Christmas getting into the festive spirit, partaking in the traditional '12 pubs of Christmas' and generally enjoying the unique atmosphere of Irish pubs, stop and think about the person who is serving you behind the bar, even if it's just to say thank you to them for the unique service they provide to the public.

“...the good times are back, yet the barman or woman serving you is suffering type of exploitation highlighted in the survey...”

INFODESK CHRISTMAS TEMPS

What young seasonally hired workers need to know...

By Feargal Geraghty
ICTU Youth Connect

WITH Christmas fast approaching and everyone struggling to find what to buy for their loved ones, let us take a moment to consider the service and retail staff members who are putting the stock on the shelves and suggesting ideas for gifts that might help create a great moment on your Christmas morning.

As is always the case, there is a high demand for goods this time of year and a huge number of seasonal staff are hired to deal with the influx of

business. For most people this is how they first break into the workforce, and a number of that group tend to be under the age of 18. So with this in mind we thought it might be a good idea to review the rights of students under the age of 18 in the workplace.

PAY: Your wage is determined by the number of hours that you work. If you are under the age of 18 the minimum that you should be paid per hour is €6.41 – this is 70% of the adult minimum wage. If anywhere attempts to pay you less than this you should

speak to either your shop steward immediately or contact your union directly.

HOURS: As an employee under the age of 18, you are not subject to working the same number of hours as employees over the age of 18. If you are under the age of 18 then the most you can work in a single week is 40 hours. You are only entitled to work eight hours a day and this all must range between the hours of 6am to 10pm.

TIPS: Around this time of year some people tend to be a bit more generous,

you may receive tips. There's some good news and some bad news regarding your tips.

The bad news is that you are in no way entitled to any tips that you receive while working there and it is completely up to your employer on how to handle this.

The good news, however, is you are not required to hand these tips directly to your employer; rather it depends on the custom and practice in the workplace.

This time of year can be tough, es-

pecially for individuals working in the service industry. If you feel that your rights as a worker might be being infringed, then feel free to contact us at: info@youth-connect.ie and we will be more than happy to provide you with the information you need.

As a side note, let's not forget when we're out doing our shopping for the year, that the staff are under tremendous pressure at this time. A simple smile and a "thank you" can make the world of difference to someone who's enduring a long hectic shift.

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>

TRAINING

Why this Trade Union Studies certificate means so much to me



LATE in 2013 I was given the opportunity to attend the certificate course in Trade Union Studies run by the National College of Ireland.

At the time I was extremely apprehensive about the course as the thought of going back to college and committing to it for two years was extremely daunting. Thankfully, once I attended the first class that apprehension faded away almost automatically. It is amazing how your attitude can change so quickly when you are put in a room full of trade union activists from across all unions and sectors and feel completely relaxed.

The course is broken up into six modules that last 10 weeks per module. Each module gives you a new insight into specific areas.

The first module was on *Employment Law*, this dealt with the history of labour law in Ireland up to the present day and covered every piece of legislation we need to use as activists and, hopefully, as officials down the road.

Negotiating techniques

The second module was on *Collective Bargaining*. This module looks at the history of collective bargaining and collective agreements, teaches you how to use different negotiating techniques – how every negotiation is different and how you adapt to changing circumstances around you.

The third module was on *Human Resource Management*. I know most people when they look at this module will want to run in the opposite direction – believe me, that's what I thought of doing myself! This module teaches how companies have changed the model they use from Personnel Management to Human Resources and what techniques they deploy. This was the module I struggled with the most because I found it extremely difficult to put myself in the mindset of companies and doing business their way as I have always been on the other side of the table.

The fourth module was on *Health &*



John with Mandate National Coordinator Aileen Morrissey at his NCI graduation

are. The fifth module was on *Equality & Diversity*. This covers everything from the legislation that covers this subject to what employers and your own responsibilities are in regards to the subject.

The final module was on *Economics*. This went through how the economy affects labour markets, how we have to change our strategies as unions in the changing economic markets and what we can do to get the best outcomes in these changing times.

While I do still believe that we offer the best training possible for our shop stewards and activists, this course provides you with that bit more that I feel you need to go that bit further, especially if you are looking to become involved in the movement long-term.

Greater insight

The course is facilitated in an extremely relaxed manner and debate is encouraged on subjects within each module when a difference of opinion occurs. It will help you build relationships with activists and shop stewards from other unions and give you a greater insight and the ability to take your skills to the next level.

I would highly recommend this course to shop stewards regardless of age or educational attainment, as each class on the course has a diverse age range and skill level.

Once you complete the course you formally graduate from the NCI. My own graduation took place recently. While I felt it was a great achievement and was extremely proud at having achieved it, it was a deeply bittersweet experience. My friend, Daniel McCarthy, should've been standing next to me at the ceremony.

After seeing all the hard work and effort that we had both put into this course and our work in general together, not having him there on the day and seeing Daniel's family collect his certificate posthumously was one of the most difficult things I have ever had to deal with.

Wherever Daniel is now, I hope he was looking down smiling knowing that we did it together and that whatever I do from now on won't just be for me but in his memory and I will achieve our dreams for the both of us.



Luke McCarthy holds the 3rd Level certificate in Trade Union Studies at the NCI he received on behalf of his deceased brother, Mandate activist Daniel McCarthy

Safety. This covered all aspects of health and safety in the workplace from risk assessments to bullying and harassment which is covered by the same legislation, what is classed as bullying, what are the characteristics and what your responsibilities and your employers' responsibilities



LEFT Logged on: the participants who took the Introduction to Computers course in September 2016

Does your pay rise look like this?



Tom McDonnell

THE REPUBLIC of Ireland's economy has been on a strengthening arc for the last four years with a narrowing output gap and GDP growth expected to exceed 4% in 2016.

The unemployment rate fell to 7.3% in November which is less than half of the great recession nadir of over 15%. Total employment is still down 125,000 compared to 2007 but has increased steadily since early 2012 with almost 200,000 additional employments since the third quarter of 2012.

Surplus

Eight out of 14 economic sectors have now exceeded their 2008 levels in terms of total employment and employment is up in 11 sectors since 2012. Corporate performance in terms of gross operating surplus has been gradually improving since 2009 although recent data is hard to interpret given the problems with the national accounts.

What hasn't been increasing to any great extent is wages external link. Growth in real compensation has been running close to zero in recent years. Average weekly earnings are on a mildly upward trend. Even so, real average weekly earnings are broadly unchanged since 2008. Pri-



Picture: cyclonebill (CC BY-SA 2.0)

ivate sector earnings increased by 1.8% between third quarter (Q3) 2015 and Q3 2016 and have been growing at an average rate of 1.1% over the last five years.

Sectoral performances have varied and weekly earnings have fallen in the accommodation and food sector (mainly private sector) over the last five years as well as in the education and health sectors (both mainly public sector).

Average hourly earnings have been

basically flat for the last five years. Average hourly earnings in Q3 2016 (€21.55) are actually marginally down on Q3 2011 (€21.60). Private sector wages have increased from €19.01 to €19.77 over the five years - an average increase of just 0.8% per annum with a 0.9% increase in the last year. Hourly wages fell in four of the 14 sectors in the last year and are also down in four sectors over the last five years - including in the worst paid sector (accommodation and

“What hasn't been increasing to any great extent is wages external link. Growth in real compensation has been running close to zero in recent years”

food services).

Labour cost growth in the European Union has been slowest in Ireland, Italy, Cyprus and Greece since 2012 with hourly labour costs in Ireland broadly unchanged since 2010.

The weakness of wage growth can partially be explained by a slack labour market. Ireland still has one of the lowest job vacancy rates in the EU and a rate that is only marginally better than that of Greece and Spain. Total employment is still below pre-crisis peak levels in six of the 14 sectors.

The economy is recovering. So when might workers expect to share in the recovery through higher wage growth? I anticipate that the labour market will gradually tighten over the short-to-medium term and that unemployment will continue to fall over the next two years. This will improve the relative bargaining position of labour and should manifest in the form of wage increases. If this scenario prevails it is reasonable to expect faster wage growth in 2017.

In the longer-term the baseline expectation is that nominal compensa-

tion will increase in line with inflation. Consumer inflation is likely to average close to the ECB target of 2% over the medium-term and the Department of Finance estimate that the personal consumption deflator will average 2.1% over the 2017-2019 period. In addition, improved labour productivity should be compensated through real increases in hourly pay. Irish productivity figures tend to be unreliable due to the influence of multinational tax planning activities.

Productivity

However, labour productivity has averaged close to 1.5% in the advanced OECD economies since the second world war and this seems like a reasonable baseline even though productivity growth has been somewhat slower in more recent years. The Department of Finance project on labour productivity growth of 1.4% in each of 2017-2019.

A baseline expectation for wage growth on an assumption of no change to employment composition may therefore range somewhere between 3% to 3.6% with additional upward pressure arising from the tightening of the labour market. Clearly there will be substantial sectoral heterogeneities. Another factor to consider is whether or not the labour share of income is low relative to other advanced economies given the structure of the economy.

After years of wage stagnation 2017 might well be the year when wage growth returns with a bang.

Tom McDonnell is a Senior Economist at NERI

DO YOU HAVE A MANDATE-THEMED STORY OR PIC? Email us at news@mandate.ie

IN MY VIEW...

Seeking the cornerstones of a decent society

LAST month RTE's David Murphy said that there was no cost-of-living crisis in Ireland because the inflation figure was low.

It was just another example of how out-of-touch the mainstream media is when it comes to the everyday lives of people.

Aside from the fact that our national figures are the laughing stock of the world, frequently labelled 'leprechaun economics' by academics and journalists, the reality is that significant rises in the cost of health, housing, education, childcare and transport have put enormous pressure on Irish households and no amount of soft-focus puff pieces by RTE or anyone else is going to change that.

The other fact that is constantly ignored is that we live in a low-wage



David Cullinane

“... we live in a low-wage economy. The majority of jobs pay less than €28,000 a year, with two-thirds of all people earning less than €40,000”

economy. The majority of jobs pay less than €28,000 a year, with two-thirds of all people earning less than €40,000. At present the average house price in Dublin is €332,000, more than 12 times the annual salary for the majority of Irish workers.

The past three years have seen rents go through the roof, with knock-on effects in terms of the housing crisis and increased levels of homelessness.

And in all of this we have the usual suspects trotted out on the national airwaves to say that the one thing we cannot afford at this moment is a pay rise. Well, the one thing we cannot have is a low income and high cost economy.

Nobody should have any concerns about workers having a living wage.

How can we stand over a situation where we have workers who don't

have the ability to meet basic needs?

I don't believe it is sustainable that we can build an economy on low pay. There are many people who are characterised as the working poor - who put in a week's work but can't afford to pay basic bills - don't have access to public services, and don't have the quality of life that they should have.

Decent services

If people have access to decent public services such as universal childcare and healthcare that would lessen the need for cost-of-living increases.

These moves can only happen by having fair, just and progressive taxation and reinvesting in core services.

We should not forget that there is still a gender pay gap in this state of just under 14% despite equal pay legislation dating back to the 1970s.

Certainly if you looked to the ranks of the Dunnes Stores workers striking recently you couldn't but be struck by the fact that very large numbers of them are women.

Women workers are struggling to making ends meet. Up to 50% of women earn an average income of €20,000 or less.

The next 12 months will see ordinary people, and trade unions willing to truly represent their members, build on the successes of this year and win the pay rises they deserve.

Workers' rights, a living wage and decent public services - these are the cornerstones of a stable society and each and all is worth the fight.

David Cullinane TD is Sinn Féin's spokesperson on Public Expenditure & Reform

FAREWELL, FIDEL

An extraordinary life and a legacy to learn from...

“There’s one place where (Fidel Castro’s) Cuba stands out head and shoulders above the rest – that is in its love for human rights and liberty!”

– Nelson Mandela

By David Gibney

Mandate communications officer

THE story of Fidel Castro is a complex and fascinating one and certainly one which has opened up debate in Ireland since his death a number of weeks ago.

Fidel Castro led the Cuban people to freedom from the US-backed brutal dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959. Batista was as corrupt as he was vicious, with strong relationships to organised crime in the US, turning Cuba into a brothel and playground for the wealthiest US citizens and businesses.

In 1960, John F Kennedy said: “At the beginning of 1959 United States companies owned about 40% of the Cuban sugar lands, almost all the cattle ranches, 90% of the mines and mineral concessions, 80% of the utilities, practically all the oil industry and supplied two-thirds of Cuba’s imports.”

Governor Leonard Wood said: “There is, of course, little or no independence left in Cuba under the Platt Amendment. It is quite apparent that she is absolutely in our hands.”

Minimum wage

The US also blocked the introduction of a minimum wage in the 1920s.

In 1959, a small group of 82 rebels, frustrated with high levels of poverty and corruption, boarded the Granma yacht and sailed from Mexico to Cuba where they fought back in one of the most famous revolutions in recent history led by Fidel Castro and the grandson of an Irish emigrant, Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara.

The revolution grew in numbers and strength over time and its success was immediate. Before the revolution, 23.6% of the population were illiterate. Within 12 months the country was comparable with any first world nation and now has a 100% literacy rate. Pre-revolutionary Cuba had an infant mortality rate of 60 per 1,000. This reduced to six per 1,000 and is now lower than the US. Today only Uruguay and Argentina can compare out of the 19 Latin American countries.

The US was unhappy with the progress and feared the success of socialism may undermine their own economic structures and so it set out to undermine the revolution.

Castro thwarted an invasion by US-backed and trained counter-revolutionaries at the Bay of Pigs in 1961. The US also supported terrorist organisations based out of Miami, who



Fidel's ashes being taken to the mausoleum; Fidel, right, with comrade Camilo Cienfuegos



Fidel speaks during 1959 trip to Washington

have taken the lives of more than 3,000 innocent Cubans in the past four decades. The frustration at the success of Castro’s Cuba led to the longest economic blockade in the history of the planet, which is still maintained after more than 50 years – although in recent years it has eased somewhat.

“The majority of Cubans support Castro. The only foreseeable means of alienating internal support is through disenchantment and disaffection based on economic dissatisfaction and hardship,” said Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Lestor D. Mallory in April 1960. “We wanted to keep



Pictures: Public Domain; Pablo Trincado (CC BY 2.0)

bread out of the stores so that people would go hungry,” commented one CIA officer in the 1970s.

Castro himself famously survived more than 600 attempts on his life by the CIA, many of them sanctioned by US Presidents.

Blockade

While poverty is a major problem in Cuba as a result of the blockade, there are no homeless children and Cuba is recognised as the first country in the world to eliminate mother to child HIV. It is lauded as having one of the best healthcare systems in the world. While there are 146 million

children throughout the world suffering from malnourishment – including 28% of children in sub-Saharan Africa, 17% in the Middle East and North America, 15% in East Asia and the Pacific and 7% in Latin America and the Caribbean – Cuba has 0% and is the first country in Latin America and the Caribbean to eliminate child malnourishment completely.

The aggression from the US towards Cuba led to restrictions on civil liberties which has been criticised by many, particularly the Irish media in recent weeks. But the greatest human rights abuses that have and continue to take place in Cuba occur in Guan-

tanamo Bay, a small portion of the island occupied by US military where they detain prisoners without trial and torture them with techniques such as waterboarding.

Castro’s influence on the world extended far beyond the island and his Cuban government has been an important force in fighting colonial powers the world over. In the 1980s Cuban troops helped the Angolans defeat South Africa and Castro supported Nelson Mandela in undermining the Apartheid regime. When the US backed a military coup against Salvador Allende, the democratically-elected leader of Chile in 1973, Castro backed Allende. Cuba is also credited with saving millions of lives in poor countries all around the world by sending its doctors in times of crisis. While most western countries became preoccupied with border control at the outbreak of Ebola in 2014, Cuba was first on the scene sending more doctors and nurses than any other country.

Helping the sick

Cuba also sent a larger medical contingent than any other country when the Haiti earthquake devastated the country in 2010, providing care for 40% of the victims. In Ireland, our media focused on Denis O’Brien and, in comparative terms, the spare change he gave to the country where he has substantial business interests after the earthquake while Cuba quietly went about the real business of helping the sick, injured and infirm.

If there is one lasting legacy from the life of Fidel Castro it is that when we in Ireland or anywhere else in the world are told there is no alternative to the economic system we are consistently confined to, and when we’re told that capital markets dictate whether people can be housed or have enough food to eat, Fidel Castro’s Cuba proves that that another world is possible.

After the announcement of Castro’s death, President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins expressed his sympathies to the Cuban people, which led to manufactured outrage from our right-wing press. President Higgins said: “Fidel Castro was of a generation of leaders that sought to offer an alternative global economic and social order. He was President of the Non-Aligned Movement and a leading figure in international gatherings that sought a more equal world of trade, rejected odious debt and sought an independent path to development.

“Fidel Castro will be remembered as a giant among global leaders whose view was not only one of freedom for his people but for all of the oppressed and excluded peoples on the planet.”

Yes, it is possible...

“ Yes, it was possible to reach the coast of Cuba in the Granma yacht; that yes, it was possible to resist the enemy, hunger, rain and cold, and organise a revolutionary army in the Sierra Maestra following the Alegría de Pío debacle; that yes, it was possible to open new guerrilla fronts in the province of Oriente, with ours and Almeida's columns; that yes, it was possible to defeat the great offensive of over 10,000 soldiers with only 300 rifles, after which Che wrote in his Campaign Diary, that with this victory the backbone of the army of the tyranny had been broken.

That yes, it was possible to repeat the feats of Maceo and Gómez, extending with Che and Camilo's columns the struggle from the east to the west of the island; that yes, it was possible to defeat, with the support of the entire people, the tyranny of Batista, backed by U.S. imperialism.

The man that showed us that yes, it

was possible to defeat in 72 hours, or even less, the mercenary invasion of Playa Girón and at the same time, continue the campaign to eradicate illiteracy in one year as was happened in 1961.

That yes, it was possible to proclaim the socialist character of the Revolution 90 miles from the empire, and when its warships advanced toward Cuba, following the brigade of mercenary troops; that yes, it was possible to resolutely uphold the inalienable principles of our sovereignty, without fear of the threat of nuclear aggression by the United States in those days of the October 1962 missile crisis.

That yes, it was possible to offer solidarity assistance to other sister peoples struggling against colonial oppression, external aggression and racism.

That yes, it was possible to defeat the racist South Africans, saving Angola's territorial integrity, forcing Namibia's independence and delivering a harsh blow to the Apartheid regime.

That yes, it was possible to turn Cuba into a medical power, reduce infant mortality first, to the lowest rate in the Third World, then as compared with other rich countries; because at least on this continent our rate of infant mortality of children under one year of age is lower than Canada's and United States, and at the same time, signifi-

cantly increase the life expectancy of our population.

That yes, it was possible to transform Cuba into a great scientific hub, advance in the modern and decisive fields of genetic engineering and biotechnology; insert ourselves within the fortress of international pharmaceuticals; develop tourism, despite the US blockade; build causeways in the sea to make Cuba increasingly more attractive, obtaining greater monetary income from our natural charms.

That yes, it is possible to resist, survive, and develop without renouncing our principles or the achievements won by socialism in a unipolar world dominated by the transnationals which emerged after the fall of the socialist camp in Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

Fidel's enduring lesson is that yes it is possible, that humans are able to overcome the harshest conditions as long as their willingness to triumph does not falter, they accurately assess every situation, and do not renounce their just and noble

”



These are the words that I expressed more than two decades ago about a man, who, following the first disastrous battle at Alegría de Pío – 60 years ago – never lost faith in victory, and 13 days later, already in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra, on December 18 of the aforementioned year, with seven rifles and a fist full

of combatants, stated: “Now we have won the war!”

This is the undefeated Fidel that brings us together through his example and demonstration that, yes, it was possible, yes, it is possible, and yes, it will be possible!

So, I repeat that he demonstrated that yes, it was possible, yes, it is possible, and yes,

it will be possible to overcome any obstacle, threat or disturbance in our resolute effort to build socialism in Cuba, or, in other words, guarantee the independence and sovereignty of the homeland!

Before Fidel's remains, in the Plaza de la Revolución Mayor General Antonio Maceo Grajales, in the heroic city of

Santiago de Cuba, we swear to defend the homeland and socialism! And together we all reaffirm that expressed by the Bronze Titan: “Whoever attempts to conquer Cuba, will gather the dust of her blood-soaked soil, if he does not perish in fight!”)

Excerpt of remarks made by Raúl Castro during the tribute to Fidel Castro Ruz, December 3, 2016, Year 58 of the Revolution

Pictures: Public Domain; UN Photo/Amanda Voisard (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Gerry Light

Assistant General Secretary
Mandate Trade Union

VIEW *from the* SHOPFLOOR

Moving beyond acceptance and towards action...

THE established theory of dealing with grief is gradual transition through the five stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression and – finally – acceptance. Long before we had reached the anger stage which arose from the result of the Brexit vote we were thrust once again into a spiral of grief following the US presidential elections.

Clearly as we move to the final stage of acceptance those of us who have a broader and more long-term interest in what type of society we and future generations will inhabit must start asking the questions and understanding the reasons why so many working, unemployed and retired people have turned to the narrow-minded and dangerous creed of nostalgic nationalism which was at the heart of the Brexit and Trump campaigns.

Once we reach this level of understanding we then must devise a credible new way of delivering an alternative in order to end the nightmare that we now find ourselves in.

Just in case we ever doubted it, the simple reason why millions of people were willing to support Brexit and Trump is because they, their families and communities are suffering to the point that many of them have lost their sense of security, status and even identity. In recent decades they have been abandoned by neoliberal economics which has, for far too long, prioritised the interests of big business and billionaires over the needs of ordinary people.

Whether we like it or not, the Brexit and Trump campaigns spoke directly to the pain being experienced by these citizens.

The failure of these economic policies has clearly proven one thing – the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. In their desperation to find a new order that will prioritise their interests, clearly many people have turned their backs on centrist economic and political thinking and instead of looking to the Left for a new type of salvation, they have turned, in the case of Trump, to a political and economic ideology that promotes the values of individualism and materialism over the common good.

Apparently it does not seem to matter much that the ideology is also driven by racism, sexism, and the abandonment of environmental policies crucial for the very survival of the planet. We must constantly remind ourselves that we retain the capacity to destroy our planet but not to escape it. The more we pronounce our disdain for this emerging extreme right-wing populism, the

more the Left is going to come under pressure to prove how its view of the world will deliver for those who require, more than ever, a well-conceived and constructed progressive alternative.

Even in the face of dramatic failure supporters of neoliberal economics will continue to attack the inability of the Left to provide credible solutions. Given the current and ongoing fragmented nature of the Left they just might be correct. Surely the first challenge for the Left is bridging this divide based on a strategy which recognises some basic first principles that display an understanding of the challenges and the solutions required to bring about an end to the suffering of those who should be their natural allies and constituents.

First, there cannot be any compromise in the fight against the new core ideologies of what the Brexit and Trump campaigns stand for. Second, there must be an acceptance that the so-called “working class” is becoming increasingly diverse and complex and the natural left constituency and agenda must reach much deeper into the equally diverse and complex communities in which people live.

Real-life challenges

Third, the desire to bring about change and its shape must be influenced by the real-life challenges being experienced in these communities and the emerging policies have to be driven by the people, for the people.

Fourth, we must unite around a platform shaped by moral identities and values to the point where this approach is given priority over economic self-interest. Fifth, we must be cautious not to allow a left alternative be hijacked by so-called radicals whose own background and ultimate objectives have little attachment to those whose interests they purport to represent.

Many times it has been uttered that those on the Left have more in common than divides them. Now is the time to move beyond rhetoric and prove this assertion correct. This has to be done for the sake of those who look for a way to halt the disastrous choices that have recently been made in the UK and the US and which are likely to happen again in France and elsewhere in the near future.

Of course trade unions have a crucial role to perform in rebuilding and participating in this new coalition of the Left. Like never before unions must become real and effective catalysts for change and convince their members in the first instance that there is a credible alternative available to them. They, in turn, must champion this message among family, friends and the broader communities in which they live. Most of all they must use the ballot box to ensure that the fight for policies that deliver a new era of democratic socialism succeeds.

The populist radical Right is on the march and clearly gaining momentum. So together let's move quickly beyond the acceptance of this fact and start to immediately build a movement of the people that not only has a desire but also a realistic chance of defeating the naked greed, inequality, hate and fear that the likes of Donald Trump and Nigel Farage stand for.

Make no mistake about it, while these well-heeled privileged sons of society pretend to be champions of the working class, they constantly promote policies that deliver the contrary. Pretending to listen, understand and indulge the concerns of workers and those living in poverty is one thing, doing something which has positive meaning and impact is something entirely different and it is on this basis that they should and hopefully will be judged

The longer we wait for the fight back to happen, the more likely we are to fail and the present that we currently fear will worsen and become the norm for generations to come. Surely they deserve better than that.



THINKING OUT LOUD...

We CAN'T afford it!



Illustration: Colleen Simon; opensource.com (CC BY-SA 2.0)

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

THE Government have been relentless. We can't afford public sector pay restoration. We can't afford to upgrade our water infrastructure. We can't afford to house the homeless. We can't afford to invest in our public health service. We can't afford a decent public transport system. We can't afford, we can't afford, we can't afford...

Well, why can't we afford all the things that any civilised society should have?

There are two reasons.

1. Our Government keeps giving tax cuts to the wealthy; and
2. Our Government refuses to tax wealth.

Over the last three Budgets alone, our Government has given tax cuts of €3 billion, primarily aimed at the top 20% of earners and employers:

Budget 2015

- Income Tax Threshold €292m
- Income Tax Changes (41% - 40%) €405m

Budget 2016

- Employers PRSI €7m
- USC Threshold €561m
- USC Cut €772m
- Capital Gains Tax (Entrepreneur Relief) €27m

Budget 2017

- USC Thresholds €335m
- USC Cut €390m
- Earned Income Tax Credit €91m
- Capital Acquisition Tax Thresholds €22m

TOTAL: €2.9 billion

All of these cuts are a political choice. Politicians are choosing to allow people – your neighbours – to

live on the streets. They're enabling long delays on hospital trolleys.

Last year the Right2Change Trade Unions, including Mandate, published a *Fiscal Framework* which would have enabled the Government to raise up to €10 billion for extra spending on public services and social protection. Instead, what we got was more tax cuts that disproportionately benefited the highest earners.

Ireland could raise more than €300m from a Financial Transaction Tax. We could have closed the special 9% VAT rate afforded to the hotels sector which would bring in €600m and we could gradually increase Employers' PRSI to the average in Europe which could bring in €4 billion in a short space of time.

This is enough to cure our housing crisis, our healthcare crisis and our education crisis. But that's not high enough of a priority. Allowing high paid workers to become even higher paid is the name of the game. And so you and your family must suffer.

There is only one way to ensure this stops. Get active. Get active in your community, in your political parties and in your trade union. If you have a different vision for Ireland than the one being driven by Leinster House, it's up to you to make it happen.

So the next time you hear a politician or a media commentator saying: "We can't afford public sector pay restoration. We can't afford to upgrade our water infrastructure. We can't afford to house the homeless. We can't afford to invest in our public health service. We can't afford a decent public transport system. We can't afford, we can't afford, we can't afford..."

Remember that the truth is that we can. They just choose not to.

“All of these cuts are a political choice. Politicians are choosing to allow people – your neighbours – to live on the streets. They're enabling long delays on hospital trolleys...”

Congress advises private sector unions to seek pay rises of at least €1,000

CONGRESS has advised affiliated unions in the private sector to seek pay increases in 2017 “that would see basic pay rise by at least €1,000 annually, or 4% – whichever figure is higher.”

ICTU Private Sector Committee chair John Douglas said: “People have seen living standards fall or stagnate over recent years. The best way to address this is through wage increases and we now expect to see claims being lodged along these lines.”

The *Congress Private Sector Bulletin* advises affiliate unions that ICTU has “monitored pay bargaining developments over the course of 2016...and trends across a range of key meas-

ures that impact on the living standards of workers.

“While some progress has been made in recouping earnings lost in the financial crisis, data shows there is still some considerable ground to be made up.”

The *Bulletin* says that a number of key considerations have been taken into account in formulating the claim, namely:

- The general level of earnings in the economy and the share received by workers,
- Projected increases in rates of price inflation,
- Projected increases in productivity,
- Profit levels in private sector companies.

The *Bulletin* points out that Ireland’s ‘wage share’ remains low when compared to the UK, US and the EU. It forecasts inflation of 2% in 2017 and estimates labour productivity will grow by 1.5%.

When seeking increases, private sector unions are urged to “have regard for the policy of Congress on achieving overtime as a minimum, a wage of €11.50 per hour for every worker.”

The *Bulletin* advises that pay claims in the sector should also take account of hours of work and the necessity to ensure workers have “reasonable weekly contracted hours” that give some certainty over their work schedule.



John Douglas spoke at the Plan B for Europe conference in Copenhagen in November



● Discontent among ‘old working class’ being exploited across Europe by far right

Our fight against ‘gig economy’

GENERAL Secretary John Douglas has described “social dumping” – employers use of drafted in cheap labour that undercuts labour and social standards in the country where products are made – as “but a symptom of the disease of neo-liberalism and globalisation”.

And he claimed that such practices became inevitable once the single EU market agreed on what he termed the “four neo-liberal pillars” – free movement of capital, labour, goods and services.

He made the comments during a speech at the Plan B for Europe conference held in the Danish Parliament in Copenhagen – an event organised by a number of Scandinavian left parties in November.

Claiming that Social Charter was largely “a symbolic gesture”, he said the reality was that as long as there were significant differences between the cost of labour across the EU along with a weakening of the labour movement and collective bargaining, “as night follows day”, European labour standards “converge towards the lowest common denominator”.

Mr Douglas warned the discontent felt by

Europe’s “old working class” was being exploited by parties of the far right.

“They exploit our failure to engage with and have the difficult conversations about migration, social dumping and about the neo-liberal objective of a single market. The right fill this space with a toxic cocktail of nationalism, protectionism, racism and scapegoating of minorities.

“If the history of Europe in the last century is to teach us anything, it is that the lack of hope, respect and dignity amongst citizens will be exploited by the far right. They will turn worker against worker, Christian against Muslim, old against young and race against race.”

He said the European Project was in need of a total overhaul because it was not working for its citizens. Social dumping was, he pointed out, “meant to happen”.

“It is called internal devaluation of Europe to compete globally against China and globalisation. Social dumping was inevitable once the free movement of labour went hand in hand with attacks on organised labour, the right to strike, the attacks on sectoral bargain-

ing and falling union density and coverage.”

Mr Douglas said the Left had to challenge beliefs regarded as “fundamental rights” which were nothing but “economic drivers” for the neo-liberal agenda – these included the free movement of capital, labour, services and goods.

Added to this, “the fourth industrial revolution is upon us” with the advent of artificial intelligence and robotics.

He suggested that the Left were ill prepared for this: “Capitalism is either evolving to a new phase or consuming itself. We progressives must try and shape a future and society from an economy in turmoil.”

In conclusion, Mr Douglas warned that if the disease of social dumping was not tackled “the future of work as we know it will no longer be an option for millions of EU citizens and that work that remains may will be precarious or in the gig economy world”.

“Work will not pay and this will have serious consequences for society. We must shape this fourth industrial revolution for workers, for citizens and for a decent society.”



Thomas Pringle

IN MY VIEW...

A Universal Basic Income could address the need for income security

SOCIAL Justice Ireland recently held an impactful conference on the notion of a Universal Basic Income. The idea is that each individual would receive a payment from the State, sufficient enough for anyone to live a frugal but decent lifestyle.

It wouldn’t be means tested and would apply equally to all people and wouldn’t be taken away if you earned above the amount given.

It’s an idea that struck me as something familiar and altogether relevant in an age of changing work norms and increasing calls for greater recognition of equal pay for equal work.

You might ask how the introduction of a basic income would benefit workers in the retail sector but the idea ties in with the notion that adequate income, meaningful work and real participation should be seen as a birth right.

It can come in many forms: partial introduction or given to a particular group of people (ie: carers). While details about its implementation and consequences remain unclear, we can safely assume that the introduction of some form of basic income could positively impact on workers here in Ireland, particularly those on low incomes.

‘Working poor’

For one, the introduction could offer workers more bargaining power in the labour market by providing basic security for those workers. As the current tax and social welfare system stands, more people are finding themselves in poverty despite having a job, often referred to as the ‘working poor’.

A basic income would go a long way towards addressing this failure, while holding those in power to account for the eroding working conditions which increase the threat of poverty on workers.

A basic income would help people to address the growing risks they face in the labour market, especially as an increasing number of jobs are becoming automated.

An often spoken about fear is that people may be forced to accept lower paid jobs as a result which is why it’s crucial that the Government anticipates this transition through the introduction of some semblance of a basic income.

It would also give workers the ability to reject low-paying and insecure jobs and gives the individual a freedom to choose the work they find most fulfilling. Workers could decide to take up unpaid work such as caring for children or the elderly without fear of the threat of poverty, a recognition of the role unpaid workers play in our society.

It’s a conversation more of us will be talking about in the future, a conversation which the Government needs to start listening to now.

Thomas Pringle is Independent TD for Donegal



Picture: Sinn Féin (CC BY 2.0)

THE publication of the report by the 'Expert Commission' on water has vindicated everything the Right2Water campaign has been saying for almost three years. Water should be paid for through general taxation which is the most socially equitable, economically beneficial and environmentally sound methods of funding the service.

Frustratingly, had an arrogant government and media listened to our campaign and to people in communities across this country, we would not have wasted €1 billion on water meters and setting up Irish Water as a commercial entity – enough to build a hospital in Ireland.

Even Engineers Ireland warned the Government back in 2010 that bringing in water charges would mean "spending €1bn of money we don't have on something we don't need."

The key findings of the report include:

1 That Irish people already pay for their water through taxation and that "water funded through general taxation is not free but paid for by the taxpayer."

2 Access to adequate clean water for living requirements should not be determined by affordability.

3 A referendum is necessary to protect our public water system from privatisation.

4 Ireland has one of the highest rates of water availability in the world, with water availability per person four times higher than France and 50 times higher than Israel.

5 "The Expert Commission has not seen any evidence that Ireland has particularly high levels of domestic water usage" and Irish people are at the 'lower end of the spectrum' when it comes to comparing water usage among other European countries.



David Gibney

6 Irish people use between 15%-25% less water than the UK, where water charges have been in place since 1989.

7 Water charges do not result in water conservation unless they include education and information. Therefore, it can be established that it is education and information that results in water conservation, not charges.

8 Commercial companies are not paying their water bills, with almost half refusing to pay. Ensuring a comprehensive commercial water charges regime should reduce dependence on general taxation.

9 There are 'no abstraction charges' for our natural spring water on private companies like Britvic (Ballygowan) who pay nothing when bottling our natural spring water for profit. This should be 'addressed.'

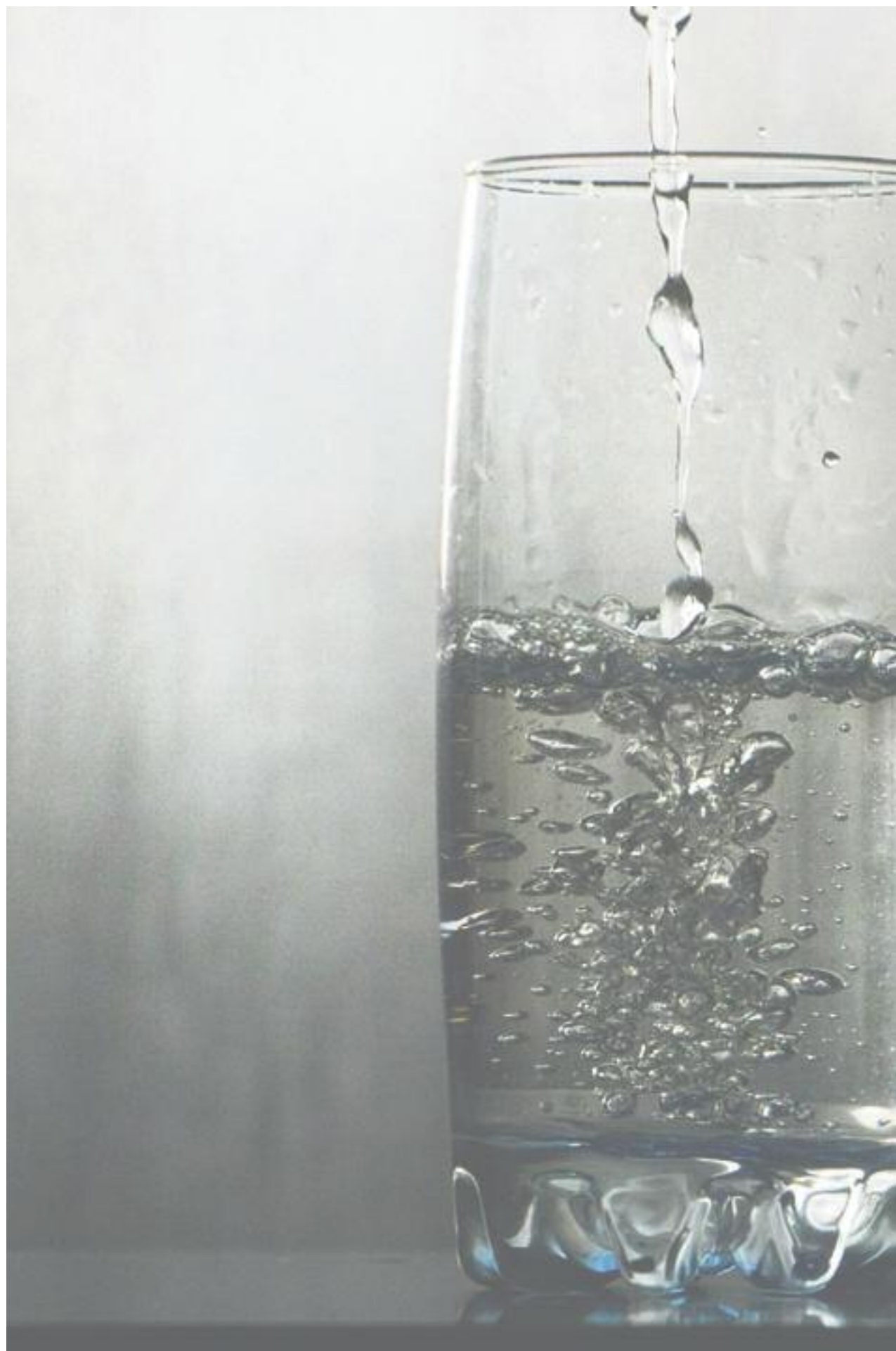
10 Metering should only be done on an optional basis.

11 Group schemes should have an allowance in order to create equity.

12 There is a need for investment of €5.5bn in our infrastructure by 2021.

13 The water charges regime does not have political support or popular acceptance.

14 Flat rate charges are regressive and do not address the issue of conservation. Also, a water charge added to a property tax leads to "unfairness in the system."



15 The water charges regime was intended to reduce household consumption of water by a mere 6%, yet the system leaks 41% of all treated water. The best way to reduce waste is to fix the leaks.

16 "While considerable weight must be given to the opinion of the European Commission, the definitive interpretation of European law is a matter for the Court of Justice of the European Union."

Borrowings?

Importantly, the Commission states that because the funding of domestic water should come from general tax-

ation in public ownership, it will no longer achieve the 'off balance sheet' exercise. This will reduce or potentially eliminate the need for 'borrowing' that inevitably leads to debt and the servicing of that debt by households – diverting money directly into the financial services sector instead of water infrastructure.

Leakages

The report says that there are 7% of households using six times more water than the average household, although Irish Water have indicated that customer-side leaks contribute to this anomaly. However, it is esti-



Right2Water campaign claims 'hold water' according to new Expert Commission report

tial that water charges are abolished outright.

Funding?

In addressing the funding of water services, the Commission suggests that the funding requirements which were to be allocated through domestic water charges are now made through the "exchequer rather than by householders directly."

The Government and the previous government must take responsibility for the leakages and deteriorated infrastructure that Irish people currently have to rely on.

In the last three budgets alone, tax cuts of €2.9 billion have been implemented. The beneficiaries of those tax cuts are the top 20% of earners as well as employers. In ensuring our water system is fit for purpose, the Government should immediately:

1 Cease all cuts to progressive taxation.

2 Stop the metering programme and wasting money on the vanity project that is Irish Water.

3 Increase taxation revenue by implementing the Fiscal Framework Document set out by the Right2Water Trade Unions in 2015 – which could raise up to €10 billion. This would not only fix and upgrade the water infrastructure, but could also address our housing and homelessness crisis, along with our healthcare, education and other underfunded public services.

Media failure

It is felt that much of Irish media failed in their duty to facilitate an honest and democratic debate about Government's water policy.

While a number of trade unions, political representatives and community groups were attempting to raise real and valid issues about water charges and the implications locally, nationally and internationally, a compliant media refused to accept the arguments put forward and even refused to allow a debate to ensue.

Even now, faced with all the evidence which shows that Ireland is a water-rich country and that Irish people do not waste water, many media outlets refuse to accept the fact that water charges are economically inefficient, environmentally unsound and socially destructive.

Furthermore, protesters were and continue to be demonised and vilified for their stance on water charges, yet this report now vindicates what they have said all along: that paying for water through progressive general taxation is the fairest and most equitable method possible.

As Maude Barlow, environmentalist and expert on water from the Blue Planet Project and the Council of Canadians, said: "The Irish system of paying for water and sanitation services through progressive taxation and non-domestic user fees is an exemplary model of fair, equitable and sustainable service delivery for the entire world."

Right2Water remains committed to its stated objective of the abolition of water charges and Irish Water.

Dave Gibney is Right2Water coordinator

● Water Commission report: Right2Water campaign claims are... VINDICATED!

Picture: Jaidi Amal (CC BY 2.0)

Picture: People's Social Forum; Ben Powless (CC BY 2.0)

mated that up to 97% of leaks do not come from the household side of the infrastructure and the report states "it should be noted that water leaks waste not only water but also energy and public money." Therefore, it makes sense to divert all money from the domestic metering programme towards a district metering programme as recommended in the report.

Water charges

The Expert Commission has suggested that where water is used at a level above what is necessary for normal domestic purposes, that the user

should pay for this through tariffs. The suggestion is that an allowance is determined and this allowance could be "regularly reviewed and, if necessary, adjusted to reflect changes in water use patterns in Ireland."

As stated earlier, the evidence shows Irish people are not profligate with their water and in fact use less water than almost any other country in Europe despite having more water available to us.

There are also very serious concerns about any allowances being eroded over time, like bin charges. Therefore, continuing an expensive water metering programme with the

added costs of highly-paid consultants, advertising, postage, call centres and other outlays, for no conservation benefit would be an extraordinary waste of valuable resources, costing up to €300m per year and returning potentially nothing.

The Government and the Oireachtas sub-committee should accept the will of the electorate – two-thirds of whom voted for parties and individuals who promised abolition. This is now also backed up by an *Irish Times* MRBI poll which also reveals that two-thirds of the population want to scrap the charges.

With all of this in mind, it is essen-

Environmentalism Maude Barlow: Irish model of paying for water through general taxation is 'an exemplary model'



Trade unionists from across Europe, including David Gibney from Mandate, attended the event in Brussels

Picture: Eddie Whyte

● 'Solidarity with Palestine' event Conference hears of harsh reality of life under occupation...

"We, representatives of Palestinian civil society, call upon international civil society organizations and people of conscience all over the world to impose broad boycotts and implement divestment initiatives against Israel, similar to those applied to South Africa in the apartheid era. We appeal to you to pressure your government to impose embargoes and sanctions against Israel for the sake of justice and genuine peace."

Palestinian Civil Society Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions, (BDS) 2005

Want to be more involved?
www.bds-movement.net

BDS
MOVEMENT
www.bds-movement.net

The purpose of this campaign is to pressure Israeli state-sponsored institutions to adhere to international law, basic human rights, and democratic principles as a condition for just and equitable social relations. ... We stand with Palestinians, an increasing number of Jews, and other human rights activists all over the world in condemning the flagrant injustices of the Israeli occupation.

IPSC
IRELAND
PALESTINE
SOLIDARITY
CAMPAIGN
WWW.IPSC.IE

Always CHECK the country of origin or the Brand name. If in doubt ask the store personnel.

How to avoid Israeli produce

2004 the barcode that designates an Israeli company, but it is not a guarantee of where an item was produced. Always look for a product's country of origin.

Additional information
454g e
\$ 1.45 (€ 0.55) 18
Produced in Israel by T. S. Shalev Ltd. (Israel) Ltd. (Tel Aviv, Israel)



Nafel it says Cyprus, but it is an Israeli brand



Below are some of the Israeli brands to avoid.



All Jaffa products, regardless of the stated country of origin, e.g. Spain, South Africa, should be boycotted. Jaffa is an Israeli Brand licensed to others.

The theft of Palestinian land by Israel in use for growing peppers for export to Europe is increasing.



Israel food company that is a large supplier of meat-substitute products

Below, are some non-food brands and products to avoid

Plastics

Garden furniture, Keter plastic garden furniture, sheds and storage, sold in such outlets as Argos, Wickes, B&Q, and Aldi's Homecare are manufactured in the illegal settlement of Ariel, 25 km east of Tel Aviv.



Toys



Cosmetics



Diamonds

The majority of diamonds sold are likely to have been processed in Israel. These help fund the illegal occupation and crimes against humanity. Israeli diamonds are Blood Diamonds. If the Jeweller can't guarantee it's not from Israel - don't have it on your conscience. For more information: <http://www.bds-movement.net/boycott>

Others



By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

AT the inaugural Trade Union 'Solidarity with Palestine' conference in Brussels in November, delegates were given a brief insight into the harsh realities facing Palestinians by workers and trade unionists.

Each participant was urged to bring back home a message to workers in their countries about what they can do to break the EU's complicity with Israeli violations of international law.

Ghada Ghalyoun from the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions opened her speech by stating: "I don't want to talk to you about the thousands killed by Israeli military or the communities who continue to be separated by the wall, I want to talk to you about the occupation of our land, our natural resources, our culture."

While the impacts of Israeli bombardments every few years gain massive media attention, naturally from the murder and maiming of innocent civilians, including thousands of children, not much focus is ever given to the every-day life of Palestinians under illegal occupation by any media outlet.

Once the bombs stop, the media moves on to the next story, and that's why conferences such as that held in Brussels are important. We get to hear from people who live under occupation and oppression every day.

"We need your help to end the suffering of our people, our workers, our unions," Ghada said. "Your solidarity is a badge of honour, wear it with honour."

She explained how there is now a 42% unemployment rate in Gaza and this has led to pressure on workers who are crossing into illegally occupied territories in search of work.

Ghada told the conference: "There are three types of workers - 1. Those who have legal permits to work in Israeli terri-

tory - of which there are between 38,000 and 42,000. Only 2,500 are women; 2. 40,000 are illegal workers without permits or permission and are smuggled into illegal settlement areas where they are used and abused and 3. 35,000 workers inside the illegal settlements."

She continued: "It is a daily ordeal to get to work, with long delays at checkpoints where workers are routinely humiliated by body searches and other actions by guards. The provocations are getting worse. Infrastructure is destroyed, the illegal settlements continue to grow and land and resources are stolen, and then there is the wall that further isolates people."

And Palestinians face mass exploitation should they manage to find work.

"One in three workers are illegal and have no permit or license," Ghada pointed out. "This means as a labourer they have no protections."

Dangerous jobs

In theory, Palestinian workers have the same rights as their Israeli counterparts but in reality they are exploited and discriminated against on a daily basis. They are often used for the most dangerous jobs.

Muhammad Bleidi, from New Unions, said: "They are confiscating our land and even our water."

He added: "We are talking about the working class in Palestine, the strongest class, and we need to stick together. When you buy or supply Israeli goods, you are helping them to kill our children."

Mr Bleidi explained how we are all facing the same struggle in different ways.

"Our struggle is to get rid of capitalism, fight against privatisation and resist occupation. We need everyone to support the Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) campaign if we are to stop Israeli colonialism."

Free-market approach led to housing crisis

“It’s a great market. We’ve never seen rental increases like this in any jurisdiction that we’re aware of.” – the words of David Ehrlich, CEO of Ireland’s largest landlord, Ires Reit.

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

IN RESPONSE to the escalating rent crisis Mandate, along with our partner trade unions, the Civil and Public Services Union (CPSU) Communications’ Workers Union (CWU), Financial Services Union (FSU) IMPACT, SIPTU and UNITE as well as online campaign group Uplift, launched the ‘Secure Rents’ campaign in October 2016.

The campaign is calling on Minister Simon Coveney to regulate increases by linking rents to the Consumer Price Index, as well as revoking the right of landlords to evict tenants for the purpose of sale, and to move from current four-year leases to indefinite

lease terms. Speaking at the launch of the campaign Mandate General Secretary John Douglas told *Shopfloor*: “The free-market approach to housing and accommodation by successive governments has led directly to the crisis we’re seeing in housing and in the wider economy.

“It has also exacerbated poverty and deprivation levels. If a low-paid worker is spending up to 60% of their income on putting a roof over their head, it means they won’t have enough to spend on clothing, food or other necessities.”

Mr Douglas pointed out that homelessness and the housing crisis doesn’t just happen overnight.

“It takes decades of neglect and negative political policies to have a housing crisis like we have today. There are more than 6,000 people homeless including 4,283 adults and

2,426 children – most of whom are in emergency accommodation,” said Mr Douglas.

“The demands made by the Secure Rents campaign would go some way towards preventing excessive rent increases in the future, which are a key reason homelessness occurs.”

Boom years

Rents have increased by 30% nationally over the last five years and 40% in Dublin – with Dublin rents now more than 10% higher than the boom years. If the trend continues, renters are most certainly looking at an even worse housing crisis in the coming months and years.

Joe O’Connor, from IMPACT said: “After years of excessive rent increases, thousands of workers, students, parents, and children are struggling to keep a roof over their heads due to unaffordable rents. Many more have seen their living standards and disposable in-

come cut to the bone.” He continued: “Without Government intervention, the situation is set to get a lot worse. People are at the end of what they can cope with.”

To kick-start the campaign, a calculator was launched which allows tenants to calculate how much rent they are likely to pay in five years time based on what they are currently paying and projected future increases. You can see that at www.securerents.com.

Emily Duffy, a campaigner with Uplift, added: “Simon Coveney has the power to turn thousands of individuals’ and families’ lives around by protecting them from unfair rent increases and guaranteeing them security in their homes. Tenants are being blackmailed into paying rents they can’t afford. This campaign will provide thousands of tenants who feel powerless to join forces and take action together.”

IN MY VIEW...

They’re favouring developers over working people...

IN THE most recent Budget the Government gave a boost to property developers by putting in place a ‘first time buyers’ grant’. This led to overnight increased prices of new houses – which will now be pocketed by the big property developers, a la Celtic Tiger era.

Now the Government is giving a boost to landlords – and a growing number of them are vulnerable funds.

For three weeks the Government had a ‘consultation’ phase with stakeholders in the rental sector. This included trade unions, renters, legal experts, landlords, etc.

That phase closed to submissions on Monday, November 7 and three days later, on November 10, Minister Simon Coveney had announced he wasn’t going to implement ‘Secure Rents’ – which was what the vast majority

of people wanted. Instead, within two days of that initial announcement of no ‘secure rents’, he said that he was going to give rent subsidies to people earning under €55,000.

So much for a consultation phase when your priorities and policy plan had already been predetermined!

Now, if you’re a landlord, and you know your tenant now gets a rent subsidy, increasing their disposable income in a time of limited housing supply, what are you going to do? Up the price is what!

Rents have gone up by 40% in Dublin over the last five years and 30% nationally, while at the same time the Consumer Price Index has only gone up by 2%.

Rents are expected to go up by another 25% over the next two years, according to a recent Savills report. Although that was before the Minister announced his boon



M&S Galway shop steward Eoghan Fox, Organiser Eoin Griffin, Industrial Officer Dave Miskell & Pat Hardiman of Galway Council of Trade Unions

for landlords, so you can expect even higher rents if the Government’s plan goes ahead.

The ‘Secure Rents’ campaign run by Mandate and a number of other organisations is calling for measures already implemented in other countries which would protect people from continued rent increases and stop evictions.

If you think this doesn’t effect you because you have a mortgage, think again! For every penny that’s lost to a landlord rent hike, it’s money taken out of the local economy. It’s money that would be

spent in shops, bars and restaurants, which would support jobs, which, in turn, provides a reduction in social welfare payments and a corresponding increase in revenue for government allowing us to invest in housing, education, healthcare, transport, etc.

On Wednesday, November 30, a Bill that would have vindicated the ‘Secure Rents’ campaign by restricting rent increases and stopping eviction was debated in Dail Eireann. The Bill was moved by Sinn Féin and signed by the Labour Party, Independents4Change,

AAA/PBP, the Social Democrats and the Green Party. The only representatives opposed to the ‘Secure Rents’ proposals were the government parties of Fine Gael and the Independent Alliance, along with Fianna Fail.

It appears that the Government’s priority is developers and landlords over ordinary working people.

We have to fight back and make sure that changes or we’re about to experience and even bigger housing and homelessness crisis.

The conference heard a number of inspirational stories. Eddie Whyte, originally from Ireland but now working for Fagforbundet, a public sector trade union in Norway, told delegates: “Norway is now the one of the only countries in the world that doesn’t have G4S in it.”

G4S is the largest private security firm in the world and it has contracts with the Israeli government to run prisons. The pressure from the BDS campaign around the world has led to the company announcing it will par-

tially sell its Israeli business – and much of that pressure came from Norwegians.

Another company targeted by the BDS campaign is Veolia, the multinational transport and water company which is installing water meters in Ireland and owns the Luas transport system in Dublin.

Veolia has now pulled out of Israel and is one of the biggest successes of the BDS campaign to date.

Dexia, a Belgian bank, also felt the pressure of the BDS campaign and

announced it was to sell its 65% stake in Dexia-Israel. Ireland’s largest multinational, CRH, which trades in cement also divested from Israel earlier this year following a strong campaign by BDS.

One of the biggest concerns raised by Palestinians at the conference was over water. Jerusalem receives as much rain as Paris or Berlin, but Israel manipulates this.

During the heatwave in June 2016, Israel’s Mekorot water company drastically cut the water supplied to

Palestinians. As a result, factories were shut down, gardens and plant nurseries were ruined and animals died of thirst or were sold to farmers outside the affected areas.

“How can we live correctly when they control our water?” asked one participant at the conference.

Patricia McKeown from ICTU told the conference: “If we want to put a peace process on the Palestinian agenda, it will be different to Colombia. There are few governments that have shown commitment to peace

and by remaining silent it is actually agreeing with what is happening in Palestine: an apartheid regime, constant humiliation and violation of human rights.”

All of the Palestinian workers and trade unionists present asked that members of trade unions support the calls from Palestine for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) of Israeli goods and services.

You can find out more at www.bdsmovement.net

LOOKING GOOD FOR THE ONE PERCENT



Michael Taft

THE 1 percent serves as an excellent symbol of actually existing capitalism. Examining the inequalities between households gives an insight into the level of solidarity within a country. So let's take a look at how those at the top of the pyramid – the 1 percent – are doing these days.

A standard measurement is by ratio. Here we see the ratio of the income of the top 1 percent to the top cut-off point of the first decile. [SEE FIG 1]

Though Ireland is not the worst – that is reserved for the poorer Mediterranean countries and France (this might help explain the rise of the National Front) – we're still in the top half of the table. We're slightly ahead of the mean-average of the EU-15, but much higher than our peer groups: Northern and Central European economies (NCEE excluding the Mediterranean countries) and other small open economies (Other SOE).

Ireland had very high levels of inequality towards the end of the boom period. The 1 percent took a hit with the crash given their greater reliance on property and speculative activity and this resulted in falling inequality. Not because low income groups saw their income rise. It was just that their income fell slower than the 1 percent.

It's been quite a roller-coaster for the ol' 1 percent in Ireland. In 2006, they had the highest level of income in the EU-15 bar Luxembourg. But by 2012, they had experienced a fall of 22 percent. However, though they haven't climbed back to their dizzying pre-crash levels, in the last two years their income has grown faster than any other EU-15 country with a growth rate of 13 percent compared to an EU-15 average of 3 percent. [SEE FIG 2]

Even after the big recession hit, the Irish 1 percent still rank high in the



Picture: The Great 8 (CC BY 2.0)

FIG 1 Ratio of top 1% to bottom 10%

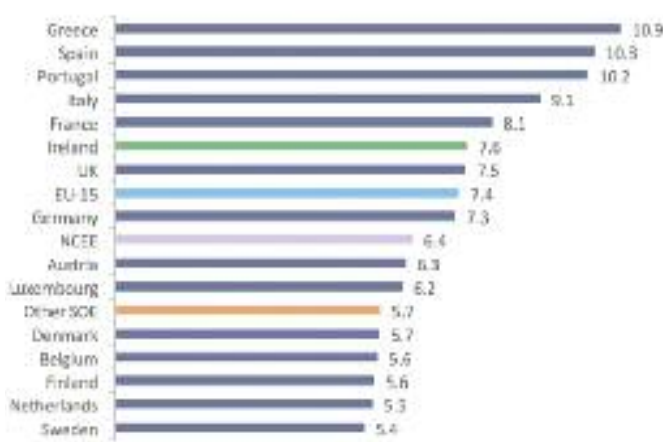


FIG 2 99% percentile income at top cut-off point – 2014 (€ equivalised)



EU-15 tables. So what's driving this new spate of inequality? It comes from a number of sources. First, the income at the higher end is being driven by self-employed and capital income, combined with tax cuts (the Government's proposal to cut inheritance gain will be a nice booster to the higher end).

Second, at the other end, social protection payments have over this period been either cut or frozen.

Third – and this is not appreciated in the debate – income from work for most people has been sluggish. People in the public sector will know all about this. However, in many sectors and occupations in the private sector, wage growth has been sluggish.

We can't put this down to lack of profits. For instance, profits in the hospitality sector are nearly 40 percent higher than they were prior to the crash. The problem for so many, especially in the domestic-focused sectors, is the weak bargaining power of labour. Low union membership, lack of collective bargaining; remember the Joint Labour Committees where were raised up by the last government after the High Court struck them down? Employers are boycotting the hospitality and retail JLCs. Workers in these sectors have little power to raise their wages.

So here's the story: prior to the crash Ireland was highly unequal with the top 1 percent doing better than almost any other 1 percent in Europe. In the recession they took a hit. This decline has been reversed, inequality is growing again and the income of the Irish 1 percent is growing faster than anywhere else in the EU-15.

Yes, the 1 percent are doing alright.

Michael Taft is a research officer with Unite the Union check out www.notesonthefront.typepad.com

NOTE: the tables present household income in 'equivalised' terms. This accounts for the size of the household (adults, children). In the Eurostat tables, the income level is based on the top cut-off point. For instance, for the bottom 10 percent, the top cut-off point is that income point in which people rise to the next decile. For the top 1 percent, this is the income at which they enter that top decile.



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Course Title	Course Dates	Duration	Location	Closing date
Union Representative Introductory	January 16/17/18	3 days	OTC Dublin	28/11/2016
Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5	January 23/24/25	3 days	OTC Dublin	01/12/2016
Union Representative Advanced Senior	January 30/31 February 1	3 days	OTC Dublin	05/12/2016
Union Representative Introductory	February 6/7/8	3 days	OTC Dublin	19/12/2016
Union Representative Introductory	February 13/14/15	3 days	Portlaoise	22/12/2016
Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5	February 20/21/22	3 days	OTC Dublin	03/01/2017
Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5	February 27/28/1 March	3 days	Cork	09/01/2017
Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5	March 6/7/8	3 days	OTC Dublin	16/01/2017
Union Representative Introductory	March 20/21/22	3 days	OTC Dublin	30/01/2017
Union Representative Advanced Senior	March 27/28/29	3 days	OTC Dublin	06/02/2017
Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5	April 3/4/5	3 days	Athlone	13/02/2017
Union Representative Introductory	April 24/25/26	3 days	Mullingar	06/03/2017
Training & Development 2	May 8/9/10/11/12	5 days	OTC Dublin	20/03/2017
Union Representative Introductory	May 15/16/17	3 days	OTC Dublin	27/03/2017
Safety Representation for Elected Reps Fetac 5	May 22/23/24/25/26	5 days	OTC Dublin	03/04/2017
Union Representative Introductory	May 29/30/31	3 days	Waterford	10/04/2017
Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5	June 12/13/14	3 days	OTC Dublin	24/04/2017
Equality Course	June 20th	1 day	OTC Dublin	02/05/2017
Union Representative Advanced Senior	June 26/27/28	3 days	OTC Dublin	08/05/2017
Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5	September 11/12/13	3 days	Galway	24/07/2017
Union Representative Introductory	September 18/19/20	3 days	OTC Dublin	31/07/2017
Union Representative Introductory	September 25/26/27	3 days	Cork	07/08/2017
Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5	October 17/18/19	3 days	OTC Dublin	18/19/2018
Safety Representation for Elected Reps QQI 5	October 2/3/4/5/6	5 days	OTC Dublin	14/08/2017
Training & Development 1	October 9/10/11/12/13	5 days	OTC Dublin	21/08/2017
Union Representative Introductory	October 16/17/18	3 days	OTC Dublin	28/08/2017
Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5	November 6/7/8	3 days	OTC Dublin	18/09/2017
Union Representative Advanced Senior	November 13/14/15	3 days	OTC Dublin	25/09/2017
Union Representative Introductory	November 20/21/22	3 days	OTC Dublin	02/10/2017

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.

TRAINING

Five days that were life-changing for me



IN MY VIEW...

Media ownership – time to show some backbone

IN ANY healthy democracy there should be an open and diverse media. A media that holds those in powerful positions to account. One that helps to shape the public discourse. That seeks to find the truth and ensure the public have access to that truth.

In March 2016, an EU-funded report published by the European Centre for Media Pluralism and Media Freedom found that Ireland was in the 'high risk' category for concentration of media ownership. This was the first time Ireland's media ownership was assessed alongside 18 other EU countries.

A legal report that I commissioned on the Concentration of Media Ownership in Ireland has found that we have one of the most concentrated media markets of any democracy. With the two most controlling entities being the national State Broadcaster, RTE, and one individual businessman, Denis O'Brien, in the private media sphere.

O'Brien enjoys a dominant position in the print sector and a significant position in the commercial radio sector. The print arm of his media portfolio, Independent News & Media is currently trying to swallow up another seven regional newspapers. A decision to allow this merger is currently in the hands of the Minister for Communications, Denis Naughten.

Due to a unique set of circumstances in Ireland we have effectively created a perfect storm that threatens news plurality and the media's ability to be the sword arm of democracy.

In December 2014, the Irish Government brought forward media merger guidelines as part of the Competition and Consumer Protection Act. The problem is that by bringing forward weak guidelines with no retrospective powers, they not only failed to address the problem but they actually made it worse.

The new media merger rules copper-fastened the majority hold of O'Brien while simultaneously setting up new thresholds and barriers for anyone seeking to challenge his position.

Then add to the mix, the fact that Denis O'Brien is a prolific businessman with many business interests and we start to see the potential problems.

A study carried out by Dr Flynn of DCU found that media ownership can and does have a major influence on tone and content.

In his study of 140 articles it found that coverage of the business interests of this media tycoon was less likely to be negative in his own publications and was more likely to focus on other individuals.

This then places a greater onus on other media outlets including the national broadcaster to bridge the gap

and provide the much-needed balance.

However, this is where the final pieces of the nightmare media jigsaw come together. Mr O'Brien is a 'serial litigator' who, since 2010 has taken out 12 cases against media organisations alone. In 2012, Transparency International Ireland expressed their concerns about the legal threats against journalists with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders.

The litigious situation is further compounded by the fact that Ireland has deeply flawed defamation laws which are out of kilter with the rest of the EU. Many publications will simply choose not to run a story for fear of large settlements and long dragged out court proceedings.

It is not just media outlets that are afraid. Politicians seem to balk at the thought of effectively dealing with the issue. It seems not much has changed in Irish politics since 1973 when the late Minister Justin Keating pointed out that "No politician is willing to pick a fight with a newspaper owner".

This is simply not good enough. Decent, civic-minded politicians should have nothing to fear from a robust free media, in fact they should embrace it.

Freedom of expression

It is not OK for politicians to hide behind so called property rights of the Constitution. Those elected to public office – including myself – have an obligation to balance those property rights with the constitutional rights to freedom of expression and freedom of the organs of public opinion.

My legal report argues that there is no such bar under Irish Constitutional law, European Court of Human Rights or EU law. On the contrary, it argues that urgent action is required in order for Ireland to fulfil its legal obligations.

The NUJ have called for a multi-disciplinary Commission of Inquiry to look at the media landscape in Ireland, I believe it is time that we had that Commission.

Minister for Communications, Denis Naughten should stop the proposed merger deal with INM and instead be the politician courageous enough to take on the thorny issue of media ownership once and for all.

Politicians of every party and none should come together to support the minister in this challenge. The ball is now in the court of all Irish politicians to show that they have the political mettle and backbone that is required to take on those who seek to stifle debate.

Lynn Boylan is Sinn Féin MEP for Dublin

By Keith Leonard
Tesco, Castlebar

I GOT the call from my official to say I had been put forward for a course in October in Dublin that would run over five days. Later the letter arrived stating when and where the course would take place. I was delighted and the date of the course crept up on me very quickly. On October 16th I was on my way to Dublin. Only two weeks before I had been on the same train to go to the All Ireland Final ... but we won't dwell on that!

Day 1 – Monday morning arrived and I made my way into the training room. Wow, what a fabulous place! I was greeted with a warm, friendly smile by Amanda, whom I had spoken to on the phone many times but had never met until that day. Some 20 minutes passed and a few others started to arrive. We were directed into the training room, aptly called "the Connolly Room", very fitting given the year we are in I thought.

We were welcomed by course tutor Margaret Nolan. As she introduced herself I thought to myself, 'This woman is highly educated – I won't get away with much!' She asked us to introduce ourselves, I was delighted to be in the room with Cian Keogh (TK Maxx), Brian Fogarty (SuperValu, Bray), Betty McGorman (Debenhams, Henry St) and Tonya Whelan (Tesco, Wexford). I immediately thought, 'Great – all from retail and all with a wealth of experience'.

Margaret passed out the paper work and said we had three assignments to finish, two by Friday and one by the first week in November. She then places a BIG book in front of us and said, "Use this, it will help you during the week and going forward." My instant thought was assignments, book, etc.... I'd never done an assignment before, never mind read a book of this size and thought I'll get the next train west – this is not for me.

Margaret then informed us that by Thursday we would have to deliver a 20-minute training session, which was one part of the assignment and it would be recorded and played back to us on Friday for evaluation. Oh God, that is when the nerves really started to hop – all I could think of was I needed a brandy!

As the day passed I began to relax



more and felt more comfortable especially with all the others in the room. By the end of the day I felt at home and looking forward to the next day.

Day 2 – Things were coming together on the Tuesday morning and Margaret broke things down in down in plain English and it got easier. I even thought to myself 'Maybe I can do this'. It made me believe in myself.

Day 3 – This was a very intense day so much so that I was physically and mentally exhausted. I couldn't even drink a third pint in the evening! But looking back I can understand now why it was so intense because Thursday was the day to deliver our training session for the class. The nerves were building...

Day 4 – D-Day had arrived. You could feel the nerves as you entered the room that morning, but Margaret assured us all we would be fine. We were given a few hours to put it all together and with the help from Margaret and all the support we were giving each other we got it all ready. We broke up for lunch and after that we would become movie stars as our

training was to be filmed. With lunch over, we all go back and I asked the group if I could go first as my nerves were at me. I felt like a pack of Tic Tacs, everything was shaking and they graciously let me go first. I started to deliver what I had prepared and after a couple of minutes it actually began to flow, even though we were being filmed it didn't affect me. Margaret was sitting there as if she was one of the group, the camera wasn't an issue as I ploughed on through the presentation, which seemed like it went on for ever but was coming to a finish.

Working with the other four people all week, I felt I had known them for ever. We all got on so well which was a bonus. When I finished my presentation with two small words "thank you". I got a huge round of applause and I felt the weight of the world had just been lifted off my shoulders. One by one each of the guys delivered their presentations, all different but all excellent, you could feel the relief in the room when we had all finished. We gave feedback to each other – four days before we hardly knew each other and now we were a very close group.

Margaret let us finish up 30 minutes early as we had all done so well but reminded us that all would be played back in the morning. We left and headed back to the hotel for a drink or two – we'll say no more about that!

Day 5 – Friday came and we all shuffled into the training room, some a bit peaky and the odd one didn't even brush their hair! One by one each session was replayed and it was so brilliant to watch how much we had grown in the few days.

I knew we were coming to the end of the day and I thought that though we would all be heading of in different directions that day, I was sure we would remain friends for life.

Putting it all together, for me, it was a life-changing course, going in nervous and not knowing what to expect and leaving a person who had gained confidence and self-belief. I would strongly recommend that if you get the chance to take on a course like this that you avail of the opportunity.

Nothing is impossible – if I can do it, anyone can.

“When I finished my presentation with two small words “thank you”. I got a huge round of applause and I felt the weight of the world had just been lifted off my shoulders”



**Mandate Organising and Training Centre,
Distillery House, Distillery Road, Dublin 3**

Tel: (01) 836 9699 Email: mandateotc@mandate.ie

TRAINING

Four essential steps to take...

By Brian Fogarty

Shop steward, SuperValu, Bray

REPRESENT, PROMOTE, ORGANISE, TRAIN... these are the four steps every trade union activist – especially young activists like myself – should take...

I recently attended Mandate's Training & Development course held in our magnificent training centre and I have to say it's the best training course I have ever been on.

The course objective is to equip ac-

tivists who have completed shop steward training with the skills to be able to deliver training sessions as well as understand training evaluation and equality in the workplace.

My understanding of why and how we do training has completely changed. This course gives participants an opportunity to gain FETAC Level 6 accreditation but it also offers so much more than that...

Once completed learners will have

the skills required to deliver training sessions within Mandate or their own workplaces. I would highly recommend this course as well as all the other training courses available to Mandate members.

Our union offers courses ranging from shop steward and house committee training to evening classes in computer skills.

It's YOUR union, so why not get involved in it...



Training & Development October 2016 – standing left to right: Cian Keogh (T K Maxx, Arklow), Betty McGorman (formerly Debenhams, Henry St), Margaret Nolan (tutor); seated from left: Tonya Whelan (NEC, formerly Tesco, Wexford), Keith Leonard (Tesco, Castlebar), and Brian Fogarty (NEC, SuperValu, Bray)

Learning is a lifelong process – enjoy it

By Tonya Whelan

Mandate NEC member

I WANT to tell members about the excellent training facilities and free courses that Mandate have on offer which are open to every member – not just shop stewards. Mandate offers a whole host of training courses including Computers and Personnel Development.

I particularly want our older members to avail of these courses as we all know the changing environment we find ourselves in, particularly in the retail sector. I know we feel that we don't have the time to avail of training but I have learnt that it is so important to keep yourself upskilled.

I was one of those people who didn't attend courses then I suddenly found myself made redundant. Although we all have excellent retail skills they just aren't enough, especially in the current market. It is so important to have other skills particularly computer skills.

I didn't realise this until I was I was doing out my CV – only then did I re-

“Not only has the course giving me a new skill that can be added to my CV to help open up a whole new world of employment, this learning experience has given me new lifelong friends and a network of people”

alise how institutionalised I was for so long. So, I told myself I need to upskill as soon as possible. I then enrolled in a Microsoft Office course which I paid for myself.

I found the new way of learning difficult but I stuck with it. I found my confidence growing every day. I am currently working on achieving a diploma for this course. I have found

a new passion and that is to learn more new skills. It is a pity that I did not do this training through Mandate's free training courses.

Recently when an opportunity came from the Mandate Training Centre to do one of their courses, I jumped at it. It was a very intensive course but most enjoyable. I was doing the course with other people with the same needs and we all bonded very well. Not only has the course giving me a new skill that can be added to my CV to help open up a whole new world of employment, this learning experience has given me new lifelong friends and a network of people from all walks of life.

I urge everyone to upskill and take advantage of Mandate's excellent training facilities and free training courses.

Just a little thought for everyone – learning is a lifelong process, so enjoy it.

Tonya Whelan, who has been a Mandate member for 25 years, was a Tesco shop steward in Wexford for 15 years.



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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

Trade Development (Full & Part-Time) Training Programmes 2016/17

FULL-TIME PROGRAMME:

DT417: BSc (Honours) degree in Bar Studies – Management & Entrepreneurship

Full details go to:

www.dit.ie/study/undergraduate/programmes/dt417

PART-TIME PROGRAMMES (CPDs)

Bar and Beverage Operations Studies 1 (Course Code TFBO 1024)

This programme enables the learner to develop a deeper understanding of bartending for the licensed and hospitality industries. It is in this context that this 12 week part-time course will help prepare candidates (or apprentices) for future roles as bartenders.

Class Day/Time: Thursdays 9am to 1pm or 2pm to 6pm

(12 Weeks: Starting 15th September 2016)

Room 107 – D.I.T, Training Bar, Marlborough Street, Dublin)

Subjects covered: Bartending practices, Customer care, Responsible service of alcohol (RSA), Foundation Cocktail Making, foundation wines studies, beers and draught dispense mgt, professional & industry associations, Licensing laws, Hygiene and bar procedures including equipment use.

Award: CPD of the Dublin Institute of Technology in Bar and Beverage Operations Studies 1.

Successful candidates are also eligible to apply for the Bar and Beverage Operations Studies 2 (TFBS 1023).

Course and Examination Fees: Available on request

Enrolment/Application: Early August / September 2016, To apply: Tel: (01) 402 4344 or email: scaft@dit.ie

Bar and Beverage Operations Studies 2 (Course Code TFBS 1023)

This programme builds on the knowledge and skills gained from Bar and Beverage Operations Studies 1 and continues to help the learner develop a deeper understanding of bartending for the licensed and hospitality industries. It is in this context that this 12 week part-time course will help prepare candidates for future roles as bartenders.

Class Day / Time: Monday 3.30 – 7.30 pm or Wednesday 3.00-7.00 pm

(12 Weeks: Starting 23rd January 2017, Room 107 –

D.I.T, Training Bar, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1)

Subjects Covered: Role of the bartender, Flairtending, Intermediate Cocktail Making, Operational Food Safety, Bar & Cellar Operations, Cash Controls and payment systems, Barista skills, Classic bartending practices, Hot Drinks, Dietetic Cocktails, stock taking procedures and bar merchandising.

Awards: CPD of the Dublin Institute of Technology in Bar & Beverage Operations Studies 2. Successful candidates are also eligible to apply for the TFBO 3021 Bar & Beverage Management Studies 1 course.

Course and Examination Fees: Available on request

Enrolment/Application: Early August / September 2016, to apply Tel: (01) 402 4344 or email: scaft@dit.ie

Cocktail Making Course

(Course Code TFBS 1021)

Developing the skills, art and ability required to prepare and serve a range of cocktails in a professional manner is one of the keys to both entertaining customers and providing a profitable source of revenue. Course classes consist of a tutorial and a practical cocktail making session. Candidates who successfully complete this 12 week course will be competent and confident in serving a range of classic cocktails and contemporary mixed drinks utilising a variety of techniques and styles. Successful candidates are also eligible to apply for the TFBS 2021 Advanced Cocktail Making course.

Class Day / Time: Thursday 9.00 am – 12.00 am

(12 Weeks: Starting 26th January 2017, Room 107 –

D.I.T, Training Bar, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1)

Subjects covered: Evolution of Cocktails, Responsible Service of Alcohol, Identification and use of Cocktail Equipment, Classic and Flair Tending Styles of Cocktail Making, Preparation and Service of Classic and Contemporary Cocktails, Costing techniques, garnishing techniques, special master classes.

Award: CPD of the Dublin Institute of Technology in Cocktail Making.

Course and Examination Fees: Available on request

Enrolment/Application: Early Aug/ Sep 2016 or early January 2017, to apply Tel: (01) 402 4344 or email: scaft@dit.ie

Bar and Beverage Management Studies 1 (Course Code TFBO 3021)

The fact that the licensed industry has remained so popular is a tribute to the quality of the product. The bar manager plays a central role here, managers must be first class merchandisers, superb people managers and be au fait with profit and stock margins. It is in this context that this 12 week part-time course will help prepare candidates for future roles as bar and beverage managers.

Class Day / Time: Monday, 12.00 – 3.00 pm

(12 Weeks: Starting January 23rd 2017, Room 107 –

D.I.T, Training Bar, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1)

Subjects Covered: Role of bar management, Managing Quality Control, Managing RSA programmes, Supervisory Management & Training techniques, Licensing Laws, Managing Cocktails, Stock Control, Waste Management, Marketing & Promotions, managing health & safety in prevention of conflict & violence, research and case study analysis.

Award: CPD of the Dublin Institute of Technology in Bar and Beverage Management Studies 1.

Course and Examination Fees: Available on request.

Enrolment / Application: Early Aug/ Sep 2016 or early January 2017, to apply Tel: (01) 402 4344 or email: scaft@dit.ie

Cocktail Making: One Day Course

This one day (six hours) module introduces the learner to the principles and practices of cocktail making including a range of classic and contemporary mixed drinks.

Class Day / Time: The module will be offered in a one day six hour block that may include one afternoon and evening or one full day (6 Hours in total) – DIT, Training Bar, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1.

Award: Cocktail Making – Certificate of Attendance of the Dublin Institute of Technology

Course and Examination Fees: Available on request.

(Group / trade bookings are also most welcome)

Enrolment / Application: Early Aug/ Sep 2016 or early January 2017, to apply Tel: (01) 402 4344 or email scaft@dit.ie

Additional CPD Part-time trade development courses are also available in the following fields of study;

- International Beer & Draught Dispense Management Studies (Code: TFBS 1023) - starting 12th September 2016.
- Spirits and Liqueurs Studies (Code: TFBS 1026) - starting 12th September 2016.
- Advanced Cocktail Making (Code: TFBS 2021) - starting 23rd January 2017.
- Wine Studies (Code TFBS 1025) - offered in both semesters – September 2016 & January 2017.
- Advanced Wine Studies (Code TFBS 4021) - offered in both semesters – September 2016 & January 2017.

For Further details regarding full-time & part-time trade training courses contact:

School Administrator,

School of Culinary Arts & Food Technology,

College of Arts & Tourism,

DIT, Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1.

Email: scaft@dit.ie Tel: 01-4024344

or

Mr. James Murphy, MSc, MA, Mgt Dip,

Trade Development Programmes Co-ordinator, Lecturer,

Bar Management Studies,

College of Arts & Tourism,

DIT, Cathal Brugha Street, Dublin 1,

Email: James.p.murphy@dit.ie Tel: 01-4024453





ABOVE Trade Union Representation QQI Level 5 November 2016 – standing left to right: Deirdre Pratnell (Heatons, Cork), Eoin Kelly (House of Fraser, Dundrum), Val (Valerie) Longmore (SuperValu, Northside); seated from left: Elma Stanley (Tesco, Blanchardstown), Tonya Whelan (NEC, formerly Tesco, Wexford), and Sarah Byrne (Argos, Liffey Valley)



LEFT Learn English with Mandate September 2016 course participants



LEFT Personal & Professional Development course September 2016 class

DO YOU HAVE A MANDATE-THEMED STORY OR PIC? Email us at news@mandate.ie



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



House Committee Training Course

This House Committee course is designed to assist members in their role as Mandate Trade Union representatives and to build on their skills and expertise as a House Committee member. This three-hour course is delivered to House Committee members with a minimum of five in attendance and held at a time that suits you in a location convenient to your workplace.

Course Content:

- Background to Mandate Trade Union.
- A stronger union workplace.
- Organising your workplace.
- Development of effective communications.
- Building your network and involvement in Mandate Trade Union.

If you are interested in this training please contact the training centre at:

**Mandate Organising and Training Centre,
Distillery House, Distillery Road, Dublin 3**
Tel: (01) 836 9699 Email: mandateotc@mandate.ie

The good, the bad and the ugly...



Tom Healy
NERI Director

THE ANNUAL budget fanfare is a legacy of the Westminster system of administration now augmented and refined by the processes springing from EU oversight of budgetary matters and 'semetrification'. The annual speech and announcements provides a focus point for debate, submissions, commentary and analysis.

Did Budget 2017 point towards a particular vision for this society? Taken in association with recent budgets and the general consensus across society it is not apparent that public policy is heading towards a rupture with the existing economic and social model characterised by primacy of markets over people and the primacy of tax reliefs for the few over public services for the many.

Positive developments

Yet, the budget did contain some positive new developments as well as being in a succession of budgets giving relief years of fiscal austerity.

The decision to raise public spending – albeit by a modest amount relative to demographic need and social crisis – is welcome. Whatever the exact magnitude of the 'fiscal space' (we will never know until after the event) the decision to proceed on the assumption of a space of around €1.2 billion is good.

On the positive side, the initiation of a new Affordable Childcare Scheme is welcome. Yet, the scale of investment and the breadth of the challenge not least in the area of housing demands a much larger outlay of expenditure backed by appropriate additional personal or corporate taxation or social insurance.

Moreover, such investments require a clearly articulated vision and strategy stretching out over 20 years. The micro-debate on the size of the 'fiscal space' and the apportionment of this space between 'public spending increases' and 'tax cuts' is not helpful. For one thing it can deflect from a debate on the composition of total amount of public spending (which comes to



Minister for Finance Michael Noonan & Minister for Public Expenditure Paschal Donohoe in the media spotlight

Picture:RollingNews.ie

€72 billion next years based on Eurostat statistical conventions). Secondly, such a micro-level and short-termist debate avoids the bigger picture of where we want to go as a society.

The decision to grant modest increases across the board for social welfare recipients is welcome. This only goes a small way to redress the real cuts since 2009 especially in the case of lone parents and young unemployed persons under the age of 26

The availability of more information in the months leading up to the Budget is also welcome. Certainly, matters have improved on the past. Yet, we need much better and more timely information including documentation on the likely equality impacts of specific budgetary proposal or package of proposals. It is simply not good enough that Government commissions the ESRI (or others) to assess the impact of a Budget on different households arranged by income after decisions have been made. This information – based on incomplete budgetary proposals – should be a normal part of the pre-budgetary debate and deliberation.

According to very preliminary analysis by researchers at the Economic and Social Research Institute, Budget 2017 was probably mildly 'progressive' in the sense that taking all the measures together including the suspension of water charges in March of this year households at the bottom of the income distribution gained (in percentage terms) a little bit more than households at the top or in the middle [Lower income groups gain most from budget external

link]. It is noteworthy that of the eight tax payer examples cited in the main Budget 2017 book external link (page B.17 and onwards) only one example refers to persons with a household income of under €27,000 per annum.

This says a lot about the one-third of the population below this income level and the priority given to them in commentary about the 'squeezed middle'. Once again, one sees a reference to the lowest income household example benefitting from the 10 cent per hour increase in the national minimum wage. This is misleading to the extent that not every household on low income necessarily benefits from this extremely modest increase (at most only €200 a year) depending on hours worked and other factors.

On the negative side, Budget 2017 continued the policy of cutting tax rates on most forms of income including the granting of tax reliefs to very high income and high wealth individuals. The raising of the threshold on Capital Acquisition Tax is most regrettable. No arguments on grounds of economic efficiency or social equity have been advanced to defend this regressive and anti-equality measure. At an estimated annual cost of €22 million the money forgone could have been used, instead, to build 120 social houses a year – a drop in the ocean compared to the scale of house-building needed but still something of value to 120 families currently sleeping in hotels or bed and breakfasts.

An associated budgetary matter is the policy adopted by the vast majority of local authorities

to not index residential property values in line with inflation and thereby forfeit significant revenue flows at local level which could have been used to alleviate some of the housing and accommodation emergency that is evident.

The record of the current Government (and the previous two) in relation to housing and social housing in particular is appalling. Many new strategies and initiatives have been brought forward in recent years but the level of housebuilding remains relatively static and hugely inadequate.

The house price stimulus measure (otherwise known as the 'Help to Buy Scheme') has received a resounding negative response from economists. Given a relatively inelastic supply curve on housing the stimulus to demand via an income tax rebate for buyers of newly-built homes is a perfect gift to builders (and indirectly to landlords because the measure is unlikely to have an appreciable impact on supply which is the core problem underlying the housing crisis).

Tax revenue

The policy of cutting income taxes (via USC rates and measures to raise various tax credits) will put a very modest amount of money in the pockets of those paying income tax. However, it will further erode the base as well as the flow of tax revenue across the income range in a way that will hurt families and communities by depriving them of key services. Consider that forgone income taxes (USC) of €300 million could have paid for:

- 9,500 additional Special Needs Assistants in primary schools; or
- 2,000 social housing units; or
- 6,500 new speech and language therapists.

A key area of weakness in Budget 2017 and in recent budgets is the relative neglect of capital investment. The most recent editions of the *NERI Quarterly Economic Observer* have highlighted the need for a large increase in public capital investment. Government plans are to increase the level of spending from 1.7% of GDP to 2.2% by 2021. This level of investment needs to be at least double that.

Other regrettable decisions include the continuation of a 'temporary' reduction in VAT rates especially in the highly profitable hotel sector in many areas of the country a point emphasised strongly by trade unions in the run-up to the recent budget.

BOOKSHELF REVIEW BY RORY HEARNE

How we got off our knees and started to fight back...

From Bended Knee to a New Republic

By Brendan Ogle
Published by The Liffey Press, €16.95
(High street price €20)

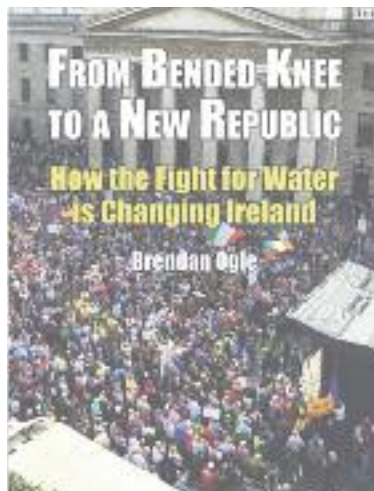
BRENDAN Ogle's new book *From Bended Knee to a New Republic: How the fight for water is changing Ireland* is a fascinating, inspiring and informative, journey through inequality in Ireland and "a nation's fightback against it".

The book, just like the water protest movement itself, is about much more than water. It explains the reasons (global water privatisation agenda, austerity, poverty, inequality, health and housing crises)

behind the protests which are "the biggest (per capita) and most peaceful protest movement for social change anywhere in the world".

It tells the story of the water activists and the origins of the movement, which, as Brendan rightly says, you won't read about in the media or many other places. In this way the book provides a really important contribution to documenting Ireland's recent political history, particularly the voices and views in society which are too often ignored.

For example, the book documents how the movement was built from the grassroots up – in working class communities like Edenmore in



Coolock in Dublin and by "wonderful people" from all over Ireland "who were determined to make a difference".

It tells the inspiring story of water activist Karen Doyle, a "housewife and mother who also works part-time outside the home" from Cobh Says No. She got involved in the water charges movement and formed one of the hundreds of 'meter watch' groups, which were the heart of the movement across the country, to obstruct water meters being installed. But from that action a broader social movement was born.

Brendan writes, "Every weekday morning someone would rise about

4.00 to 5.00 am and find where the meter contractor vans were heading. Text alerts were sent so that by the time the vans arrived people like Karen were at estate entrances to protest. A caravan and trailer were procured and soup, tea and coffee produced every day for sustenance. Margaret Thatcher would have hated it. Society! People came from their homes, their individual isolated bolt-holes, to start sharing stories about where it had all gone wrong, how their lives had been impacted by the breaking of a nation, which gave them the strength, the determination, to do something about it."

However, Brendan explains that

Safety Representation for Elected Reps QQI Level 5

This course is aimed at Health and Safety Representatives.

The following topics will be covered on the course:

- Health and Safety Legislation
- Role of Health and Safety Representative
 - Safety statements
- Role of Health and Safety Authority
 - Occupational health
- Identification of hazards and risk assessment
 - Accident investigation
 - Fire safety
- Effective communications
- Health and safety promotion

Date/Time: 22/23/24/25/26 May 2017 – 9:30am-5pm

Venue: Mandate Training Centre, Distillery Road, Dublin 3

Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this course will receive a QQI Level 5 component award certificate and may progress to other courses offered by Mandate or other organisations.

Please contact your union official or Mandate Training Centre phone **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to confirm your place

Remember that this Christmas...



these groups faced problems from “some on the ultra-left” who saw the local groups “as a vehicle for advancing their own agenda, viewing people like Karen as potential recruits.” He notes that in the past “many have walked away from the campaigns, surrendering them to the dogmatic ultra-left and the inevitable failure to deliver on their promise.”

But not this time. Karen and many other community activists like her continued and developed their own spaces and confidence to keep building a broad and inclusive movement. Important in this was the support given by the Right2Water trade unions, and Unite through its political economy education.

This was a very innovative approach which provided an important longer term empowering aspect to

the movement. Brendan writes how “through the training we not only helped them connect with each other on a national level but showed how the tax and privatisation agenda are global issues...giving renewed energy as to how to challenge the neoliberal consensus”.

It provides an excellent chapter that explains neoliberalism. Which is then followed logically by a chapter entitled, The Labour Party from Democratic Socialism to Social Democracy, which details how the Labour Party has become an “obstacle to progress toward a more equal Ireland, and is in fact an enabler of neoliberal inequality”.

He describes in fascinating detail the many examples of a hostile media (particularly RTE constantly underestimating the size of demonstrations)

and its role in damaging democracy (which is part of a useful framework of analysis he presents for understanding the present state of our democracy through “three phases of democracy”).

Built trust

He describes how himself and Dave Gibney, the other main organiser in Right2Water, overcame difficult negotiations and built trust and a strong working partnership with local communities who felt they had been let down by trade unions in the past but had started this new movement organically. And the constant work required to build unity among the fractious left-wing parties that make up the ‘political pillar’ of the movement.

We can read in these pages how Brendan and others in the water

movement which “could so easily have been just another failed campaign in a failed Republic”, actually developed the most successful mass protest movement in modern Irish history. It is, therefore, an essential read for those looking to understand not just how and why the water movement developed in Ireland but for those seeking lessons of how to build successful social movements and campaigns.

In an important reflection on recent talks of a resumption of social partnership, Brendan is strongly critical of the “shameful” role of the wider trade union movement “in collaborating with the policies that wrecked a nation (so-called ‘social partnership’ from 1987 to 2009)”. But he highlights that there were those “within the movement who not only resisted

that lazy partnership consensus but who are now trying to forge a new model of community and workplace-based ‘lifelong trade unionism’”. The Right2Water unions have spearheaded this exciting new approach to trade unionism that was central to the success of the movement, “this model seeks to assist citizens acting ‘in union’ through campaigns.”

The book ends with an exciting chapter that asks “where will our progressive government come from?” He believes that the Right2Change policy principles, developed last year by the Right2Water unions with strong participative community and political input “could form the bedrock, the founding principles of a new egalitarian Republic.”

Rory Hearne, author and researcher, writes here in a personal capacity.

121digital training FREE private lessons for members of Mandate



Dear Mandate member

you or a family member may be interested in this **FREE** 121digital training.

Each learner chooses their own course content; learns at their own speed; there is no exam. Each learner has their own tutor. Lessons are private. We meet in a group. The 121digital programme engages the young (secondary school students and university undergraduates) as tutors to share their digital skills with adults living and/or working in the local community. Learners bring their own device (laptop /tablet /smartphone) to lessons. 121digital lessons take place in your local secondary schools, IT colleges and universities and also in libraries, community centres and youth centres and are run during the working day (in schools) and in the evenings in other centres.

The 121digital programme has engaged 2,000 volunteers to train 2,000 learners, so far but places are limited – so book early. 121digital training centres maintain a waiting-list of learners for future courses.

121digital was established in 2010 and since 2014 is supported by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources (DCENR), hence our programme is recognised by the Government and is part-funded for its work in the community.

When completing their end-of-course questionnaires, learners report improved communication with family and friends and access to services. They report feeling more safe and secure online and a resulting improved self confidence.

“My (digital device) is my friend, now. I can send emails and attachment. I called my grandson on Skype. I can find information online,” they tell us. Months and/or years later learners return with another device (laptop, tablet, or a new smartphone) for another course. Visit the website **www.121digital.ie** for more information and call your local 121digital training centre to book.

Regards Fintan Mulligan
121digital
fintan.mulligan@121digital.ie
Tel: 086 8199 752

Do your bit on the Shopfloor!



**SHOPFLOOR KEEPS
YOU INFORMED...
HELP KEEP US
INFORMED BY
EMAILING STORIES
& PICTURES ABOUT
YOUR WORKPLACE**

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

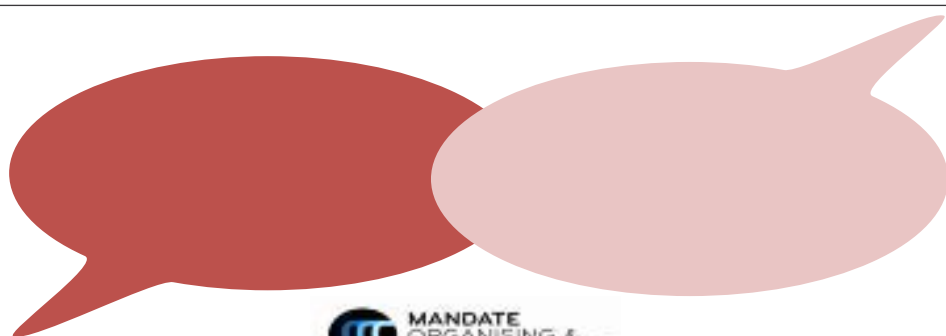
Shoe Zone store closes, 5 jobs lost

SHOE ZONE in Tralee closed its doors for business for the last time on Friday, November 25 with the loss of five jobs.

The UK parent company made the decision to close the outlet as part of a rationalisation plan.

It is understood that high rental costs, increased online sales as well as competition from other high street retailers meant the future sustainability of the Tralee store was no longer viable.

Mandate Industrial Officer Caroline Clifford told *Shopfloor*: "It's very sad to see yet another store close in Tralee town centre and the loss of five decent jobs."



**MANDATE
ORGANISING &
TRAINING CENTRE**

Learn English with Mandate for free!

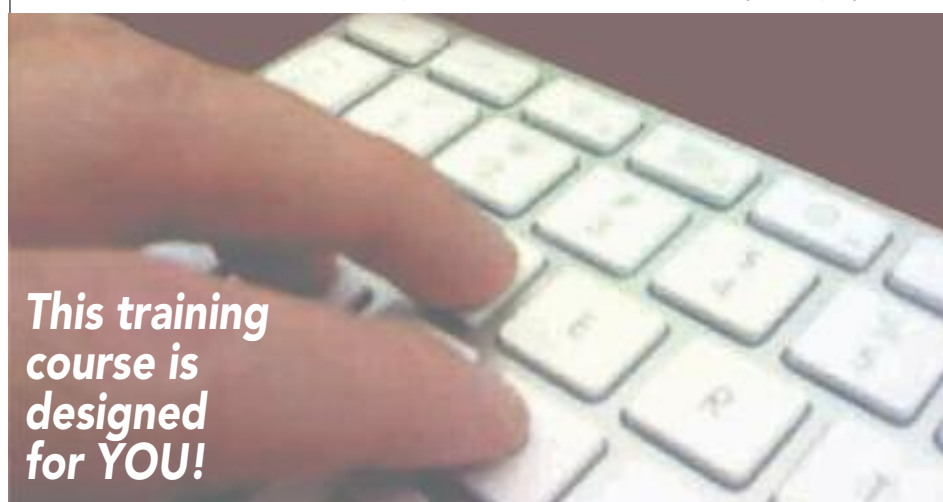
Mandate, your trade union, is offering English speaking classes for members. The course is for members who while speaking some English have never had the opportunity for formal training. In the course you will learn the basic grammar and improve your vocabulary. You will have the chance to correct those 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*

- Evening training ● Free to Mandate members ● Venue: In location near your workplace
- Places limited ● Courses also open to Mandate members currently unemployed



*This training
course is
designed
for YOU!*

**MANDATE
ORGANISING &
TRAINING CENTRE**

Higher Level Computers QQI Level 5

What you'll learn...

- **Word Processing: Document Formatting, Graphics, Mail Merge**
 - Create documents applying a range of processing features
- **Use proofing tools such as spell-check, thesaurus & search/replace**
 - Learn File Management ● Use Windows Explorer
- **Open, edit, and print a document ● Enter, edit and sort data**
 - Insert and delete rows and columns in a worksheet
- **Enter formulae ● Microsoft Outlook - send and receive emails.**
 - Excel - create spreadsheets ● PowerPoint presentations

**All courses need a minimum of 10 participants and may
form in your area based on the level of interest.
The Mandate Organising and Training Centre will
determine the location and delivery of courses.**

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

'Building and maintaining a strong presence'

FOLLOWING discussions between Argos and Mandate a set of proposals were accepted by a significant majority of members in October 2016.

The agreement provided for the restoration of previous cuts to public holiday and Sunday premiums as well as a framework for both sides to engage further on the issue of working hours and pay frequency.

Industrial Officer David Miskell told *Shopfloor*: "The agreement represented a step forward in that some restoration of previous cuts had been achieved. While there is much work to do it is to be welcomed that it has been possible to reach such an agreement at this time."

Also during the year, two shop stewards, Bernie Jackson (Limerick) and Gerrard Halligan (Longford) vis-



ited a number of Argos outlets in a bid to recruit members and met with great success.

Mr Miskell commented: "This complemented the work of other shop stewards and Mandate staff who continue to engage with non-members with the aim of building and maintaining a strong union in Argos."

Looking forward, he said the union's priorities for members working in Argos would be to address the

outstanding issues through the working party as well as to prepare for pay talks, set to start when the current agreement ends in the summer of 2017.

Mr Miskell added: "Over the course of the next number of months we intend to circulate a survey to all Argos employees to seek views on a number of issues, allowing the National Negotiating Team to formulate an appropriate agenda for talks in 2017 and beyond."

"Our thanks go to the continued hard work of the National Negotiating Team (Sarah Byrne, Liffey Valley, Lisa Fox, Carlow, Gerrard Halligan, Longford Mary Finnerty and Bernie Jackson, Limerick) and we look forward to continuing this work in 2017 on behalf of members across Argos."

Congress disability conference looks at employment strategies

CONGRESS hosted its annual disability seminar in La Mon House Hotel, outside Belfast on November 17 and 18.

Themed around implementation of employment strategies for people with disabilities, North and South, delegates heard from a number of contributors, including Walter Jayawdene from the Irish Equality and Human Right Commission and Sean Fitzsimmons of Belfast-based Disability Action.

Introducing the conference, ICTU President Brian Campfield said: "Decent work means work that is productive and delivers a fair income. However, for the millions of disabled people of working age worldwide, achieving decent work is getting more and more challenging."

"This is why the role of trade unions and the Disability Champion in the workplace is more important than ever."



Brian Campfield: Disability Champion role vital

- Evening training ● Free to Mandate members ● Venue: In location near your workplace
- Places limited ● Courses also open to Mandate members currently unemployed



Introduction To Computers QQI Level 4

What you'll learn...

- Use Windows Explorer ● Open, edit, and print a document
 - Create, open, close and save a worksheet
 - Enter, edit and sort data
- Insert and delete rows & columns in a worksheet
 - Enter formulae ● Send and receive emails
- Reply to/forward emails ● Move/delete a message
- Access a web page ● Use search engine tools (Google)



All courses need a minimum of 10 participants and may form in your area based on the level of interest. The Mandate Organising and Training Centre will determine the location and delivery of courses.

Please contact Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to book your place.

STAY CONNECTED www.mandate.ie



Union Representative Advanced Senior Course

The Union Representative Advanced Senior Training Course is for union representatives who have completed the Introductory and Advanced course and who have experience as a union

Course content

- 📢 The history of trade unionism
- 📢 The emergence and development of the market system
- 📢 The impact of globalisation
- 📢 Free trade and open markets in a modern society

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.

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

● Venue: In a location near your workplace



● Evening training ● Places limited

Personal & Professional Development Skills QQI Level 5

The objective of this course is to provide you with tools and techniques that will allow you to know more, learn more and develop yourself, your knowledge and your abilities for your own personal and professional development.

- How to communicate your needs and wants
- 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

Contact **Mandate's Training Centre** on **01-836 9699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** if you are interested in taking the course. Training is **FREE** to Mandate members but courses are also open to Mandate members who are currently unemployed.

This training course is designed for YOU!



HMCA & MANDATE TRADE UNION A 20 YEAR AFFINITY PARTNERSHIP

Since 1996 Hospital and Medical Care Association (HMCA) have been providing a range of membership benefits to members of Mandate Trade Union and their families.

HMCA were formed in 1978 as a specialist provider of membership benefits and our success relies on the quality of plans which are all supported by a first class customer service and claims handling team. All of the plans are offered on a voluntary and optional basis and as part of your membership with Mandate Trade Union.

As part of our affinity partnership with Mandate Trade Union, HMCA have also contributed to the Mandate Trade Union Benevolent Fund which we are delighted to help support. Once a member has subscribed to a plan then HMCA pays a sponsorship payment, which Mandate pay into their Benevolent fund.

HMCA are continuously looking to offer new products to provide to members and their families that are cost effective and will provide necessary protection when needed. With this in mind, we have recently introduced the low cost Care Starter Cash Plan and Care Cash Plan, both these plans are designed to offer tax-free cash benefits towards, in-patient and day-case hospital admissions, dental, optical, consultations, x-rays, scans, physiotherapy, complementary medicine and much more..

The full range of plans available for Mandate Trade Union members include: -

- ✓ Care Cash Plans
- ✓ Life Plan
- ✓ Dental Plan
- ✓ Personal Accident Plan
- ✓ Travel Plan
- ✓ Vehicle Breakdown Recovery

You can visit the HMCA website at www.hmcaireland.ie or enquire online at www.hmcaireland.ie/mandate.htm for full details of all of the plans.

You can also phone the office in Dublin at **01 6130316** for an informal discussion on your requirements.

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Connect with Mandate

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Building on our shared values



By Niall Crowley
Claiming Our Future

MANDATE stepped up to the plate early in the life of Claiming Our Future. The union provided office space, administrative support, and an address as the initiative was taking shape. It supported a trade union engagement with Claiming Our Future's espousal of the need for a more powerful, effective, and coherent engagement by civil society with the economic crisis and its impacts.

Claiming Our Future invited the various parts of civil society to work together and provided a platform to bring the actions of trade unions, community groups, global justice organisations, cultural groups, environmental groups and others into a more creative and impactful whole.

Fragmentation within civil society and the damage this was doing to our collective aspirations for a more equal, environmentally-sustainable and participative society was a constant theme in the life of the Claiming Our Future. It remains a challenge as it winds up and looks to others to take up this challenge.

Broken politics

One of our final events was a deliberation on the challenges to civil society in a context of 'Broken Politics'. This concluded that fragmentation had actually increased over the period of austerity with civil society organisations pitted against one another for dwindling resources, declining media space, and jaundiced public opinion.

The event called for support structures for collaboration and cooperation at local and national levels and cross-pollination between the different parts of civil society through new types of organising. It suggested that connections within civil society could be nurtured through establishing spaces around which we could connect and developing a means of connecting through our own media or through digital networking. *Shopfloor* is an important and well-developed part of this 'own media' that has of-

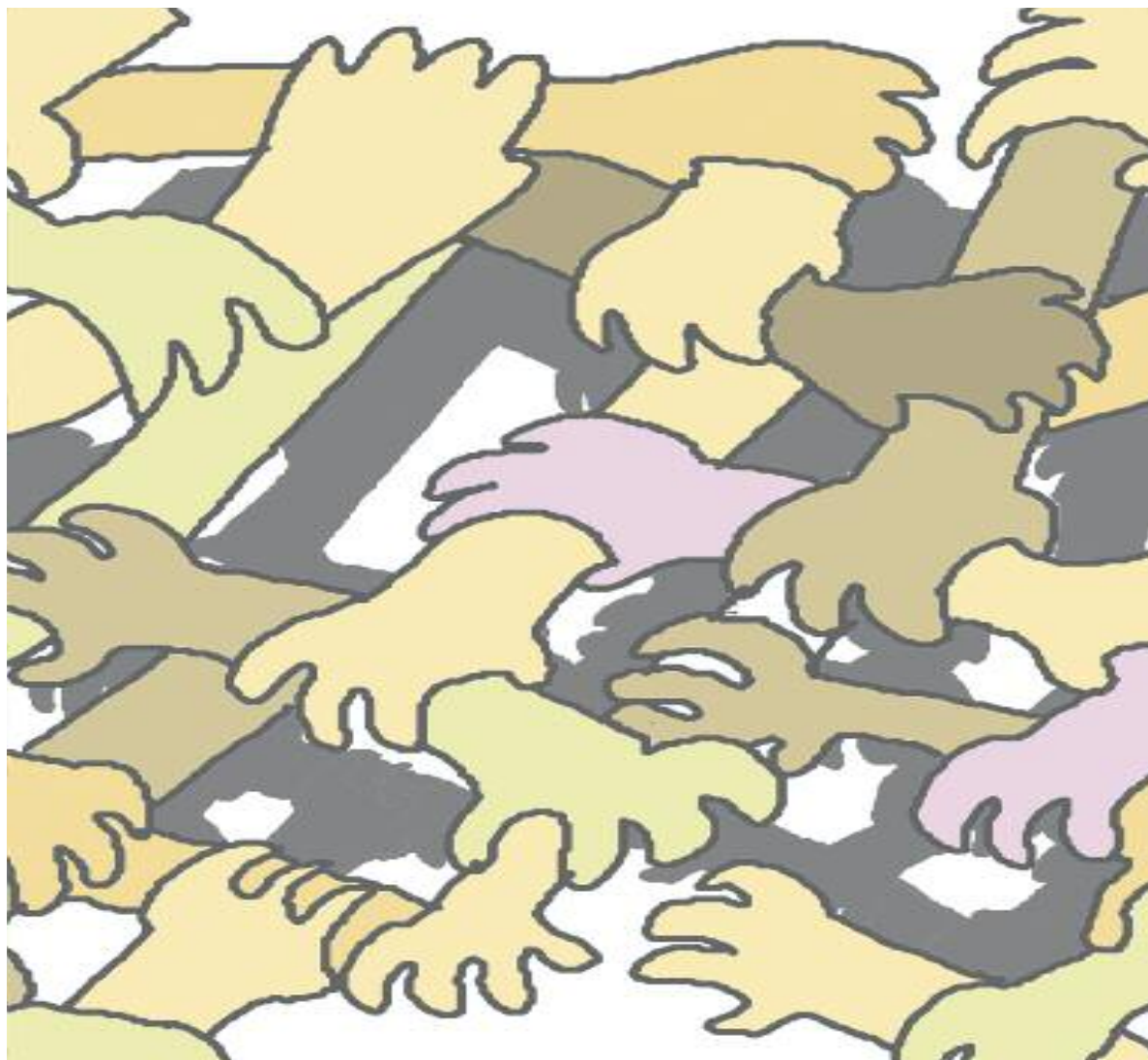


Illustration: Xoan Baltar (CC BY 2.0)

fered valuable space to Claiming Our Future. Facilitating deliberation and creating spaces for deliberation have been central to the work of Claiming Our Future from its inaugural event in 2010 that filled the Industries Hall in the RDS. Deliberation events were hosted around the country to build agendas and to mobilise action on issues such as 'an economy for society', 'income equality', 'political reform', 'international development goals', 'local

resilience', 'new forms of energy production, distribution, and consumption', and the aforementioned event on civil society itself in a context of 'broken politics'.

Deliberation involved an open invitation to participate in values-based debate and to build consensus on a position on the different themes and on how to advance that position. The debate was facilitated in tables of 10 people and consensus voting, devel-

oped by the de Borda Institute, was used to find the consensus across all the tables in the hall.

This proved a powerful means of exploring alternatives to current models of development. Civil society was found wanting for convincing alternatives when the economic crisis hit. A tradition of deliberation had to be rebuilt and needs further development if alternatives are to be devised and put forward as the crisis changes and

evolves. The inaugural event of Claiming Our Future identified the values it would espouse as being equality, environmental sustainability, participation, accountability, and solidarity.

These values were central to the work of Claiming Our Future over the last six years. At first they were the link through which different parts of civil society could identify with the emerging initiative. Then they became the lens through which we analysed situations and responded to possibilities.

Finally, they emerged as a focus in their own right. The task of any movement that would espouse transformative change includes to convince and remind people to give priority to such values and allow these perspectives to shape their perspectives and choices. This was a challenge to civil society to engage with people as much as power holders in shaping a new dominant value base in society.

Creative

This approach demands creativity. It engages us in a cultural battle that we are ill equipped for. Claiming Our Future therefore worked to bring the activist and the artist together in a series of dialogues and events. Art has the power to move people, to capture their imagination and attention, and to draw them into seeing new perspectives. It enables people to express themselves and to articulate different futures. Just as in moments of key change in the past, art should be a component in our current search for change. This challenges activists to learn to draw upon their creative talents and artists to contribute their skills to issues they care about.

It remains to be seen where the ideas that have been developed and tested by Claiming Our Future will be taken up. Claiming Our Future was 'waked' in Tailors Hall on December 10. Its work has much to offer a creative cross-sectoral search for change by civil society.

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