

MANDATE TRADE UNION

FEBRUARY 2018

SHOPFLOOR

SECURE HOURS

= BETTER FUTURE

PUT THEM UNDER PRESSURE!

**LOW PAY
ZERO HOURS
INSECURE
WORK**

MANDATE IS LEADING THE CHARGE

REPORT/PICTURES PAGES 6/7

STRAIGHT TALKING

Gagging on the gig economy

SOME of you might have heard of the “gig economy” and more of you might be wondering what the gig economy is. Has it anything to do with music or outdoor events you might well ask. It sounds fun and exciting but words and phrases are often used to hide reality or portray a more benign picture.

The “gig economy” for the majority of workers simply means unfettered exploitation. The “service provider” [employer] has simply carved up what were once decent jobs and re-classified them as self-employed, and in doing so washes their hands of all responsibility to the “new gig workers” who are now deemed self-employed.

So these so called gig workers are entitled to no holidays, no pension, no sick pay, no contract, no rights, and no future. The “service provider” will often say that “gig workers” take these self-employed (bogus) jobs as a lifestyle choice, that gig workers like to work when they want, for as long as they want, on days of their choosing – it suits the gig workers they contend.

We hear the same from employers who only offer part-time or flexi contracts to their employees. This is frankly delusional for these gig service providers have total control over their workers via sophisticated technology which monitors their every move, their speed, rate of productivity and customer response.

Who are the gig workers? The most visible are the delivery bike riders, large square boxes strapped to their backs as they weave in and out of our city traffic delivering our meals or our post. They race the traffic lights, taking the short cuts, endangering themselves and others in their quest to make an income and hoping they might get a tip. Their delivery times and routes monitored and customer feedback analysed by sophisticated software so that so-called unproductive workers can be weeded out. Their own health and safety is solely their responsibility, they fall or crash they are not covered.

But gig workers are also across other sectors, they are the “pickers” in warehouses and distribution centres, the home-helps paid per client visit, they’re the accommodation staff in hotels paid per bed or room cleaned. They all have one thing in common – they have to race to make an income.

The jobs they perform are broken down into units of time. They have no legal rights as employees because they are so called self-employed. They are on every construction site in the country often not realising they have been deemed self-employed by the main contractor until they get their first week’s wages, which will not have any employee tax or PRSI deducted. They, like the employees on precarious contracts in retail, are at the coalface of the race to the bottom.

Far too many of our young people feel they have been abandoned to the gig economy. They believe that the older generation has pulled the decency ladder up behind them – not for them a decent job, a decent wage, a pension, a career or even a home. Many employers believe that they, as employers, have no responsibility to create decent jobs; rather their sole objective is to maximise profits and the return on capital.

They believe that it’s the “State’s” duty to provide a basic decency threshold via social transfers/Social Welfare Payments, e.g. Family Income Supplements etc. But, ask yourself why should the State be forced to subsidise by social transfers exploitative profitable employers? The employers who, while refusing to pay a living wage or create decent jobs, at the same time increase shareholder dividends and CEOs’ salaries and bonuses?

In a decent society, of course, the State has a role in supporting a basic decency threshold for all citizens but the State should pick up the tab for major profitable multi-national companies who deliberately destroy decent jobs.

The immoral concentration of wealth is now at obscene levels across the world – the world’s richest one per cent own over half of all the world wealth (2017). There are now 36 million millionaires across the globe (an increase of 2.4 million millionaires in the past year alone). These millionaires account for just 0.7% of the world’s population while on the other side of the spectrum 3.5 billion of the world’s poorest adults have less than €8,000 in assets. This trend in the accumulation of wealth is increasing each year.

Most of the wealth accumulated by the 1% is at the expenses of labour’s share. But the greed of the 1% is the fatal flaw within the neo-liberal capitalist system, and if it remains unchecked will see a total collapse of the prevailing world economic order, which is still predominately based on consumerism, be it the consumption of products or data.

If the trend of the accumulation of wealth in fewer and fewer hands continues, the vast majority of the world’s population will not have the means to consume – i.e. they will not have money or assets to spend.

The rise of the gig economy and precarious work is becoming the norm, and a living wage and a decent job are being confined to the history books. Then, one has to ask, who will be spending in our shops, pubs, restaurants or over the internet? If large swells of the population are not earning enough – not only to spend but also not earning enough to make a social contribution via Tax/PRSI to the State for the social infrastructure of schools, roads, hospitals, etc – then the whole deck of cards will collapse.

This is already the case in many countries around the world where the 1% have retreated to the high-security, gated communities for fear of attack/kidnap as social order breaks down fuelled by poverty and a lack of hope.

This scenario is not scaremongering but a certainty to happen if the world remains on the same neo-liberal trajectory it is currently on. There are even some of the 1% millionaires who see this happening and are calling for a “fairer” system of wealth distribution, their motive is self-preservation. When the “great and the good” meet in places like the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, they discuss how to prolong the system and protect their wealth. They realise that the current model is globally unsustainable.

Workers and workers’ collective power is the only counter-balancing force to this inevitable collapse. Workers need to organise in trade unions, political parties and communities to win back their fair share of the wealth they create. It will not be easy, the odds are stacked against us. For decades the 1% in collusion with willing governments and a bought-off media have demonised trade unions and workers’ actions. But in a strange twist of fate, the future survival of the 1% might now depend on workers organising and winning a greater share of wealth so that they can continue to be active in the economy as consumers.

The current younger generation must find their voice and the strength to organise – to protest, to join unions, to demand a decent job, a decent life and a decent society. The gig economy is not a lifestyle choice, young people do not voluntarily choose to be exploited. The ball is firmly in their court. They can strike it or let it pass. Let’s hope for the sake of humanity and the planet that they stand up to the plate and strike hard.

“Do not wait to strike till the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking” – William Butler Yeats



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TESCO

Labour Court hear 2017 pay and benefits claim

THE Labour Court heard the outstanding 2017 pay and benefits claim relating to thousands of Mandate members work in Tesco Ireland on Monday, January 29.

The principal items in the claim included:

- 3% pay increase for 2017;
- Weighted pay increase for members on the lower hourly pay rates;
- 500 full-time jobs; and
- A review of the banded hours agreement which controls the distribution of weekly hours.

Speaking after the meeting, Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: “This was a very important day for our members in that the issues they prioritised as impor-

tant through their participation in the national membership survey in 2017 were finally placed before the Labour Court for consideration.

“Unfortunately the reason why we ended up before the Labour Court was because the company failed to engage directly with the union when the claim was served as far back as April 2017.

“Instead of sitting down with us to discuss the totality of the claim, they went ahead and made a 2% pay increase.”

He added that this had fallen “far short of members’ expectations and what they actually deserved”.

The Labour Court is expected to issue its recommendations in the coming weeks.

Pre-1996 claim also heard

ON January 29, the Labour Court also considered a claim brought by Mandate for annual cost-of-living increases on behalf of members working at Tesco Ireland who are on pre-1996 contracts.

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light said: “it is totally unfair that these three 2% annual pay increases have not been made to this small group of members given that they have already been paid to all other union members employed in Tesco Ireland over this period of time.

“We cannot allow one group of members to be picked off and treated in a less favourable way to the vast majority of their fellow members. This would be simply far too dangerous a precedent to allow happen.”



‘Aggressive’ stance slammed as Forever 21 closes sole Irish store

MANDATE has condemned US multinational retailer Forever 21 for refusing its workers the right to be represented by their trade union during the closure of its only Irish store.

The January 9 announcement of the closure – which came as a surprise to the 82 workers at the company’s Dublin outlet – stated that €13 million had been allocated to facilitate the move. It is understood some of this money has been set aside for redundancies.

According to Mandate, it appears the company will only be imposing the minimum statutory redundancy of two weeks per year of service.

Mandate members in the store have expressed deep disappointment that such a profitable global retailer has refused to engage with their chosen union to negotiate redundancy packages.

Mandate Divisional Organiser Tara Keane told *Shopfloor*: “The company has taken a very aggressive stance in refusing representation for their staff. “Staff had to go through a very dif-

icult consultation process alone. When their designated representative arrived to represent them in the store, the representative was removed by senior management. It is deeply concerning that a company of this size feels the need to refuse their staff professional representation during a difficult process like this.”

Ms Keane claimed that numerous calls on the company to meet with Mandate have been rebuffed. According to the union, as a result those workers impacted cannot fully vindicate their legal and constitutional rights.

She said: “It is insensitive, inconsiderate and highly disrespectful of management to allow workers to find out this information in the media before they have been officially informed. This is simply not how you do business.

“Our members are still waiting for answers in relation to the package on offer and other basic information,” Ms Keane added.

Christmas every day for bar bosses

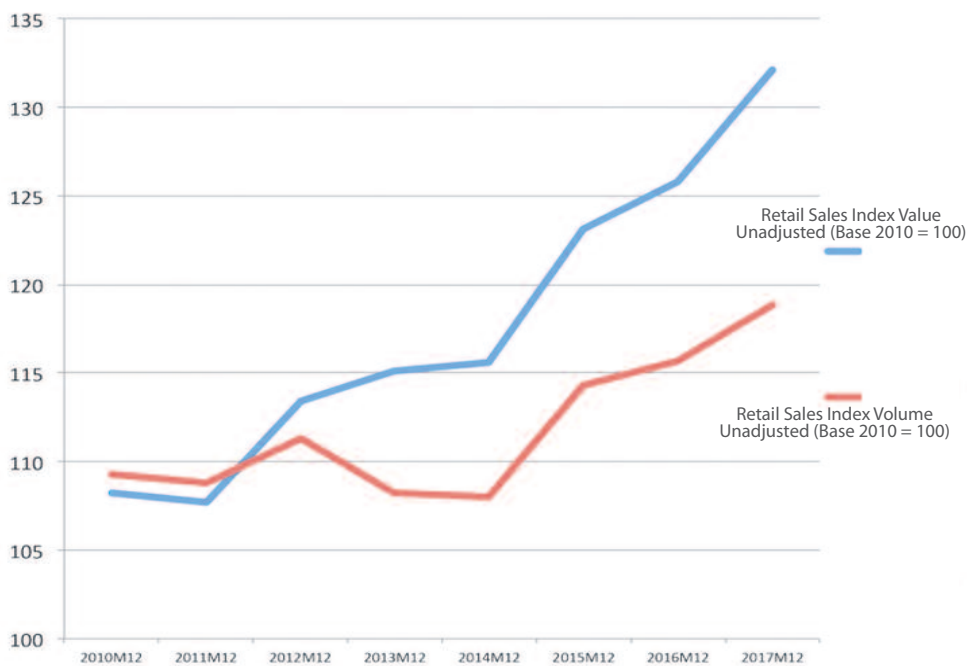


Festive bonanza: making merry outside the Oliver St John Gogarty pub in Dublin at Christmas

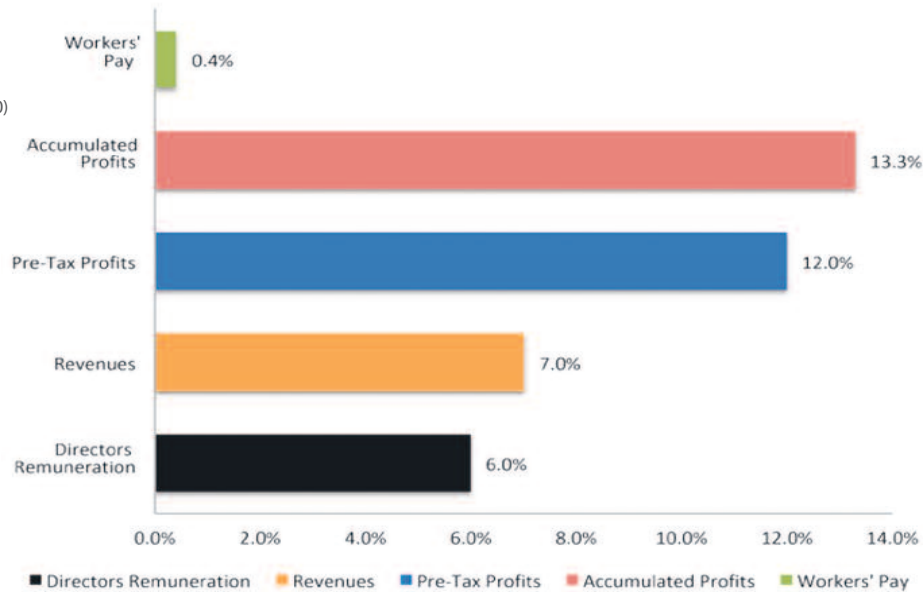
Picture: Juanna (CC BY-SA 2.0)

● They're minting it while the workers get small beer... ● It's time to organise!

PROFITS SURGE IN BAR TRADE...



OLIVER ST JOHN GOGARTY PERFORMANCE 2017



By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

"BAR workers are underpaid and undervalued." Mandate General Secretary John Douglas made this observation two years ago – and things have only worsened since then.

Of course there are bars and pubs that are not profitable, and there are others that are only managing to get by, but overall, the industry is booming.

The question is: do bar workers value the contribution to this success enough to get organised and fight for pay increases and decent working conditions?

Unlike most other sectors in the economy, the bar industry is boosting its profits at a far faster rate than it is increasing volume. This means they are selling slightly more product, but at a much higher profit level. (Chart 1)

One example of this phenomena is the Oliver St John Gogarty pub in Temple Bar, Dublin. The pub increased pre-tax profits by 12% to €5.5m. Revenues rose 7% to €16.24m.

Accumulated profits for the company last year increased from €35.3m to €40m and staff numbers increased from 105 to 108. Yet, staff costs only rose from €2.75m to €2.84m.

With 108 staff sharing €2.84m in 2017, it would indicate that each worker earned approximately €26,296, compared to €26,190 in 2016 for 105 staff. This includes employer contributions to PRSI, pensions and other overheads. This puts an average wage for a worker in the group at less than €25,000.

Fifteen times!

Meanwhile, directors' pay increased from €233,650 to €247,550 – almost FIFTEEN times the workers' pay increase at 6%.

Imagine for a second, though, that the workers were organised in their trade union and were able to collectively bargain. They could then gain a larger proportion of the €5.5m pre-tax profits.

In the best case scenario, if those in-

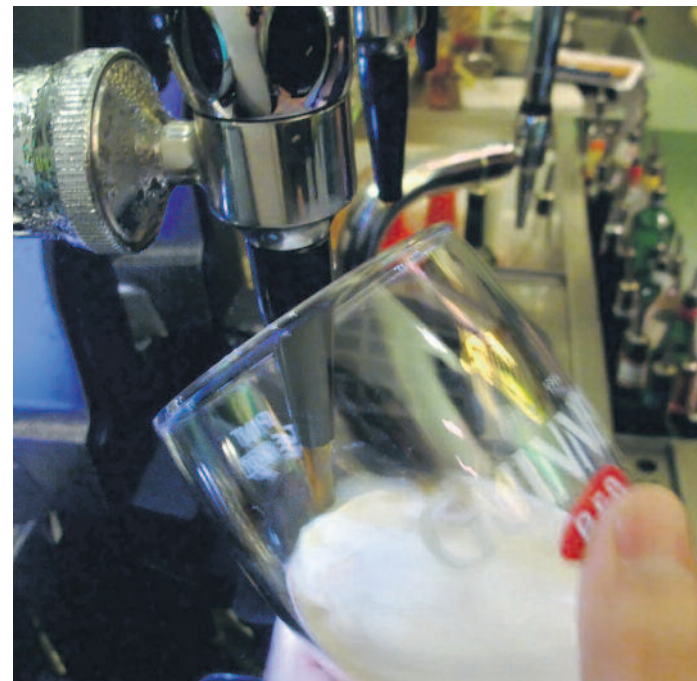
creased profits had been shared equally between the workers in 2017, they could have raised the average workers' income by more than €50,925 per annum, and the company would still break even. To put that in perspective, that's a 193% pay increase for every worker in the company.

So why is it that the workers are content with a 0.4% pay increase?

Many decades ago bar workers were a respected and valued trade. In recent years, due mainly to de-recognition by pub owners and vintners, the terms and conditions have been in constant decline.

Be under no illusion, there is only one solution to this quagmire and that's for bar workers to get organised.

If the owners of pubs like the Oliver St John Gogarty can charge punters €8 for a pint, award themselves pay increases of 6%, and still increase profits by 12%, they can certainly afford to give their workers a decent pay increase.



Picture: James Cridland (CC BY 2.0)

Christmas cheer as volume of retail sales up 7.2% in December

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

THE volume of retail sales was up 7.2% in December compared with the same period the year before, according to the latest figures from the Central Statistics Office.

The sectors with the largest month-on-month volume increases were furniture and lighting (3.1%) and books, newspapers and stationery (3.1%). There was a decrease of 0.5% in the

value of retail sales when compared with the previous month, and there was an annual increase of 4.5% when compared with the year before. When motor trades are excluded, there was a decrease of 1% on the month and an increase of 4.6% in the annual figure.

Mandate Trade Union General Secretary John Douglas said: "These figures show again that the retail industry is improving and recovering. We acknowledge that profit margins may not be

as high as they were during the boom era 10 years ago. However, the sector is clearly returning to profitability and this time, unlike the boom years, we believe workers should get a fair share from the hard work they do."

He added: "A 7.2% increase in sales in one year is a tremendous achievement but it comes with challenges. The key challenge for workers is to ensure they and their colleagues are members of their trade union, Mandate. For every

worker who is not a member of their union, it weakens their collective voice within their own workplace, but it also undermines the ability of other retail workers to drive working conditions upwards."

Mr Douglas added: "If you are not already a member of Mandate, then you can join on our new website – www.joinmandate.ie – and if you are already a member, you can become more active by contacting your local official."



Pharmacy giant's refusal to allow workers representation by union

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

IRELAND'S largest pharmacy chain, LloydsPharmacy, has written to staff in six stores informing them that their stores are "at risk of closing", with up to 40 jobs now in jeopardy.

Despite the serious implications for the workers concerned, the company has refused collective representation for the workers through their trade union.

The six stores threatened with closure are: Abbey Street, Wicklow Town; St Brigid's Road Ar-tane, Dublin; Crumlin Road, Dublin; Governey Square, Carlow Town; Market Cross, Kilkenny; and Rathbourne, Dublin. Mandate, which represents almost all workers in the six locations, has now submitted a claim to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) under Section 9 and 10 of the Protection of Employment Act, 1977.

These sections require an employer to consult employees' representatives and to provide relevant information relating to proposed redundancies.

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: "To receive the news that you may lose your job is traumatic enough, but in this case the situation is aggravated by the refusal of management to allow collective representation for the affected workers."

Mandate insists LloydsPharmacy workers in the six stores should have a range of voluntary options presented to them in the event of the closures taking place.

Mr Light continued: "In the first instance we want to ensure jobs are protected and an option to transfer to other stores in the locality should be made available.

"Where this is not possible, and as a very last resort, redundancies that reflect the union norms

should be negotiated with the workers through their trade union."

He explained that Mandate had written to the company on 4th January seeking a meeting to discuss the closures. However, management rejected this reasonable request stating that the internal "Colleague Representative Committee (CRC)" – which was initiated and is funded by the company – would be representing the workers.

He said: "LloydsPharmacy workers are entitled to representation but management are apparently determined to circumvent both the legislation and best practice.

"They've left their staff with no other option but to take a case that claims the company failed in their legal obligations."

Mr Light added: "Our members have made it abundantly clear. They wish to be represented by an independent and professional trade union."



Gerry Light: 'Our members wish to be represented'

TESCO

Survey call

A NEW membership survey is to be distributed to Mandate members working in Tesco.

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light said: "It is vitally important that a small amount of time is taken to complete the survey as it presents an important opportunity for our members to highlight issues that are important to them."

He added: "We will then use this information to prioritise the agenda and future campaigns for our members working in Tesco."

DUNNES

Activists set to debate priorities

A NATIONAL meeting of Dunnes activists will take place on Monday 19th February.

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light said the meeting would allow activists to engage each other in a "structured manner" so that they could set priorities on behalf of the thousands of Mandate members employed at the retailer.

He added: "Central to these deliberations will be the task of identifying the various parts of the 2018 pay and benefits claim which will be served on the employer in the coming weeks and also where we take the *Decency for Dunnes Workers* campaign next."



MARKS & SPENCER

PDR system talks

TALKS about the future shape of the PDR system as it applies to Mandate members working as section managers in Marks and Spencer have started with senior management.

It is expected the discussions will be concluded in the coming weeks. Any proposal that comes from the talks will be put to the entire section manager group for their consideration.

LloydsPharmacy claim lodged with Labour Court

IN A separate development, Mandate has lodged a claim with the Labour Court to address a number of issues affecting all LloydsPharmacy workers and the hearing date has been set for Friday, 2nd March.

This claim had to be served under a Section 20(1) referral because the company once again refused to engage with the workers' union. The claim includes:

- A fair pay increase (many workers at LloydsPharmacy are on the minimum wage);
- Greater security of working hours (eliminating zero-hour contracts);
- The introduction of incremental pay scales across grades;



- Improvements in annual leave entitlements and public holiday and Sunday premiums; and
- The introduction of a sick pay scheme.

Mr Light said all of the issues in Mandate's claim were important to members of the union but that it "beggared belief" that workers in the healthcare industry did not have a comprehensive sick pay scheme.

LloydsPharmacy is owned by one of the largest healthcare pharmaceutical companies in the world, McKesson Corporation. The company had revenues of \$200 billion in 2017

Meanwhile, as previously predicted, senior management are now speeding up their efforts to address some of the core issues Mandate members have raised through the company-initiated and supported "Colleague Representative Committee" (CRC).

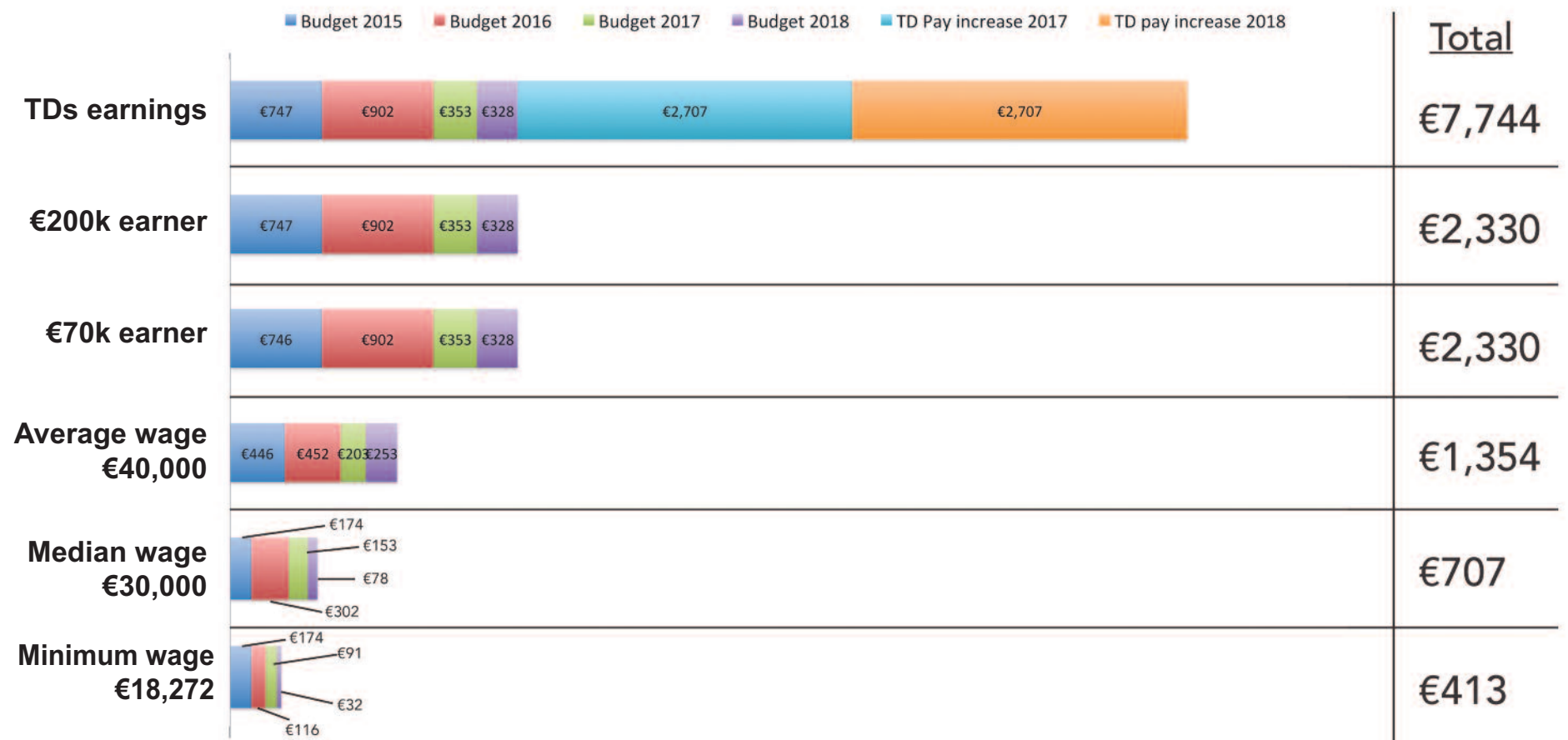
Mr Light said: "Make no mistake, none of these efforts would be taking place without the commitment of Mandate members in LloydsPharmacy who have taken the decision to join and demand better and fairer treatment through their union.

"These objectives will not be delivered through engagement with the CRC, but can only be delivered through professional representation through Mandate Trade Union."

He added: "While any future improvements to your conditions are welcome, it should encourage more LloydsPharmacy colleagues to join Mandate to ensure that issues of fairness and decency are dealt with effectively now and in the long run."

If you work for LloydsPharmacy but are not already a member of your union, Mandate, you can join at www.joinmandate.ie
If you have not done so already, reach out again to colleagues not yet in the union and encourage them to join today.

We're all in this together? Let's have a look at the figures...



| | Minimum wage €18,272 | Median wage €30,000 | Average ind wage €40,000 | €70,000 earner | €200,000 earner | TD's earnings |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Budget 2015 | €174 | €174 | €446 | €746 | €747 | €747 |
| Budget 2016 | €116 | €302 | €452 | €902 | €902 | €902 |
| Budget 2017 | €91 | €153 | €203 | €353 | €353 | €353 |
| Budget 2018 | €32 | €78 | €253 | €328 | €328 | €328 |
| TD pay increase 2017 | | | | | | €2,707 |
| TD pay increase 2018 | | | | | | €2,707 |

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

IN THE last four Budgets more than €3 billion in tax cuts have been given away, mostly to the already well off and to businesses and corporations.

If you question the tax cutting agenda, they say "low paid workers benefit from tax cuts too", so they can hide the real beneficiaries.

So I did up a very quick chart to illustrate where the majority of those tax cuts went, and also to highlight the increased income most

TDs have received (except the TDs who gave back their pay increase).

An average worker received a tax cut of approximately €5 per week in the last Budget. Many would prefer to sacrifice that €5 so that it could be invested in housing, healthcare, education, child care, and public transport, for instance. That's what tax is for.

Those in power now (Fianna Fail, Fine Gael and the Independent Alliance) and in the last Government (Fine Gael and Labour) chose to give tax cuts ahead of tackling the housing and

healthcare crisis which affects the lowest earners most.

A TD who was on €87,258 per year is now €5,000 better off now than they were four years ago.

A median wage worker (where 50% earn more and 50% earn less) is only "better off" to the tune of €707. So a TD now has almost 10 times more excess disposable income compared to a median wage worker after three short years.

However, it is the median wage worker and

those earning less who need public healthcare and public housing the most.

By the way, €3 billion could have built 15,000 houses every single year clearing our social housing list and eliminating homelessness. But the choice was made to line pockets and leave families in hotel rooms.

Remember that come election time.

● Tax figures approximate and taken from the <http://taxcalc.ie/> website

NEWS

SuperValu branches reinvigorated after talks success

MANDATE members working at independent branches of SuperValu in Killester and Raheny voted unanimously to accept a deal brokered between the union and their employer, Oxtron Limited, in December.

It followed the launch of pay talks in early November. From the start of the process Mandate put in place a recruitment drive among the 150-strong workforce across both stores, setting up house committees and electing new shop stewards.

Industrial Officer John Callan, who led the negotiations in conjuc-

tion with the Organising Department on behalf of Mandate, told *Shopfloor*: "Mandate had some long serving members in both locations – some staff had more than 40 years loyal service to the union and their employer.

"And it was great to see new members in both stores step up and become active in the union following in the footsteps of their experienced colleagues to pursue outstanding issues with the company."

During the talks, the union sought a pay increase; improve-

ments in rostering through management giving advanced notice and regular display of rotas; and a long service increment for staff with more than five years service.

John Callan met with company representatives and after a number of meetings, the following was agreed:

- 2% pay increase for all staff from the acceptance of the proposals with a term of one year;

- Rosters would be displayed one week earlier than previously and on a Tuesday of each week for the fol-

lowing week. Local management also agreed to deal with any issues involving the non-display of rotas "in a speedy and efficient manner".

Members unanimously voted for the proposals in early December.

Mr Callan said: "Both stores now have new shop stewards and house committees and training is due to take place in February.

"We also recruited additional new members and updated contact details from existing members.

"The success of this organising /pay negotiating campaign bodes

well for other smaller employments in the Dublin North Division. We intend to replicate this success in forthcoming local negotiations in Malahide Golf Club, where pay talks are at an advanced stage, and in Nolan's Supermarket, Clontarf, where pay talks will start shortly."

He added: "No matter if you work for a leading retailer or a smaller employer it's time to organise and secure better terms and conditions for your workforce.

"Encourage non-members to join Mandate at www.joinmandate.ie and let's organise to win."

GOVT MUST



Magdalena Barska, Howard Mahony, Leanne Fetherston and Audrey Grey with Jack Chambers TD of Fianna Fail



Mary Ann Molunby, Stacey Fitzgerald and Rebecca McMonagle, with Fianna Fail TD Jackie Cahill



Cian Keogh, Rose Kinsella and Muireann Dalton meet Fine Gael Wicklow TD Andrew Doyle



Wicklow FF TD Stephen Donnelly, centre, with Bill Abom, Brian Fogarty and Danielle Murray

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

THE Government published draft legislation in December that has the potential to protect vulnerable low hour workers against exploitation by their employers.

The legislation itself isn't perfect, and needs amendments to make it fit for purpose, but it is a small step towards improving employment standards, particularly in sectors where employers don't necessarily treat their workers with the respect and dignity they deserve – including retail, bars, restaurants, academia and health, among other industries.

For best part of a decade Dunnes Stores workers and other retail and bar workers have been banging on Mandate's door explaining how their hours are being arbitrarily cut, leading to a massive loss in income.

Members would often tell us how their employer is using low hour contracts to ensure they were kept compliant.

"When I complained about a fire exit being blocked by stacked pallets," explained one member, "my manager told me I was being cut from 40 hours per week to 10 hours for six months."

He added: "That meant I was down three-quarters of my wage, more than €300 per week."

There is nothing illegal in this. The workers' contract states 10 hours as a minimum, so the manager has full discretion to cut it to the minimum with no recourse for the member.

To make matters worse for low hour and low paid workers, this cut can mean losing their entitlement to Family Income Supplement (FIS) because you need to work a minimum of 19 hours a week for three months to be eli-

gible. If the employer spreads the hours over a number of days, the worker can also lose access to part-time social welfare because this is done on a day-to-day basis.

They can effectively manage you out of your job by ensuring you can't feed and clothe your family or put a roof over their heads. This is the disproportionate power an employer can have over their workers.

For three years now Mandate has been lobbying to change legislation to outlaw this behaviour.

In 2015, Dunnes Stores workers went on strike to highlight these types of contracts.

Picket lines

Representatives from almost all political parties in the state joined the workers on the picket lines and the then-Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, expressed his support for the workers in the Dail. He said: "I support the workers in their right to have clarity about their working lives."

"Therefore, the message to the employers is that this can be sorted out. These workers are loyal workers. They provide services every day of the week on a 24-hour basis. That should be recognised."

Fianna Fail leader Michael Martin visited the St Stephens Green picket line and said: "I endeavour to get the full Oireachtas behind the [Dunnes Stores] workers, in the name of common decency, and in the name of basic rights that these workers are entitled to."

Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams also expressed his party's support: "They [Dunnes Stores workers], and the 129,000 low-paid workers in this state, deserve certainty about their hours of work and income. They de-

serve secure jobs and they should get fair pay. And their right to trade union representation should be respected."

Ruth Coppinger, from the Solidarity/PBP, said: "The Anti-Austerity Alliance and the Socialist Party fully support the strike action taken by Dunnes Stores workers across the country. We are calling on people to support this important strike by not passing the pickets today and to stand in solidarity with the workers."

Independents4Change's Clare Daly also put on the record her support: "It is vital for all workers in Ireland that the Dunnes workers win this battle. Employers in this country need to be sent a clear message that we will not tolerate these unscrupulous work practices."

So with all this political support, it's hard to understand why two-and-a-half years later, we still don't have legislation protecting low hour workers from exploitation.

Sinn Fein's David Cullinane tabled a piece of legislation in June 2016 which would have given the Dunnes workers and others the security of income and hours that they needed. This was delayed by Fianna Fail by 12 months, entered the Joint Oireachtas Committee for pre-legislative scrutiny, but has now been sent to purgatory by the Ceann Coimhairle for political reasons.

The Labour Party tabled a Bill in the Seanad which was unanimously passed, but hasn't progressed further.

But now the Government has published its own Bill, which is welcome, but it has a number of weaknesses. The two key flaws are the lookback period of 18 months and the width of the



Dunnes shop steward Catherine Glavin, right, with Fianna Fail TD Mary Butler



Fionualla Purcell and Bernie McCarville with John Lahart TD

ACT ON SECURE HOURS!



Nigel Bishop (Mandate activist, Supervalu), Catherine Martin TD (Green Party) and Lorna Dempsey (Mandate activist, Dealz)



Picketline political presence: Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and Fianna Fail's Micheal Martin show their support for Dunnes strikers

bands of hours.

The University of Limerick report, which was commissioned by the government, is adamant that a six month look-back period should apply. The cross-party Joint Oireachtas Committee, as a compromise, stated that 12 months should apply. But now the Government is saying that a worker cannot

get security over their hours for at least 18 months. This is simply too long and will facilitate exploitation.

The Joint Oireachtas Committee also recommended that the gap between bands should be no greater than five hours. This would allow a level of flexibility for the employer, but crucially, some security of income for the

employee. The Government's Bill has much wider bands with one band being 11-24 hours. This means an employer could still effectively cut a workers' income by 54%.

That's why Mandate members are out in force lobbying their local TDs. They are calling on all TDs to support Mandate's Secure Hours = Better Future Charter

which has six key demands.

Dunnes Stores, Dealz, Supervalu and Tesco workers among others have been visiting their local TDs and asking them to sign the Charter. They've been explaining how important this is for low hour contract workers.

Support

Mandate member Lorna Dempsey, a low hour contract worker in Dealz in Dundrum said: "We've been visiting TDs in our constituency and asking them to support low hour contract workers."

"We explained to Catherine Martin TD from the Green Party that there are 1,200 Mandate members in her constituency, and each of them has family and friends who feel strongly about this issue."

Ms Dempsey continued, "To be fair, I don't think Deputy Martin realised the extent of these contracts and how difficult it can be to live on one of them."

"They affect your mental health. You don't know from

week to week what your income is going to be so you don't know if you'll be able to pay your bills or feed your children."

Ms Dempsey also explained to Deputy Martin how tackling these contracts would be good for the state.

"There are rogue employers out there who are abusing the system. Local managers can pick their friends to receive more hours and cut the hours of people they don't like."

"This forces a lot of workers on to social welfare to receive top-up payment benefits – despite the fact many employers are making millions in profits. Why should the Government have to pay top-up benefits when the employer can easily afford to pay the workers a decent wage?"

She added: "If companies like Tesco, Penneys, SuperValu and Marks & Spencer can give their workers security of income through banded hours structures negotiated with their workers' union, then all retail outlets can."



Mandate's John Callan and Dunnes Cardiffsbridge worker Lorraine Clarke join FG TD Noel Rock, centre, outside his constituency office



Sinn Fein TD Brian Stanley



Sinn Fein senator Rose Conroy Walsh shows her support for the Banded Hours/Secure Contracts Campaign after successful lobbying by Mandate activist Keith Leonard

Why unions are turning the page up North

PAGE 11

A NEW, user-friendly publication, launched in early February, could help thousands of Irish families in mortgage distress and facing unfair evictions to understand and advocate for their rights using vital EU consumer and human rights law.

Titled *Your EU Consumer and Human Rights: A Guide for People in Mortgage Distress in Ireland*, the guide is also essential reading for people improperly denied tracker mortgages or those who have been given incorrect interest calculations.

A decade after the financial crash, and with one in 10 mortgages in arrears, Ireland continues to have the highest level of mortgage defaults in the world.

Central Bank of Ireland statistics (September 2017) showed that over 72,000 mortgages are in arrears. A massive 44% (totalling over 31,000) of these are in arrears for over two years, putting them at far greater risk of mortgage repossession.

The laws outlined in the guide oblige Irish courts to assess the fairness of mortgage terms under the EU Unfair Contract Terms Directive. They should also assess the human rights impact of an eviction on all occupants in the home – including children, older people and people with disabilities – under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

These EU requirements are not new. However, to date, they are not being fully applied in Irish courts, according to the Irish and international legal experts behind the new publication.

Dr. Padraic Kenna, Director of the Centre for

HOUSING

Guide sets out legal routes to help those in mortgage distress

Housing Law, Rights and Policy, NUI Galway and one of the authors of the report, told *Shopfloor*: “Our *Guide* sets out simply and clearly how existing EU law should be routinely applied to determine, firstly, whether a mortgage contract term is fair and, secondly, whether a possession or eviction notice is a proportional response to any breach of a mortgage term.

“By applying these EU laws, Irish courts and lawyers can really assist their clients and vulnerable defendants,” he added.

The authors have stressed that the *Guide* is for information purposes only. It does NOT pro-

vide legal advice, and is not a substitute for consulting a lawyer. And they suggest, within the *Guide*, that people share it with their solicitors. However, the authors also acknowledge that a large number of people facing possession are unrepresented, due to the shortage of free and low-cost legal services.

In tandem with the publication of the *Guide*, a group of facilitators are being trained by Community Action Network (CAN), an NGO with extensive housing rights expertise. The facilitators will be available to help promote the *Guide* to people in mortgage distress and to

“ Our *Guide* sets out simply and clearly how existing EU law should be routinely applied to determine, firstly, whether a mortgage contract term is fair and, secondly, whether a possession or eviction notice is a proportional response to any breach of a mortgage term ”

service agencies who may be working with them. They will help people understand the information in the *Guide*, but will not provide legal advice or representation.

The *Guide* also contains practical advice on how to find a solicitor, an outline to the Abhaile Scheme and Personal Insolvency Arrangements, and other vital resources for people in mortgage distress.

Finally, it contains sample template pleadings, for information purposes only.

The *Guide* has been created as part of the Open Society Foundations’ Abusive Lending Practices Project, in conjunction with the Centre for Housing Law, Rights and Policy, NUI Galway and a group of Irish lawyers and advocates. It is available to download at <http://abusivelending.org>.

NEWS

Kildare Trades Council revived

TRADE unionists and activists from across the county attended the first meeting of the re-constituted Kildare Trades Council on February 1st.

Reps from 11 separate unions attended the meeting and there were apologies from a further three unions.

Positions on the Committee were decided and a motion passed in support of Section 39 workers, represented by SIPTU, who are set to go on strike on February 14th if agreement can't be reached to resolve the dispute.

A spokesperson explained to *Shopfloor*: “A decision was taken early last summer to reform the trades council committee, as a result of significant efforts by ICTU’s Fiona Dunne and with the help and support of activists and union officials from across the county.

“We hope Kildare Trades Council will augment the profile of trade unions and organised labour serving members locally and helping to grow union membership in the county.”



Back from left: Emmanuel Cassidy (CWU), Grainne Kelly (INTO), Willie Hamilton (Mandate), Fiona Dunne (ICTU), Aelish Collins (INTO), Eamon Dennehy (ASTI), Willie Bagnal (SIPTU), Aidan Kenny (TUI), Mick Dowling (SIPTU); Front: Billy Wall (OPATSI), Rhys O Seireactain (ISSU), Frank Jones (IFUT), Celine Ward (Fórsa), Chris Harrison (Fórsa), Steven Horgan (TUI), John Hubbard (SIPTU)

Incoming Council President Frank Jones, of IFUT, claimed the most “positive development” was the inclusion of the Irish Second Level Students’ Union (ISSU) on the Council.

He said: “It is so important to the work of the trades council to have access to a voice coming directly from this group. For too long many among us presumed we knew and under-

stood the needs and concerns of this group.

“The inclusion of Rys O Seireadain from the ISSU, and with Rys being elected to the role of Youth Engage-

ment and Student Liaison Officer, ensures that the Council will have a loud and clear voice bring the needs of those in second level education to our meetings.”

SHOP STEWARDS TRAINING PROGRAMME 2018

| Course Title | Course Dates | Duration | Location | Closing date |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Occupational Health and Safety Awareness Training (Refresher) | April Tue 3/Wed 4/Thur 5 | 3 days | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Training and Development Part 2 | April 9/10/11/12/13 | 5 days | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Union Representative Advanced Senior | April 16/17/18 | 3 days | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Negotiation Skills Level 1 | April 23 | 1 day | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Union Representative Introductory | April 30-May 1/2 | 3 days | Waterford | 19/02/2018 |
| Employment Law Level 1 | May 9 | 1 day | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Union Representative Introductory | May 14/15/16 | 3 days | Cork | 19/02/2018 |
| Union Representative Introductory | May 21/22/23 | 3 days | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Negotiation Skills Level 2 | June 5 | 1 day | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Trade Union Representative QQ Level 5 | June 11/12/13 | 3 days | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Occupational Health and Safety Awareness Training (Refresher) | June 18/19/20 | 3 days | Dublin | 19/02/2018 |
| Employment Law Level 2 | Sept 3 | 1 day | Dublin | 23/07/2018 |
| Communications & Personal Development QQI Level 5 | Sept 11 - Dec 4 | 14 weeks 1 night p/w | Dublin | 23/07/2018 |
| IT Skills QQI Level 5 | Sept 11 - Dec 4 | 14 weeks 1 night p/w | Dublin | 23/07/2018 |
| IT Skills Advanced | Sept 12 - Dec 5 | 14 weeks 1 night p/w | Dublin | 23/07/2018 |
| Union Representative Introductory | Sept 10/11/12 | 3 days | Limerick | 23/07/2018 |
| Union Representative Advanced Senior | Sept 17/18/19 | 3 days | Cork | 23/07/2018 |
| Union Representative Introductory | Sept 24/25/26 | 3 days | Dublin | 23/07/2018 |
| Training and Development Part 1 | October 1/2/3/4/5 | 5 days | Dublin | 13/08/2018 |
| Trade Union Representative QQI Level 5 | October 8/9/10 | 3 days | Dublin | 13/08/2018 |
| Health and Safety Level 5 | October 15/16/17/18/19 | 5 days | Dublin | 13/08/2018 |
| Union Representative Introductory | October 22/23/24 | 3 days | Galway | 13/08/2018 |
| Union Representative Advanced Senior | November 5/6/7 | 3 days | Dublin | 13/08/2018 |
| Negotiation Skills 3 | November 12 | 1 day | Dublin | 13/08/2018 |

If you are interested in attending any of these courses, please contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Organising & Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email mandateotc@mandate.ie

● Dublin courses will take place in Mandate Organising & Training Centre ● Please note venue/dates may vary ● To secure your place book early to avoid disappointment



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

The DRAPERS' ASSISTANT

Journal of the Irish Drapers' Assistants' Association, forerunner of Mandate Trade Union

EDITORIAL DECEMBER 1917

The wage war is a world war

THE greatest war for national supremacy is drawing to a close, but the wage war still holds on, and will hold on until the aims of greed avarice are defeated and the worker gains the just recompense for his labour – a decent livelihood. The wage war is a world war.

All over the known globe the voice from the depths calls out aloud for sustenance and the rectification of their oppressions, but their oppressors, conscience-hardened, heed not the call of their necessities, and so the world wags on with humanity, who should bathe in the God-given crystal springs of nature, steeped in a cesspool of iniquity and misery which is sprung from that source of avarice, low wages.

The degradation and vice of the world is due, primarily, to the default capitalist to pay the labourer his just hire. Capitalism, in lowering the worker's sustenance, has lowered the physical and moral fibre of the nation. It has cast the worker down, as it were, into a pit from whence their responsibilities become invisible; wherein the noblest of men's thoughts are stifled, and where despair plays upon the mind to such a degree as to produce an utter thoughtlessness of self-respect, and even degrades the human mind so far as to conceive and mature the seeds of vice from which spring the criminal.

We cannot possibly credit the capitalist with such an intense barrenness of mind as to credit him with the ignorance of the effects of his low wages policy, and therefore when we review the methods he adopts to counteract the extreme poverty and misery which his avarice has produced, we cannot but label him as a hypocrite.

By so-called philanthropy the oppressor of mankind poses as its benefactor and

consider himself as worthy of their benediction. He keeps them during their best years in a state of semi-starvation and bestows upon them the demoralising shelter of the workhouse in after years, when humanity and justice demands that he should have tendered them a living wage during their working days, to be succeeded by a pension.

He upholds the workhouse as the recompense for the lives broken on the wheel of toil; he justifies the goal system as the medium of turning the victims of his greed into moral men and women; and he is conscious of a flame of Christian charity within his heart when he exerts his influence to have the skeletons of his victims conveyed to their last resting place at the expense of the public.

Can such a state remain? It cannot. It must not be allowed to remain. Organisation has taught the worker the true value of himself, self-reliance and honest pride, and every day the volume of the voice of labour swells in its demand for the rectification of the present state of things. It demands a living wage that it may live decently and procure the necessaries for the body and that a fair chance be given to the future generation of being reared in a different environment from the past, an environment where the moral aspect of men and matters may be clearly presented to them; where they may understand the responsibilities they must shoulder for the good of the nation.

In other words, that they may be reared the free children of a free country imbued with the ideal of working, not for a mere sustenance, but for the progress of their country and themselves. With this end in view the wage war must keep on until the bitter end. The silencing of the clang of war in Flanders will open up an opportunity for Labour to force their demands. It will give them the chance they have been looking for for years, and let us trust they will be prepared to take it.

Capital is well aware that its sins have long since found it out and are preparing for a desperate effort to crush the aspirations of labour.

Let us urge forward all our strength towards the though organisation of ourselves that with our combined force we may wring from the unwilling capitalist the means of a decent livelihood – a living wage.

Smashing down the barriers to employment

By Fergus Finlay

JUST over two years ago the Government announced a comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities. It was very far-reaching and extensive and was designed to be implemented over a period of years. Ever since then, I have been chairing an implementation group, which consists of representatives of government departments, the disability sector, and the world of work – especially the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

We all know that people with disabilities face far more challenges than most in getting a job, building a career, finding fulfilling and rewarding work to do.

The figures are stark. According to the latest census, there were 176,445 people with a disability in the labour force, giving a labour force participation rate of 30.2% compared with 61.4% for the population overall. The unemployment rate among persons with a disability was 26.3%, more than double the 12.9% rate for the population as a whole.

As we know, Ireland is moving toward full employment. I've told the group I work with that against a background of rising employment and a growing economy, the figures I've quoted above demonstrate ongoing inequality and discrimination.

We will fail to address that discrimination if we continue to fail to get education right, to get services right, to get the infrastructure around employment right, and to get attitudes right.

If people with disabilities continue to fail to benefit from a recovering and growing economy, and from a demand among employers for loyal, committed and productive workers, it will be our failure, not theirs.

Recruitment processes

But there's a lot of really good work going on. The Government has agreed to double the target of people with a disability in the public service from 3% to 6% over time, and steps are being taken to make recruitment processes easier and more disability friendly.

The Department of Social Protection is introducing significant changes, through its Make Work Pay report, to make it easier for a person with a disability to take up a job without threatening the access to services that he or she needs.

A new model for the allocation of additional teaching supports for pupils with special educational needs was introduced for all schools, in September 2017. The model is based on the profiled special educational need of each school and is aimed at providing better outcomes for children with special educational needs and addressing potential unfairness in the previous model.

In relation to further education and training a significant development has been the decision to establish a new social inclusion unit in SOLAS in order to support the participation of all, including people with disabilities, in accessing opportunities.

All over the country, people with disabilities report that one of the main barriers to employment is accessible and available transport.

In this year's Budget there was a multi-annual allocation of around €28m to improve accessibility. This funding is a trebling of the previous allocation for accessibility under the Capital Plan. This will facilitate the continued roll-out of the programmes to install accessible bus stops, the upgrading of train stations to make them accessible to wheelchair users and the grant scheme to support the introduction of more wheelchair accessible vehicles into the taxi fleet.



Picture: Paul Wilkinson (CC BY 2.0)

So in a whole variety of ways, a lot is happening. And yet not enough is changing. Why?

Part of the answer may be in a survey of attitudes conducted by the National Disability Authority this year. When asked about their level of comfort working with people with disabilities, respondents reported highest comfort levels for working with people with physical disabilities (8.9 out of 10), and the lowest comfort levels for working with people with mental health difficulties (8.2 out of 10). But only 18% of respondents believed that people with disabilities receive equal opportunities in terms of employment.

The NDA also operates a helpline for employers, to enable them to access support and advice around the issue of employing people with disabilities. The helpline gets a lot of calls – but the vast majority of them come from employers who have encountered disability among their existing workforce. There is no sense whatever that employers in general want to take a lead – or indeed take any risk at all – when it comes to helping people with disabilities break down the barriers.

That's why, in the report I will be publishing on

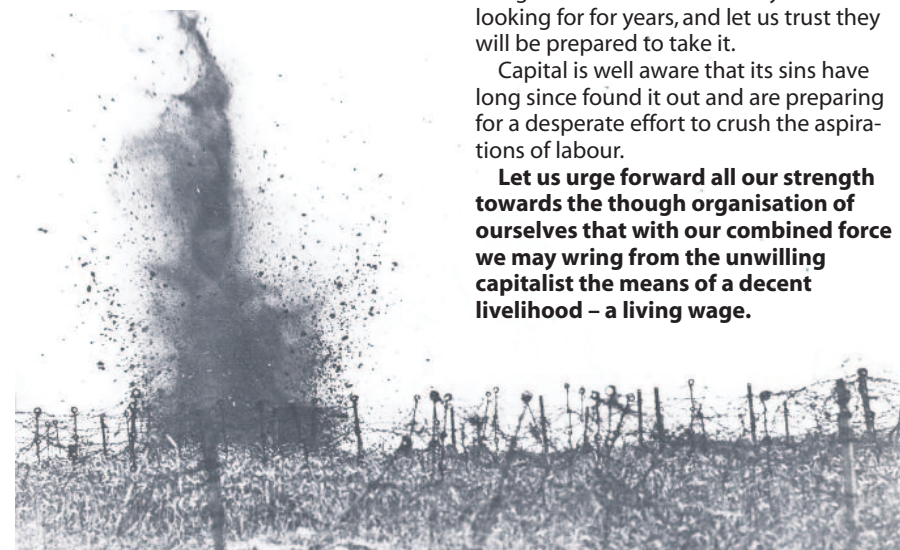
“ People with disabilities have just as much right as any other citizen to participate in the world of work. The things that stop them – including prejudice and wrong perceptions – are barriers that we all helped to erect. They are the kind of barriers that the trade union movement exists to tear down ”

the second year of our work, I will be suggesting to the Minister for Disabilities that he would consider calling an informal “summit” of employer and trade union bodies to start putting the kind of awareness campaign that is necessary in place, and to call out champions from the world of work to end the ongoing discrimination in this area.

I would really welcome the support of the wider trade union movement for an initiative like this. If we don't work to actively break down barriers, we are implicitly condoning discrimination.

People with disabilities have just as much right as any other citizen to participate in the world of work. The things that stop them – including prejudice and wrong perceptions – are barriers that we all helped to erect. They are the kind of barriers that the trade union movement exists to tear down.

Fergus Finlay is chair of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy Implementation Group



Picture: Public Domain

Unions turning the page up North

By Mel Corry
Trademark

THE Editor of *Shopfloor* is always demanding good news stories about the trade union movement. I'm delighted to oblige...

In November 2017, the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions launched a campaign under the slogan 'Better Work Better Lives'. Launching the campaign, Congress Assistant General Secretary Owen Reidy pointed out that the trade union movement in Northern Ireland comprised 30 unions organising and representing the interests of 200,000 workers coming together across all sectors to shine a light on the scourge of low pay and precarious work, attacks on public services and low investment in these services and the injustice of 1% public pay gap.

Mr Reidy described the situation in Northern Ireland as serious and that it needed to be addressed without delay.

The facts are stark:

- One out of every three workers considers their work to be insecure.
- Four out of every 10 workers are in non-standard working arrangements.
- 20% of all workers are on or below the real living wage.
- Women and young people are disproportionately affected, especially in the private sector.
- Since 2010 the block grant from Westminster has been cut by 10.2%.
- Education spending has been cut by 9% since 2010/11.

● Since 2011/13 workers had to deal with a wage freeze and since then an annual 1% pay cap.

● Inflation is forecast to be 2.5%-3% in the coming year and rising.

● Community and voluntary sector workers are facing month to month contracts and many services are disappearing.

Engagement

Congress is calling for a process of meaningful engagement with policy makers and others to seek to address the issues and change direction.

It is clear that the situation is compounded by a series of political decisions and is not supported by economic data. Supported by research carried out by the Nevin Economic Research Institute the Congress campaign is drawing from the experience base of its membership. Teams of union officials along

with workers from public and private sector unions as well as local trades councils across the north are initiating meetings with political parties in every constituency. The teams are broadly reflective of all the sectors and the campaign has reawakened a sense of pride that the movement is relevant to the lives of workers.

The old myth of public sector bad and private sector good has been exploded; the private sector has been sucking at the teat of the public sector in the form of PFI and PPP for too long and is now being exposed as inefficient and indeed not up to the job.

As we're beginning to see private sector companies starting to fall apart under the weight of their own debts, it is the workers who suffer. Precarious employment and low pay is now a common feature among public sector workers in health, education and local government - the scourge of the zero hour contract is now a common feature.

An example of the pressures people face in today's workplace is Yvonne's story. She has worked for more than 20 years as a school secretary. You might consider that a nice wee number but Yvonne works 32.5 hours a week in her job and has had

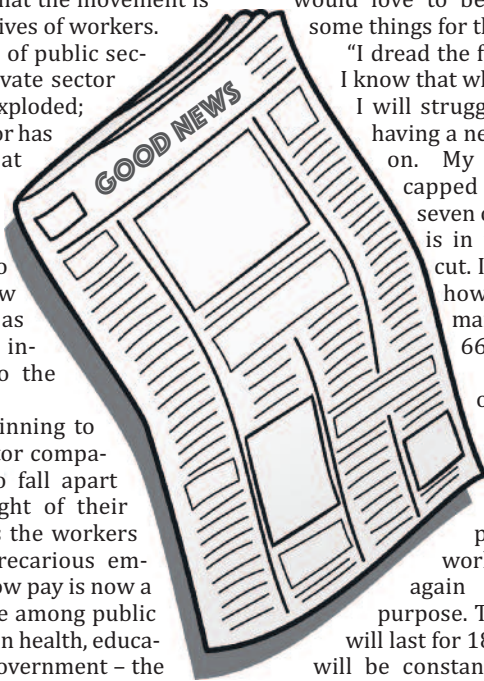
to take on a second job to make ends meet.

She said: "The last time I got oil for the house I had to put it on the credit card and will be doing the same again this month. I can't remember the last time I bought myself clothes and would love to be able to get some things for the house."

"I dread the future now as I know that when/if I retire I will struggle instead of having a nest egg to rely on. My wages being capped this past seven or eight years is in reality a pay cut. I have no idea how I'm going to manage until I'm 66 years old."

This is just one of many examples that are bringing public and private sector workers together again in common purpose. The campaign will last for 18 months and will be constantly reviewed and evaluated.

For our part Trademark has access to its own TV programme in partnership with a local digital community TV station Northern Visions TV. We have just recorded our first campaign programme update and will make a series of updates for the duration of the campaign.



“As the search for a suitable form of government continues to elude us here, it is a good news story when we see an energised trade union movement uniting workers and workers uniting people behind this campaign”

The TV programmes regularly get audiences in the 100,000s and will hopefully embed the campaign in the minds of the population. The campaign has its own web page where you can find out what's happening at <https://www.betterworkbetterlives.org/>

The campaign so far has garnered greater partnership working among Congress affiliates and officials working with lay members. Interaction with the Northern Ireland Trades Council activists has seen a noticeable increase and we are confident that membership will grow as workers see the movement engaged in a meaningful campaign to improve their interests.

Energised

As the search for a suitable form of government continues to elude us here, it is a good news story when we see an energised trade union movement uniting workers and workers uniting people behind this campaign.

Tackling low pay and insecure work, as Mandate members know only too well, will give us better work, more productive and fulfilling work and lead to better lives.

We need to see a reversal of the cuts to public expenditure and investment which will also make for a place worth living in.

Finally, workers need their wages to keep pace with and indeed outpace inflation and we demand an end to pay caps and call for free collective bargaining with strong trade unions defending their members' interests. *Up the workers!*



Occupational Health and Safety Awareness Training

This three-day QQI Health and Safety Course is for elected Health and Safety Representatives. The following topics will be covered on the course:

- Module 1** History and Principles of OSH
- Module 2** The Law Part 1
- Module 3** The Law Part 2
- Module 4** The Safety Statement
- Module 5** Hazard Identification and Risk assessment
- Module 6** Safety representative - role and rights
- Module 7** The Health and Safety Authority and Enforcement

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a progression route into the QQI Level 5 Certificate in Health and Safety

Venue: Mandate Training Centre Dublin

Date: April 3rd – 5th

Venue: Mandate Training Centre Dublin

Date: June 18th-20th

Please contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** if you are interested in taking this course; or alternatively you can email your request to mandateotc@mandate.ie



Negotiation Skills Intermediate Level 1

This one day progression course in Negotiation Skills is for union activists, union representatives who have a desire to improve their knowledge and understanding in conflict resolution and negotiation skills, managing the process and the psychology of the negotiating environment.

There are three levels:

- Introductory ● Building Skills and Knowledge ● Negotiations in Practice

Course content:

- Psychology of the Negotiating Environment
- Strategic approach to negotiations ● Collective Decision Making
- Identifying goals to be achieved ● Prioritising issues
- Developing tactical plans ● Tactics in negotiations – both sides – *Key Learning
- Stone walling ● Cooling off periods

Date: April 16th **Venue:** Mandate Training Centre, Dublin

Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate certificate. Members who complete this course may progress to Level 2 Building Skills and Knowledge and Level 3 Negotiations in Practice.

Please contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** if you are interested in taking this course; or alternatively you can email your request to mandateotc@mandate.ie



Collective bargaining: the fight goes on

I WOULD like to thank Mandate for this opportunity to write in *Shopfloor*. Unite and Mandate members share many of the same concerns and priorities – and securing the right to collective bargaining is high up that list.

All too often, the media dismisses the fight for collective bargaining as unions fighting for ‘their’ recognition. But it’s not about unions’ rights – it’s about workers’ rights. It’s about respecting their right to choose how they will be represented.

Ireland is alone in the European Union in not giving workers an unequivocal right to be represented collectively when negotiating with their employer.

Unite represents workers throughout the island of Ireland – but our members enjoy different rights in Northern Ireland and the Republic. In fact, there is a hard border when it comes to workers’ rights.

Let’s take the case of youth services provider Extern. They are a major player in the social care market, contracted by local authorities, government departments and state bodies



throughout Ireland. The organisation originated in Northern Ireland, and then spread to the Republic where its clients include the HSE, Tusla and the Irish Youth Justice Service.

Vulnerable young people and their families benefit from the expertise, professionalism and commitment of Extern staff, many of whom deliver social care in both parts of Ireland.

But although their work may be all-island, the right of Extern staff to be collectively represented stops short at the border. In Northern Ireland – however reluctantly – Extern has to negotiate collectively with workers through the union of their choice. In the Republic, where Unite organises three-quarters of Extern staff, Extern

can and does refuse to negotiate with Unite. They have also refused to attend a WRC conciliation conference.

Instead, Extern is sheltering behind the 2015 Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act and proposing a so-called ‘Staff/Management Consultative Forum’ – or what might more accurately be termed a ‘bosses union’.

When the 2015 Act was brought in, it was trumpeted as – finally – providing a legal right to collective bargaining. But in fact, all it does is provide some remedies for those who do not have the right to collective bargaining. Is it an improvement? Certainly. Does it vindicate the right of workers to be collectively represented by a union of their choice? No.

From Extern to LloydsPharmacy, and Capita to Forever 21, companies regularly refuse to negotiate collectively with their workers and there is currently no legal mechanism to compel them to do so, or even to compel them to engage with the state’s industrial relations machinery and implement the outcomes of such engagement.

Ireland and the UK are at the bottom of Europe’s collective bargaining league table – but at least UK workers have a legal right to negotiate collectively, however difficult it often is to implement that right.

On average, 80% of European workers have access to collective bargaining. In Ireland, it is just 33.5%. And when one strips out public sector workers the picture is even grimmer: the percentage of private sector workers with access to collective bargaining could be as low as 15%.

And that is bad for all of us. Research by organisations not known for their radicalism, such as the OECD and IMF, indicates that union membership and collective bargaining rights reduce income inequality, while other studies have found that union membership, employee participation and collective negotiation improves productivity at the enterprise level.

But of course it’s about more than income equality or productivity, important as these are. It’s about democracy. It’s about ensuring that

working people have a voice in the decisions that affect them.

That means organising in workplaces. It means using all the instruments at our disposal to advance sectoral bargaining, in the form for example of REAs and SEOs.

And it means continuing the fight for proper collective bargaining legislation. This will be one of my priorities as Unite Regional Secretary, and I look forward to working with other unions, including Mandate, to progress that fight on behalf not only of our existing members – but also all those workers, especially in the private sector, who do not yet have the benefits of union membership and a collective voice.

Belfast man Jackie Pollock has been a trade union activist since the early 1980s, when he was elected as a shop steward in Harland & Wolff. From 2014 to 2016, Jackie served as Chair of the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU. Most recently, he served as Deputy Regional Secretary of Unite. On January 1st 2018, Jackie Pollock succeeded Jimmy Kelly as Ireland Regional Secretary of Unite.

THERE'S A NEW WAY TO JOIN OR PAY YOUR DUES

www.joinmandate.ie

OUR NEW WEB PORTAL ALSO ALLOWS EXISTING MEMBERS TO SWITCH THEIR PAYMENT METHOD



Illustration: Daniel Huntley (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Employment Law Introduction Level 1

This one day progression course in Employment Law is for union activists, union representatives who have a desire to improve their knowledge and understanding of employment law.

The introductory course in employment law will enable course participants to gain an understanding of the legislative environment within which the employment relationship operates.

Date: May 9th, 2018

Venue: Mandate Training Centre

● **Sources of Irish Law**

Common law, judicial precedent;
Equity;
Constitution.

● **Statute Law**

Primary legislation;
Secondary legislation;
Role of EU law. Directives.

● **The role of law in regulating working conditions.**

● **The role of law in promoting equality, Health & Safety and best practice in the workplace**

Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate certificate. Members who complete this course may progress to the Advanced Employment Law Level 2 course on **September 3rd, 2018**

If you are interested please contact Mandate's Training Centre on **01-836 9699** or by email mandateotc@mandate.ie.

● **The rights and duties of both employers and employees in the workplace.**

● **Contract of employment:**

Distinguish between an independent contractor (contract for service) and an employee (contract of service);
The nature of employers defences;
Redress/remedies in Employment law.



INTERNATIONAL

Mandate extends 'hand of solidarity' to Basque rally

MANDATE has joined other trade unions, social movements and political parties from across the world in sending a message of solidarity to those who took part in a massive rally through that centre of Bilbao on January 14.

Some 95,000 people took to the rain-soaked streets of the Basque capital in what has become an annual event protesting against the policy of dispersing political prisoners across Spanish and French jails, hundreds of miles away from their homes and families.

Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes told *Shopfloor*: "Mandate stands proudly in solidarity alongside our Basque comrades in defence of the human rights of Basque political prisoners."

"We shall never forget the human rights struggles endured by political prisoners in Ireland under the rule of British imperialism over many decades."

"It is with one eye on our own shared history and the ongoing human rights violations experienced by Basque political prisoners that we extend the international hand of trade union solidarity and comradeship standing alongside the majority of the Basque trade union movement and the wider international trade union movement and beyond."

"Spanish and French state repression will never silence Basque expression."



ORGANISING



'Exciting' and 'bright' future as Connect Trade Union launched

THE launch of Connect Trade Union, bringing together a larger number of craft and skilled technical, engineering, electrical and construction workers than ever before, has been hailed as an "exciting" new era in organising in Ireland.

The union was formally launched by ICTU General Secretary Patricia King and Connect Trade Union General Secretary Paddy Kavanagh, at the unveiling of a plaque outside its head office in Gardiner Row, Dublin, on January 17.

Paddy Kavanagh told *Shopfloor*: "With the launch of Connect Trade Union we are embarking on an exciting and challenging new period for the organisation of workers in Ireland. The new organisation brings together more crafts, construction and engineering workers into one union than ever before in Ireland, while also maintaining the best of the traditions of both its predecessor unions, the TEEU and UCATT."

"The name, Connect Trade Union, reflects how unions and workers connect to each other, their families and communities. It also reflects the work of many of our members involved in the crafts, engineering and construction sectors in which they connect materials together so as when com-

bined makes them stronger than their individual parts.

"The objective of Connect Trade Union is exactly this to combine all such workers in Ireland for a stronger voice and greater representation at workplace, local and national level."

"Our new union is now embarked on a journey, one in which it will utilise its growing strength to promote inclusiveness and fairness in both the workplace and society. As the largest craft union in Ireland Connect Trade Union is the leading advocate of craft apprenticeship and post apprenticeship training in all of the 21 trades (greater than any other union) it has negotiating rights for."

He added: "Connect Trade Union is in talks which will hopefully result in the number of trades it represents being even further expanded. If successful this will be one more giant step to the formation of the long awaited one strong independent union for all craft workers in Ireland."

"The future is bright for Connect Trade Union. By working together our members will ensure that Connect Trade Union will be the union for craft and technical, engineering, electrical and construction workers in Ireland."



ICTU General Secretary Patricia King unveils plaque outside the new union's Gardiner Row HQ as Connect Trade Union's General Secretary Paddy Kavanagh looks on

Pictures: Graham Seely

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

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>

THINKING OUT LOUD

One rule for the rich another for the poor

By John Carty
Divisional Organiser

COULD you imagine living in a country where the government brings out a law that if you break it, the same law prohibits a judge from penalising you for breaking that law? Could you imagine living in a country, where a law is designed to protect those with power from those who have none? Well, you don't have to imagine any more, if you live in Ireland.

The Government is proposing to bring out such a law. The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017 is a law that the Government is proposing to protect part-time workers by providing them with a right to a banded hour contract, that does not meet the standard called for by Mandate.

However, despite the weakness and the loopholes of the Fine Gael-proposed Bill to suit employers at the expense of part-time workers, there is a blatant injustice. Section 15 of the Bill proposed to amend Section 18 of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. If the 1997 Act is amended by this Fine Gael proposed change, Section 18A, Sub Section 10 will read: "Notwithstanding section 27(3)(c), a decision in accordance with subsection (9)(b) shall not order an employer to pay compensation to the employee for the employer's failure to comply with this section."

Is this blatantly giving employers carte blanche? As 27(3)(c) of the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997 states that: "(c) require the employer to pay to the employee compensation of such amount (if any) as is just and equitable having regard to all the circumstances, but not exceeding two years remuneration in respect of the employee's employment, and the references in the foregoing paragraphs to an employer shall be construed, in a case where ownership of the business of the employer changes after the contravention to which the complaint relates occurred, as references to the person who, by virtue of the change, becomes entitled to such ownership."

Without the potential cost of compensation of up to two years wages, what incentive is there on an employer to comply with the new law? All a third party such as the Workplace Relations Commission, Labour Court, (after delays, adjournments, appeals etc) can do is tell the employer to comply with the law from the date of the decision. Under Fine Gael's proposals the worker cannot be compensated for the loss of wages they accrued because their employer was breaking the law.



Illustration: Xoan Baltar (CC BY 2.0)

The 18th Century philosopher, Jean-Jacques Rousseau would not be surprised by this. In 1762, he stated: "The universal spirit of laws, in all countries is to favour the strong in opposition to the weak, and to assist those who have possessions against those who have none." [1]

Adam Smith, another 18th Century philosopher, stated in 1763: "Laws and government may be considered in this and indeed in every case as a

Remember: these TDs depend on your votes for greater security for their livelihoods. Greater security for your livelihood depends on those TDs

combination of the rich to oppress the poor, and to preserve to themselves the inequality of the goods which would otherwise be soon destroyed by the attacks of the poor, who if not hindered by the government would soon reduce others to an equality with themselves by open violence." [2]

Of course, both these philosophers were writing at time before universal adult suffrage. Now workers can vote for and lobby politicians to ensure

that the laws they enact are just. However, the law and its interpretation (which is just as important) is still weighed against workers' interests.

A recent Supreme Court decision regarding Ryanair and union recognition [3], would be an example of this. John Hendy, a barrister with serious credentials (Chair, Institute of Employment Rights; President, International Centre for Trade Union Rights) recently stated at a lecture in Trinity College Dublin that he believes the Supreme Court erred in its decision to Ryanair's favour. [4] Nevertheless, in good old trade union fashion, the Ryanair pilots threatened Ryanair with strike action and secured for themselves by themselves what the Supreme Court failed to deliver.

Likewise, it is up to Mandate members to campaign and secure for themselves what Fine Gael is refusing to deliver. Contact your local TDs (all parties) and ask them straight out if are they prepared to sign the Mandate pledge regarding proper banded hours contracts secured by law. Mandate officials have sent every TD in the country the details of the pledge. To see if the TDs in your constituency have signed or not, check out the link <https://dunneworkers.com/secure-hours-better-future/>

Remember: these TDs depend on your votes for greater security for their livelihoods. Greater security for your livelihood depends on those TDs.

[1] Page 34, quoted in Piven, F.F. and Cloward, R.A. (2005), 'Rulemaking, Rulebreaking, and Power' in T. Janoski, R. Alford, A. Hicks, and M. A. Schwartz (Eds.) *The Handbook of Political Sociology*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

[2] Page 208 in Smith, A. (1978), 'Lectures on Jurisprudence' in R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael, and P. G. Stein (Eds.) *Adam Smith: Volume V, Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[3] *Ryanair v The Labour Court and Irish Municipal Public and Civil Trade Union (IMPACT)* (2007) 4 (1) I.E.L.J. 24

[4] Hendy, J. (2014), McGowan and Collective Bargaining in Ireland, lecture in Trinity College Dublin in conjunction with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and Merchants' Quay Chambers 30 January 2014.



'No hiding place' for TDs on housing

Housing expert Dr Lorcan Sirr, above left, addresses conference and the NGO panel, above right, answers questions from the audience
Pictures: Congress

MANDATE has insisted there should be “no hiding place” for TDs not prepared to tackle the housing crisis head on.

Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes made the comments following the launch of a new initiative, *Charter for Housing Rights*, by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions earlier this year.

The Charter, launched on January 23 at the CWU Conference Centre in Dublin, demands the Government introduces a right to housing and initiates a major building programme of public housing.

Mr Forbes said: “A vital component of the ICTU initiative is to establish cross-union lobby groups in local constituency areas to apply pressure on TDs to sign up and agree to the five basic demands set out within the charter.

Emergency

“There should be no hiding place for any TD not prepared to do everything in their power to end this housing and homelessness emergency sweeping our country.”

These five demands set out in the *Charter* are:

- The declaration of a national housing and homelessness emergency and the launching of a major building programme of public housing to deliver at least 10,000 new homes annually over the next five years.

- The holding of a referendum or the introduction of legislation within a set timeframe that affirms the right to housing for every citizen.

- Put in place legislation to ensure that all tenants within the rental sector enjoy security of tenure and certainty over rents and standards of accommodation.

- The eviction of a family or an individual into homelessness must be prohibited by law.

- The development of a national land management policy commensurate with a right to housing.

Speaking at the launch, ICTU General Secretary Patricia King said: “It is clear to us and to many agencies operating on the front line that we are in the midst of a very real emergency, with respect to housing and homelessness.

“Lives are being damaged and destroyed and a whole generation of younger workers now wonders whether they will ever be in position to find suitable, secure and affordable accommodation.”

She called that the housing crisis a “systemic policy failure of the highest order” and identified the key problem as the “severe lack of public housing” and the state’s abandonment of housing policy to developers.

These sentiments were echoed by Brian Forbes. He described the housing and homelessness crisis as “the defining issue of our time” and one that demanded an “urgent and coherent national response”.

Mr Forbes insisted: “The crisis is not intractable, but its resolution will require significant policy change. A critical component of that resolution is the need to begin a major programme of public housing construction along with initiatives that will lead to the creation of a secure and sustainable housing system for all.

“Winning this change is the central aim of the Irish Congress of Trades Union housing campaign and one which should generate strong support



Brian Forbes: ‘not intractable’



Patricia King: Housing crisis in Ireland is a ‘systemic failure of the highest order’



across a wide alliance of political and civil society groupings.

He added: “This Congress campaign initiative is a step in the right direction and a clear sign that the new Congress leadership is pre-

pared to engage in a bit of ‘street fighting’ campaign work which is a positive sign for union members and workers everywhere!”

Download the *Charter* at <http://bit.ly/2Dzsn0F>

VIEWPOINT Patricia King page 22

“ It is clear to us... that we are in the midst of a very real emergency... Lives are being damaged and destroyed and a whole generation of younger workers now wonders whether they will ever be in position to find suitable, secure and affordable accommodation ”

Beware the presence of the employer once removed

THERE is nothing new in certain businesses using the practice of agencies to recruit and manage their workforce. Whether it is in the aviation sector here in Ireland (Ryanair) or in the world of sportswear retailing in the UK (Sports Direct) we have seen very clear examples in the past of how big wealthy, profitable corporations are availing of this labour hire model to not only add to their already existing bloated bottom line but also to significantly distance themselves from and make it more difficult for trade unions to establish a presence with a view to creating a meaningful collective bargaining environment.

Another good example of this labour hire model recently came to my attention when I read about Amazon, now the world's biggest retailer, and how they set about getting workers for a new venture in Australia. Instead of employing workers directly, Amazon uses another company, totally independent of them, called Adecco to both recruit and employ workers who are then placed in the Amazon business under the control of Adecco.

Just in case you think this practice is confined to Australia apparently Amazon and Adecco have a global contract to provide workers in this manner. Not surprisingly the hourly rate of pay given to workers is the minimum legal rate while the union negotiated rate for the job is some 60% higher.

If this is the model being promoted by the biggest retailer in the world then it is time for us all, whether from a worker or consumer perspective, to sit up and take notice.

The head of the Australian-based National Union of Workers (NUW), Tim Kennedy, has quickly identified the difficulties that the Amazon labour hire model presents. He says that there is no point bargaining with Adecco because they have effectively no power while on the other hand they can't seek to negotiate with Amazon because they have no workers.

According to Kennedy some of the features that evolve from this type of employment model are low paid, low quality, irregular work, shift cancellations at late notice and short shift lengths. Another sinister tactic identified by the Aussie union is where the labour hire firm already has in place a non-union collective agreement with workers before they are placed into the host business,

not surprisingly these are called "sham" agreements.

There is also evidence in Australia that agency workers are not reserved for new start-ups and are now being gradually evolved into businesses that traditionally started out using a directly employed workforce.

On the other hand when challenged about the use of this type of labour hire model Amazon had some interesting and alarmingly familiar responses. First, they prefer to call the workforce associates and not workers. They practice an open-door policy that encourages the associates to bring their comments, questions and concerns directly to their employer.

The main justification for their labour model is – and I quote – "to enable us to move quickly, access talent and manage variations in customers' demand". Now think for a moment and recall where you heard in an Irish context remarkably similar explanations in the recent past.

Clearly the unions in Australia like their global counterparts are facing real challenges that threaten the whole future of unionised labour and the growth in the use of agency workers is yet another dark cloud on the horizon.

While the use of this type of employment model is rarely illegal we must continuously challenge its objectives, legitimacy and moral basis. Where appropriate we should lobby for effective legislation that ensures the unmasking of the host company and make it more difficult for them to easily avoid their responsibility to treat the workers that generate their massive profits and wealth with the fairness and decency they deserve.

However, as I have said in this column before, an over-reliance on legislation is in itself a potentially dangerous strategy. We must continue to seek to collectively bargain the best terms and conditions achievable. It is only then that we can continue to promote and tactically use the premium that union membership brings.

If we can achieve this, then we can attack at the very heart of these employment agencies to ensure better and significant improvements for those who they directly employ. This is the best way of destroying this largely insidious employment practice. By forcing them to pay proper wages to their workers it will reduce their profits to the point that it is no longer viable for them to stay in business then the pressure will return to the host company to start directly employing workers again.

Whether in the capacity of individual workers or consumers we also have a critical part to play in opposing the spread of exploitative business models similar to the ones that Amazon see as very much the future.

As workers we must remain constantly diligent in the workplace and ensure that the introduction of these detrimental practices are monitored, resisted and removed at the earliest stage possible.

As consumers we retain the considerable power of our spend and, where possible, we must look beyond the value proposition and into the moralities of the workplace that presents an offer that in some circumstances is too good to be true and, therefore, it should be resisted for the sake of the common good.

Acting together against the greedy and self-serving interests of these powerful corporate powerhouses will be difficult and without doubt will require a sustained effort, but victory is not impossible.



AGENDA

National Action Plan and workplace rights

THE first *National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights* finally saw the light of day in late 2017. The Human Rights Unit in the Department of Foreign Affairs is to be commended for its work in developing the plan and getting Government approval. You can view a range of civil society responses to the plan at <http://bit.ly/2jE3oSU> but here is a trade union perspective...

The National Plan's stated aim is: "To promote responsible business practices at home and overseas by all Irish business enterprises in line with Ireland's commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights globally and to being one of the best countries in the world in which to do business."

It is divided into three sections, the first of which sets the context, the *UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights*, and the consultation process leading to the adoption of the National Plan.

The *UN Guiding Principles* form the context for this discussion and set out a "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework which includes the concept of human rights due diligence by businesses.

The next section sets out the current legislative and regulatory framework in Ireland and part 3 the actions to be undertaken by the Government.

In order to judge the potential effectiveness of these actions, I will compare them to the content of ICTU's 2015 submission to Government on the development of the plan.

The legislative section has a short section on workers' rights. While it does mention Ireland's very welcome membership of the ILO governing body, it does not mention our obligations to report on how we are implementing fundamental rights at work.

The two key actions in section 3 of the plan are:

- Commission a comprehensive baseline assessment of the legislative and regulatory framework pertaining to business and human rights as it applies in Ireland;

- Establish a 'Business and Human Rights implementation group', comprised of representatives from government, business and civil society, to meet twice a year to review the implementation of the National Plan over the first three years

In our submission, Congress pointed to the fact that there are significant gaps (collective bargaining, the right to representation etc) in the Irish legal and policy framework to ensure businesses operating in or from Ireland are respecting human rights and to address such gaps. ICTU called on the Government to conduct a "root and branch" review to bring Ireland into compliance with international human rights law obligations.

Clearly, the commitment to conduct a comprehensive baseline assessment has the potential to achieve some of this and ICTU will be working to ensure that the baseline assessment is not simply a paper exercise



but can point the way forward for meaningful change in rights at work.

The implementation group is a positive step and our participation in it will enable us to follow the implementation of the plan and to seek to influence the committed actions.

Our submission also included a proposal "to shine a light on the revised *OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises*". These *Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises* (MNEs) comprise a set of recommendations from governments to MNEs on responsible business conduct.

A unique feature of the guidelines is a Government-backed complaints mechanism where potentially big business can be held to account for its impacts on workers and the environment. Under the *Guidelines*, each signatory government is required to set up a National Contact Point (NCP) – a government body hearing complaints and generally promoting the Guidelines. The Irish NCP is among the least active ones in the OECD and apart from a mention in the context section, there is only a vague ongoing action listed in Annex 1:

"Facilitate mediation where appropriate in the OECD National Contact Point grievance procedures for cases arising under the OECD multinational guidelines following the publication of national procedures to give effect to the guidelines."

Congress will seek clarity on what this might entail and continue to press for an effectively resourced NCP, something the Government is required to implement under an OECD Council ruling.

Finally, the publication of the plan is a positive step and Ireland now joins a select number of countries which have done so. The plan is careful to stress that the *UN Guiding Principles* are "not legally binding" this is reflected in the continued use of terms such as "encourage" and "support" and avoidance of words such as "require".

It pointedly eschews the legislative route for mandatory due diligence such as the Netherlands' Compact, France's Vigilance Law or the less-onerous UK Modern Slavery Act.

Debate on a binding international treaty in order to regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises is for another day, but the effectiveness of plans such as these will be judged on how they impact the millions upon millions of workers in global supply chains who continue to experience unsafe and insecure work with poverty wages.

David Joyce is Equality Officer at ICTU

We need smart thinking on housing

WHAT if you could rent an apartment or a house for hundreds of euro less than current levels? Or buy a house for a €100,000 less than current price? Does it sound like fantasy? It isn't. In fact, it's happening already – in Ireland and throughout many European countries.

One housing cooperative in North Dublin is already building and selling houses at well below current market prices. A one-bedroom house is going for €150,000; a two-bedroom comes in at €175,000; while a large four-bedroom house is selling for €215,000. To put that in perspective, new houses in Dublin average over €400,000.

So how can they do it? They are building houses at cost – not for profit. And they are building on land given to them by the Dublin City Council, not bought from a developer. These are not yellow-pack houses, either. They are built to top specifications. For instance, they have such high energy ratings that they are effectively zero-energy houses (that is, there would be very little electricity and heating costs – another big saving). And the cooperative still manages to make a small 'surplus' which they are re-investing to build more houses.

Regarding rental accommodation – with apartments in Dublin going for €1,500 per month and more – the Nevin Economic Research Institute, the trade union think-tank, proposed a 'cost-rental' model that is pervasive throughout other European countries. Simply put, tenants would only pay the cost of the construction and maintenance. This would substantially reduce rents.

So why the difference between cost-based (or non-profit) housing and current market prices? One explanation is that 35% of market house prices are made up of profit and the cost of land. That's a big chunk. Another feature is that the state can borrow money much more cheaply than a private developer – about the half the rate.

This is not unknown to policy makers. The Oireachtas Committee on Housing commissioned the Society of



Michael Taft

Chartered Accountants to identify all the costs that go into the price of a three-bedroom house. The Society came up with a total figure of €330,000. However, when you go through each of the items making up the cost, we can see the difference...

- Profit and cost of land: €95,500

- Planning levies, and sale and marketing costs: €20,000

- Financing (borrowing) twice as much as public sector borrowing: €10,000

These costs – which are not borne by the public sector – come to over €125,000. Therein lies the difference. As Dr Lorcan Serr, a leading housing expert who recently addressed a housing conference sponsored by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, stated: "There's plenty of evidence out there to show that direct delivery of housing by the State can be done much cheaper than relying on speculative building... State delivery of housing is the most efficient way to provide housing quickly and affordably."

So what is stopping the Government from stepping into the 'market' and building the housing – social housing, rental accommodation and house purchases – that we so desperately need? Nothing but their own policy prejudices.

The local authorities have enough land already to build nearly 40,000 houses – nearly three times as much as the Government is planning to build over the next four years. And this doesn't count the land other public agencies hold.

Some have pointed to the large number of TDs who are landlords as

an explanation. There's something in that. If I own 20 houses that I'm renting out I will have a different perspective than if I'm a tenant paying up to 40% of my disposable income on high rents.

However, the problem is more endemic than that and is rooted in an ideology of residual public housing. This refers to the idea that public housing is for 'the poor'. The flip-side of this is that all other housing must be delivered through the private sector. And if the state needs to step in –

with cash subsidies, tax breaks – to help the private sector along the way, not to worry. The market will eventually 'stabilise' and everyone will be housed.

The housing crisis has put this ideology to a test and found it wanting. Land hoarding, increasing rents, pushing up prices: there is little sense in blaming the individuals or companies that engage in these activities. They are merely responding to signals in a dysfunctional market.

The task for trade unionists and

progressives is to promote a programme that creates different signals and provides more options for people in housing need. We need public intervention through a range of housing models that are based on costs, not profits; and facilitate people with different needs in their life-cycle and conditions.

From renting to purchasing, from small homes to larger ones when starting a family, accommodation for all income ranges, specialist housing for those with disabilities, housing for the elderly: this is not so much about creating a market but, rather, a network to facilitate people's need for a decent home.

“ We need public intervention through a range of housing models that are based on costs, not profits; and facilitate people with different needs in their life-cycle and conditions ”

That is why the march on April 7th, sponsored by the National Homeless and Housing Coalition – a broad-based organisation of civil society groups, trade unions and progressive political parties – is so important.

We have the analysis, we have the programme, we have the examples. Now we need to keep the issue of housing at the top of the agenda and, so, give us the opportunity to convince the debate that we don't need to be the victims of market forces, that housing should be for homes, not for profit.

Michael Taft is an economic analyst and trade union activist

IRISH LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

For those who want to brush up on their Irish speaking, writing and spelling skills while also developing communication skills which are important for dealing with workplace and personal situations.

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

- This course helps you to improve your Irish language communications skills.
- Use introductory vocabulary, to include greetings, introductions, exchange of basic personal information etc.
- Exchange familiar information in the Irish language context.
- Read simple notices, signs and short pieces of text on familiar subjects to include social and work related information.
- Interact in social and work related situations using Irish language as the means of communication.
- This course will help you to use the Irish Language at beginner level.

This Course is open to members who have not achieved their Leaving Certificate or who have an out of date Leaving Certificate. Places are limited and allocated on a first come, first served basis. Courses delivered by the Education & Training Board near to your workplace

If you are interested please contact Mandate's Training Centre on **01-8369699** or by email mandateotc@mandate.ie



MANDATE ORGANISING & TRAINING CENTRE

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THE GOOD RETAILERS?

Organizing at Zara and H&M in New York City

By John Logan
San Francisco State University

ORGANIZING workers in the retail sector is difficult work, especially in countries like the United States, where legal protection for the right to organize is woefully inadequate and employer hostility is widespread.

In most cases, management simply needs to make clear that it opposes unionization and this, along with the very real threat of retaliation, is sufficient to convince most workers not to support the union.

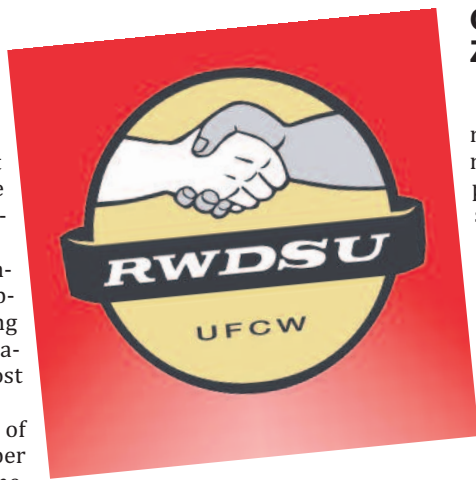
Add to that the high rates of turnover in the sector, large number of employees who work part-time, and the prevalence of erratic work schedules, all of which make promoting “cultures of solidarity” in the stores extremely challenging, and US retail unionists really have their work cut out for them.

It's hardly surprising, then, that according to figures just released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, union density in the retail and wholesale sector in the United States in 2017 was under five per cent. [1]

However, even in the face of these formidable obstacles, over the past few years, the Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union (RWDSU), an affiliate of the United Food and Commercial Workers international union (UFCW), has enjoyed remarkable success in organizing workers at fast fashion retailers Zara and H&M in New York City.

Both of the retail giants – the first and second largest fashion retailers in the world – are accustomed to dealing with unions in their home countries and elsewhere in Europe, and both have signed global framework agreements with UNI Global Union – Swedish-owned H&M in 2003 and Spanish-owned Inditex in 2009.

In addition, both companies have signed framework agreements with the global union federation IndustriALL covering labor standards among



their supply chain workers, which Inditex first signed in 2007 and H&M signed in 2015. [2]

These framework agreements are intended to ensure that management will respect workers right to organize and bargain collective, and not interfere when they attempt to form unions.

In the United States, both retailers have signed neutrality and access agreements allowing the RWDSU access to the stores to meet with workers, ensuring that management will not attempt to pressure or intimidate workers into opposing the union, and agreeing to allow workers to unionize on the basis of a majority of signed authorization cards, rather than require them to go through lengthy and adversarial National Labor Relations Board election campaigns.

In common with labor law in Ireland, US labor law does not require employers to grant union access to workplace, stay neutral during organizing campaigns, or recognize unions on the basis of a majority of signed membership cards – but neither does it prohibit them from doing so.

So what has happened in New York City and why is it important?

Organizing at Zara in New York City

In 2016, the world's largest fashion retailer, Inditex, agreed to remain neutral during union organizing campaigns at its seven New York Zara stores, which employ about 1,000 workers. [3] Zara employs approximately 4,700 workers throughout the United States. The company, which owns more than 2,350 stores globally, including about 125 in North America, has allowed its US workers to make the decision on unionization without fear of pressure and intimidation.

The neutrality agreement developed out of a labor dispute which started in 2014. Before the company signed the agreement, Zara workers had complained about low wages, poor working conditions, erratic schedules, and a lack of advancement opportunities for people of color at the stores.

Management has invited union officials into the workplace to explain to workers how the union and the collective bargaining process function, and how the union seeks a constructive relationship with management that will benefit the company and workers. [4]

In July 2016, Zara workers in New York City decided overwhelmingly to join the RWDSU/UFCW, and UNI Global Union complimented both the union and Zara management for ensuring that the spirit and the provisions of the global agreement were enforced during the campaign. [5]

Organizing at H&M in New York City

Likewise, in recent years, several thousand H&M workers in New York City have joined the RWDSU/UFCW without having to worry about management interference. [6] After H&M signed a global agreement in 2003, the UFCW signed a neutrality and access agreement with the company in



RWDSU member hammers home the point. The union has had great success in organizing retail workers at Zara and H&M stores in New York City

Picture: RWDSU

IT TO
ANITIZE
CRACY!



Picture: Chrisinphilly5448 (CC BY 2.0)



Picture: Mike Mozart (CC BY 2.0)

motivated by antipathy towards the company. The employee stated that she “loved” her job, but recognized that unionization would improve the environment: “Retail workers, especially part-time workers like me, need a union for fair treatment, fair pay, affordable health care, and equality in the workplace.” [7]

Outside of New York City, the UFCW has experienced problems with management opposition when it has attempted to organize H&M retail workers. However, the global framework agreement, along with the national neutrality and access agreement, has provided a mechanism for ongoing dialogue with the company, and the union is hopeful it will resolve these problems, especially given the positive experience it has had with H&M management in New York City.

Outside of the United States, the Swedish retail giant has something of a mixed record when it comes to respecting the right to organize among its 150,000 retail workers.

Lessons from Zara and H&M campaigns

The experiences of Zara and H&M workers in New York City



IKEA: Same firm, differing union policy in US from that followed back home in Sweden

Picture: emdot (CC BY 2.0)

demonstrates, once again, that when retail workers in the United States are given a genuinely free and fair choice on whether or not to join a union, they decide to organize in droves. Union density in the retail sector in the United States is low not because workers are disinterested in joining unions, but because retail employers pressure and intimidate them during organizing campaigns – as has been clearly illustrated by hostile employers like Amazon and Walmart. Both retail giants have crushed any and all efforts among their employees to organize unions and improve working conditions. [8]

Even Swedish furniture retailer IKEA, which respects workers’ rights and cooperates with unions at home, has fought aggressively against ef-

orts by its employees to form a union in the United States.

At home IKEA is the archetypal Swedish firm that embraces dialogue with labor and promotes socially responsible values. In the United States, in contrast, IKEA management has embraced no-holds-barred anti-unionism.

It has recruited notorious “union avoidance” law firms, forced workers to attend “captive audience” anti-union meetings, and predicted negative consequences if workers choose to unionize. The federal labor board has found that it committed unlawful anti-union practices in 2015 and 2016.

When one IKEA worker pointed out that the company routinely deals with unions in Sweden and elsewhere in Europe, an IKEA manager responded, “Well now you’re talking a European union, which is totally different.”

Zara and H&M deserve praise for allowing their workers in New York City to choose unionization free from management interference. They now need to expand that process beyond America’s largest city, and other large retailers should follow their example.

If IKEA, Amazon or Walmart workers in the USA were given an equally

free and fair choice on unionization, they too would join up in large numbers. There is little doubt that they, like their counterparts at Zara and H&M, would benefit enormously from union membership.

Too often, retail workers in the United States suffer from poverty wages, poor working conditions, a lack of due process, limited access to full-time hours, and erratic work schedules. Instead of being given a free choice, however, these workers have faced management pressure and intimidation when they attempt to form unions.

Amazon and Walmart are companies that appear to have a hostility towards unionism engrained in their DNA. IKEA, on the other hand, respects labor rights in Sweden and elsewhere in Northern Europe; it should also do so in the United States. If H&M and Inditex can uphold workers’ right to form a union, then so can IKEA.

John Logan is Professor and Director of Labor and Employment Studies at San Francisco State University, and a Senior Research Associate at the University of California-Berkeley Center for Labor Education and Research

[1] <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/union2.pdf>

[2] <http://bit.ly/2F51wtC>

[3] UNI Global Union, “Respect for workers’ right to join union in Zara’s New York flagship store,” September 15, 2015. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2BnsSsA> (Accessed August 15, 2016).

[4] Daily Labor Report, “Manhattan Retail Workers OK Neutrality Agreement With Zara,” August 2, 2016.

[5] UNI Global Union, “Zara workers unionize for first time in the United States,” August 3, 2016. Available at: <http://bit.ly/2BodIU0> (Accessed August 15, 2016)

[6] Daily Labor Report, “H&M Employees at Six New York Stores Choose RWDSU Through Card Check,” August 4, 2011.

[7] Daily Labor Report, “H&M Employees at Six New York Stores Choose RWDSU Through Card Check,” August 4, 2011.

[8] <http://time.com/956/how-amazon-crushed-the-union-movement/>

Migrant fishers average €2.82 an hour

NEW research conducted with migrant fishers working on Irish boats has revealed that severe underpayment, discrimination and exploitation are still rife in the industry.

The findings, based on research carried out by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI), was outlined at a launch in Dublin on December 11, 2017.

In-depth interviews with 30 fishers showed that:

- A majority (65%) work more than 100 hours a week;
- Average pay is just €2.82 per hour;
- One in four have experienced

verbal or physical abuse;

- One in five have experienced discrimination and racism; and
- 40% do not feel safe at work

MRCI Director Edel McGinley told *Shopfloor*: "Ireland cannot be proud of the food we produce unless we respect the people who produce it. Fishing is a tough job in a complex industry, and it's even more difficult and dangerous for migrant fishers enduring chronic underpayment and shockingly long hours."

A Government taskforce was set up in 2015 after the *Guardian* newspaper revealed the levels of exploitation in the Irish fishing

industry. But the new report claims the Atypical Working Scheme developed by the taskforce has in fact compounded problems.

Edel McGinley said: "As a result of this scheme, these skilled and experienced fishermen are being paid minimum wage for a 39-hour week – while, like all fishers, working much longer hours."

"This means their actual hourly pay is less than €3."

She added: "This must be an immediate priority for Minister Heather Humphreys; people need to be sure that the Irish fish they buy is exploitation-free."

Govt report backs CIC take on bogus work

THE Construction Industry Committee (CIC) of ICTU has claimed the publication of a long-awaited official report into the growth of bogus self-employment "serves to confirm that the practice remains a significant problem in the construction sector and therefore must be tackled at a national level."

Responding to the report's findings, CIC spokesperson Bill Wall told *Shopfloor*: "This official investigation into the nature and scope of bogus self-employment was prompted by the 2015 publication of an ICTU study titled *False Economy: the Growth of Bogus Self-Employment in Construction* that showed taxpayers had lost up to €600 million as a result of the practice while standards of employment in the sector had also suffered."

The new report, published in early February, was prepared by a working group from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection, the Department of Finance and the Revenue Commissioners.

Mr Wall said: "The CIC and unions across the sector will now study this report and its findings and issue a more detailed response in due course. But for now we note that the report confirms that while self-employment may av-

erage some 15% across the wider economy, it is now over 30% in the construction sector, which confirms the fears we have repeatedly expressed.

"We note also that report confirms that the practice has led to a 'not insignificant' loss of tax revenue to the State."

"Clearly the priority now is to bring an end to bogus self-employment in the sector and in all other areas of the economy where it is present."

Mr Wall underlined the need for "speedy and effective remedies" for workers forced into self-employment.

He added: "To that end, the CIC believes it would be more suitable to ensure that such workers should have recourse to the offices of Workplace Relations Commission, as opposed to taking their case to the Scope section of the Department of Employment Affairs & Social Protection, as is currently the case."



Bill Wall: report confirmation



Picture: Images Money (CC BY 2.0) TaxRebate.co.uk

Why your €4 subs is money well spent

FOUR euro – sure you couldn't even get a pint for that. So what are Mandate members getting for their €4 subs every week? The benefits are clear – they are:

● **PROTECTION AT WORK** – You are never alone. Unionised workplaces elect an in-store shop steward – people like me – to represent and defend the interests of the workers.

When needed Mandate's highly trained and skilled officials will provide professional advice and assistance on a number of issues. Being a union member means you are less likely to be sacked!

● **BETTER PAY & CONDITIONS** – The union's strength is in numbers. This gives more collective bargaining power to negotiate better pay and conditions. Every non-union worker weakens our position at the negotiating table. Every year Mandate fights to win pay increases and improve terms of employment for its members.

Having already secured banded hour agreements with a number of employers, they are actively campaigning for banded hour legislation which would provide workers with security of earnings each week.

● **SAFETY AT WORK** – Workplaces that have a strong union are safer. Mandate's elected Health and Safety reps are highly trained to minimise the risk of injuries or accidents at work. They also ensure that employers meet their legal obligations at all times and that duties are safe to be carried out.

● **TOP QUALITY TRAINING** – A high number of courses are available to members in Mandate's state-of-the-art training centre and at locations across the country. All these courses are free for members.

They range from shop steward and Health and Safety training to evening courses such as computer skills etc. I have enjoyed all the courses I have taken part in and I have gained new skills and confidence to help me in my role as a union rep as well as in my everyday life.

The tutors are excellent and the courses are delivered to a high standard with a number providing opportunities to gain QQI accreditation.

● **A VOICE IN THE WORKPLACE** –



Brian Fogarty

When one person speaks it is usually ignored or ineffective but when a group of people speak it is heard. Telling your boss "We want things to be different here" is far stronger coming from a group of workers than from just one employee.

Mandate organises in workplaces by encouraging members to have more active in their union. This helps create a collective strength and solidarity that is needed to resolve issues and improve conditions as a unified group.

“ The union's strength is in numbers. This gives more collective bargaining power to negotiate better pay and conditions. Every non-union worker weakens our position at the negotiating table ”

As well as fighting for fairness and equality in the workplace Mandate also challenges social injustice nationally and Internationally using progressive campaigning to fight issues that matter to members, their families and to society in general.

The Right2Water and Right2Change are campaigns recently supported by Mandate. We lobbied TDs to get behind the campaigns to help us try to make our society a better place to live in.

So here's my advice to anyone working in retail...

- **JOIN MANDATE TRADE UNION;**
- **PAY YOUR SUBS;** and
- **GET ACTIVE IN YOUR UNION.**

Simple... €4, money well spent.

Brian Fogarty (SuperValu Bray) is a member of the NEC



Computer Applications Basic Skills QQI Level 4

What you'll learn...

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

Venue: Mandate Training Centre, Distillery Road, Dublin 3

Cost: Free of Charge **Eligibility:** Mandate members



Evening Courses take place one evening per week for a duration of 12 weeks.

If interested contact Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie**

STAY CONNECTED www.mandate.ie

Raising consciousness, changing society

By **Ciaran Campbell**
Mandate Divisional Organiser

MANY trade unionists have long debated whether their organisations should engage on a wider political front, often opting instead to exclusively limit their representations and work to the industrial relations level.

While this has undoubtedly led to laudable wage dividends for trade union members it only perpetuates a system that is exclusively and intentionally capitalist-motivated and which consistently enslaves the very class trade unions are there to represent.

Eoghan O'Neill's excellent, succinct and clear article in the January edition of *Socialist Voice* – copies of which are free to take from the foyer of Mandate's O'Lehane House – not only tackles this conundrum but argues that unions have a responsibility not only to engage politically but, just as importantly, demonstrate to their members how the class struggle affects them.

O'Neill sets out the historic capitalist/worker relationships that subjugate workers by ensuring that they do not get the full pay value of their labour, effort and time thus generating a profit that is kept and subsequently accumulated by the capitalist.

This relationship is intentionally hidden from the worker. As he states: "The wealth is created by labour, but the product belongs to the capitalist;

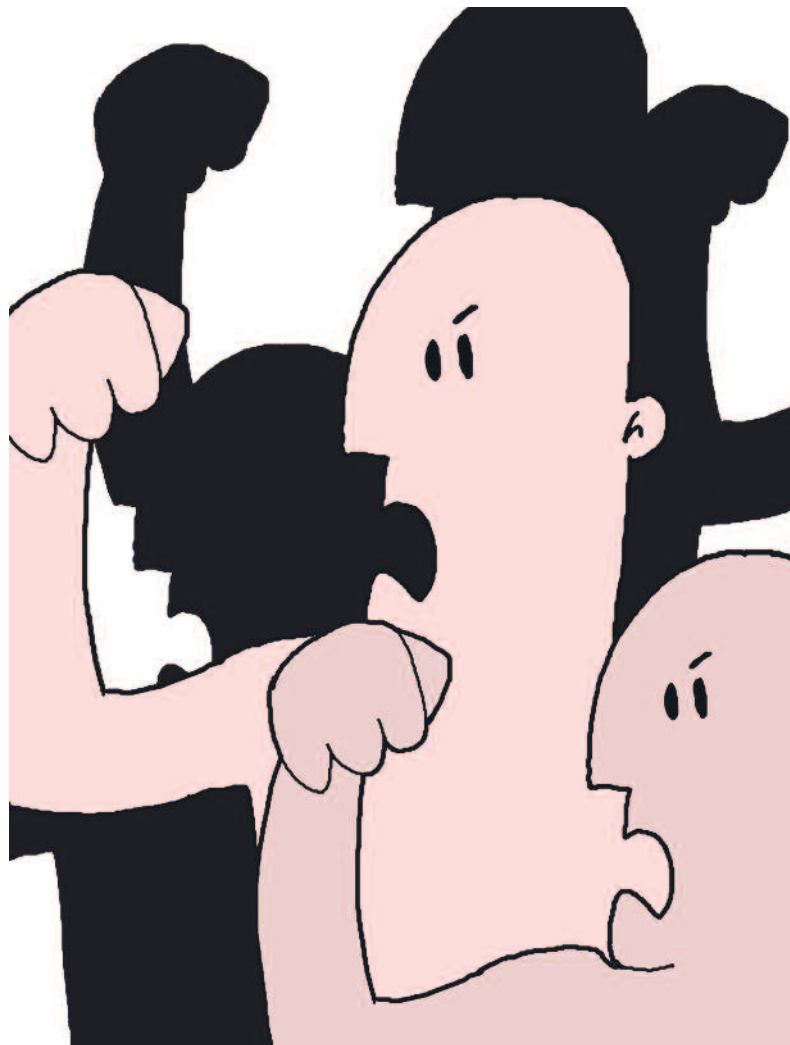


Illustration: Xoan Baltar (CC BY 2.0)

and through the laws, customs and standards of the private-ownership system this wealth is extracted and then divided. The strength of labour will determine what portion of the wealth they created they are able to keep."

While this strength through organised trade union membership can, through wage negotiations, help address the inequalities of the labour for pay exchange, it fails to address the exploitation inherent within the system.

Facilitators

Wage increases and the subsequent maintenance of workers' living standards are an important staple for union representatives' labours, but it importantly does not challenge the capitalist classes' systematic stranglehold. This stranglehold exploits not only at an employment level, but because society's productive forces are exclusively privatised, the exploitative abuses also impact socially.

These impacts are indirect and unnecessary taxes, unfair taxation policies, health and education charges, housing and so on. While some or many of these might have universal application their effects are socio-economically disproportionate in disadvantaging the lower paid.

People movements, such as Right2Water, which was supported by a number of trade unions (not least Mandate), are important collec-

tive and organised challenges to this capitalistic exploitative system. This system made sure that any austerity measures would have little or no impact on those controlling the levers of real power but in turn helped them to grow even more powerful and wealthy.

Right2Water and its limited but very important successes demonstrate that trade union representation of members has to have a holistic approach rather than the narrow wage focus that currently predominates.

Protecting workers at both employment and societal levels as a class struggle will challenge the very structures that enslave and oppress workers. This cannot be achieved overnight – by an isolated or general strike or by cries of 'Revolution' at a mass rally – but can be achieved by developing class consciousness. Trade unions can and should be important facilitators of this development.

Political economy education courses such as that presented by Belfast-based Trademark, and which is part of Mandate's annual training course programme, are important tools for class consciousness development – essential if we are to have any hope of reversing the recently Oxfam declared and unchallenged statistic that in 2017 1% of the world's wealthiest shared 82% of the world's wealth. *The time is right for Right2Change!*



Health and Safety Representation for Elected Reps QQI Level 5

This five-day QQI Level 5 Health and Safety Course is for elected Health and Safety Representatives. The following topics will be covered on the course:

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

Date: October 15th - 19th

Venue: Mandate Training Centre, Dublin

Members who successfully complete this Training Course will obtain a QQI Level 5 Certificate in Health and Safety.

Please contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** if you are interested in taking this course; or alternatively you can email your request to mandateotc@mandate.ie



Negotiation Skills Level 2 'Building Skills and Knowledge'

This one day progression course in Negotiation Skills is for union activists, union representatives who have a desire to improve their knowledge and understanding in conflict resolution and negotiation skills, managing the process and the psychology of the negotiating environment.

There are three levels:

- Introductory ● Building Skills and Knowledge ● Negotiations in Practice

Course content:

- The Negotiating Team – formation; delegation ● An Evolving Plan – sitting around the table
- Different roles for different people ● Who takes the lead? ● Who takes the notes?
- Who provokes the other side? ● Who watches the other side?
- Handling problems without sensation and becoming emotional
- Producing Facts to support arguments ● Predicting counter arguments
- Benchmarking – what are the markers to work towards? – top; middle and bottom

Date: June 5th **Venue:** Mandate Training Centre, Dublin

Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate certificate. Members who complete this course may progress to Level 3 Negotiations in Practice.

Please contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** if you are interested in taking this course; or alternatively you can email your request to mandateotc@mandate.ie



Five key changes to tackle crisis in housing

THERE are some in official circles who continue to insist that we do not have a housing or homeless crisis, despite the evidence that overwhelms us daily in media outlets and on our streets.

It was even recently suggested that our homeless problem was low by European standards. Thankfully that particular claim was quickly discredited and shown to be wrong.

Congress has produced research which clearly shows that workers on average incomes now struggle to find affordable accommodation to buy or rent in Dublin, Cork, Galway and other parts of the country.

While rents have risen by an average of 60% nationally and house prices by 40%, disposable income is up by 8% over the same timeframe.

The net effect is that thousands of younger workers and families are ef-



fectively locked out of the housing sector and forced to live in high price, insecure and often poor quality accommodation.

Meanwhile, instead of building affordable homes and tackling the crisis at the root, the Government continues to pay out enormous sums to private landlords for rental properties, as part of its response to homelessness.

Some €5.5 billion has been spent on this wasteful subsidy since 2005 – money that could have built 30,000 affordable homes. Based on current

trends this expenditure will rise to a staggering €1 billion per annum by 2019. The numbers simply do not add up.

It is also deeply problematic that we continue to funnel huge sums of state money into a sector in which tenants do not enjoy security of tenure and have no guarantee of decent standards of accommodation.

The absence of joined-up thinking and a coherent strategy to tackle this very deep crisis is a source of huge concern for Congress, given the negative impact on tens of thousands of working people.

Clearly we need to rectify this dramatic imbalance of power in our housing sector: housing is far too fundamental a human need to be left to the mercy of the market and the balance sheets of private developers.

That is why Congress has em-

barked on a major national campaign on the housing and homeless crisis, with the aim of securing very significant changes in official policy.

We have outlined the key changes we need to see in our *Charter for Housing Rights*. This calls on the Government to:

- Declare a housing and homeless emergency and begin a major public housing building programme, delivering at least 10,000 affordable homes per annum

- Hold a referendum or introduce legislation that affirms the right to housing for every citizen

- Legislate to ensure all tenants enjoy security of tenure, rent certainty and decent standards of accommodation

- Ban 'evictions to nowhere' – no family or individual should be evicted into homelessness

- Develop a land use policy in accordance with the right to housing.

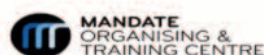
The *Charter* has already gained support from the main housing and homeless campaign and support groups and from major political groupings, such as Sinn Fein, Labour and People Before Profit.

We have now embarked on a major, national lobbying campaign – in collaboration with Mandate and other affiliates – which will see teams of union members across the country visiting their local TDs to ask where they stand on the *Charter*.

Given the scale and impact of this crisis, it is critical that all TDs let their constituents know exactly where they stand on this issue and if they will work to make the rights outlined in the *Charter* a reality.

Download the *Charter* at: <http://bit.ly/2Dzsn0F>

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

Why we are seeking an Abtransformation

By Alex Homich
Connolly Youth Movement

SCABTRAN is a page that was set up by activists of the Connolly Youth Movement in Cork to facilitate the many complaints we've become aware of regarding Abtran.

The company is known around Cork to have a huge turnover of overwhelmingly young staff.

The stories our page, which we've titled 'Scabtran', have picked up are horrific. There are reported incidents of bullying, harassment and horrendous working and pay conditions.

Like most of the private sector, Abtran is not unionised and has no vehicle that represents the interests of workers. Abtran prefers to keep it this way. According to claims made by former staff, threats are routinely issued regarding union membership. Former employees that have con-



tacted us have told us that those trying to get organised have been let go.

The page has exploded since we set it up on January 25th. Hundreds of stories have been sent in to us by current and former employees. We have engaged with so many people it's beginning to get hard to keep track of the information that is coming to us.

Then, four days into our setup, on January 29th something amusing and eventful happened. Abtran management emailed their staff about the page telling them not to view it. Before you knew it the page had almost doubled in traction!

It is clear that Abtran, like every

other company, has only one objective - to maximise productivity and profits while minimising costs. This is done at the expense of workers. Minimum wage, cancellation of bonuses, no overtime pay, broken equipment and virtually no incentive for productivity all form part of the issues workers face.

Abtran reportedly controls and monitors its staff. It's claimed social isolation techniques are used (one example is the Sky account has something called 'bootcamp', which is a remote desk where you are placed if you don't make targets).

If you go over your daily allowance

of seven minutes 'away time' that doesn't exclude breaks, your name is put on a list marked 'red', while those who don't exceed it are 'green'. This psychological approach to reward those who obey and embarrass or shame those who don't is part of a mechanism for control.

Scabtran is just the first part of our strategy to unionise the operation - after all, we want to build up the necessary support among former and current employees to expose how the company treats workers and then act upon it.

Our second phase will be to engage directly with the workforce and target the locations, leaflet the workers and encourage them to unionise. To succeed we must be organised, disciplined and have a vision of where we want to go.

Some of our current objectives are:

1. Collective bargaining for the workers;
2. Union recognition by Abtran;
3. Pay rise to a living wage as proposed by the Nevin Economic Research Institute;
4. Complete removal of monitoring of bathroom breaks;
5. New equipment for necessary facilities (broken chairs, desks, headsets, etc); and
6. A complete overhaul of management techniques, to be done in conjunction with workers' representatives.

We understand that this may turn into a long and bitter struggle but we, as young people standing in the tradition of James Connolly, are fed up with seeing other young people getting hammered in the workplace.



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



Information Technology Skills 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

If you are interested in taking this course in 2018, contact Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mndateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place

Places are limited and are allocated on a first come first served basis and are open to Mandate members who are currently unemployed.

Please see Mandate website for further training courses at www.mandate.ie



● Survey 'proof' abortion is trade union issue ● TD praises 'vital' research

Unions brief Oireachtas on survey findings

TRADE union leaders, activists and academics outlined the findings of a groundbreaking survey looking at trade union members' attitudes to abortion rights to members of the Oireachtas on January 31st.

Deputies Joan Collins and Clare Daly had issued the invitation following the publication of the *Abortion as a Workplace Issue* study.

More than 3,000 union members North and South were surveyed in the research, which was commissioned by Mandate along with Unite, CWU, Unison, GMB and activist groups Alliance for Choice and the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th.

Joan Collins TD, who hosted the



briefing, said she welcomed the publication of what she called "this vital research".

"This work shines a light on women's experiences within Irish workplaces and the barriers to accessing health care that they face on a regular basis."

She added: "I also very much welcome the initiative of the trade union campaign in organising for repeal of the 8th. Trade unions have played a valuable role in forefronting equality and human rights issues in the past

and will play a crucial in the forthcoming referendum."

Mandate General Secretary John Douglas said: "The survey findings make interesting reading in that it has been confirmed that safe open supportive access to abortion is a workplace issue for very many workers.

"Where there is a lack of support at work, workers feel more vulnerable and pressurised at a time which is already very stressful for them.

"Therefore there is an obvious need for unions, employers and workers to create a culture of dignity and respect for the choices of women workers and to support those choices by all means necessary in the work-

place in terms of privacy, leave and other supports."

He added: "The removal of the 8th Amendment from the Constitution will be an important first step in creating this culture of dignity, respect and support both at work and in the wider society."

CWU General Secretary Steve Fitzpatrick said: "This survey provides clear proof that abortion is a trade union issue from an economic, social and members' welfare perspective."

Dr Fiona Bloomer, lead researcher of *Abortion as a Workplace Issue* said: "This pioneering research provides clear evidence that abortion is a workplace issue, that those needing abortions have encountered barriers

in relation to obtaining time off work, accessing sick pay, advice and support and that many also experienced isolation.

"The study also highlights the benefits of having a safe space to talk about abortion, demonstrated through the process of the online discussion forum, whereby research participants talked to each other about their experiences.

"We found that even those who expressed hostile attitudes to abortion could see that abortion was a workplace issue and that trade unions had a key role to play in supporting members on this."

Maggie Ryan, of the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th, said: "The 8th Amendment does not reflect the reality of a country in which women regularly seek and have abortions either by going abroad or using pills. The reports of the Citizens' Assembly and the Joint Oireachtas Committee demonstrate clearly that abortion is an Irish reality.

Struggle

"Our survey shows that 20% [of respondents] have some experience of abortion as a workplace issue. In 73% of cases the abortion was not disclosed within the job and 42% had a struggle to pay for it. The current regime is particularly bad for poorer and low paid women and even worse for migrant women whose right to travel is restricted."

Brendan Ogle, political, community and education officer with Unite, said: "With just months to go until a likely referendum, it is crucial that the Repeal the Eighth debate is informed by verifiable facts with respect to the socio-economic aspects of the abortion issue.

"Thanks to the groundbreaking research in this report – and to the 3,000 union members who took time to respond to the survey – we now not only know that abortion is a workplace issue, but also that trade unionists want legal reform.

He added: "Nearly 90% oppose the criminalisation of women who have abortions, and a clear majority of all demographics want legislative change to the abortion regimes in both jurisdictions."

Download *Abortion as a Workplace Issue* at <http://bit.ly/2BNyZqz>

Court reverses Dunnes' disciplinary sanction

MANDATE has welcomed a recent Labour Court recommendation reversing a disciplinary sanction taken against Dunnes Castlebar worker Carmel Irwin.

North and West Divisional Organiser Ciaran Campbell described the sanction as procedurally flawed and claimed it displayed a "complete disregard for the principles of natural justice".

Ms Irwin was suspended from work for three days without pay in late 2015 for alleged abusive and in-subordinate behaviour and language towards a line manager.

Despite refuting these allegations and demonstrating that the employer was in breach of its own disciplinary



Ciaran Campbell: 'disregard for its own procedures'

Court under Section 20(1) of the *Industrial Relations Act, 1969* and was heard by the Court in the employer's absence on 3rd November 2017.

In its recommendation, LCR21631, the Labour Court stated: "[The] employer in this case did not comply with best practice, its own procedures nor with Statutory Instrument No. 146/2000. The procedures in this case failed to afford the Claimant access to fair procedures and deprived her of her right to have the matter dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice."

Ciaran Campbell told *Shopfloor*: "Not only have Dunnes shown a complete disregard for our member, Carmel, who suffered considerable

stress as a consequence which caused her to be absent from work for a considerable period of time, but the company have once again shown a complete disregard for its own procedures and the principles of natural justice.

He continued: "Furthermore the company's non-compliance with the *Industrial Relations Acts* processes not only disrespects the third party institutions but demonstrates a complete lack of testicular courage to defend its own decision making.

"While at this moment this represents a Pyrrhic victory of sorts other possible options are being considered that might be of help to our member."



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Brian Forbes

UBI* and me

*Universal Basic Income

A NEW World Order is slowly but surely descending upon us as we busy ourselves with our Playstations, iPhones, Kindles and assorted other electronic devices oblivious to the coming of the great Fourth Industrial Revolution.

This new revolution is embedding itself deeply throughout society and challenging our notions of work and what work might look like in the future. New breakthroughs in robotics, artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, quantum computing and a range of different fields are connecting billions more people to the web and drastically improving the efficiency of many businesses to the point where humans are becoming superfluous.

In short, robots are taking over the world and we don't have a Sarah Connor or a Terminator to save us from ourselves.

Automaton

This "second machine age" is creating a swathe of populist opinion behind a concept called Universal Basic Income (UBI). UBI is like a monetary equivalent of a Terminator saviour for mankind fighting back against automation and the Fourth Industrial Revolution by providing every citizen with a weekly or monthly sum of money from the government, whether they are in work or not.

Many people on the political Right and some on the Left champion the notion of UBI and see it as a ready-made replacement for social welfare, rather than a utopian fantasy. A safety net if you like that removes the stigma of being unemployed and incentivises work rather than remaining on benefits.

Now, I get really upset with myself when former UKIP leader Nigel Farage comes on TV blasting the European Union – especially when I start nodding in agreement! And I get similar feelings coupled with a slightly discombobulated inertia when listening to well-meaning social justice advocates praising the concept of UBI.

One of the main arguments made by UBI proponents is that technological advances will force the end of employment as we know it today. These notions, at least thus far, have proven to be unfounded. As we seen before, as jobs on farms were replaced, jobs in factories were created.

Some neo-liberal champions of UBI advocate that guaranteed income for all can be paid through two specific mechanisms – to tax robots and software and to replace existing social welfare programmes with a UBI system of payment.

So replace a targeted and complicated system of welfare that aims to tackle poverty and inequality across society with a payment for everyone? This is akin to a giant state helicopter hovering above and emptying sacks of cash that'll gently drift down from above coming to rest in a citizen's bank account and thus help tackle –

and perhaps eradicate – extreme poverty, improving the lot of people living in areas of high economic and social deprivation. We wish it were so simple.

However, if there is one positive message I've gleaned from UBI champions it is the principle that every citizen is a valued member of society and has a right to share in its collective wealth.

In fairness though that novel idea has been around for more than 500 years as first appeared in Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*. The flawed utopia that is UBI can't claim that as its own. I did

begrudgingly appreciate the rather crass, albeit honest, analysis offered by Luis Pares, a commentator on the *Economist* website. He said: "When Universal Basic Income comes to reality, I want to be 100% invested in casinos, tobacco, alcohol and private security."

I'd suggest that Mr Pares' quote is a more accurate reflection of how powerbrokers in society view the "plebs on welfare" and how they might choose to spend their UBI. Capitalism is epitomised in those ugly and most cruel of words.

The popularity of the Universal

Basic Income stems from a fanciful diagnosis born in Silicon Valley of the challenges faced by the working class across industrialised nations. Sure even good auld Mark Zuckerberg, of Facebook fame, is a fan of giving UBI a go.

He recently told a gaggle of Harvard graduates: "We should explore ideas like Universal Basic Income to give everyone a cushion to try new things." It's the multi-billionaire espousing the petit-bourgeois fantasy of every individual flowering as a poet, a musician, a creative being, free from the confines of this capitalist money worrying society to be the best they can be. Boke!

Switzerland put UBI in a referendum to its people in 2016. All residents would have been entitled to \$30,275 a year from the state – unconditionally. This would have necessitated a tax increase by 40% of GDP. In a low turnout only 23% of voters voted for the proposal thus suggesting people are not ready quite yet to hand over work to the robots.

Sympathy

Many advocates of UBI prefer to keep the argument at the level of general principle. In fact, Bernie Sanders expressed sympathy for UBI while stopping short of endorsement. Rather than engage in the dirty practicalities of numbers, they choose principle over application.

However, back in the real world, social welfare when properly weighted and applied addresses poverty and exclusion in a more targeted and financial sound way than UBI. Poverty isn't just about material wellbeing, it is so much more complex than that and social wellbeing plays a big part.

The amount of our tax money required to finance an Irish version of UBI would surely decimate further our crumbling public services already wrecked through ideological application of austerity measures.

The principle notion of UBI versus decent and adequate public services free at the point of need and demand, for me, outweighs all consideration towards UBI.

If our government intended to implement a wealth tax to fund UBI, then I'd be interested in discussing it some more but the more I consider UBI the less enthusiastic about it I become. If I thought for a second that UBI was a crafty path from capitalism to communism then I'd be its biggest champion.

Ahead of the curve as always, Ireland has for years adopted a hybrid form of UBI. An area of society where people can sit around and get paid for doing nothing. We call it Dail Eireann.

Brian Forbes is Mandate National Coordinator



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How Cissie and her sisters in struggle changed the world

By Mary Muldowney

CISSIE Cahalan, a shop worker in Arnotts in Dublin and member of the Irish Drapers' Assistants' Benefit and Protection Association (one of the forerunners of Mandate) was an important figure in the struggle for women's suffrage in Ireland. She was a respected comrade of women like Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington and Constance Markievicz, who are better remembered in Irish history.

One hundred years ago, in February 1918 the Representation of the People Act gave the vote to all Irish and British men over 21 and women over 30. The reason for the age restriction for women was to ensure that the electorate would not be female dominated. Women also had to be ratepayers, excluding many working-class women who tended not to hold property in their own names. It was not until independence from Britain was achieved in 1922 that the limitations on women's citizenship were removed by the Constitution of the new Irish Free State.

In the early years of the 20th century, suffrage organisations were set up throughout Ireland. In 1911, Louie Bennett and Helen Chenevix (who took over the running of the Irish Women Workers' Union in 1916) set up the Irish Women's Suffrage Federation in 1911 to co-ordinate the work that was going on all over the country. Bennett also founded the Irish

Women's Reform League which focused attention on the social and economic position of women workers.

The more militant Irish Women's Franchise League was founded in 1912 by Hanna and Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and Margaret Cousins, and many of its members were also involved in the labour movement. Cissie Cahalan joined the IWFL and spoke from the platform at many meetings called to campaign for women's right to vote. Unlike Bennett and Chenevix, she advocated mixed unions so that male and female workers could work 'shoulder to shoulder' in pursuit of a just society.

James Connolly believed that it was essential for the labour movement to promote women's suffrage, wage equality and legislative protection for women workers, in contrast to many political activists, even some socialists. He recognised that there were significant overlaps between socialists and trade union activists and the more militant feminists who were members of the suffragist organisations.

Both Connolly and Jim Larkin associated with the members of the Irish Women's Franchise League and organised members of the ITGWU to provide security at IWFL meetings. When the Irish Women Workers' Union was founded at a meeting in Dublin in September 1911, the platform was shared by Larkin and his sister Delia, with Sheehy-Skeffington and Markievicz. Markievicz claimed at the meeting that organising women workers in

unions would lead to their being given the vote.

During the 1913 Lockout, women from the suffrage movement had been actively involved in organising pickets and demonstrations and providing food for the locked-out workers and their families, wearing their IWFL badges while they carried out their volunteer work. Women who disagreed over the relative priorities of nationalism and women's suffrage were able to work together in support of labour. From 1912 to 1920 the Irish Citizen reported on women's growing activism, while the Irish Worker also consistently reported on the activities of the IWFL.

Clerical authorities, and their friends in John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party, were generally opposed to female suffrage, insisting that giving women access to the franchise would undermine their 'natural' role in the home. Arthur Griffith's Sinn Féin did not oppose the demands of women in the way that the IPP did. However, what support they gave to women's rights was grudging. Griffith himself was very hostile to the labour movement. He opposed higher wages for factory workers, claiming that this would hold back the growth of Irish industry.

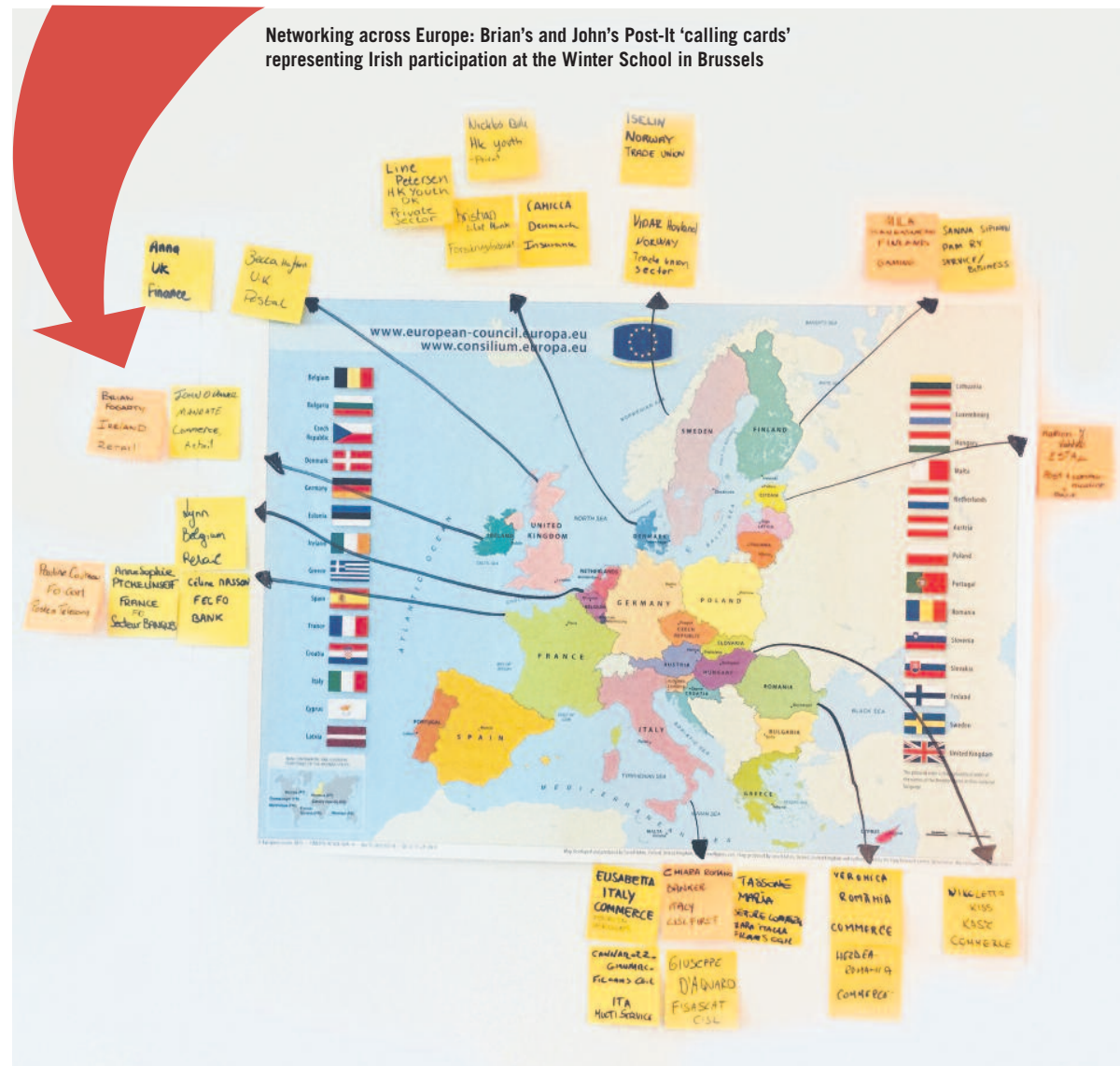
'Equal terms'

At the 23rd Annual Congress of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress, held in Derry in August 1917, a resolution was passed giving a reserved welcome to the terms of the Representation of the People Bill, which was being debated in the British Parliament at the time: "That this Congress of Irish workers, while recognising with satisfaction, that the Representation of the People Bill will enact many reforms long demanded by the workers of this country, expresses its disappointment that it is not proposed to establish adult suffrage, full proportional representation, and redistribution in Ireland (without reducing the total number of Irish Members). That this Congress cannot be satisfied with any measure of Franchise Reform short of complete Adult Suffrage, and further desires to see women admitted to the administration of justice on equal terms with men."

At the following year's annual Congress in Wexford, their concern about the terms of the enacted Bill had shifted to national self-determination.

Under the provisions of the 1922 Irish Free State Constitution, all citizens over the age of 21 were enfranchised and, in theory at least, the limitations on Irish women's access to the full rights of citizenship were removed. However, the provisions of the Constitution were not applied to that year's 'Treaty Election' (which facilitated the partition of the country) meaning that many women were barred from voting in what was arguably one of the most important elections in the history of the Irish state.

'Sticking up' for youth rights



By Brian Fogarty
SuperValu Bray and NEC member

ON January 24 I left for Brussels along with Mandate President John O'Donnell to attend the three-day UNI Europa Youth Winter School being held at the European Trade Union Institute.

The fundamental aim of UNI Youth is to unite young people by promoting international trade union solidarity. It tries to assess common issues and concerns and develop focused plans of action to address them within the democratic framework of different trade unions. It also aims to support and encourage more young people to participate actively in their trade unions.

Trade unions need to intensify their efforts to integrate young members because they are the lifeblood of the trade union movement and are the trade union leaders of tomorrow.

Young activists drawn from 11 different countries attended the Winter School. It was fantastic to be able to listen and learn from the experiences of young activists from across Europe.

John and I informed the other participants about the main issues impacting on decent work and wages in Ireland such as precarious and low-hour contracts as well as the right to access.

We spoke about Mandate's campaign for a banded hours bill, which seeks to give members security of earnings each week, as well as the union's work lobbying government to push through legislation for trade union recognition and the right to access.

We also identified the main players who support and impact on trade unions in Ireland.

- During the three days, we learned about:
- National realities in terms of decent work and wages in other countries;
 - Different strategies to pressure governments and to stop discrimination against young workers;
 - Different proposals for a 'youth action week'



Thumbs up: Brian Fogarty and Mandate President John O'Donnell at the UNI Europa Youth Winter School

aimed at raising awareness about precarious job situations in the labour market;

- How to reinforce networking between members of the UNI Europa Youth in order to be aware of plans going forward.

Both John and I gave feedback to the group about how the course could be improved as well as letting group members know how we intended to use what we had learned to improve Mandate's own youth network.

We both intend to build on the good work that has been done to help inspire young members' participation in the union and to grow the membership.

580,000 bombing missions ...and the US kept it secret

By **Garan Campbell**
Mandate Divisional Organiser

THE UNITED States is regularly held up as a beacon of democracy promoting individual and economic freedoms, the defender of human rights that benchmark civilised governance.

The country's undisputed global superpower status means that the US is praised by many as the planet's 'policeman', protecting the First World against terrorism and authoritarian regimes that must be destabilised and usurped.

But in gaining their current global superpower status the US's consistent foreign policy activities bear all the hallmarks of neo-colonialist power struggles characterised by historical legacies of war-mongering, atrocities and, at best, duplicitous political manoeuvrings.

Often the US public have been unaware of these foreign policies, content to remain in their insular 'Let's Make America Great' comfort zone.

The US's 'Secret War' in Laos, waged from 1964 to 1973, is a typical example. The US government purposefully kept their foreign policy campaign in this area secret from the US Senate and, ultimately, from the public. This was seen in the regular denials given by Henry Kissinger and his State Department officials about US involvement in the Laotian civil war.

Often accused about such actions, Kissinger firmly practised what he preached and commented, "the illegal we do immediately; the unconstitutional takes a little longer."

In the nine-year Laotian war that overlapped the Vietnam War, the US ensured that this small Asian country was the most bombed country per head of population in the world.

Despite signing the 1962 Geneva Accords primarily focused on consolidating Laos as a neutral country, the US nevertheless indiscriminately



Trigger finger: Henry Kissinger, President Richard Nixon and Al Haig in a Camp David pow-wow in 1972



B52 bomber in action over South East Asia

Pictures: Public Domain

dropped more than two million tons of explosives – many of them cluster bombs – over a total of 580,000 bombing missions.

That equates to a plane-load of bombs every eight minutes, 24 hours a day for nine years.

The bombing campaign was part of

the US backing for the Royal Lao government against the left-wing peasant Pathet Lao organisation.

The bombings destroyed many villages and displaced hundreds of thousands of Laotian civilians. Best estimates suggest that a third of the dropped bombs did not explode, leav-

ing Laos presently contaminated with vast quantities of unexploded ordnance resulting in more than 20,000 people being killed or injured by these unexploded bombs since 1973.

In 1969, when US President Lyndon B. Johnson declared that the US would cease its Vietnamese bombing campaign, its bombing operations were re-directed to Laos where the populations of whole villages had to live and cower in mountain caves to avoid air raids. One Laotian described it thus: "...the bombs fell like rain for years!"

Until 2016, the US failed to publicly acknowledge and recognise its true involvement in this war. US President Barack Obama in his landmark visit to Laos in 2016 stated: "The United States had between 1963 and 1974 dropped two million tons of bombs on the country, more than the total

loosed on Germany and Japan together during World War II. That made Laos, which is slightly smaller than Michigan, the most heavily bombed nation in history."

The facts of the US's secret war in Laos make startling reading:

- More than 270 million cluster bombs were dropped on Laos during the Vietnam War (210 million more bombs than were dropped on Iraq in 1991, 1998 and 2006 combined); up to 80 million did not detonate.

- Nearly 40 years on, less than 1% of these munitions have been destroyed. More than half of all confirmed cluster munitions casualties in the world have occurred in Laos.

- Each year there are now just under 50 new casualties in Laos, down from 310 in 2008. Close to 60% of the accidents result in death, and 40% of the victims are children.

- Between 1993 and 2016, the US contributed on average \$4.9m per year for bomb clearance in Laos; the US spent \$13.3m per day (in 2013 dollars) for nine years bombing Laos.

- In just 10 days of bombing Laos, the US spent \$130m (in 2013 dollars), or more than it has spent in clean up over the past 24 years (\$118m).

Joshua Kurlantzick, in his engrossing book, *A Great Place to Have a War* – titled after one old CIA hand's sardonic remark – is a sobering account of the American engagement in Laos and – relatively timely – states the secret war in Laos has set a pattern for future conflicts, especially for the Central Intelligence Agency's paramilitary role.

He states: "Laos would prove so successful – for presidents and for the CIA, that is – that it would become a template for a new type of large, secret war for decades to come."

This, and other similar horror stories, begs the question, Who or what will police the 'global policeman'?



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Places are limited and are allocated on a first come first served basis and are open to Mandate members who are currently unemployed.

Report charts CEO pay hikes

THE Irish Congress of Trade Unions has warned of “a growing wage gap that will inevitably lead to a rise in wider inequality” following publication of its annual survey of executive pay levels in the private sector.

Titled *Because We're Worth It: The Truth About CEO Pay in Ireland*, the annual survey – first published in 2017 – examines the remuneration for chief executives in 20 of the largest companies listed on the Irish Stock Exchange, along with CEO pay at the 12 largest commercial state companies.

The latest study, compiled by Dr Peter Rigney and Eileen Sweeney, has exposed extraordinary pay differentials between top CEO pay and average earnings. In some instances, the study shows that it would take people on average earnings up to 270 years to earn what the CEO of some companies make in one year.

The report also reveals pay increases for some chief executives of up to 100%, between 2015 and 2016 and along with a near doubling of cash bonuses for some.

Dr Peter Rigney, told *Shopfloor*: “The Congress study clearly has significant implications for wider Irish society, given the enormous disparity it reveals between senior executive pay and average earnings. In our view, if this trend is left unchecked it will inevitably lead to greater



levels of inequality across society.

“To that end we need to see greater transparency and accountability around senior executive pay and remuneration packages.

“Overall, the debate around corporate pay is part of a wider debate around corporate governance, an issue on which Ireland generally lags behind other EU countries.

“In addition, there is also the issue of pay and performance and we have yet to see conclusive evidence of a direct causal link between high CEO pay and company performance,” he added.

“Indeed some studies warn that high and exorbitant levels of pay at senior levels can lead to lower productivity, perverse incentives and a focus on short-term indicators.”

The Congress study also looks at the issue of gender diversity at senior level. It finds that three out of the four companies having no women on their boards are London based. Some of the companies (in the report) have noted that they are not

bound by London codes of practice because they are Irish registered.

“If this is a regulatory gap it needs to be closed. This is a matter for government, for the stock exchanges and for fund managers,” the Congress report notes.

Download *Because We're Worth It* at <http://bit.ly/2Dh4ej8>

ICTU: factor in housing & childcare costs in claims

THE Irish Congress of Trade Unions has advised affiliated unions in the private sector to seek compensation, where appropriate, for the “excessive costs” of housing, childcare and pensions, in addition to “a minimum pay increase of 3.1%” to take account of normal productivity and cost of living factors, for pay claims in 2018.

The Congress Private Sector Committee issued the advisory on pay bargaining for 2018 to member unions in the private sector, pointing out that “through the normal collective bargaining processes and where appropriate, affiliate private sector unions should seek compensation for the excessive costs associated with housing, childcare provision and pensions.

“This is in addition to a minimum pay increase of 3.1% to take account of normal productivity and cost of living factors,” according to

the Congress *Private Sector Bulletin*.

The bulletin is issued to Congress affiliate unions in the private sector and focuses on the high cost of housing and childcare, noting that many workers are struggling to meet these costs.

It points out that workers in Ireland endure the second highest childcare costs in the OECD, while many workers on average wages struggle to rent or buy homes, across the country. In large urban areas such as Dublin housing can account for up to 47% of total essential expenditure.

The bulletin also flags up detailed NERI research on the high cost of housing, childcare, pensions and on wage trends and notes that the Minimum Wage would have to increase by more than 24% to reach the level of the Living Wage.

Download the *Private Sector Bulletin* at <http://bit.ly/2reZmFJ>

DEBENHAMS

WRC date for supervisors claim

A CLAIM for the payment of a long service increment to members employed as supervisors across most Debenhams stores is scheduled for a conciliation conference at the Workplace Relations Commission on Wednesday, February 28.

BOOTS

Talks set to star over 2018 claim

NEGOTIATIONS are set to commence on Wednesday, February 12 with Boots management in respect of our 2018 pay claim.

PENNEYS

Banded hours review 'nearing completion'

FOLLOWING a number of meetings with management representatives the annual review of Mandate's national banded hours agreement is nearing completion.

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: “So far some positive developments have come out of this year's review with the introduction of a more formal and structured application method for individual workers when they request a review of their working hours.”

It is understood a more detailed report of the current review is expected in the coming weeks.

IN THE PICTURE...

Mandate donation to help homeless

ASSISTANT General Secretary Gerry Light hands over a cheque for €1,000 from Mandate members to Brother Sean of the Capuchin Centre in Bow Street, Dublin.

Bro Sean, speaking to *Shopfloor* in the run-up to Christmas, explained: “The centre is now dealing with double the numbers compared to last year. This year, we're dealing with an extra half of that again, but

now it's more and more families from hotels who are coming into us.”

And to emphasise the point, he said that a year ago the Centre had started to order nappies and baby food for the first time ever.

The centre costs more than €3 million to run and provides thousands of homeless individuals and families with essential meals, but receives less than €500,000 from the Government. Anyone looking to donate can do so at: <http://www.capuchindaycentre.ie>



Dunnes staff from Dundalk Marshes and other local stores taking the basic computer course at the VEC in Chapel Street, Dundalk. The participants, having nearly completed the course, and have already signed up for the advanced course. Pictured are Mary Kerley, Catherine Talt, Lisa Rodgers, Christine Murden, Sharon Fretwell, Noeleen Farrell, Carol Riordan, and Jackie Garvey

Picture: John Callan

Amid the rubble of the Carillion collapse



Stephen Nolan

CARILLION was until recently a British multinational facilities management and construction services company, the second largest in Britain. It demerged 20 years ago from the company Tarmac Ltd – you know, the one that makes, well, Tarmac.

It was liquidated last month. You'll notice that it did not go into 'administration' which allows it to continue operating while a new buyer is sought but instead went into immediate 'compulsory liquidation' – in other words, no-one wanted near it, it was worthless.

The problem for the British government is that Carillion, a private sector company, was heavily reliant on government outsourcing and is responsible for:

- Maintaining 50,000 military homes;
- Delivering 218 school meal services;
- Maintaining 50 prisons (half the UK stock);
- Providing 11,500 hospital beds;
- Constructing the £400 million Battersea power station development;
- Constructing the £1.4 billion contract for the HS2;
- Constructing the £335 million Liverpool Hospital;
- Constructing the £558 million West Midlands hospital.

Many of these contracts are of course Private Finance Initiatives, an arrangement that is essentially about raising money 'off balance sheet' so it doesn't appear on government expenditure figures. A private firm, such as Carillion, creates a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to raise the finance for the project which then manages the project for its duration.

In turn the government pays interest repayments, shareholder dividends and maintenance costs to the SPV for the length of the contract, which is typically between 25 to 30 years. Of course most of this public infrastructure is too important to fail so while on paper the private company carries the risks, if a company, like Carillion, is unable to meet its obligations, these debts are effectively transferred back to the state.

In the UK there are 700 PFI contracts. They will be paid in full by 2049 and will have cost £307bn, more than FIVE times what the assets are actually worth. Here at home, well over €6 billion of public expenditure is committed to PPP's including half a dozen major schools building programmes being constructed by, Carillion.

In this instance thousands of Carillion workers – many with mortgages, high rents and car loans – will be made redundant. In Oxford, fire-fighters were put on stand-by to deliver



Carillion workers and many thousands of sub-contractors are set to suffer as result of the 'compulsory liquidation'

“ If you were a cynic you might be led to believe that the entire economic and political system was controlled by a small group of privately educated, wealthy, psychopathic and well-connected individuals. But that's unthinkable in a modern democracy, isn't it? ”

school meals, workers will see their pensions cut by up to 20% and the Pension Protection Fund will be on the hook for as much as £800 million. Thousands of smaller sub-contractors in the supply chain remain unpaid and are likely to receive less than one penny for every pound they are owed. The ever helpful banking sector are, of course, now putting the squeeze on those supply chain companies to pay back any overdrafts and debts they are carrying while they as 'secured creditors' will get first dibs on what's left of Carillion's assets.

Priorities

The response of the company? Their first act was to remove the names and photos of company directors from their website. Priorities.

This is the efficiency of the private sector, a private monopoly that parasitically lives off state welfare that controls so many core state services that when it goes bust the state has to take back control of those services and re-finance the projects.

You might wonder why the state out-sourced, privatised and PPP'd those services in the first place. But perhaps that's the actual role of the

state – to hand over what is collectively ours to a small groups of unaccountable millionaires to make private profit with zero risk.

You have to stand in awe at the efficiency of state monopoly capitalism. You create a small cartel of major suppliers – Carillion, G4S, SERCO, Interserve and others – that become addicted to government contracts. The government then slashes public spending in response to a financial crash forcing those suppliers to cut margins to win contracts to survive.

As they begin to struggle the state throws more contracts their way; in this case, £2 billion worth of contracts were given to Carillion immediately AFTER they issued a profit warning.

Then the City of London gets in on the act – HSBC divests a million shares while the state-owned RBS refuses to lend them any more cash at all. Oh, and two years ago 18 hedge funds, seeing the writing on the wall, begin to short sell (or bet against) Carillion shares further driving down the share price. One of those hedge funds is Blackrock, that employs George Osborne, the former chancellor. Blackrock made over £40 million

betting against Carillion.

It couldn't get any worse though could it? In the midst of this shit-fest, the board of the company changes its rules in order to give greater protection to executive bonuses, give the departing CEO a £1.5 million golden handshake and agrees to pay his £600,000 salary until October 2018.

Because of a public outcry, the Solvency Service has said that no payments have been made since the firm collapse so you'll be pleased to hear that the former CEO has secured a new job heading up the firm that won a contract to inspect Hinkley C nuclear power plant, so that's good.

Awarded CBE

Meanwhile, the Chairman of the board, Philip Green, was appointed advisor to Downing Street on corporate responsibility and was awarded a CBE for "services to business". As this was happening Business Secretary Greg Clark has announced that Sir John Kingman has been appointed the permanent Chair of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) with a budget of £6 billion.

He happens to be Chair of insurance giant Legal and General which, in turn, is a major shareholder in Carillion, with 1,371,990 shares and responsible for Carillion pension funds. Last year contributions to these pension funds were deferred until 2019 while the company continued to pay out dividends. But that should be no surprise as since 2012 Carillion paid out £217 million more in dividends than it generated in cash, which means it borrowed money to pay shareholders, and now it's £1.5 billion in debt.

All this, two years after Carillion had admitted illegally blacklisting union workers.

As the dust still rises from the rubble of this collapse, the usual suspects emerge blinking into the light. The Business, Work and Pensions Select Committee have sent letters to the big four auditors – Deloitte, KPMG, PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and EY – to outline the work they have undertaken for Carillion since 2008 and potential conflicts of interest.

There is particular interest in KPMG, Carillion's auditors since 1999 who signed off the company's accounts in March 2017, four months before it announced a massive profit warning. But don't panic because PwC is acting as 'special manager' in the liquidation process, which will be totally above board.

If you were a cynic you might be led to believe that the entire economic and political system was controlled by a small group of privately educated, wealthy, psychopathic and well-connected individuals. But that's unthinkable in a modern democracy, isn't it?

By the way, and to finish, can I just say that if you're one of those clued-in types that continues to think that 'entrepreneurs create all the wealth', or 'the size of the public sector is the problem', or 'Civil Service pensions are too generous', or 'we can't afford it', or 'it's the fault of migrant workers', or the 'Luas drivers are greedy', or really anything else that entirely misunderstands how the economy actually works, then you my friend are a f****ing idiot.

By Giaran Campbell
Mandate Divisional Organiser

CHRISTMAS day 2017 marked the anniversary of the passing of popular music icon Georgios Kyriacos Panayiotou, better known as George Michael who, with pop group Wham! and later throughout his long solo career, blazed a path of top ten chart hits and musical awards.

But Michael wasn't just a champion of popular music. He regularly advocated lesbian and gay rights – none more so after his very public 'coming out' as a homosexual in 1998, and was equally outspoken in the lead up to and during the 2003 Iraq war, criticising the then-UK Prime Minister Tony Blair for slavishly following American President George W Bush's line that 'if you are not with us, you are against us' in the US's 'War on Terror' against the so-called 'Axis of Evil'.

He immortalised the Bush/Blair relationship in his hit single *Shoot the Dog*, and was very vocal in criticising Blair's lack of public consultation with the UK people on the Iraq War when he commented: "On an issue as enormous as the possible bombing of Iraq, how can you represent us when you haven't asked us what we think?"

He was a regular outspoken critic of UK and American foreign policy on the Middle East, frequently opining that those same policies led to increasing instability in the region which would only come back to haunt the western world through increased terrorist activities.

In February 2003, Michael recorded another song in protest against the looming Iraq war, Don McLean's *The Grave*. The original was written by McLean in 1971 and was a protest against the Vietnam War. Michael performed the song on numerous TV shows including *Top of the Pops* and *So Graham Norton*. His performance of the song on *Top of the Pops* on 7th March 2003 was his first studio appearance on the programme since 1986.

He ran into conflict with the show's producers for an anti-war, anti-Blair T-shirt worn by some members of his band. In response, Don McLean issued a statement, through his web-

In praise of George Michael

Picture: Meridol/CZ (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Class act: George Michael was an outspoken backer of progressive causes including playing a NUM benefit concert for miners during the 1984 strike

“ His undisputed legendary kindness, philanthropy and politics belied the flash pop star image that he was so often expected to flaunt ”



site, praising Michael's recording. He said: "I am proud of George Michael for standing up for life and sanity. I am delighted that he chose a song of mine to express these feelings. We must remember that the Wizard is really a cowardly old man hiding behind a curtain with a loud microphone. It takes courage and a song to pull the curtain open and expose

him." George Michael's socio-political conscience stretched as far back as his early Wham! days when the group took part in a benefit concert in aid of the striking National Union of Miners in September 1984 at London's Royal Festival Hall.

The group's support for the strik-

ing miners facilitated the unlikely future campaign relations between miner organisations, other unions and lesbian and gay right organisations in the UK. In 2006, he performed a free concert for NHS nurses in London to thank the nurses who had cared for his late mother. He told

the audience: "Thank you for everything you do – some people appreciate it. Now if we can only get the government to do the same thing."

His undisputed legendary kindness, philanthropy and politics belied the flash pop star image that he was so often expected to flaunt. Michael regularly debunked his alter ego lifestyle and work expectations relative to a global pop music superstar, often courting media and political prejudices throughout his short life, but which typified his grounded upbringing in London.

It is in this context that revelations shortly after his death about his membership of the Young Communist League by the General Secretary of the Communist Party of Britain, Rob Griffiths, demonstrates the substance of his socio-political motivations.

COMMUNICATIONS

Training Course (QQI Level 3)

DO YOU HAVE A DESIRE TO IMPROVE YOUR COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS? BUT NEVER GOT AROUND TO IT?

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

- Starting from scratch this course helps you to improve your communications skills.
- Courses are open to members who have not achieved their Leaving Certificate or who have an out of date Leaving Certificate.

Communication Skills:

For those who want to brush up on their writing and spelling skills while also developing personal and interpersonal skills which are important for dealing with workplace and personal situations.

Evening Courses take place one evening per week for a duration of 12 weeks in a venue near your workplace.

If you are interested please contact Mandate's Training Centre on **01-836 9699** or by email **mandateotc@mandate.ie**

Check out **www.mandate.ie** for further training courses. Places are limited and are allocated on a first come, first served basis. Courses are delivered by the Education and Training Board in a location near your workplace.





Diarmaid O'Sullivan

Increasingly precarious and unaffordable...

THE private rented sector in Ireland is more important now than it has ever been. One in five households in the country now rent their homes, and demand for rented accommodation will only continue to rise.

There are many underlying reasons for the growth of the rental sector but the main one is the lack of affordable alternative accommodation. For a growing number of people, renting is the only viable housing tenure; for many buying a home or accessing social housing is only a remote possibility.

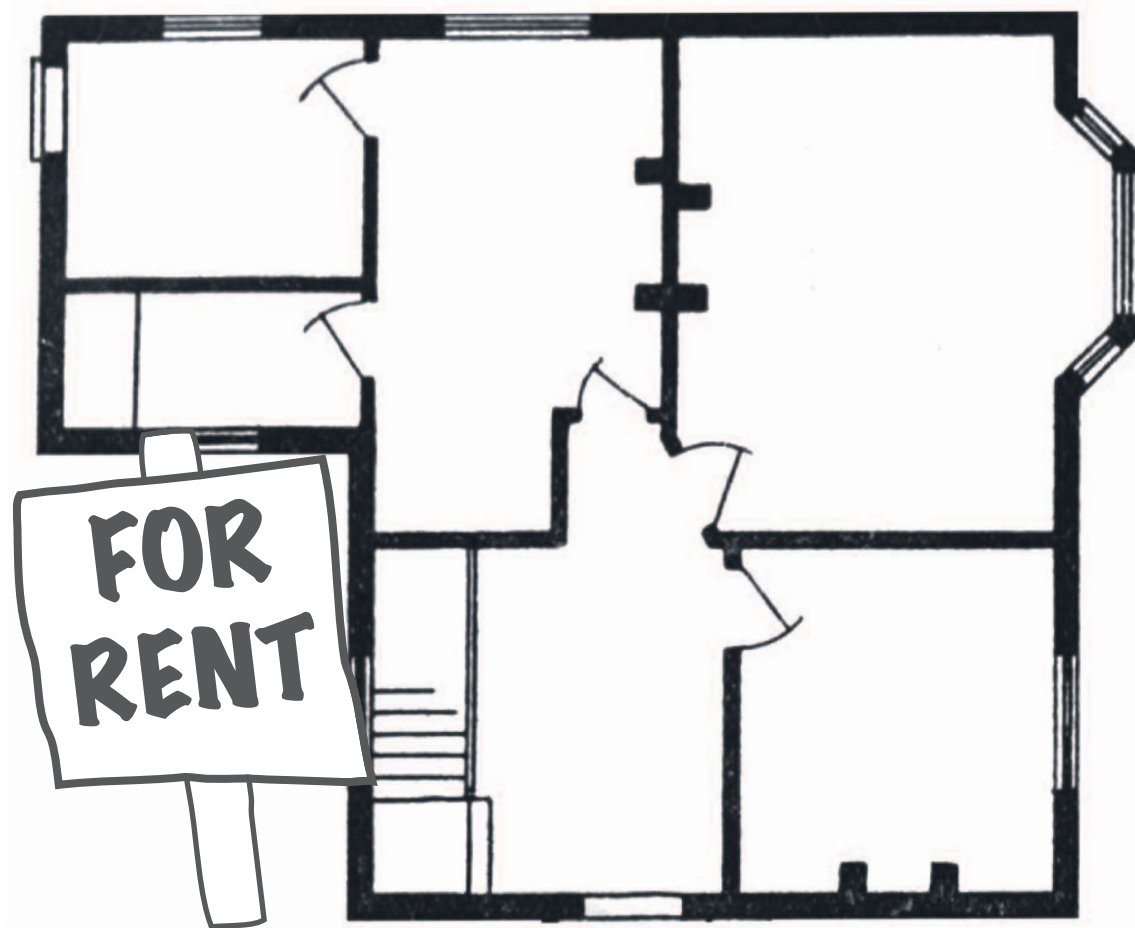
Government policy over the past number of decades has shifted from "bricks to benefits" – that is providing financial housing supports rather than building social housing. It is estimated that the State will spend €3bn on rent subsidies over the next five years. Many commentators argue that this money would be better spent building social housing.

Recent figures from Rebuilding Ireland underline the degree to which the Government is reliant on the private rented sector to provide social housing. Of the 25,892 households that had their social housing needs met last year 19,624 (76%) of the households were supported in tenancies in the private rental sector through payment such as the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP).

We are seeing a modest increase in the overall volume of housing being built across the country and Approved Housing Bodies are playing an important role in the delivery of social housing. However, the number of units being delivered is still small, particularly given the unmet demand that has built up over the last 10 years. In the short to medium term, the private rented sector will continue to play a key role.

Insecurity in the Private Rented Sector

Despite some improvements brought about through changes to the law in recent years, the private rented sector remains a relatively insecure place. Tenancies can be terminated by a landlord on a number of different grounds including, the sale of the property or because the landlord requires the property for their own use or that of a family member. Last year Threshold dealt with over 5,000 queries in relation to tenancy termination.



What Govt needs to do to sort the problem...

WHAT needs to be done to address the problems facing the private rented sector?

In the first instance, there needs to be a major public building programme to provide additional social housing. Local Authorities and Approved Housing Bodies have a crucial role to play here. Additional social housing as well as meeting social housing need would also free up capacity in the private rented sector.

Secondly, there needs to be changes to the law to ensure that tenants in the private rented sector enjoy real security of tenure and certainty in relation to rent and standards of accommodation.

Finally, we need proper enforcement of the law to uphold tenants' rights. The Residential Tenancies Board has a key role to play here as regulator of the private rented sector.

The loss of a tenancy can be extremely disruptive and can be a cause of great stress for families and individuals, particularly when children are involved. Finding alternative accommodation can be very challenging. Supply of rental accommodation is at an all-time low; there are currently just 3,100 properties listed for rent for the entire country on the property website Daft.ie.

The insecure nature of renting makes it difficult for individuals and families to put down roots in communities, which has a knock-on impact on social solidarity. For a growing number of people, loss of tenancy can result in homelessness. There are currently 8,587 people homeless in the country, including 3,079 children.

Rising rents and lack of affordability

The other big challenge currently facing tenants is affordability. According to property website Daft.ie, the average national rent now stands at €1,198. The cost of renting relative to wages has risen significantly in the last number of years.

The traditional rule-of-thumb, that a household should spend no more than one third of their take-home pay on their accommodation, is simply not realistic for many.

Threshold increasingly sees families and individuals spending 40%, 50% or even 60% of their disposable income on rent, which has obvious negative knock-on effect on living standards.

The fact that people are spending more of their wages on rent means that less income is available for other goods and services and has an impact on the ability of people to save for a deposit to purchase a home.

Many low and middle-income households do not qualify for housing supports such as the Housing Assistance Payment but struggle to pay market rents. For those that do qualify for payments such as HAP, finding accommodation that comes under the maximum rent levels for such payments is extremely challenging.

Precarious employment

The precarious existence of many tenants is even worse for those in precarious employment. Recent research from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions reports that there has been a rise in the numbers of people in insecure and uncertain employment.

Some 7% of workers are in temporary employment, while 8% of workers are in jobs where they cannot predict their working hours on a week-to-week basis. Paying the rent and maintaining a tenancy can be a real challenge for people in such situations.

In an effort to combat excessive rent increases, the government introduced Rent Pressure Zones in certain parts of the country in 2016, under which annual rent increases are limited to 4%. There is some evidence that the new rules have helped moderate rent inflation, but there is also evidence that the rules are being ignored or flouted by many landlords.

Diarmaid O'Sullivan is the Galway based Regional Service Manager with Threshold, the National Housing Charity, whose aim is to prevent homelessness through advice, tenancy protection and advocacy.

Keeping tenants in their homes

GIVEN the scale of the current challenges facing the private rented sector, it will take time to introduce the measures outlined above. It is more important than ever that tenants are aware of their rights and receive the support they need to remain in their tenancies.

Thresholds' Tenancy Protection Service provides crucial advice and support to tenants to keep them in their homes by ad-

vocating with landlords and letting agents and challenging invalid notices of terminations and rent increases.

Last year Threshold took 71,319 calls from tenants across the country.

Threshold has advice centres in Dublin, Cork and Galway. For free, confidential advice on your rights as a tenant, call **1800 454 454** or visit **www.threshold.ie**





Computer Training Course QQI Level 3

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

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

Courses are open to members who have not achieved their Leaving Cert or who have an out-of-date Leaving Cert

Evening Courses take place one evening per week for a duration of 12 weeks in a venue near your workplace.

If you are interested please contact Mandate's Training Centre on **01-8369699** or by email at **mandateotc@mandate.ie**

Please see Mandate website for further Training courses at **www.mandate.ie**

Email: **mandateotc@mandate.ie**

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

Picture: European Parliament

BOOKSHELF Q&A WITH STIOFÁN Ó NUALLÁIN



Inspired by the language and landscape

Picture: Donal Higgins

Tell us a little about yourself?

I was born in Clapham, London to Irish parents from Westmeath and Derry. I came home as a teenager to study for way too long before settling near the village of Leitrim, County Down, with Patricia and our three children.

After working as a volunteer on a Bosniak refugee camp during the war in Yugoslavia I came back to Belfast to finish a PhD in Linguistics. I began working with Trademark, the 'Anti-sectarian Unit' of the Irish labour movement, nearly 20 years ago. I am an Irish language speaker and activist and though writing in English, Irish is the language of the home.

What prompted you to start writing?

Boredom. My partner was ill for a brief period and staying in quite a lot so I started jotting down some ideas and before long I had 10,000 words written. I had tried creative writing once before in a remote guesthouse in Brazil while on holiday. I thought that if I smoked and drank heavily in a foreign location then Hemingway-like inspiration would naturally flow, it didn't.

How long does it take you to write a novel?

I've only written one. It took about a year.

Was there much research involved?

Not too much. I teach a bit of history so had an idea about the historical period and subject matter though I did visit a forge to talk to a blacksmith and get a sense of the processes involved in metal working.

Where do you find your inspiration? Are you influenced by anything in particular?

Landscape, placenames and history feature strongly. There is a tradition in Ireland of 'Dinnseanchas', the "lore of places" which brings together legendary and mythical events and characters and their association with specific places, and it's ubiquitous in the Irish landscape.

I spent quite a few years working with ex-prisoner groups and part of that work included the teaching of history. We tended to do most of the work outside the classroom on study tours and trips to sites of historical significance.

Using narrative and Dinnseanchas to engage the participants in learning about the past was a key strategy. The historical background to *YELLOW SUN* is one of the stories we used to tell.

An example by way of explanation – one of the characters in the book is called Gowan, who possesses knowledge of metal working. In Ireland today Ballygowan (Baile Gabhan) means 'townland of the blacksmith'. Gabhan comes from the old Irish word 'Goibniu', who was the metal smith for the mythical tribe the Tuatha Dé Danann.

After the arrival of Christianity it found its way, like many Celtic gods, into the name of a saint, St Goban who was prized as an architect in seventh century Ireland and in modern Irish a jack of all trades is 'Gobán saor'.

What would be your criteria for a good story?

My values and politics

tend to drive me in the direction of 'killing the monster' type stories. I don't have the skill to do subtlety or nuance, so I have a tendency towards catastrophe and brutality. When I'm writing I always think to myself "if I was reading this, would I bother turning the page", that tends to direct the story and keep up the pace.

Who are your favourite authors?

I've spent the last eight years reading political economy almost exclusively – it's probably one of the reasons why I retreated into my own imagination. I've read everything I can find by Toni Morrison, Umberto Eco, John Irving, Iain Banks, Jean Rhys, Brian Ó Nualláin and Seamus McGrianna.

What was the last book you read?

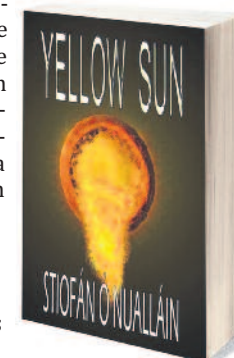
The last novel was *The Old Curiosity Shop* by Dickens.

How important as a writer is support from family and friends?

I tend to write in the gaps in everyday life so as not to annoy those around me; it's a fairly solitary pastime.

Any advice for aspiring authors?

Befriend a good beta reader.



What are your plans for the future? What can we expect from you next?

I started writing a sequel to *YELLOW SUN* before it was published which was a bit presumptuous but I'm enjoying the process.

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

EVENT

Celebrate women!



INTERNATIONAL Working Women's Day on Thursday, March 8th will be celebrated in style at the Liquor Rooms, Temple Bar, Dublin – in an event to honour the accomplishments, the lives and the struggles of working women.

The event, titled *A Different Perspective: The Lives and Struggles of Working Women*, is being organised by Women's Group, Communist Party of Ireland.

An spokesperson told *Shopfloor*: "It is to celebrate women who in the past, struggled fearlessly against difficult conditions in domestic and industrial labour, and who, in the present, continue to struggle in an era

of increasing hatred, division and exploitation.

"In 2018, women are bravely facing these challenges. Our event wishes to showcase the endurance of contemporary socialist-feminist activism, and the continued relevance of International Working Women's Day."

According to the organisers, the event will shed light on the activists who are "leading the charge in resisting sexist-capitalist exploitation and oppression within our community, both in Ireland, and internationally".

The spokesperson added: "The evening will feature a host of speakers with discussion focused on working conditions, abortion access,

housing, imperialism and neo-colonialism. Through this discussion we will illuminate the vitality of the socialist-feminist struggle in 2018.

"We are asking for a donation of sanitary products (pads, tampons) on entry. These will be donated to The Homeless Period Dublin who share these products with front line services to distribute to women in need."

A range of artists, musicians and poets will provide entertainment on the night.

The Liquor Rooms, 6-8 Wellington Quay, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. Start time: 8pm.

NEWS

SHAWS

Allowing members to have a say

IN KEEPING with standard practice across all employments, a membership survey has started in Shaws.

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light commented: "As in other employments the main purpose of the survey is to allow members have a say in determining what should be prioritised in future negotiations with their employer."

HEATONS

Survey is a 'valuable opportunity'

MANDATE members working in Heatons have been urged to take part in the union survey currently under way.

A Mandate spokesperson said: "This is a valuable opportunity to make sure each individual member at Heatons has their say in prioritising what issues are on the agenda before the start of negotiations with management."



Negotiation Skills Level 3 'Negotiations in Practice'

This one day progression course in Negotiation Skills is for union activists, union representatives who have a desire to improve their knowledge and understanding in conflict resolution and negotiation skills, managing the process and the psychology of the negotiating environment.

There are three levels:

- Introductory ● Building Skills and Knowledge ● Negotiations in Practice

Course content:

- Review of Level 1 & 2 ● 1st Exercise: producing a team plan and objectives
- Real topic to negotiate on (recorded) ● Learner assessment by Tutor
- Individual learner feedback ● 2nd Exercise: based on feedback
- Supports for negotiations – media strategy if appropriate, member info and commitment

Date: November 12th

Venue: Mandate Training Centre, Dublin

Progression:

Members who successfully complete this 1 Day Training Course will obtain a Mandate Certificate.

Please contact your Mandate Union Official or Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** if you are interested in taking this course; or alternatively you can email your request to mandateotc@mandate.ie

Healthcare issues Representative sea/olodum Representative Health Employment Protection Law Grievance Representative Process Negotiation Agreement Productive Working Hours Terms Rules Employer Union Wages Group Overtime Safety Establish Cost Limits Work Fair Salary Regulate Contract Particular

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

Communications & Professional Development (CPD)

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.

Gain a National Qualification with a QQI Level 5 Course and develop your own skills and learn more about your rights and your society.

- **Communications skills: public speaking skills, better writing skills**
- **Finding the right information that will steer you in the right direction**
- **The environment in which we live and work**
- **Social, political and economic landscape of unions**
- **Media ownership – who is telling you what and why**
- **Social Media – What it is all about?**

Evening Courses take place one evening per week for a duration of 12 weeks.

*If you're interested, contact **Mandate's Training Centre** on **01-836 9699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie***



This training course is FREE and designed for YOU!



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MANDATE TRADE
UNION MEMBERS**



HMCA have nearly 40 years' experience in offering voluntary and optional benefits, specially tailored to members of professional associations and membership groups. The plans are only available exclusively to members of an association so we can ensure and maintain low cost rates for members and their families.

The full range of plans available for Mandate Trade Union members and their families include:



Care Cash Plans provides tax free cash towards medical expenses such as Overnight and Day-Case Hospital admissions, G.P. and Consultants, Scans, Physiotherapy, Acupuncture, Podiatry, Optical and Dental



Travel Plan provides €12 million cover on Annual or Single trips, whilst travelling in Europe or World-wide.



Dental Plan provides you with tax free cash towards any dentists for Routine examinations, Hygiene, X-rays, Remedial and Restorative treatment



Personal Accident Protection Plan provides 24 hours a day, 365 days a year worldwide cover for Accidental Death, Permanent Disability, Legal Expenses and Liability Cover



Vehicle Breakdown Recovery provides full cover for Home-starts, Roadside-assistance and recovery following an accident or breakdown.

All of your calls are handled personally by a friendly and professional team who can answer your queries and offer further details of all the above plans.

Visit the website www.hmcaireland.ie/mandate.htm to enquire online or call HMCA in person on 01 6130316

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with
Mandate**

www.mandate.ie

Picture: Rodrigo Senna (CC BY 2.0)

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JLT Ireland is offering a home and motor insurance solution for MANDATE Members

Features include:

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For further information on Mandate facilitated insurance solutions please contact:

JLT Ireland
1800 200 200
www.mandate.jltonline.ie



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There may be a recovery... but for whom?

By Eugene McCartan
General Secretary, CPI

IT IS constantly repeated in the pro-boss media that the Irish economy is in recovery and that this recovery is in full swing across the European Union. But you have to ask the serious question – a recovery for whom? ...and at what price?

They repeat the mantra that unemployment levels are coming down. Unemployment across the 19-country eurozone is at its lowest level in nearly nine years at 8.7%, down from 9.7% in 2016 and comes amid a strong economic growth rate of 2.5% last year. But behind this supposedly good news story lies a grimmer reality.

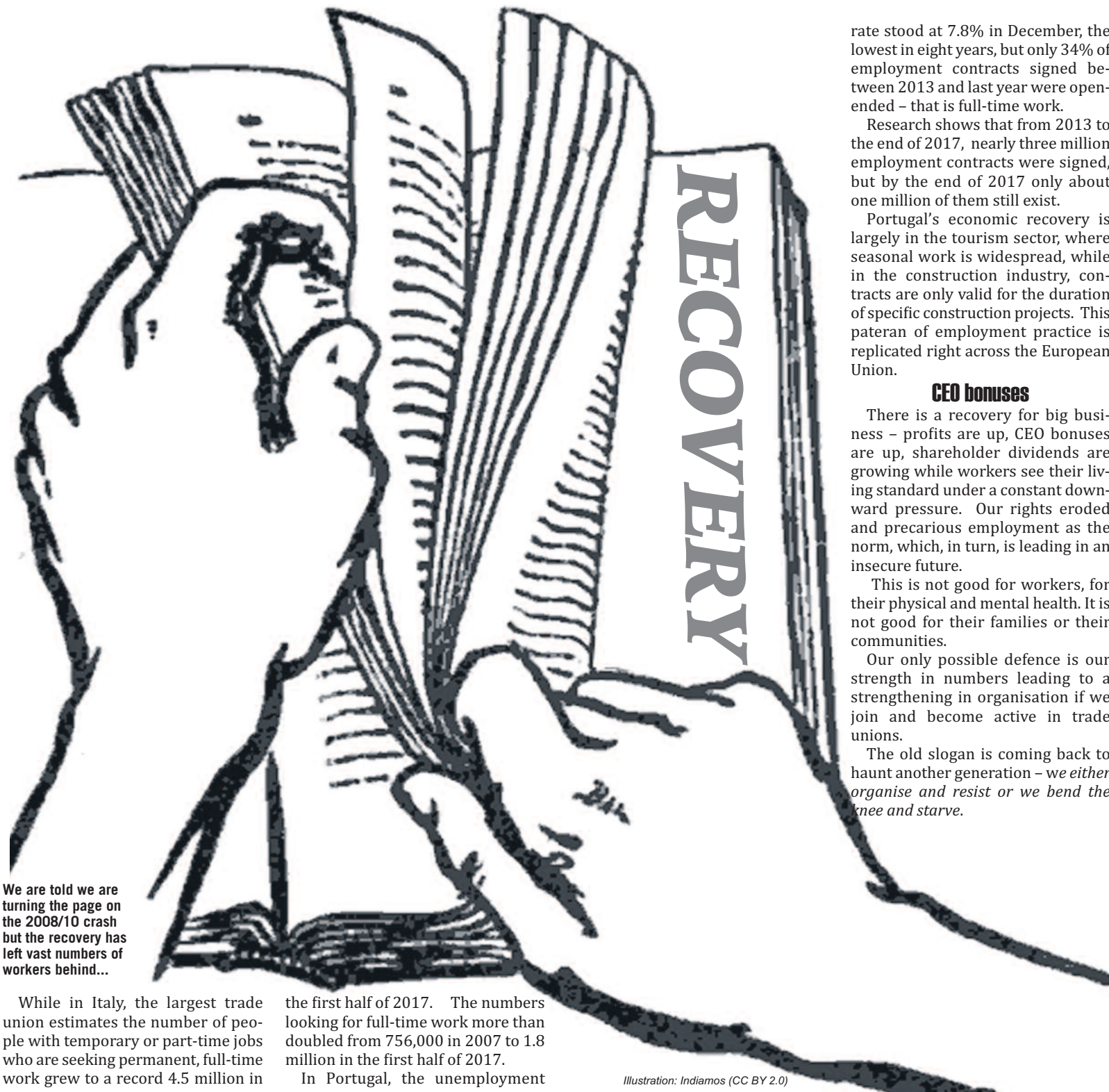
Fixed-term or temporary contracts have increasingly become the norm across the European Union since the crash of 2008/10. This has resulted in widespread income insecurity among tens of millions of workers and growing profits for employers. To paraphrase the multi-billionaire George Soros, "Never miss the opportunities presented by a crisis to advance your position".

Growing attacks

Across the European Union workers have experienced growing attacks on hard-won rights and terms and conditions, seeing legislation that supposedly protects workers' rights being watered down and, in some cases, removed altogether.

Employers remain reluctant to risk open-ended contracts that further down the line could be an unwelcome burden due to severance pay and other legal considerations. This is leading to a situation, known as a "dual labour market", which results in some workers getting healthy pay packets, generous benefits and employment security, while others are reduced to low wages, job insecurity and few, if any, avenues for promotion.

In January 2018, the Spanish government announced that 2017 was a record year for job creation, with 21.5 million employment contracts signed – of these, 19.6 million were temporary.



We are told we are turning the page on the 2008/10 crash but the recovery has left vast numbers of workers behind...

While in Italy, the largest trade union estimates the number of people with temporary or part-time jobs who are seeking permanent, full-time work grew to a record 4.5 million in

the first half of 2017. The numbers looking for full-time work more than doubled from 756,000 in 2007 to 1.8 million in the first half of 2017.

In Portugal, the unemployment

rate stood at 7.8% in December, the lowest in eight years, but only 34% of employment contracts signed between 2013 and last year were open-ended – that is full-time work.

Research shows that from 2013 to the end of 2017, nearly three million employment contracts were signed, but by the end of 2017 only about one million of them still exist.

Portugal's economic recovery is largely in the tourism sector, where seasonal work is widespread, while in the construction industry, contracts are only valid for the duration of specific construction projects. This pattern of employment practice is replicated right across the European Union.

CEO bonuses

There is a recovery for big business – profits are up, CEO bonuses are up, shareholder dividends are growing while workers see their living standard under a constant downward pressure. Our rights eroded and precarious employment as the norm, which, in turn, is leading in an insecure future.

This is not good for workers, for their physical and mental health. It is not good for their families or their communities.

Our only possible defence is our strength in numbers leading to a strengthening in organisation if we join and become active in trade unions.

The old slogan is coming back to haunt another generation – *we either organise and resist or we bend the knee and starve.*

Illustration: Indiamos (CC BY 2.0)

SKILLS FOR WORK *Interested in doing a personal finance or maths course?*

Do you have a desire to improve your personal finance skills? Or maths skills? But never got around to doing it?

Personal Finance and Maths course



Starting from scratch this course helps you to improve your maths and personal finance. Mandate Trade Union in conjunction with Skills for Work are offering members the opportunity to attend training. The courses are to encourage members back into learning and training while aiming towards a QQI Level 3 Award. If you are interested in doing a Communications through Computers course, contact:

Mandate Training Centre, Distillery House, Distillery Road, Dublin 3

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

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

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PAY INCREASES
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AND MUCH, MUCH MORE...

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