

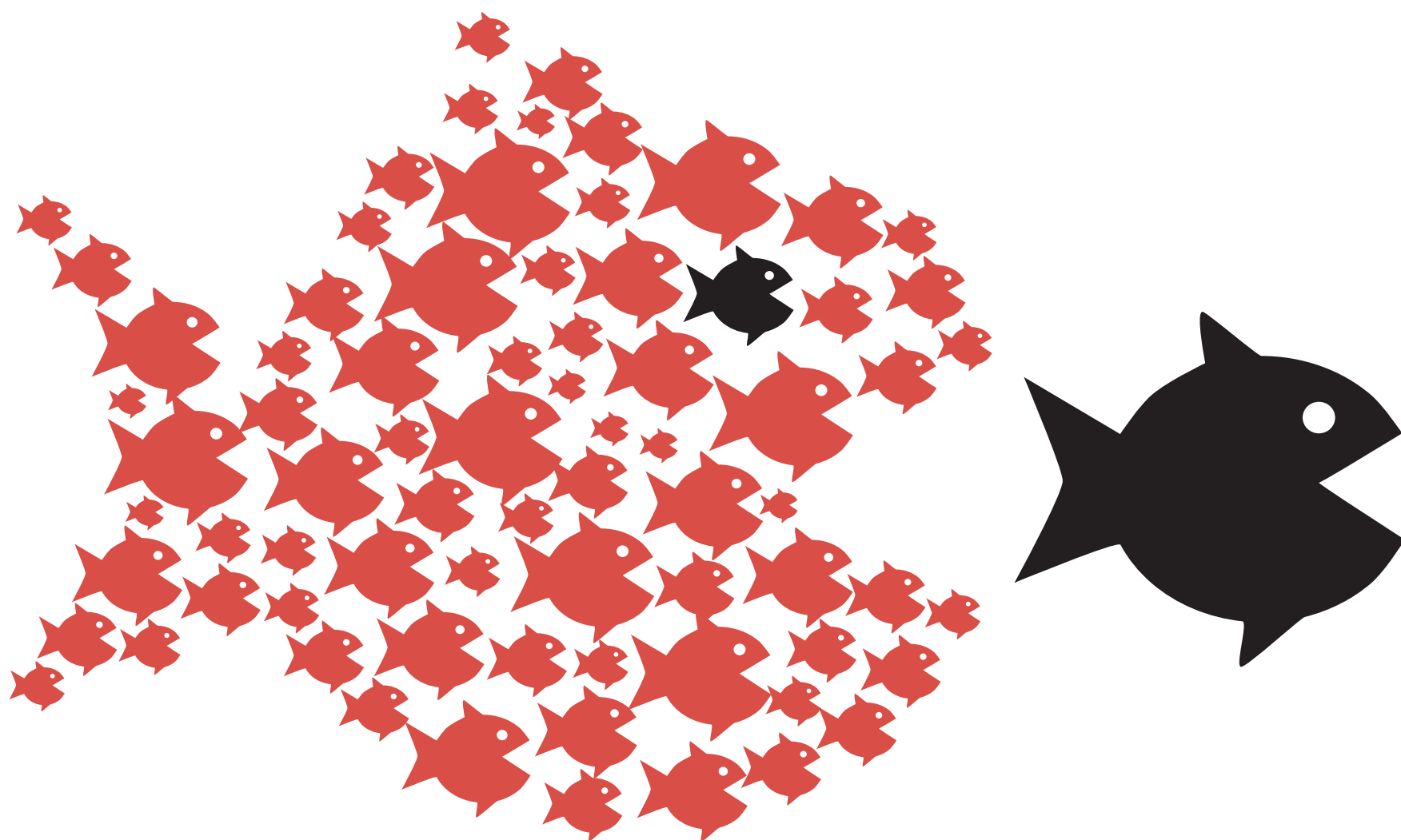
MANDATE TRADE UNION

APRIL 2018

SHOPFLOOR

MANDATE CONFERENCE 2018

AS DELEGATES GATHER IN WEXFORD
WE HAVE ONE SIMPLE MESSAGE:



ORGANISE!

STRAIGHT TALKING

Organising for change... it's the right thing to do

DOING the right thing is not always easy but it's always right. In our jobs and in our communities there are many things that are simply wrong.

We witness inequality, injustice and bad treatment every day of the week, whether it's the sight of homeless people huddled on cardboard in shop fronts, families condemned to living in one room in second-rate B&Bs, elderly patients waiting on trollies in a public health service starved of resources, workers forced to labour on minimum wages chasing hours in an attempt to make a living, children turning up to school hungry... the list is endless and all too predictable. The danger is that all this becomes normal.

The day we stop noticing these inequalities is the day the other side wins, but it's not good enough just to notice and say 'shame', we all need to do more than just notice, we need to make change happen – change at work, change in our communities, change in our national political system.

This society of ours is fundamentally broken, not broken by accident but by design and unless we vigorously challenge the regime that allows this to happen then it will become the new normal.

The regime includes all the major vested interests – the politicians, the developers, the media, the speculators, the legal profession, the major accountancy and consulting firms, large multinationals and their representative organisations, and the EU. All these and more are at the very heart of shaping the State. They are the regime that inflicts all the inequalities we see every day of the week.

Organised labour at work, organised labour politically, and organised labour in communities is the only defence we have. It offers the only real chance of defeating the regime. That is why employers, politicians, and their media allies spend so much time trying to destroy and vilify organised labour.

That is why major employers bully and intimidate workers or try to split and cause divisions among workers. They know that we are a very real threat to the privilege they enjoy at the expense of others. That is why the regime politicians are happy that more than 30% of our citizens don't vote in elections. That 30% tends to be those most screwed over. Not voting is not a protest. Not voting is surrendering.

Mandate members will continue to shout out loud and take action, continue to stand up and fight back against injustice at work and in their communities. It's not easy and often it puts our members and their union in harm's way but it is the right thing to do.

We as their union will continue to be a vehicle for regime change. We will mobilise, educate and agitate. Our union and our members are proud of our record and make no apologies for our actions.

Our task now is to grow and encourage Mandate activist groups in every town and city in Ireland. Our union is full of leaders and we have a responsibility to allow those leaders set the agenda and mobilise at work and politically.

We call on all trade unions in Ireland to put "the movement" back into trade unionism. Larkin and Connolly were not satisfied to live off the crumbs from the rich man's table. Their vision was a table where all workers sat as equals and ate their fill.

Organise, Organise, Organise and fight for your rightful place at the table.



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SHOCK MOVE

Arcadia moves to close outlets at Liffey Valley

THE Arcadia Group announced on March 7 that it intends to close a number of outlets in the Liffey Valley Shopping Centre in the summer. The stores, including Topshop/Topman, Dorothy Perkins, Burtons, Evans and Miss Selfridge, will close their doors for business on July 7.

A total of 49 Mandate members will be potentially impacted by the move.

It is understood collective consultations are scheduled to start on Tuesday, March 27. A general meeting of members will be held later that evening.

According to Mandate, the agenda for the collective consultations will include:

- Details of any suitable alternative vacancies within the Arcadia Group.
- Details of help and support which will be provided to Mandate members over the coming months.
- Details of the selection and implementation of potential redundancies.

Mandate Divisional Organiser Keith Pollard told *Shopfloor*: "The company has confirmed that a ban

on recruitment has been put in place across all Arcadia stores in the immediate vicinity in an effort to create possible transfer opportunities for the impacted members.

"It will be Mandate's intention to try and secure transfers for all members who wish to move to other Arcadia locations."

Mr Pollard emphasised that an agreed enhanced redundancy package for Mandate members was in place which means they will receive a more financially beneficial redundancy package compared to non-members.

He added: "Arcadia's announcement came as a total surprise and shock to those Mandate members affected by the move but they are hopeful that through their union they will secure options for their future that are acceptable to them."



Keith Pollard: total surprise

“The company has confirmed that a ban on recruitment has been put in place across all Arcadia stores in the immediate vicinity in an effort to create possible transfer opportunities for the impacted members”



Activists set campaign priorities at conference

MEMBERS from across the country gathered at Mandate Head Office in Dublin on February 19 for the second Decency for Dunnes Workers Campaign conference.

A previous gathering of campaign activists was held in Galway.

Mandate Divisional Organiser Karen Wall said: "The special conference was an extremely well attended and structured day with activists being given an opportunity to take part in forming the agenda for the next phase of this continuing campaign."

It is understood activists set the priorities for the next pay and benefits claim to be served on the retailer.



Ms Wall continued: "Members shared experiences and listened to an update on the current campaign on Banded Hours legislation. Many of our Dunnes members have been busy lobbying their TDs to ensure this legislation is fit for purpose."

She added: "Activists also used the opportunity to network and informed us that they look forward to our next event. Our Dunnes activists continue to pursue with determination secure jobs with decent pay and conditions."

GENDER PAY GAP

COMPARE AND CONTRAST

● Gender pay gap widens by 2% in Ireland ● Unions must mobilise on the issue

By David Gibney

Mandate communications officer

ON AVERAGE, women are paid 14% less than men, according to the latest data from the Central Statistics Office (CSO).

The figures from 2014 are based on gross hourly earnings, and compare with a 12% difference between men and women's pay in 2012.

This indicates that the gender pay gap is widening again and shows that much work needs to be done by trade unions and the Government to ensure we not only stop this gap from widening, but also begin to erode it.

To give a greater understanding of how wide the gender pay gap has become, it equates to women in full time employment working for free in Ireland for about one month of every year.

In the latter half of 2017, *RTE News* presenter Sharon Ní Bheoláin revealed that she was earning €60,000-€80,000 less than her co-anchor Bryan Dobson. The very public nature of these jobs is one of the reasons gender pay inequality has come back into the spotlight.

Why does the gender pay gap exist?

In an article published on the RTE website in November 2017, Dr Christine Cross, Head of Department, Personnel & Employment Relations at the Kemmy Business School at the University of Limerick explained the gender pay gap (GPG):

"There are a number of complex and often interrelated factors that explain its existence. The first is segregation in the labour market. Men and women tend to work in different sectors of the economy and in different jobs. In sectors where women tend to dominate, such as health-

care, education and public administration, these sectors have traditionally been seen as having lower value and consequently are lower paid. Essentially the fields where women dominate tend to pay less than those where men dominate such as engineering, science and computing."

She added: "However, the issue is further compounded by the fact that men hold the most senior and best-paid roles within female-dominated sectors and are employed as hospital

consultants, school principals and general secretaries.

"Another reason for the existence of the GPG is that women encounter greater obstacles when balancing home and work life. Family care and domestic responsibilities are not equally shared.

"For example, far more women than men chose to take parental leave. The consequence of this is that women have more career interruptions or work shorter hours than

men, which has a negative impact on their promotion prospects and hence their salaries and bonuses."

Dr Cross cited the Irish government's consultation process on the issue as a "laudable" development, but said more needs to be done: "... the process of ensuring organisations engage in wage transparency alone will not reduce the pay gap. Instead, the underlying causes of low levels of female representation in senior positions in organisations needs to be addressed."

In the trade union movement we know that tackling inequality of all kinds is a struggle, and that it will be

resisted by those who are in power – who happen to be mostly men. So solidarity and collectivism is essential if we are to be successful.

That's why being an active member of a trade union is so important. We must campaign in our workplaces, in our communities and demand action from politicians.

Iceland became the first country in the world to make it illegal to pay men more than women earlier this year. The country, which has a gender pay gap of 5.7%, a population of 330,000 and already ranks first in the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Equality Index*, wants to eradicate the gender pay gap by 2022. This is the type of ambitious programme Ireland needs to adopt.

Under the new legislation, companies and government agencies with more than 25 employees will be required to obtain government certification for their equal-pay policies.

Those failing to demonstrate pay equality will face fines.

"It's a mechanism to ensure women and men are being paid equally," Dagny Osk Aradóttir Pind, a board member of the Icelandic Women's Rights Association, said.

"We have had legislation saying that pay should be equal for men and women for decades now but we still have a pay gap."

It is similar in Ireland. Despite legislation attempting to level the playing field and prevent inequality between men and women, our gender pay gap is growing. It's time trade unions engaged fully in this debate and made preparations for a well-resourced and prominent campaign.



ICELAND
Gender pay gap has decreased to 5.7% and Govt is seeking its eradication by 2022

IRELAND
Women paid on average 14% less than men, a 2% increase in the pay gap between the sexes since 2012



Illustration: European Parliament

NEWS

ARNOTTS

T&Cs threatened under new proposals

MANDATE has voiced its "categorical opposition" to any imposition of detrimental terms and conditions on members employed in Arnotts.

The comments follow a shock announcement from the retailer at a meeting with the union on January 22.

Divisional Organiser Keith Pollard said: "It came as a complete surprise to Mandate and their members in Arnotts. We were informed of this development half

way through a two-year pay agreement that they intended to implement lesser T&Cs for new entrants, starting in February 2018."

Changes proposed by the company include:

- Reduced annual leave entitlements;
- Removal of the Christmas bonus; and
- Reduced Sunday premiums for members on probation.

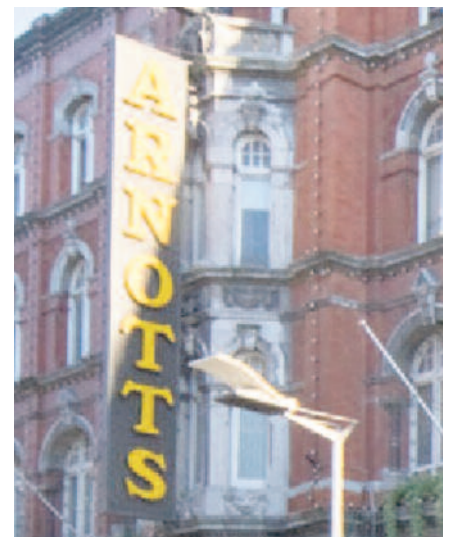
Arnotts management also announced that they intended to cease the payment of commission for online sales to retail team members.

Mr Pollard commented: "This proposal has the potential to detrimentally impact upon the earnings power of our members and would lead to cost savings for the company that were not envisaged as part of the pay negotiations in 2017."

He continued: "As you expect the

company have been unequivocally informed – in line with Mandate policy – that we are categorically opposed to the unilateral imposition of any detrimental changes to T&Cs for both our current and future members employed in Arnotts.

"At the time of going to print we are awaiting a response from the company over its intentions and all members in Arnotts will be kept up to date about all developments over these issues."



Heatons-Sports Direct members surveyed before talks start

THE results of a survey of members at Heatons-Sports Direct have provided union negotiators with a host of useful information in advance of discussions to secure a new deal with the company.

Divisional Organiser Bill Kelly told *Shopfloor*: "It was a comprehensive sample – 76% of members took part in the survey, drawn from 38 stores. The high number of members who have expressed their views will help to strengthen

the position of the new national negotiating team elected at a recently very well attended shop steward meeting."

According to the findings, some 62% of members said they were employed in Heatons stores or departments, with another 26% in sports areas.

Mr Kelly said: "What members highlighted as the most important issue that needed to be resolved in talks was that members working out-

side of sports areas are prevented from earning an equal share from the '5 Star' incentive scheme.

"In fact, 66% of members said they were earning less than they did under the old Heatons scheme."

He added: "However, the company has informed us that they are paying out 110% more under the new scheme including the top-up payment due to stores that have earned less.

This top-up payment is due for payment shortly."

The outgoing agreement included a clause that committed the company to give all existing members the same average hours on a year-on-year basis.

Some 64% of members who replied to the survey indicated that this commitment was still being applied to them and that their hours were being maintained. However, the other 36% did flag up difficulties in this area.

The results also revealed that though additional members had joined the pension scheme, only 14.8% were signed up to the scheme.

Also, 86% of respondents said they were receiving more notice of rostered hours, with 12% indicating they were on a fortnightly roster.

Other issues raised as priorities in the survey included additional hours for long-term and weekend workers and more secure contracts that reflect working hours as well as the introduction of a fortnightly roster and a pay increase.

The first meeting with the company to discuss a new deal took place on March 15 with further meetings planned for April.

NEW CHARITY

LGBT Ireland 'will be strong voice for rights and inclusion'

ON March 5, Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone officially launched LGBT Ireland as a national service provider and advocacy organisation.

LGBT Ireland will provide key services to LGBT people and the wider national population in three core pillars of service provision: support in non-judgemental, confidential help lines, including online web chats and peer support services; training to statutory and voluntary agencies and community groups and act as an advocacy organisation for the rights of all LGBT people living in Ireland.

Setting out the organisation's role, CEO Paula Fagan said: "LGBT Ireland is a newly-established charity which has been developed out of the National LGBT Helpline project. Over the past decade the helpline has supported thousands of LGBT people and their families, so we know firsthand the issues and struggles that many still face across the country.

"While Ireland has come a long way in providing rights and protections for LGBT people, there is still a lot of work to be done to ensure that when a person is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, or Trans, they can be open about who they are, without any fear of encountering negative reactions or stigma.



LGBT Ireland CEO Paul Fagan with Mandate officials Brian Forbes and Bill Kelly at the March 5 launch of the new charity

"With LGBT Ireland we will continue to deliver vital support services while also being a strong advocacy voice for LGBT rights and inclusion. We will also be providing training to staff and volunteers working in public and private sector organisations to assist them to better understand the needs of LGBT people and to help make their services more open and welcoming, so that LGBT people are visible and celebrated in workplaces, homes and communities across Ireland."

While the organisation pointed to "significant progress" being made in recent years, it also emphasised that research had shown that LGBT people in Ireland still faced considerable challenges.

Chairperson of LGBT Ireland, Bernadine Quinn said: "LGBT people deserve their representation to be as profes-

sional as any other sector. LGBT services in the past have been delivered on a very local basis leaving services very 'ad hoc' or funding-compliant.

"Our vision for LGBT Ireland is to change that with the continued support of our members and partners to deliver a coherent cohesive message across Ireland.

"We plan to do this through the delivery of standardised training, presenting a clear message to all recipients across the country. The aim of LGBT Ireland is to advocate for LGBT people and their families and to be the go-to service for support and information. LGBT Ireland also aims to attain triple-lock governance status as a national organisation."



Children & Youth Affairs Minister Katherine Zappone

MARKS & SPENCER

Section managers surveys 'invaluable'

NEGOTIATIONS are continuing over the current PDR system that applies to section managers.

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: "As part of this process Mandate has conducted two surveys of the broader section manager membership. The resulting feedback from members has been invaluable in assisting the national team during the course of the talks process."

BOOTS

Talks on pay

PAY negotiations are continuing at the retailer with the next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, April 11.

SHAWS

Meeting held

A WELL-ATTENDED national shop stewards meeting took place on Tuesday, February 27. The main purpose of the meeting was to consider the findings of a recently conducted Shaws membership survey and to set the agenda for forthcoming negotiations with the employer which will be held in the coming weeks.

Bah Humbug! Tesco postpone Xmas for 4 staff

By John Carty
Mandate Divisional Organiser

AS REPORTED in the December 2017 issue of *Shopfloor*, four Mandate members who work in Tesco Ballinasloe were successful in their claims under the Organisation of Working Time Act 1997. An Adjudication Officer from the Workplace Relations Commission found that Tesco had broken the law.

The four workers were looking forward to receiving their compensation, but this was not to be the case. On the Wednesday before Christmas Day, the workers found out that their employer would NOT be paying them their compensation.

Tesco were challenging the Adjudication Officer's decision and appealing the amounts of €500 for each worker to a full hearing of the Labour Court.

Talk about a missed opportunity to build some goodwill in the shop on Christmas week. When the workers returned from their Christmas break, they were informed that the date for the Labour Court hearing was set for March 27.

However, on February 22, the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) which is Tesco's union (yes, Tesco is a member of a 'trade union!') emailed the Labour Court stating that the appeals were withdrawn.

Mandate was not informed why Tesco had changed its mind. It's possible that someone in Tesco management saw sense and, if so, that is welcome. It's just a pity that Tesco were a little late in showing some Christmas spirit.



The wrong kind of Christmas spirit: Marley's ghost visits Ebenezer Scrooge

The golf between us...
Tommy McKearney PAGE 11

Staff at new M&S store in Santry get organised...



MANDATE has been quick off the mark in getting staff fully organised at the new Marks & Spencer store in the Omni Shopping Centre in Santry, Dublin.

The Santry store, the retail giant's 18th in the Republic, opened its doors for business on November 30 and within months the shop now has a fully functioning House Committee as well as a shop steward and deputy shop steward.

Mandate Industrial Officer

John Callan had written to the company late last year to organise an induction event along with the union's Organising Department. It was subsequently agreed with management that this would be held after the busy Christmas trading period.

Industrial Officer John Callan and Organiser Moira Murphy visited the store and held a "very useful induction event" on January 31.

John Callan explained to

Shopfloor: "As a result of this induction event we were able to ascertain that some members had transferred in from other stores.

"So we began the process of setting up a new union structure in the new store and nominations were sought for the positions of shop steward, deputy shop steward, health and safety rep and membership of the House Committee.

"As a result of this initiative

Mandate now has a shop steward and deputy shop steward in place as well as a House Committee in the store.

"On top of that, training is being organised for our new reps. And, of course, we continue to organise and recruit within the new M&S store."

Membership within the new store is continuing to grow and staff can join the union at

www.joinmandate.ie

MALAHIDE GOLF CLUB

Ballot backs pay deal

MANDATE members at Malahide Golf Club have unanimously accepted a two-year agreement brokered between management and the union.

Pay talks with Malahide Golf Club began in early November 2017. However, due to a change in the structure of the committee at the club and the election of a new club president, it was decided to reconvene the negotiations on January 9, 2018.

At the January 9 talks it was agreed that:

- The period of the agreement would run for two years from October 1, 2017;

- There would be an increase of 1% on basic rates, backdated to October 1, 2017, applied immediately;

- A further increase of 2% would be applied on October 1, 2018.

A general meeting and ballot was held on February 9 and there was an unanimous acceptance of the proposals.

Industrial Officer John Callan told *Shopfloor* members were "extremely happy" with the contents of the agreement and with the "certainty that the proposals had given to all our members in Malahide Golf Club".

He added: "The successful outcome of these negotiations and subsequent acceptance of the proposals shows how, if organised, workers together with their union are able to make significant gains in their workplace even if they are in smaller employments."

HOUSING RIGHTS



ASSAULTS ON SHOP WORKERS

Usdaw: 'Enough is enough'

VIOLENCE against UK shopworkers increased significantly during 2017 according to the latest surveys carried out by Mandate's sister union Usdaw and the British Retail Consortium (BRC).

The BRC recorded a doubling of violence against retail staff, as reported by employers, while Usdaw's survey showed a 25% increase, suggesting there are around 265 shopworkers assaulted every day.

The survey also revealed that one in five retail staff who have been assaulted don't report it and that 80% of shopworkers think a new law to

stiffen penalties for those who assault them is needed.

Usdaw General Secretary John Hanning claimed the findings were a "clear message" to the UK government. "These two surveys have returned truly shocking results and clearly demonstrate there is a growing problem that needs to be tackled," he said.

"It is entirely reasonable that shopworkers continue to ask the Government for legislation to provide stiffer sentences for the thugs that assault them. It is time to say enough is enough."

TD told Govt must act on housing

MANDATE Divisional Organiser Willie Hamilton, pictured left, met recently with Fine Gael's Kildare South TD Martin Heydon to discuss ICTU's Charter for Housing Rights initiative and to press home the need for government action on the issue.

Congress is calling for a large-scale public house building programme to deal with Ireland's housing and homelessness crisis, which it has dubbed "the defining

issue of our time". Willie Hamilton told *Shopfloor*: "We went through the charter and the rationale behind it with him and emphasised the strength of feeling among our members in relation to the current situation with affordable housing.

"While we didn't get his agreement to support it, he said he would consider the Charter and send us a written response." ► **Brutal reality of homelessness p16**

ICTU claims Govt's pensions 'Roadmap' is 'potentially significant'

CONGRESS has called the publication of the Government's Roadmap for Pensions Reform "potentially significant" in the development of future pension policies.

General Secretary Patricia King said the plan to move to a total contribution approach "will go some way towards addressing the inequality of the current eligibility criteria for the state pension".

February 2018 | SHOPFLOOR

She also noted that the proposal to introduce a second pillar, auto enrolment occupational pension scheme for all workers, coincided with ICTU submissions to successive governments on the issue.

"While the implementation of any such scheme will be a matter for consultation between unions, employers and government, it is critical that we move to address this major deficit in

our pensions system, with some 60% of private sector workers currently without workplace pension coverage and forced to rely solely on the state pension in retirement," Ms King said.

"The proposal to extend the state pension age to 68 in 2028 will pose major income challenges for workers whose employment may not extend to this date and who will be solely dependent on the state pension for in-

come in retirement." Ms King said ICTU had consistently queried changes to the state pension age and pointed out that Ireland was "moving faster and further" than most other EU states and was only one of three OECD countries planning such an increase.

She continued: "In relation to changes to Defined Benefit Scheme regulations, Congress had extensive engagement with the Department of

Employment & Social Protection in the lead up to the publication of the Social Welfare Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017 and we look forward to its early enactment.

"The Government has committed to detailed consultation with key stakeholders on the proposed reforms and Congress looks forward to participating fully in this process and working to have these crucial matters addressed." ► **Liam Berney p25**

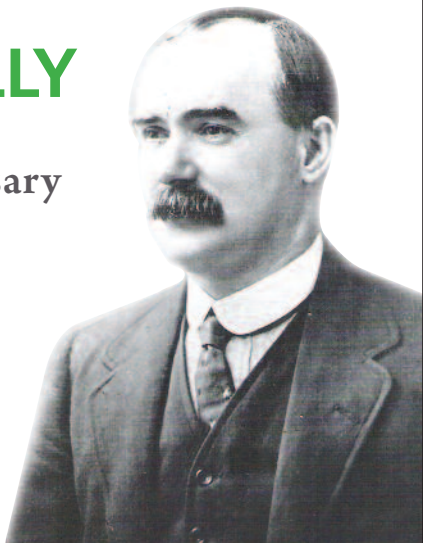
You are cordially invited to
our Commemoration of



JAMES CONNOLLY

on the
150th Anniversary
of his birth

Sunday
13th May 2018
at 12 noon
Kilmainham
Gaol



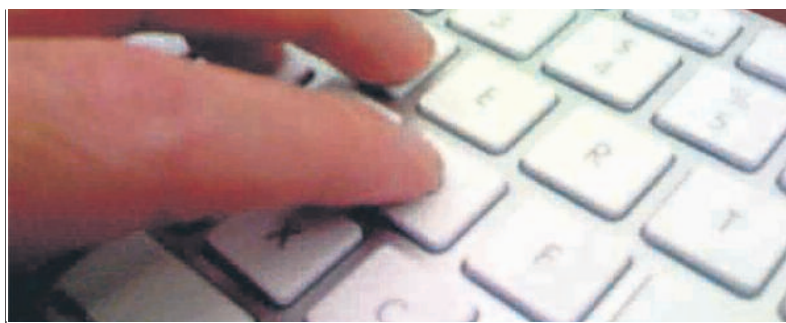
Guest Speakers

EUGENE MCCARTAN | General Secretary, Communist Party of Ireland

JIM SLAVEN | Director, Connolly 150 Committee Edinburgh

Refreshments and music featuring Gypsy Lacey will follow the
Commemoration.

Please RSVP by Tuesday 1st May to Colm Kinsella
colm.kinsella@unitetheunion.org or text 00353-871466663



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

NEWS

Labour Court calls on TK Maxx[®] to recognise Mandate Trade Union

THE Labour Court has issued a recommendation over a wide-ranging claim Mandate took on behalf of members working in the TK Maxx store in Arklow, Co Wicklow.

In its findings issued on February 23, the Court stated that TK Maxx should recognise Mandate in order to deal with the various issues set out in the union's claim. Mandate has since written to the retailer and is awaiting a response.

The union's claim included:

- A pay rise and the introduction of a proper pay scale with increments based on length of service, which is the norm in retail.

- More secure working hours – including contracts that guarantee more weekly working hours and offering additional hours to staff before new staff are hired.

- At least two weeks' advance notice of staff rosters and proper consultation over any changes to them.

The Labour Court had resumed looking at the case on February 8 but the company had failed to attend any of the hearings to respond to the TK Maxx workers' claims.

Divisional Organiser Michael Meegan told *Shopfloor*: "They continue to refuse to meet with the workers through their union and refuse to engage with the state's industrial relations bodies. This is completely unacceptable."

It is understood that the company has made some concessions since Mandate launched the claim last year. These include a 3% pay rise in April,



Michael Meegan: 'Completely unacceptable' increases to the weekly contracted hours for some workers and more advance rostering.

In March the company also announced a payment of a discretionary

“ The fact the Court recommended the employer should recognise the union to deal with these issues is a very important point and one has to conclude that this has a much broader application in the future to all employment matters ”

bonus across all global locations.

Mr Meegan commented: "Mandate believes these concessions do not go far enough to fully address TK Maxx workers' main concerns – and we have warned staff that these concessions can be eradicated at the sole discretion of management at a later date."

In its February 23 recommendation, the Court attempted to deal with banded hours by referring to pending legislation on the issue.

It noted that the issue of banded hours is "currently the subject of draft legislation and would therefore urge the parties to engage at an early stage in relation to this issue".

On the other points raised by Mandate, the Court recommended that the employer "should recognise the union as the representative of those employees who are in membership of the union and should engage with it in dealing with employment-related matters arising within the employment affecting those members".

Mr Meegan said: "The fact the Court recommended the employer should recognise the union for the purpose of dealing with these issues is a very important point and one has to conclude that the recommendation has a much broader application in the future to all employment matters relating to the members in question."

Mandate has since written to the company about the Labour Court recommendation and will now consult with members in Arklow.

DEBENHAMS

Long service issue for WRC

A CONCILIATION conference is to take place at the Workplace Relations Commission on Tuesday, April 10 to deal with a claim by supervisors over the non-application of a long service increment.

'Broad agreement' over deal

A THIRD meeting was held with Debenhams chiefs on Friday, March 23, over a set of proposals impacting on managers.

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: "At this stage the parties have reached broad agreement over the principal contents of the final proposal document. It is hoped that this will be completed within the next two weeks. Once the final draft of the proposal doc-

ument is agreed, it will then proceed to a ballot of the members directly impacted by the proposed change. At this stage we believe that number affected to be 12 in total."

He added: "Obviously any final agreement will contain an option for the union to raise issues of a detrimental nature that may arise in the future as a direct consequence of the new management structures coming into play."

MAC BEES BOUTIQUE

Members vote for 2% rise deal

FOLLOWING negotiations with Mac Bees Boutique, Killarney, a proposal was put to the members that was accepted. Members voted in favour of a 2% pay increase for all staff as well as an agreement that rosters will be displayed two weeks in advance.



CONCERN
worldwide

www.concern.net

REVIEW By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

MARY Manning's new book, *Striking Back*, about the 1984 Dunnes Stores Anti-Apartheid strike is receiving rapturous reviews:

- "I haven't been so moved by a book in a long time. For various reasons, it couldn't have been written earlier. It's personal and political, intimate and artful... This book should become a classic." – Gene Kerrigan, *Sunday Independent*.
- "Captivating book...beautifully expressed... remarkable." – *The Irish Times*
- "Fascinating...an intriguing insider account of a campaign that won plaudits from Nelson Mandela and Archbishop Desmond Tutu." – *The Irish Independent*.

The book isn't simply about the strike, or a battle with Dunnes Stores management, it's about a group of young retail workers taking on the entire Irish Establishment... and winning.

It's the story of a very public political campaign, mixed with a deeply personal story. Of triumph and tragedy. Of sacrifice and success. But mostly about the selflessness of a small group of Irish working class activists.

When Mary Manning and her colleagues in Dunnes Stores on Henry Street were issued a directive by their trade union IDATU (now Mandate Trade Union) not to handle South African goods, the workers knew very little about the struggle of impoverished black South Africans.

Nevertheless, they weren't going to ignore their union's directive.

Mary Manning was first to be tested. A young woman approached her till with Outspan grapefruits and Mary explained how she could not handle the goods the customer had presented because of a union directive. The customer had no issue with this, but management did. This simple action would ignite the highest profile Irish trade union dispute in decades.

When Mary was suspended for her action, shop steward Karen Gearon announced a walk-out, with only eight other workers joining Mary and Karen on the picket line (Tommy Davis, Liz Deasy, Michelle Gavin, Sandra Griffin, Theresa Mooney, Vonnie Munroe, Cathryn O'Reilly and Alma Russell).

Milestones

The strikers were aged 17 to 24 years of age, and at first it was thought the whole affair would only last a few days, but almost three years later, the workers still stood their ground.

Striking Back details the milestones along the way. How, when the workers learned how the black South Africans were treated by the minority white population; how they were routinely murdered or declared missing; how they couldn't vote; own property; or vindicate the most basic of human rights; they could never go back to handling South African produce.

Mary's book illustrates a small number of heroes along the way, including the late Mandate Trade Union official Brendan Archbold, who stood by the workers through thick and thin. And Nimrod Sejake, a black South African who could not return to his homeland because he would face the death penalty – yet stood on the picket lines throughout the strike giving counsel, educating the strikers and helping them to strategise and build their movement.

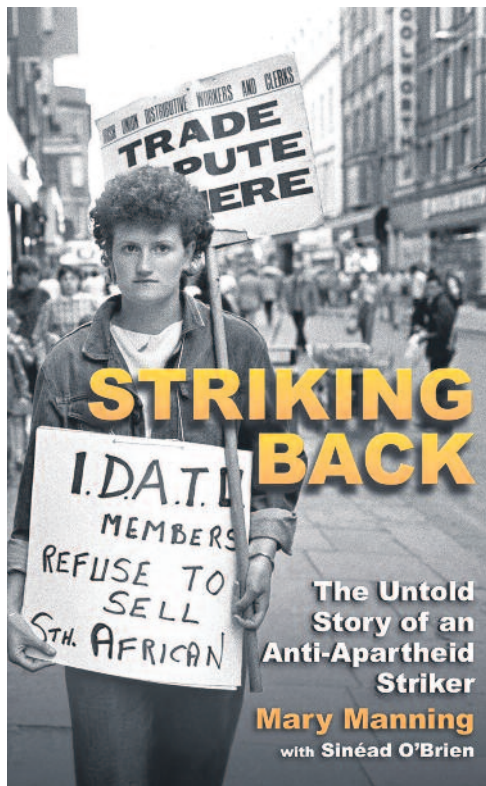
Then there are the villains.

The Dunnes Stores management who went to extreme lengths to make life difficult for the workers, who tried to humiliate them, who turned a blind eye as former "colleagues" of the strikers threw food out of upstairs windows at the workers as they took their brave stance.

The gardai who routinely harassed the workers, calling them "n***er lovers", who beat them up, followed them home and called to their family homes to intimidate them.

The Catholic Church who publicly con-

How ten Dunnes Stores strikers changed the world



demned the strikers, with a group of nuns passing the picket in order to incite the picketers.

The politicians who took no actions to protect the workers for years, who left them on the picket lines for two years and nine months until they were embarrassed by the international attention the action was receiving.

The workers' own union executive who ordered the workers off the picket lines at a crucial stage in the dispute.

And surprisingly, the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement leader Kader Asmal, who undermined the actions of the workers.

It was only when Archbishop Desmond Tutu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 and requested the Dunnes strikers attend his press conference in London that public opinion and attitudes in Ireland changed.

Nelson Mandela, after being released from 27 years in prison, visited the strikers in Dublin to personally thank them for their actions, but the fallout for Mary Manning was to continue. She couldn't find any jobs in Dublin because her name was synonymous with the strike, so she had exiled herself to Australia for five years, missing out on meeting one of her heroes, while also missing the funeral of her father.

Towards the end of the book, Mary thanks Mandate Trade Union for sending her and the

other strikers to Nelson Mandela's funeral in 2013, giving them a particular sort of closure on that chapter in their lives: "Incredibly, Mandate agreed to pay for all the remaining flights and accommodation for our 10-day stay in South Africa.

"I think we all felt that this huge act of generosity was the union's way of letting us know that, while the union Executive Committee of the 1980s had failed us, the present day Executive would not.

"They were proud of our action against Dunnes Stores as an employer and against apartheid as a regime and could not have expressed their feelings more strongly than by making the impossible happen – the Dunnes Stores strikers were finally going to South Africa!"

Solidarity

This book is essential reading for all trade unionists and activists. It successfully illustrates the Dunnes Stores strikers' belief that power comes from the bottom, and with determination, solidarity and persistence, anything can be achieved.

It is an honest portrayal of one of Ireland's longest and most inspiring strikes, exposing the class bias and viciousness of Ireland's Establishment. It's an emotional rollercoaster highlighting the impact an action like this can have on not only you, but those closest to you. It also shows how the Catholic Church and the Irish Establishment have terrified ordinary decent citizens into paralysis on matters of conscience.

But most of all, it's the story of a serendipitous coming together of a small number of extraordinary retail assistants in Dunnes Stores on Henry Street in Dublin who went on strike in solidarity with millions of black South Africans they had never met. And how those working class heroes helped millions of oppressed black people overcome the vicious and murderous apartheid regime.

Gene Kerrigan ends his book review by stating: 'Striking Back' should be part of every Irish child's education. It speaks of morality and courage and would tell them that Ireland does not have to be a country of sleazy secrets and dodgy deals."

I tend to agree.

Striking Back by Mary Manning can be purchased at most good book stores in Ireland.



Heroes all – the Dunnes Stores strikers on the picket line

When organising becomes contagious!

Report from the US
CENTRE PAGES

The DRAPERS' ASSISTANT

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

EDITORIAL NOVEMBER 1917

Organise! Organise!! Organise!!!

WE HAVE no hesitation in stating that at no period in the history of the Association has there been a greater necessity to become members and to be more active in the movement than at the present time.

The great conflict which has affected, we might say, the whole world is still raging and shows no sign of abatement, and no one knows what the end will bring. We cannot, at any rate, shut our eyes to what has happened during the past three years, and he would be a clever person who could foretell what will happen on the cessation of hostilities.

Committees and councils have already been formed by the various powers to deal with what are termed after-war problems, and it certainly behoves every trade union to see that every worker is organised, so that when these problems come to be grappled with, machinery will be in existence to deal with matters concerning their welfare.

At the present time the workers finds every commodity of life increased in price, increased to such a figure that places them altogether out of his reach; and while the employer is reaping a bountiful harvest in the shape of increased profits, the wages of the worker are in many cases on the same level as they were in pre-war days.

Some firms, it is true, have paid a war bonus, but when the present cost of living is compared with what it was in 1914, the amount paid in the form of war bonus is altogether inadequate and cannot be looked upon as compensation for the loss sustained.

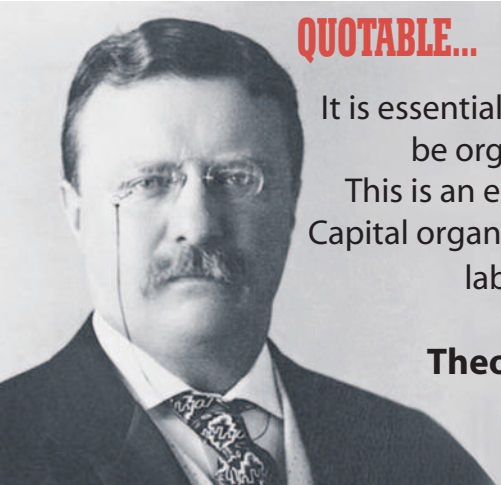
We are glad to note that there has been some activity recently in the

way of enrolling new members, and we hope, now that the organising season is in full swing, branch committees throughout the country will realise their responsibilities and see that every unit is organised under our banner!

The rank and file should not remain inactive. Let them get to work and arrange for a canvass of the non-member, and let them realise that every non-member in their midst is undermining the member in the position in which he or she may occupy.

There is no use in making any demand for the payment of a living wage unless the Association can count on the united support of every assistant and clerk engaged at the drapery trade, and if we could only get the assistants to realise their strength under such as the payment of minimum wage, shorter hours of labour, the curtailment of the number of apprentices could be very easily grappled with.

We could not sufficiently impress upon the members of the various branch committees the urgent necessity to be up and doing. We would advise them to get compiled of the non-members in their midst, as well as those who are in arrears, make arrangements for a personal canvass, create an interest in the political life that concerns every worker engaged at shop life – in other words, bread and butter politics – and we have no doubt that, with a strong pull and pull altogether, we will be able to put our house in order, so that by the end of the year we will have our membership considerably strengthened and the path made smooth to secure much-needed reforms.



QUOTABLE...

It is essential that there should be organization of labor. This is an era of organization. Capital organizes and therefore labor must organize.

Theodore Roosevelt

Picture: Public Domain



Picture: Lea Latumahina (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Bringing a bill protecting workers' tips to the plate



Paul Gavan

SINN Féin's Protection of Employee Tips Bill has a simple objective: to make it illegal for an employer to steal a worker's tips.

The unfortunate reality of the hospitality industry is that many workers are dependent upon tips which they earn at work. It would, of course, be my preference that workers were paid the living wage, and did not have to rely upon tips, but their situation is a by-product of an economic sector in which low pay, precarious employment and poor working conditions are the norm.

Our bill was drafted after research carried out by our party last year demonstrated that all too often workers are having their tips withheld. In fact, one in three workers was found to be short-changed in an extensive survey of 414 employees undertaken in Galway last year.

The bill is modelled on a Canadian bill introduced in Ontario last year, and will give real protection to workers in the sector.

At the same time, the bill will not impact in any way on good employers who already ensure that tips are passed on their employees. It also allows for the Minister to introduce regulations around 'Tronc' schemes whereby tips can be shared among all employees including back office staff working in the kitchens.

The bill will also require employers in the hospitality sector to publicly display their tipping policy in order

to give full transparency to both customers and staff.

This bill can make a real difference for tens of thousands of hard-pressed workers who depend on tips as part of their regular income. The Sinn Féin Seanad team will now seek to move this bill to committee stage and I will be asking all of the political parties to continue to take a constructive stance and cooperate to ensure this bill becomes law. Since drafting the bill my office has been inundated with hor-

“ This bill can make a real difference for tens of thousands of hard-pressed workers who depend on tips as part of their regular income ”

ror stories of monies being unfairly withheld from workers right across the State. We have also received an unprecedented level of interest and goodwill from the general public in response to this legislation.

This is something which organisations such as the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland, and trade unions working at the coal-face can also attest to. It was great to have the public support of both Mandate and SIPTU with regard to our bill.

The bill became a major news story in the weeks before it was due to be debated in the Seanad with almost every local radio station in the State covering the issue. The radio stations in turn received massive feedback from people working in the sector and from the general public in sup-

port of the bill. All of this public pressure began to bear political fruit on the day of the debate.

On the morning of the bill being debated we were informed that both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail were both going to vote against. By that evening we understood the mood of both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail had softened towards the legislation, undoubtedly due to public pressure.

The Minister began his opening speech by offering us a deal. The deal was that the Government would not vote down the bill as long as it would be delayed by six months in order for it to be investigated by the Low Pay Commission.

After listening to a number of statements in the House we came to the conclusion that we actually had broad support across the House on the opposition benches. We, therefore, decided that we would simply forge ahead and call the Government's bluff.

In the end, both Fine Gael and Fianna Fail moved aside to allow the bill to pass to committee stage without a vote even being taken.

We now have the option to either push ahead with the bill to the next stage in the Seanad during a future PMB slot, or we can chose to send it to the Low Pay Commission to be scrutinised before it returns to the Seanad.

We are considering which route to take, but one thing is for sure – we will be progressing this bill.

It won't be easy to get it passed through all stages in the Dail and Seanad – employers are already lobbying heavily against it. Which is why public pressure from workers and unions such as Mandate is so important in the battle ahead.

Paul Gavan is a Sinn Féin member of Seanad Éireann

Now is time for us to step forward



Michael Taft

ALREADY we are hearing the faint drumbeats: we have to slow down public spending. A Finance Department official said it would be “madness” to spend all the money available to us. Why? Because of all the “uncertainties”.

Of course, that’s the point of the future – it’s never “certain”. There’s always something around the corner. And there’s always someone who will say that we have to slow down spending on public services, investment and social protection. Of course there are uncertainties.

● **Brexit:** The focus has been on the border but even if we overcome that we still have to deal with the damage to our indigenous sectors reliant on the British market. Whatever happens, economic growth (and that means jobs and wages) will be hit, and in the worst scenario Brexit could cost households more than €1,000 each.

● **Corporate tax:** For years, multinationals – especially digital companies – have been manipulating tax codes to funnel profits into Ireland to take advantage of our low tax-rate; profits earned in other countries. EU countries are now taking steps to end this. And we are going to be hit. We could lose as much as €1 billion in tax revenue, and that means we will have to either raise taxes or cut spending to fill this hole.

● **Interest rates:** Since the crash central banks have printed trillions of euro to support economies, resulting in over-priced shares, assets, and property. That is now coming to an end. Nobody knows the impact. One thing we do know is interest rates will rise meaning higher costs for households (mortgages), business and the Government. If not handled right, we could experience a massive drop in over-priced assets which could bleed into the real economy (just like the crash). Even if Ireland escapes the worst, being an export-based economy means that what goes bad for our trading partners will go bad for us.

Those are just some uncertainties. And employers’ organisations will not be too far behind in calling for wage ‘moderation’ (that is, no wage increases). We’ve been through all this before. You’d think from the debate that public spending has increased at a rapid unsustainable rate. The truth is far different.

First, public spending is still below pre-crash levels (2008) when we factor in inflation and population increase. In fact, the Government

“ If you want to launch a new programme for economic efficiency and social prosperity, the launchpad comprises women and men who do the work – the workers, the producers ”



projects that even by 2021 it will still be below 2008 levels. That’s over a decade of lost spending and investment.

Second, while spending is projected to take a jump this year, the Government projects it will grow by only 1% in the years ahead – again taking into account inflation and population growth. This hardly suggests that we have been throwing around money like confetti.

Let’s be frank: there are no easy answers. We need an open and honest dialogue throughout the country. We need a vision of where we want to be in 10 years’ time. We need a realisable pathway to get there. Quite simply, we need to mobilise all our resources to create an Ireland where work pays; where the economy is based on productive activity in which people produce goods and services that other people need or want to buy; an Ireland where no one is left behind, without a home, left to sink into deprivation.

And there’s only one civil society organisation capable of starting that dialogue and seeing it through to completion: the women and men

who make up the trade union movement. Drawn from all sections of society, with experience of their workplace and community, organised so that their insights and experience can be channelled into concrete action – it is time that the trade union movement steps forward and take this lead.

Of course, with a movement so large there will be differences over priorities, over strategies, over the best way to achieve our common goals. But the trade union movement overcomes such difficulties every day.

Let’s look at one part of that vision – an important one. The OECD recently produced new data regarding the productivity of the Irish-owned service sector (retail, hospitality, transport, communication). There has been little debate over productivity, which is unfortunate because it is key to increasing wages, growth and investment – at the business and national level. Without productivity growth, incomes and living standards stagnate.

The OECD found that productivity in Irish services is worse than woeful. Productivity is below 2006 levels.

Even since 2013, when services started recovering strongly as consumer spending increased, productivity increase has been modest at best.

How can we improve productivity? Employers and their political allies have an answer: drive down wages and working conditions, turn decent jobs into precarious ones, reduce taxation and regulation on businesses. In other words, race to the bottom.

We also have an answer. Collective bargaining not only improves wages and working conditions, it also helps workplaces find solutions because it leverages in the knowledge and experience of workers. European countries with stronger collective bargaining systems are more productive. Going a step further, employee participation in decision-making at the enterprise level increases productivity even further. In fact, the less that women and men are treated like commodities, the less that labour is seen as a cost, the more work becomes decent work – the more prosperous business, society and the economy become.

If you want to launch a new programme for economic efficiency and social prosperity, the launchpad comprises women and men who do the work – the workers, the producers.

Contained within the trade union movement is that democratic, participatory vision. We have to, first, articulate it and, second, put it into action. If we don’t, then vested interests will occupy that space and drive that debate.

If we don’t step forward, don’t be surprised if those drumbeats start getting louder.



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

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

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

Salaries Employment Health Grievance Protection Law
Issues Representative Process Negotiation
Healthcare Employment Agreement Productive
Representative Union Wages Group
Cost Overtime Safety Establish Cost
Limits Work-life Salary
Regulate Contract

Colette Conaghan: 'I am not aware or know of any male counterpart that has to experience these pressures'



The gender pay gap as I experience it...

MANDATE member Colette Conaghan, an assistant shop steward at Penneys in Letterkenny, spoke at the forum.

In her enlightening presentation, she vividly detailed the obstacles and difficulties faced by working mums, in particular single mums, in the Ireland of today.

The 29-year-old Donegal native, who has two young children, pointed out that workers in retail were predominantly female.

"If you take a snapshot of my workplace population along gender lines," she told the forum, "you will find that out of a workforce of approximately 140 staff, only 15% of the staff would be male. Of the remaining 85%, half are single parents."

Colette said that women working full-time earned between 70% and 90% of their counterparts but given childminding and household responsibilities "obviously worked more and longer".

"This," she added, "is what is often referred to as the gender pay gap... but when people talk of the gender pay gap I immediately think of HR [professionals] and retail store managers, newsreaders, women working in the media, actresses, etc. I do not think of general sales assistants in retail."

Colette admitted that she got exactly the same rate of pay as her male counterparts. This would lead people to believe that there was no gender pay gap "as such" in her job. However, she suggested that there was in fact a gap "in real and practical terms – a real gender earnings inequality".

Because of childminding costs of about €120 a week, Colette claimed that "immediately... [at the start of] my working week my earnings are reduced to the point of 50% or thereabouts", adding, "This is my workplace experience and further afield doesn't apply to males..."

Colette estimated that before she was fortunate enough to secure a council house, she had about €110 left over to meet her family's basic needs, such as heat, food and clothing.

"The fact that I have now acquired a council house, this weekly amount is now double that. All that [being] said, I still rely on family hand-outs to keep me afloat."

"I have been told by the Department of Social Welfare that I would be better off not working as I would be entitled to their supports – but I enjoy my job, I want my job and I would love to do my job full-time."

She emphasised that both her career in retail and her trade union activity gave her

A wet weekend of stirring debate

By Brian Forbes
Mandate National Coordinator

A WET and windy Ballybofey in lovely Donegal played host recently to a weekend of meetings hosted by the Paedar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum. The forum was established to discuss political ideology and to analyse society with a view to constructing a vision of Ireland which we all can aim to build together.

The forum heard speakers on a range of topics including establishing working cooperatives, the state of the Irish fishing industry and Brexit, the Irish language and the Gaeltacht. Inspirational women activists, including Mandate member Colette Conaghan from Penneys in Letterkenny, spoke on issues affecting women in Irish society today. A very successful and interesting weekend debate was hosted by the forum and plans are under way for further events.

"much needed self-esteem and morale", but that childminding responsibilities and costs were a constant concern for her.

"In my experience," Colette told the forum, "all of the above are gender-biased. I am not aware or know of any male counterpart that has to experience these pressures."

But she pointed out that she would be in a far worse situation without the support and backing of a trade union.

She said: "Mandate's agreements with my employer on pay increases, and especially banded hours arrangements, has gone some way to ensuring that I and my children have a form of income security."

Hours cut

"Prior to that agreement, Penneys staff, like other major retail staff, could be employed on a 15 hours per week contract but regularly work for long periods, working well in excess of this, often double that amount of hours."

"And when the business quietened [down] the employer had the contractual right to immediately cut those hours to the contractual minimum."

"This would – and did – have a major impact on a worker's pay which on many occasions saw earnings reduced by half or more."

Colette claimed that the drastic cutting of hours could also be used by local management to punish staff "who stepped out of line" or "had a poor sickness record".

She said the Penneys banded hours agreement ensured that workers were given contracts "correct to their long-standing working arrangements". It also

"controlled" the employer, stopping them "offsetting their costs" at the expense of workers or targeting individual employees as a punishment.

Colette continued: "In Penneys we have a closed shop arrangement whereby Penneys workers have to be a member of Mandate. This is important as it immediately provides real potential worker power to counteract the employer's relentless pursuit of profits."

Despite this, she sounded a warning that the same type of "union de-recognition" recently seen in Tesco Ireland could in time occur in Penneys.

"We in Penneys need to develop that immediate membership power potential into a strongly organised and focused workplace union front so that we can face down what we believe will also happen to Penneys."

"I firmly believe that what is currently happening to Mandate in Tesco will sooner rather than later happen in Penneys...and we need to be ready for that," she cautioned.

Colette admitted that her hourly rate of pay – €16.50 – might appear reasonable in an Irish context but that was because of trade union negotiating power.

"My rate of pay is a union negotiated rate that only those it directly affects and applies to have the right to accept or reject. In non-unionised retailers or those retailers where the employer doesn't engage with unions, this is not the case."

"It, therefore, follows that getting employers to properly recognise unions should be an important next step for workers, their unions and legislators."



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.

● 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

● 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.

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.
Check out www.mandate.ie for further





Picture: zenmasterdod (CC BY-SA 2.0)



Tommy McKearney

IF ANYBODY thinks that the struggle between classes has ended in Ireland, they are profoundly mistaken. One recent happening illustrates how working people are disadvantaged in this country.

Last month, the Department for Transport, Tourism and Sport allocated €150,000 to Malahide Golf Club in north County Dublin (membership enrolment fee: €8,400).

Contrast that sum with the almost paltry sports grants made to several deprived inner-city communities. Hardly surprising, therefore, that Sinn Fein TD Imelda Munster accused the Government of “buying votes by targeting its own middle class clubs”, while adding that, “... they have just said to hell with inequality”.

Discrepancies

Nor indeed is this phenomenon only recognised by left-leaning critics of the Government. A recent report by the uber-capitalist World Economic Forum – i.e. the Davos guys – highlighted real discrepancies in relation to income and wealth in Ireland.

It first commented approvingly on Ireland’s high per capita GDP and labour productivity, coupled with a favourable business climate that has allowed Ireland to drastically decrease its public-debt level by 43% through the austerity programme. It then went on to mention the reality – that “Ireland is faced with high income inequality and soaring wealth

inequality”. Clearly we don’t need the Davos elite to tell us this. Evidence is all around with depressed wages and reduced public services. The reality is seen in hospital waiting lists at crisis levels, homelessness and widespread housing shortages, overcrowded classrooms, downgraded public transport facilities and selective infrastructural underinvestment.

Needless to say the outworking of this impacts disproportionately on working-class families and especially the less well-off.

For a number of decades from the 1960s onward, it was possible to argue that conditions for working people in Ireland were improving. This did not happen by accident. It was largely due to an organised labour movement capable of pressuring governments and employers. So influential had trade unions become that by 1987, in an effort to re-invigorate the economy, state and business felt it necessary to bring them into a social partnership arrangement.

Arguments have continued within and beyond the trade union movement ever since as to the wisdom or otherwise of participating. Whatever position a person takes in that debate, one thing at least is clear. Both the state and management realised at the time that it was vital that they involve the unions. Such was the power of organised labour at the time. Over the last decade, however, conditions for working people have become more difficult and labour movement influence has declined.

There are a number of reasons why this is so. Technology has delivered change. Over a few short decades, for example, the family-owned grocer has given way to the multinational retail chain, which in

“ We need to rebuild and, where necessary, create a realisation that support and solidarity must be across the board. It cannot simply be a case of expecting trade union organisation to ‘come when sent for’ and thereafter be abandoned to fight its own corner ”



Plenty of green: Trump owns a Co Clare golf club

Picture: Gage Skidmore (CC BY-SA 2.0)

turn is now being challenged by on-line shopping.

Globalisation has made the transfer of production overseas easier, unnerving workers in the process. Carefully crafted, pro-business legislation means it is more difficult for a union to take strike action without

having assets sequestered and its very existence threatened. Combined with ideologically driven neo-liberal governments, this has understandably resulted in weakening the trade union movement.

Obviously too, there is a strong connection between the effectiveness of organised labour and political influence exerted by the left. Deprived of leverage stemming from the workplace, Ireland’s traditional parliamentary party that sought to broker a compromise between capital and worker has found itself sidelined and practically irrelevant.

To paraphrase a left-wing US commentator: the political centre has collapsed without a clear left alternative emerging. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that our neo-liberal Taoiseach would feel confident enough to boast about helping Donald Trump maintain the value of his County Clare golf club.

Nevertheless, working people should not despair. While organised labour in Ireland is undoubtedly facing difficulties, it has demonstrated an ability to challenge the elite and the establishment.

The Right2Water movement with its significant and crucial trade union input proved that this is possible. Moreover, that campaign provided a useful lesson. The success of that struggle lay in combining union organisation with mobilisation of the people.

If this has taught us anything, it is that we should no longer compartmentalise the struggle to improve conditions for our class. We need to rebuild and, where necessary, create a realisation that support and solidarity must be across the board. It cannot simply be a case of expecting trade union organisation to ‘come when sent for’ and thereafter be

abandoned to fight its own corner. In short, we can only move forward as a class and not as separate interest groups.

We have already seen the value of trade union organisation during the anti-water tax campaign. There needs to be wider reciprocation providing active and meaningful support whenever workers are involved in a dispute. Unity and solidarity have to be constant watchwords and also given practical expression.

All of which will remain, at best, purely aspirational if we don’t lay the groundwork to bring it about. Currently there are several useful efforts being made to do so.

Progressive

The Right2Change movement that evolved from the Right2Water campaign has made positive strides in this direction. The Campaign for Public Housing has also convened a number of progressive currents demonstrating genuine potential.

There is also, however, need for a broader organisational assembly with fixed structures meeting regularly. An arena where issues can be debated, allowing key campaigns to be identified and thereafter facilitating support for these initiatives.

An opportunity to build such a vehicle will present itself next January. We will be celebrating the centenary of the First Dail and its Democratic Programme; surely an appropriate time to launch an initiative in support of workers.

The Peadar O’Donnell Socialist Republican Forum is organising an event in Liberty Hall, Dublin, on 26th January 2019 to mark the centenary.

The Forum is happy to have this issue discussed as a central theme of the event and, in the meantime, help with preparations.

My Money My Choice



“I spend my money where workers have a voice”

“I love being able to find Fair Shops on the website”



“A great campaign supporting workers”



www.fairshop.ie

Spend your money where workers count

COMMENT



Packing them in: new official apartment design guidelines – pushing a higher density approach – seem harken back to the dark days of tenements

Picture: safesolar (CC BY 2.0)

Designed to maximize profits not to suit people

By Brian Forbes
Mandate National Coordinator

THE new design standards issued in March 2018 by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in respect of apartment guidelines proves that the powers that be are not interested in resolving the housing crisis in the best interests of citizens.

These new regulations are slanted hugely in favour of those greedy property speculators and builders who caused the housing crisis in the first place.

They are more about maximizing profits for both domestic and foreign property development chancers who care less about who they are building for and more for squeezing every single last cent of profit from their investment.

These new regulations promoted by the gombeen political class in Ireland is adding to the housing crisis and creating uncertainty while in-

creasing property prices and already scandalous rental costs.

Safe, secure decent housing would appear to be the last priority on the Government's mind when it comes to apartment guidelines.

Building higher density apartments by reducing car parking provision and even cutting back on lifts while promoting 'shared living spaces' such as kitchens and dining areas is a step back to tenement life in the early 1900s in Dublin.

“Build them tighter lads and make them smaller and sure they can share a kitchen and a bog whilst they're at it,” must have been part of the conversation going on in Government circles when these regulations were being drafted.

Helping maximize profits for greedy property speculators while they diminish facilities and increase prices seems to be the Irish neo-liberal way of solving a national housing crisis.

New regulations should improve housing stock and provision and not set standards back any further to enable profits for the property chancer class.

The 'trickle down' economic thinking of the Government in relation to the private provision of housing in this country is contemptible beyond belief. It's the property roundabout trying to swing back around to Celtic Tiger days with government thinking akin to a goldfish in a bowl suffering from a fishy dose of policy amnesia.

The answer is simple – build universally available public housing and provide income-linked affordable rental accommodation for everyone who needs it.

Stop pandering to the private sector developers and speculators who couldn't care less about our citizens and create a public housing stock built by trade union labour in the best interests of wider society and our beleaguered communities.

NUMBER-CRUNCHING...

Boots members have their say...

THE latest national survey of Mandate members employed in Boots has just been completed and the following are the priorities that have been identified as we enter into a fresh set of national negotiations:

- Pay rise;
- Understaffing/non-replacement of staff;
- Better work-life balance arrangements to include rosters and fairer distribution of unsocial hours;
- More secure/set working patterns;

- Better communication from management;
- Greater clarity over performance bonus review;
- Introduction of pay scales for dispensers, technicians and assistant managers.

Responding to the survey results, Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: “Yet again we see the value of reaching out to our members by way of a national survey in that they now have a direct say in ensuring that the national negotiat-

ing team clearly know the issues that matter to them most as we enter into negotiations with their employer starting on April 11.

“The objective of these types of survey – carried out as standard practice across all retail employments where we have members – is to ensure that we build better association and active engagement with our general membership base in a way that allows their voices be heard at the national negotiating table.”

PUBLIC HOUSING

The key to unlocking the housing crisis...



THE word 'crisis' implies a short-term emergency. By definition, a 'crisis' is extraordinary, abnormal and temporary. A scenario that continues over a long period of time is not a 'crisis'. It's the new normality.

For almost 20 years we've been told that there is a 'crisis' of one sort or another in housing. The 'affordability crisis' of the Celtic Tiger was replaced by a 'credit crunch crisis' and a 'negative equity crisis'. And now we are back to the 'affordability crisis' as house and rent prices return to, and beyond, Celtic Tiger levels.

It suits the Government and those with a vested interest in the current housing model to keep peddling the myth of a temporary housing crisis. To this end the Government produces a never-ending stream of housing-related reports, recommendations and initiatives to create the illusion that the crisis is nearly over and that affordable, secure housing for low and middle-income families is on the way.

But no amount of Government spin and subterfuge can hide the basic fact that many low and middle-income workers have been unable to purchase affordable housing since the turn of the century. Unable to buy and unable to access public housing, these workers have been left to the mercy of private landlords – where mercy is in very short supply.

This is not a short-term crisis. It is the new normality and nothing that the government has announced to date is going to change it.

The shift to privatisation

To understand how we got to this situation we must first go back to the foundation of the state. From 1922 to 1960 the state built large volumes of public housing rented to low and middle-income families. Despite the poverty of these times the state managed to build 120,000 homes, almost matching the private sector on a one-for-one basis.

In the 1960s, however, an ideological shift towards a privatised housing model took root within the political establishment. In other words, Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, and by extension the state, decided to get out of the housing business. This massive shift

in housing policy was implemented incrementally through various measures. The 1966 Housing Act gave all local authority tenants the legal right to buy their houses from the state, often at a huge discount. Over the following forty years about 200,000 out of the 320,000 homes that had been built by the state were transferred into private ownership. Ironically many of these homes are now owned by private landlords.

Through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s the state systematically deregulated the private banking sector to allow for ever larger and longer residential mortgages. The availability of such mortgages meant that even low-income families could purchase an over-priced house in the private sector. Whether the repayments were affordable was an entirely different matter.

Over the same time-frame the state introduced tax breaks and other financial incentives, using public money to subsidise the private residential sector.

And finally, the state began to outsource the provision of 'social housing' to the private sector. By the end of this decade the state will have transferred an up to €10 billion of public money to private landlords through schemes like Rent Allowance, RAS and HAP.

The 2016 census revealed how dramatically the shift to privatisation has affected the housing profile across the state. Just 9% of households are now living in public housing. Home ownership has dropped to levels not seen since 1971, while the number of households renting in the private rental sector has surged from 70,000 in 1991 to circa 300,000 today.

Most worryingly of all, the size of the average household is now rising for the first time since 1966, a sure sign that overcrowding is now a significant problem.

The definition of madness

The Government and the main opposition parties remain broadly committed to a housing sector that is dominated by private provision and private ownership. This meets the over-quoted definition of madness. The same actions will without doubt produce the same results.

The private sector is motivated by profit maximisation – a motivation that is inherently incompatible with the objective of providing affordable, secure housing for all our people. Increasing the supply of private sector housing will not necessarily deliver affordability. In 2006 the private sec-



Picture: Helen Cook (CC BY-SA 2.0)

tor produced a staggering 87,000 homes – but house prices still rose by 12%.

Public housing – the only solution

There only credible way to guarantee secure and affordable housing for low and middle-income workers is through the creation of a new system of universally-accessible public housing. Under such a system everyone would have a legal right to rent a suitable home from their local authority, regardless of their income. The rate of rent paid would depend on the income of the tenant.

The state has the land, financial resources, legal powers and expertise to build hundreds of thousands of high-quality public housing over the coming years. It could do it cheaper and faster than the private sector, building traditional style three-bedroom houses for €190,000 or less. The average rent paid for such homes would be significantly lower than their equivalent in the private sector. Financial modelling has shown that this approach to public housing would be largely self-funding over time.

The state also has the legal power to procure a large volume of homes from the existing private housing stock through compulsory purchase orders. Some, or all, of the 300,000 homes currently owned by private landlords could thus become part of the public housing stock.

With time the current housing ghettoization would be replaced by mixed income communities. No longer would marginalised low-income families be concentrated into segregated housing developments.

Universal public housing would force the private sector to become far more competitive, while simultaneously releasing billions of euro into the real economy – money which is currently being sucked out of the economy by overpriced private rents and mortgages.

The concept of public housing is neither new nor radical. In the city of Vienna, for example, more than 60% of the population live in public

“ The social and economic benefits of universally accessible public housing would be, literally, incalculable. The only barrier to the creation of such a system is the lack of political will from an establishment that is fanatically committed to the free market ideology ”

housing or other forms of not-for-profit housing. The social and economic benefits of universally accessible public housing would be, literally, incalculable. The only barrier to the creation of such a system is the lack of political will from a political establishment that is fanatically committed to the free market ideology.

The Campaign For Public Housing was set up in the autumn of 2017 to build popular support for a new system of universally-accessible public housing. It is supported by a number of housing action groups, political parties, independent elected representatives, trade unionists and homeless outreach organisations. If you want to find out more, or get in touch, check out the Campaign For Public Housing page on Facebook.



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

VIEW *from the* CONFERENCE FLOOR

Collective desire to make positive change happen

OVER the past two years since our last 2016 Biennial Delegate Conference in Galway it is an indisputable fact that many economic indicators have been moving in the right direction. But the key question is: to what extent has this positive economic growth found its way into the pockets of workers in general and our members in particular?

A key challenge for any trade union is to ensure that it does everything it can to achieve a fair distribution of the wealth generated by the companies that employ their members, particularly during periods of more favourable economic conditions.

Other factors are also in play when it comes to an understanding of what is going on in the Irish retail sector.

First, the growth of technology and its ability to displace real jobs and earning capacity. Second, there is no doubt that the competitive nature of the market has become more intense with the introduction of many low-cost/low-

margin retailers who in the main prefer to operate without a trade union presence and this reality largely serves to drive not only prices but also the terms and conditions of workers downward.

Third, the massive explosion in online shopping which in order to exist does not have a dependence on traditional bricks and mortar stores and the jobs that are required to run them. Fourth, the great unknown of Brexit is now a regular talking point and while we don't know the real impact over time we must ensure that employers are not allowed to play this card and use it as yet another convenient excuse not to treat their workforce fairly.

Huge profits

Although the perception has been given for many years that the world of retail needs to operate on low margins and associated insecure low paid work, the reality is that many of the major retailers are amassing huge profits for their shareholders and wealthy owners.

Not surprisingly workers remain at the bottom of the pecking order when it comes to the distribution of the fruits of their labour and they are not going to dramatically change these circumstances until they effectively combine to bring the power of their collective strength to the negotiating table in order to counter-balance the age old power struggle that exists between capital and labour.

Increasingly over the past two years we have witnessed a growing number of employers in the retail sector investing significant resources to ensure that workers are not afforded an opportunity to exert this collective power. This is done

mainly through the engagement of expensive specialist HR and legal firms whose main objectives are to either avoid trade union organisation where it does not exist or to construct a de-recognition strategy where it does.

It is becoming increasingly obvious that a certain degree of collaboration exists between employers and their union-bashing buddies as the hostile attitude being displayed towards unionised workplaces is incredibly similar and this trend, among all others, is probably the biggest threat to the future of organised labour both in retail and further afield.

The outcome of such a deliberate strategy is the creation of a new order that sees a job as a disposable commodity offering very little in the way of decent earnings potential or long-term security. As this world of precarious work grows some workers unfortunately start to comply with its norms through expecting little and demanding less. Instead of taking the fight for better terms and conditions directly to their employer many who experience working poverty rely more and more on State benefits to ensure they keep their heads above water.

It is clear that many of these workers are driven into this inactive and dependent mind-set simply because they are caught between a genuine fear of taking the first step towards union activity and a world of supplementary welfare support which in many ways only serves to institutionalise and deepen the nightmare world of low pay and precarious work that they find themselves in.

Let's never forget, without exception, the primary responsibility rests with an employer to make sure that workers are given a decent wage

long before the State should be forced to intervene. Despite this challenging backdrop your union has been successful in negotiating pay increases largely on a no-concession basis over the past two years. We have also been to the forefront of protecting and growing earnings through the progressive development and introduction of banded hours agreements.

Significantly we continue to hold the line by ensuring that employers are no longer afforded an opportunity to seek the introduction of lesser terms and conditions for new workers. This line in the sand has been truly drawn and we will continue to fight to ensure that it is not crossed.

We have also taken on board the significance our members are placing on pay equality and this is an issue we have already started to pursue. Even where employers steadfastly refuse to come to the negotiating table we have taken a different approach by seeking to demand legislative change which these types of employer simply cannot hide from.

But make no mistake about it, changes in the law will only partially deliver in comparison to the benefits that can potentially evolve from collective bargaining conducted directly between a trade union and an employer.

This is the true demonstration of the collective power of workers coming together and speaking as one voice through their union at the negotiating table.

Our ability to continue to deliver in this manner on behalf of our current and perspective members is only restricted by their collective desire and will to make it happen. They remain and always will be the true driving force behind creating positive and lasting change.



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

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

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

Salaries Employment Health
Grievance Protection Law
Representative
Issues: ancillary Cost
seal/oidu
Particular
Regulate Contract
Limits Work-ir/ Salary
Process Negotiation
Agreement Productive
Working Hours Terms Rules
Employer Union Wages Group
Overtime Safety Establish Cost

Why we've gone way beyond a crisis

THE Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation on a daily basis Monday to Friday count the number of admitted patients waiting for a bed in our hospital system each morning.

The count takes place at 8am and does not include all of the people in the Emergency Department, only those for whom a decision has been made to admit. The 8am count is an indication that those waiting at 8am will more than likely have waited all night and maybe from the previous afternoon.

Trolley Watch is, therefore, a crude but accurate barometer of the state of overcrowding in our public hospital system. From 2013 onwards, the INMO have had to follow the trolleys as they were pushed around the hospital to hide the problem. So now, on a daily basis, not only the numbers queueing the Emergency Departments are counted, but also those who have been distributed as extra beds or trolleys around the wards. This is a separate count and shows separately as Ward Watch.

In 14 years of counting January 2018 is the worst we have ever seen. The scale of overcrowding this year is way beyond the numbers recorded when Mary Harney, as Minister for Health declared the situation a national emergency and is almost 20% higher than the number recorded last January which itself was a record high.

The reality is that the numbers of people admitted to hospital for whom there is no bed has more than doubled since the year 2007. For the patients, many of whom are over 65, the experience is harrowing. It is the opposite of what one would expect when admitted for care.

Bright lights, noise and discomfort are only the start of it, very often departments are so overcrowded that trolleys block other trolleys and serious episodes are missed or staff cannot get to the patient in crisis.

It is not uncommon in overcrowded Emergency Departments to see patients sleeping in chairs because there are no trolleys left. Neither is it uncommon to see ambulance personnel queued inside



Dave Hughes

the Emergency Department waiting hours for their trolleys to be returned because there is no accommodation for the patients they have just brought in.

The INMO Trolley Watch figures for January 2018 showed that 12,201 people waited in Emergency Departments or on additional beds placed throughout the hospitals during that month. That was an 18% increase over January of the previous year, but January 2018 was the worst year on record.

The reality is that the current level of overcrowding is beyond anything we have ever seen before and is more than double the numbers detained on trolleys in the year 2007. All hospitals with Emergency Departments are experiencing this problem, with some to a greater degree than others but when an Emergency Department is full, it is dangerous for patients.

Why is this a humanitarian crisis? And why is it a trade union issue? Well, we all live in the society and while we hope not to have to visit hospitals, many of us will experience episodes where it is necessary. More likely, however, our elderly relatives in the latter years will require more frequent visits and occasional or regular episodes which lead them to the door of an Emergency Department.

This will entail long waiting periods, which for anybody is difficult, but when you are sick is particularly difficult, massively frustrating and, when inside the door of the actual Emergency Department, possibly waiting on a chair overnight or on a trolley in a bright loud department where lots of other trauma is happening.

Often trolleys are placed side by side with one having to be moved out of the way to get to the other and, on occasion, such as the overcrowding,



Picture: bertknot (CC BY-SA 2.0)

that emergency exits are impeded by chairs or trolleys with sick patients sitting on them. To say it is chaotic is an understatement.

All of the normal rules, it seems, are ignored in such situations and instead of trying to mitigate the risks, hospital managements are increasingly spreading the risk by putting some of their overcrowding into the corridors and into wards which are already full.

In these circumstances every patient in the hospital is impacted: access to a regular bed is impeded which carries the risk of missed care; fire safety rules are clearly breached and infection control – normally so stringently applied that it can ban us from bringing flowers to relatives – seems to be completely neutered in the face of cross-contamination risks

from contagious illnesses. Added to this are dangers such as trips and falls by patients or staff, and the high probability of error given the pressure of overcrowding. From a nurse's point of view working in these stressful conditions is leading to burnout, massive anxiety, sleeplessness, and, very often, severe ill health which incapacitates them and takes them out of the system too.

When hospitals place additional trolleys or beds on wards this is euphemistically described as full capacity protocol. A hospital to run efficiently should have 85% to 90% of its beds occupied with the remaining 10% to 15% available for its emergency admissions.

The Irish Acute Hospital System is operating on the basis of a 100% bed occupancy all of the time. It, therefore, does not have the capacity to deal with emergency admis-



8am count: staggering numbers

sions and thus we have overcrowding. When that problem is spread throughout a hospital it is accepted that it is a risk-rich environment and employers have a responsibility to carry out risk assessments.

There is no evidence that these risk assessments lead to anything other than inaction and the incidences of assaults on nurses have increased to the point where nursing is now probably the most dangerous occupation.

As trade unionists we must ask ourselves is this acceptable in the 21st century? There can only be one answer – no, it is not. And in a country which, in spite of its debt, remains one of the wealthiest in the OECD, it is completely unnecessary and is a matter of policy priority.

“ In 14 years of counting January 2018 is the worst we have ever seen. The scale of overcrowding this year is way beyond the numbers recorded when Mary Harney as Minister for Health declared it a national emergency... ”

INMO and the ICTU are campaigning for Sláinte Care which has all-party support, but without trade union and public support governments will choose populist causes and tax concessions over the health service as they have done in the past.

Our health service is worth saving, it is not a basket case and the 100,000 people who work in it try their best to provide a service to all the population. Public health is delivered without fear or favour and without judgement. That is a cause worth fighting that is a trade union issue.

Dave Hughes is Deputy General Secretary of the INMO

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





Mike Allen

Homelessness

... most brutal expression of a widespread housing crisis

HOMELESSNESS used to be at the margins of society. It only happened to people when a whole series of things went wrong in their lives. However, in recent years it has developed into something that people you know, ordinary working people, face on a fairly regular basis.

Trade unionists and people with any form of social conscience always cared about homelessness. However, it was rarely part of their every-day concerns as it was not a major crisis on the scale we see today.

Today, the years in which governments failed to invest in social housing are combining with soaring rents in the private rented sector to make an unprecedented number of people insecure in their homes.

Emergency beds

The hardest, most brutal expression of this is street homelessness and rough sleeping. The harsh reality of that only became visible during the recent 'Red Weather' warnings. Despite the opening of hundreds of new emergency beds for people who are homeless we still saw another 100 people (who were not previously known to the system) emerge from squats and parks and who had to be put up on mats in a sports hall to protect them as the temperatures dropped well below zero.

It is clear to see that the same forces that are driving that extreme

form of destitution are also now forcing young families to return to frequently overcrowded parental homes, or stay in friends' living rooms or share overcrowded, poor-quality rentals.

These forms of 'hidden homelessness' are not counted in the more than 9,000 men, women and children

who are recorded as 'officially' homeless. It shows the official figures do not provide the full picture of the extent of this very human crisis.

In Dublin alone, more than 100 families became newly and 'officially' homeless in January and February this year. The overwhelming majority of these have never experienced



Picture: Cuddly Little Owl (CC BY 2.0)

homelessness before and most of them say, "I never thought this would happen to me". And they are right. In many cases, there is no predicting which families might end up homeless.

Because the decisive factor is nothing to do with what the family themselves do, or pay or earn – the decisive factor is the decision of their landlords. So the largest cause of homelessness in Ireland is being unlucky enough to have a landlord who wants to (or is forced to) sell up, or wants to use the property for a family member.

Many households that lose their homes in this way are able to secure a new property to rent – often at a much higher rent. But many families are simply unable to find somewhere else to move to as there is such a shortage of affordable rental properties in Ireland.

Discrimination

Families that are out of work and in receipt of housing support payments face the barrier of discrimination by landlords (although this is now illegal); families where parents have work, face the equally daunting barrier of rents that push them below the poverty line.

The fundamental solution to this crisis is to build more affordable homes – not just social houses, but also private houses for people to rent or buy. One particular form of housing which is being neglected is 'cost rental housing' where properties would be built to be rented out, but the rent would be set at what is required to pay for construction, not by what the market demands. This would provide much needed affordable housing for households which do not qualify for social housing.

Each month the construction industry takes a step forward, and the progress in building new homes is very welcome. But it remains far too slow. The ESRI estimate that 35,000

new homes are needed every year for us just to stand still. Since we are nowhere near that, the crisis is continuing to deepen and will continue to do so for several years to come.

In the meantime, the Government can do much more to protect tenants who face eviction. The fact that landlords can terminate leases because they decide to sell up (or are forced to), or to move in family member, is a loophole in the legislation that can – and must – be closed.

Focus Ireland proposed detailed legislation which would close this



loophole for tenants of buy-to-let landlords. Unfortunately the Government voted it down, with the support of Fianna Fail. It is now time for them to change their minds.

The Government says it is doing everything it can, but it is clear that it needs to do more – whether that is in protecting tenants or building new social or cost-rental homes. The only way to get that action is by democratic pressure – the ICTU manifesto on housing was an important start in that direction, and the Housing Crisis march on April 7th is another important step.

But to really make a difference we need ordinary workers, their trade unions, voluntary housing and homeless organisations to consistently make this the key political issue. After all, it affects us all.

Mike Allen is Director of Advocacy, Communications & Research at Focus Ireland



MANDATE
ORGANISING &
TRAINING CENTRE

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
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www.mandate.ie

Unions: the power is in our hands, let's use it...



Picture: Creative Commons (CC0)

AS A lifelong trade unionist my biggest worry is that the trade union movement in Ireland is in serious trouble unless it fully embraces wider collaboration across unions and engages in serious alliance building with advocacy groups and like-minded campaign groupings.

Unions must be in the business of reconnecting with our communities and, in doing so, demonstrate that not only are trade unions alive and kicking but that they are a vital component of fighting back against the inequality and injustice endemic across Irish society today.

All unions collectively must promote organising as the dominant feature of trade unions in the ongoing class struggle perpetuated by the Irish political class hand in glove with capital and big business.

Unions must move to engrain political education within the very fabric of their existence to educate workers on the enemy. Jim Larkin and James Connolly knew their enemies full well and they faced them head on in class struggle.

The antidote to the neo-liberal mantra of "There is no alternative" (TINA) is correctly identifying the system we all live under in Ireland and establishing exactly who benefits from it thus preparing union members for the long hard struggle ahead.

Unions, like Mandate, who are proactively engaging in the political education of their members are helping to build a movement capable of not only challenging the system but in changing it for the betterment of the majority through the promotion of socially-just alternatives to current government policies. We can have

democracy, or we can have great wealth in the hands of a few wealthy elites. We can't have both.

Over the past five years I've witnessed a fundamental shift towards precarious employment practices in both the public and private sectors. A proliferation of part-time contracts and an insatiable desire on the part of some major employers for total workforce flexibility is creating a working society built around fear and not knowing from one week to the next what's going to be in your pay packet.

We are witnessing serious inequality and economic instability imposed by successive right-wing governments as the state reduces its role in providing adequate public services, education and housing.

Big business

Add in the fact that wages have not significantly increased relative to the increasing wealth of big business and the 1% at the summit of society looking down on us all must be breaking their bollox laughing.

Unions must be the catalyst for political and societal change. They must lead the vanguard opposing austerity and challenge the right-wing orthodoxy that exists in Irish political society today.

Organising workers harnesses collective political power and we've seen that – albeit on a smaller scale – with our lobby campaign targeting local TDs by their local constituents on the issue of banded hours contracts.

Nothing helps focus a TD's mind more than the thought they mightn't get votes from a large percentage of their union-minded constituents.

Unions are an untapped sledge-



Flashback to 1913: Jim Larkin (in disguise) arrested during the Lockout

hammer for the Irish working class. Since 1913, bosses have engaged in relentless class struggle as they continuously seek to wring concessions from workers for meagre returns. The union movement has in some ways allowed that imbalance to be perpetuated but enough is enough.

It seems that employers and the political class believe that workers' rights are arbitrary – if we organise to defend them, then you can have them.

For me, that's the biggest lesson I've taken from the magnificent Right2Water campaign – communities and trade unions politically educating their members and fighting back against the man.

The Irish working class needs to be organised and in the absence of Larkin and Connolly, it's the Irish trade union movement that needs to step up to the plate on behalf of citizens the length and breadth of the country. In 1913, Michael O'Lehane,

General Secretary of the Irish Draper's Assistants' Association (IDDA) – a forerunner to Mandate – said: "Our sympathies and support must go to the thousands of workers and their families who are at present in need of our assistance."

If that quote came from a union leader today, it wouldn't seem out of place given the existence of precarious employment practices, the cuts to social welfare, the desperate emergency housing and homeless crisis, forced emigration and the impact of austerity policies on the working poor to name but a few causes of poverty and a sense of hopelessness felt by thousands of people on this island we call home.

Still denied

In 1913, unions were refused recognition by employers and that basic human right to belong to a recognised trade union for collective bargaining purposes is still denied to unions today.

Unions must demand laws that deliver basic human rights for workers in Ireland. The founder of the Dublin Employers Federation, Michael Martin Murphy, was the real victor of the revolutionary Ireland of 1913. It is the selfish capitalist ethos he espoused that remains the dominant character of the Irish State.

It is probably a bit unfair to completely blame him for the desperate state we find ourselves in today as the Catholic Church also played a major role in embedding capitalism and stoic right-wing fundamentalist thinking into modern Ireland.

Today, many companies – just like William Martin Murphy – are attempting to face down organised

labour. Many are collectively engaged in attempting to break unions and are using union-busting firms to assist them in undermining and undoing years of struggle and achievement by the working class of Ireland.

Multi-national companies, with little or no tax liabilities, are challenging the industrial relations machinery in the state as they hive off and launder their profits off-shore and away from any social contract obligation here in Ireland.

It's incredible that we, as a nation, stand idly by and allow all this to happen. It wouldn't surprise me if the wee barista in one of the tens of thousands of Starbucks that plague our high streets paid more tax to the taxman than the multi-billion-dollar operation he works for.

So, unions and wider Irish society need to wake up and smell the coffee! Irish society is being cheated out of having a decent equal society by political ideologues and global capital.

It is incumbent upon us all in the union movement to take seriously our obligations to wider society and join with unity of purpose to politically educate our membership and agitate them to take collective action across the public and private sectors.

Maybe we could chat about the establishment of an Irish Citizen Army, this time armed with a knowledge of the system rather than guns. Now wouldn't that be an interesting development?

On a separate note the above reference to coffee reminded me of an auld joke I used to tell... Question: Why does Karl Marx only drink coffee? Answer: Because proper tea is theft. I'll get my coat!

When organising beco

By Alan Hanson
United Food & Commercial Workers

EXERCISING is hard to start, even harder to stick with it, and it takes months of hard work to see any visible results. However, we all know that sticking with an exercise routine will eventually make us stronger and healthier. At the very least, exercising makes us feel a little less guilty about eating dessert after dinner.

Organising is a trade union's exercise programme. Done consistently and over time, organising builds union muscle and gives us the power not only to win better collective agreements, but to enforce them on a day-to-day basis.

Last autumn, 4,000 supermarket workers in West Virginia stood up to the largest supermarket chain in the United States and won the best collective agreement our union has negotiated in at least a decade. It's an honor to share their success story with you.

The Kroger supermarket company is enormous. It operates nearly 2,800 supermarkets and employs 450,000 workers. Kroger earned \$2 billion in profits on more than \$100 billion in sales. UFCW Local 400, where I am serve as membership director, represents nearly 14,000 Kroger workers in Virginia, West Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky and Ohio. Some 4,000 of those Kroger members are covered by the collective agreement that expired in October 2017.

Bullying workers

We knew it was going to be a tough fight. Kroger's size allows then to weather a work stoppage a lot longer than we can. Knowing that, Kroger management had been using their size to bully other workers into accepting significant cuts to their health insurance benefits. America has no national health insurance scheme, meaning that a significant rise in the cost of insurance forces many American workers to choose between a place to live and healthcare.

In the spring of 2017, we convened a small group of shop stewards to plan our strategy. We decided that our best approach would be to put as much pressure on Kroger before our collective agreement expired. By doing so, we hoped to avoid a strike while still achieving our desired improvements. Our plan rested on two strategies: enforcement of our existing collective agreement and a series of gradually escalating actions.

Our first step was to survey the membership. We distributed surveys to every one of our members, and we received responses from half of them.

Tallying the results revealed two primary concerns. Unsurprisingly, health insurance topped the list. A close second was staffing and scheduling. Our members reported that reductions in staff and the proliferation of part-time work forced many workers to do the work of two and some-



times three people.

In early August, we convened meetings across the state to discuss the survey results. Our stewards recruited heavily, and nearly 1,000 members, 25% of our total membership, attended one of the five regional meetings. We discussed the survey results, signed people up for text

message alerts, and recruited volunteers for our Contract Action Committee.

The Contract Action Committee, or CAT, is the foundation of our organising strategy. The CAT is responsible for organising their co-workers: keeping them informed, turning them out to rallies and meetings, enforcing

our collective agreement, and preparing them for a strike, if necessary.

The CAT left the meetings and immediately went to work. They began to systematically enforce the existing staffing and scheduling provisions of the collective agreement to draw attention to the issue. We developed an online tool (ufcw400.org/ourwork) to report instances of managers doing work that union members should be doing. To date, Kroger has been forced to pay thousands of dollars in back pay to members as a result. Our CAT also urged their co-workers to take their breaks.

CAT members also began to organise their co-workers. They established phone trees, signed people up for text messages (by the end of the campaign 40% of workers had signed up to receive alerts), made sure members were wearing union stickers and buttons, and they held union "huddles" – basically in-store union meetings.

Union huddles served as a powerful visual reminder to our members and to management of our unity. By doing this work well in advance of our collective agreement expiration date, we were ready if and when a fight with Kroger broke out.



...comes contagious!



We didn't have to wait long. We began meeting with the company to discuss our new collective agreement in early September. Kroger management's first move was to demand a significant rise in employee health-care costs. They told us that we could get a pay rise or keep our healthcare, but not both. The fight was on, and we were ready.

We announced that we would hold protests every Thursday at the five largest and most profitable Kroger supermarkets in West Virginia. Through phone trees, in-person visits, and union huddles, the CAT recruited members to attend the rallies. We also promoted the rallies on our website, social media pages, and through our text message network.

About 200 Kroger workers attended the first protests. They were tentative at first, but once we started chanting "If we don't get it, shut it down!" they didn't hold back. At the end of the protest we sent everyone home with a request to bring their co-workers to the following week's rally.

Excited

They responded. Our second protest grew to over 350 people. At one store alone, 180 people showed up. On the last Thursday in October, more than 600 people turned out to one of the five actions. Members were so excited by the actions that they began to organise protests at their own locations. All told, nearly 1,000 members participated in at least one protest. The actions were loud, but we also tried to make them creative and fun. A contingent of former high school cheerleaders from Logan, West Virginia, came up with their own chants and dance routines on the picket line. The chant "G-R-E-E-D-Y you ain't got no alibi, you're greedy! Kroger, you're greedy!" quickly became a crowd favorite. At another action we handed out cupcakes to customers whilst holding signs that read "Better Staffing Makes Customer Service a Piece of Cake."

Our most creative actions involved jerseys. Kroger workers are allowed to wear their favorite team's jerseys on game days. It just so happens that our union's colors – blue and gold – are the same as West Virginia University's beloved football team. We designed union jerseys and let Kroger know that our members intended to wear them on the day of the next West Virginia University home game.

Kroger was so incensed by this that they actually cancelled jersey day across the entire mid-At-

lantic division! Even though we didn't get to wear the jerseys while working, members wore them with pride while protesting in front of their shops.

Our final strategy was not to budge on the expiration date of the collective agreement. It expires a few weeks before the most important holiday for American supermarkets: Thanksgiving. We scheduled a vote on November 7 and informed

Kroger that members would either be voting to accept a new collective agreement or to go on strike.

Two days before the vote, Kroger blinked. They agreed to a new collective agreement that included both pay rises and no increases in health insurance costs for three years. It was an unprecedented achievement; every other UFCW local union that negotiates with Kroger had accepted at least

Organising works: two days before the strike vote, Kroger bosses blinked...

Pictures: UFCW



Strength in numbers: UFCW Local 400 members highlight their grievances

Solidarity: UFCW members, left, at the state capitol in support of teachers



some healthcare cost increases. Our members voted to accept the new agreement by a 2-1 margin.

As impressive as this victory was, we were unable to win improvements in store staffing and scheduling. However, the leaders that emerged during our campaign have resolved to continue to use the tools that we do have available to push for more hours and better staffing.

We continue to catch managers doing union work, we continue to push members to take breaks, and we are checking weekly schedules for contract violations. By staying organised, we hope to be even stronger the next time we negotiate with Kroger.

As I write this, 20,000 West Virginia school teachers and support personnel are celebrating a successful conclusion to a nine-day strike that shut down every school in the state. They won a 5% pay rise, and they did it by occupying the state capitol building every day that they were on strike. One of the chants that echoed through the capitol during the occupation was "If they don't fix it shut it down!"

Alan Hanson is Mobilization Director at the UFCW Local 400



Survey findings set out key issues for members

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

THE Tesco Workers Together survey 2018 was completed by members from 134 stores (more than 90% of stores) throughout the Republic of Ireland. The key results are encouraging, and give your union a greater understanding of the issues that are important to all Tesco Ireland members.

More than 90% of all staff support a claim for pay equality in Tesco Ireland, but with an emphasis on moving all workers towards the top hourly rate of pay (€15.10) instead of the downward trajectory put forward by Tesco management as part of their attempts to achieve “modern contracts”.

Currently more than 60% of all Tesco Ireland workers are receiving more than 30 hours per week, a very satisfactory outcome following the negotiation by Mandate back in 2006 of banded hours contracts and agreements facilitating hours being allocated to existing staff first. However, more than one-third of all respondents said that in their stores, Tesco Ireland is not abiding by this agreement. Almost half of all respondents say they would like to move to a higher band of hours.

There appears to be a wide inconsistency in relation to rostering arrangements. While more than 30% of respondents say they receive a monthly roster, almost 50% say they receive a weekly or fortnightly roster.

The most important issue to members by far is the request for pay equality and a pay increase. This is followed by an increase in hours and more full-time jobs with improvements to work-life balance coming in third, just ahead of an increase in annual leave.

Worryingly, 60% believe that Tesco Ireland does not uphold its stated core value of “Treat people how we like to be treated.”

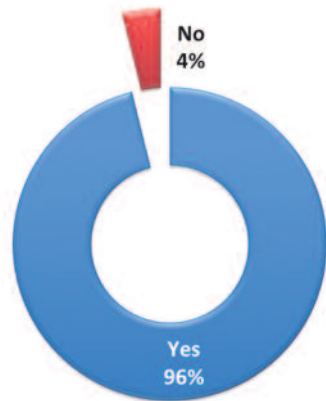
From a positive point of view, 93% of all Tesco members who completed the survey said they valued their Mandate membership.

Furthermore, 96% said it is important that their employer fully engage with their union on both individual and collective issues when requested to do so. This finding is of vital significance given that we are still waiting for a response from the company as to whether they are going to comply with the recent recommendation from the Labour Court to directly engage with your union in order to build a relationship for the future.

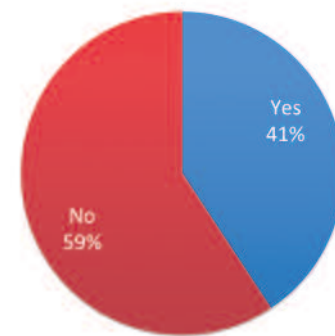
The survey also helped to identify more than 250 members who wish to take up a larger role as activists in Mandate. This is on top of those who say they are already active.

The engagement of trade union ac-

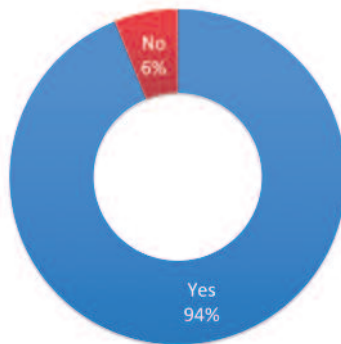
Do you believe it is important for your employer to fully engage (meet with) on both individual and collective issues when requested to do by the union?



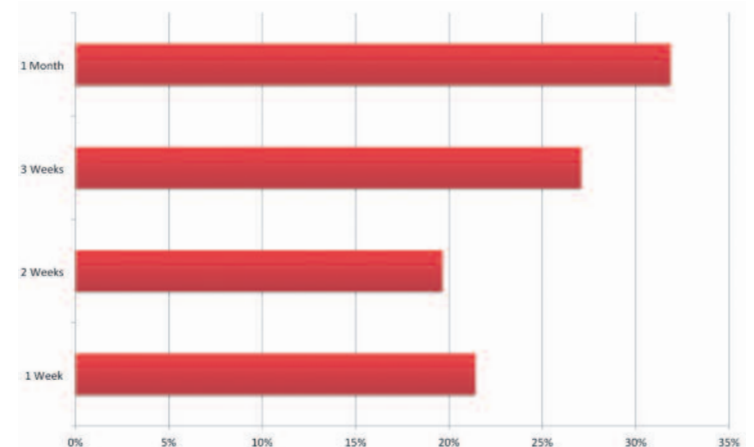
One of Tesco's stated core values is to 'Treat people how we like to be treated'. Do Tesco uphold this value in the workplace?



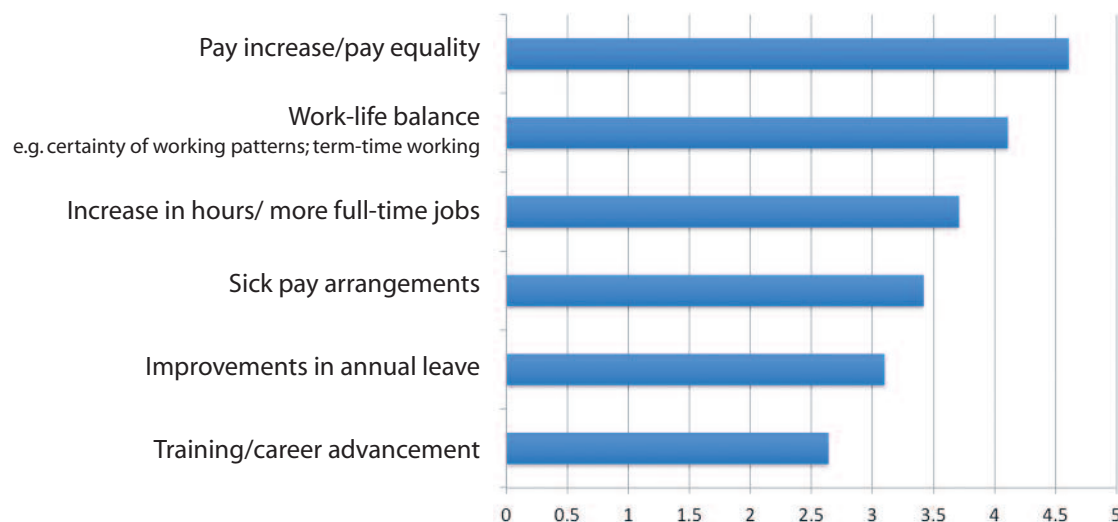
Do you value your Mandate membership?



How much notice do you receive of your roster?



Please rank the following in order of your priority...



tivists within Tesco Ireland is the only way to ensure that we can achieve the objectives set out by all members in Tesco. And if we are to realistically achieve significant improvements in standards of living for all Tesco workers, we need to ensure that all members understand that there is strength in numbers and solidarity, unity and activism is our greatest weapon.

Finally, additional comments were left by nearly 30% of the respondents identifying a range of key themes which obviously need to be addressed at an individual store and collective national level. These include, but are not limited to: bullying; negative treatment towards foreign nationals; pay increment timelines; the sick pay schemes; Dot Com driv-

ers not receiving enough time for deliveries; union recognition; lack of consultation and negotiations around redundancies; a negative place to work; harassment of pre-1996 staff; nepotism in stores; insufficient security in stores; some staff not receiving pay increases; heating issues and the resumption of union forums.

The solution to all of these issues is

by ensuring that every Tesco store in Ireland is thoroughly organised.

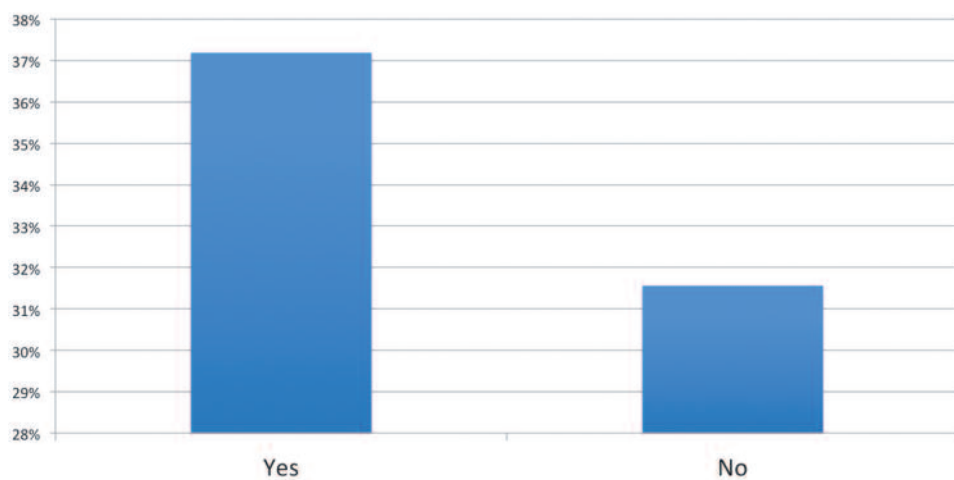
Once again thanks to all union members who took the time to complete the survey. The information that you have provided will be invaluable in prioritising the agenda for negotiations with your employer in the future and always remember.

TOGETHER WE ARE STRONGER

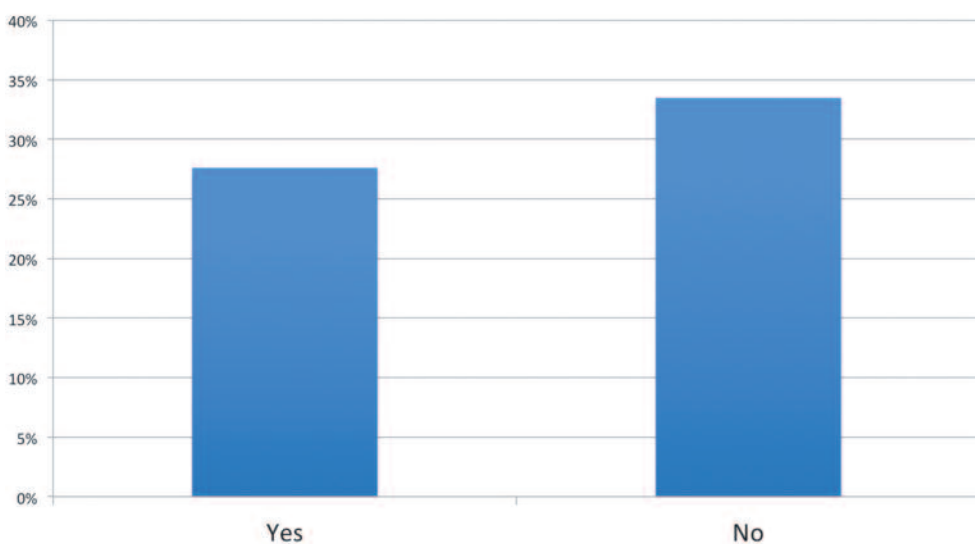
WHERE I STAND

Organise!!! Spread the message far and wide

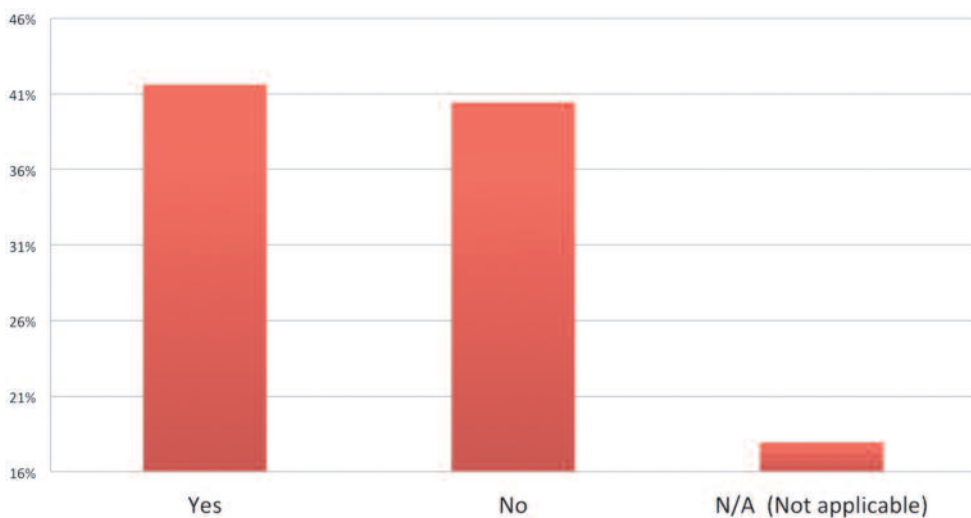
The 2006 Agreement also states that vacancies will be advertised internally within the company in the first instance. Is this being complied with in your store?



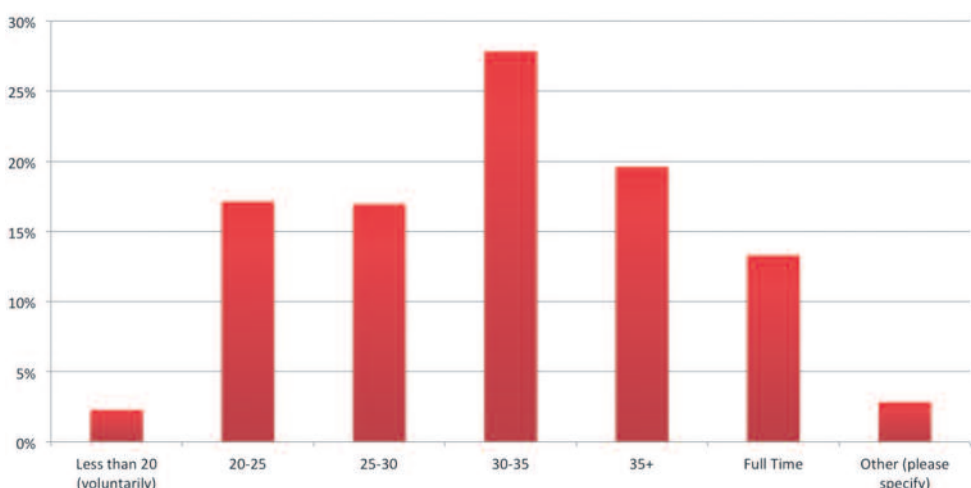
According to the 2006 Agreement, additional hours are meant to be offered to existing staff in the first instance. Is this happening in your store?



Would you like to move to a higher hours band?



What contract/hours band are you currently on?



ANOTHER Mandate Biennial Conference in lovely Wexford looms large on the horizon with more than 300 delegates readying themselves for a few days of debate, comradery and a wee bit of socialising thrown in for good measure.

The conference agenda promises discussion and debate on a wide range of important issues including the revitalisation of our Local Councils, Brexit, health matters, education, social issues and international solidarity, to name but a few.

Looking forward and preparing our union for the challenges that lie ahead for our members is an important and vital aspect of our conference. However, it is also important to look back over the past two years on the many significant achievements our activists and members have been involved in.

Our campaign involvement in Right2Water and Right2Change saw the threat of the imposition of water charges and privatisation faced down and largely defeated by communities and trade unions working together and fighting with one voice.

Never underestimate the value of our activists turning up at a rally or protesting at the attempts to install water meters in our communities. Our members were heavily involved within their own communities, supported and encouraged by their trade union and, for that, I will be eternally proud.

I would single one person out for special praise on the R2W campaign. The indomitable Dave Gibney was the beating heart and soul of the R2W campaign and his hard work and dedication in ensuring the Government was called out on every half-truth and lie was a rallying point for so many of our activists and meant there was really no hiding place for those prepared to sacrifice the universal provision of water paid for through our taxes on the altar of privatisation. He remains our resident "water expert".

Our many activists who've been lobbying their local TDs on banded hours legislation deserve huge credit for keeping politicians honest (that comment might just be an oxymoron). Their dedication to campaign and face down TDs over much-needed legislation has brought us within touching distance of laws that will benefit thousands of workers the length and breadth of this country.

Campaign lobbying works and it undoubtedly helps create leverage on important issues, especially when TDs get a sense that they may lose a significant pool of votes in a future election if they don't side with local constituents on an issue of concern to them.

Local and national campaigns involving our activists are the lifeblood of any vibrant and relevant trade union so we must continue to develop and improve our campaign capacity across a range of issues affecting our membership and wider society.

Our union organising over the past few years has developed significantly towards a more holistic and integrated vitally impor-

tant function. Our team of organisers, led by Bill Abom, is second to none on this island and the closer collaborative working between organisers and union officials at divisional level has seen advancements in many workplaces.

Our recruitment and organising gains in greenfield sites, such as Lloyds Pharmacy and Paddy Power, demonstrates that with adequate staffing, resources and a well-motivated workforce it is possible to get workers in un-unionised employments to see the collective value in being a member of Mandate.

The ongoing organising work conducted over a range of employments where we have a strong union presence is seeing the development of house committees and the identification of new activists to help sustain and build on our "army of activists" envisaged by our General Secretary several years ago at one of our previous conferences.

The past few years have not been easy for Mandate or for the Irish economy, society and our citizens. The inequalities exacerbated by the greatest transfer of wealth from Labour in favour of Capital continues at pace and Mandate has consistently been at the vanguard in defending our members' jobs as well as terms and conditions under constant coordinated employer pressure.

Our campaigns – such as *Decent Work* and *Respect Retail Workers* – coupled with our vitally important political education programme for members has seen workers collectivise against an employer-accelerated race to the bottom on all aspects of working life.

These campaigns and our organising must now take centre stage as we face an even more uncertain future especially with the growth in online shopping, self-service checkouts (stop using them folks!) and increasing automation and developments in technology.

Our class is under attack by neo-liberal ideologues intent on draining profit from everything, including our labour, and it is our job as trade unionists to rally together in proud defence of our class.

Our 2018 conference is a good launchpad for increasing our organising and campaign activity and a good place to deliver the only message that really matters to workers in Ireland today – Organise! Organise!! Organise!!!



Fianna Fáil opposes trade union rights

MANDATE members in Dunnes Stores, Lidl, Aldi, IKEA, LloydsPharmacy, Paddy Power, and many other employments know what it is like to be denied their basic human right to collectively bargain.

The end result of this lack of collective bargaining rights is dramatic: low pay, insecure work, more accidents at work, increased mental health issues, lower life expectancy, a more unequal society, higher poverty and deprivation rates – the list goes on and on.

That's why all Mandate members need to know that one of Ireland's largest political parties, Fianna Fail, is opposed to affording them that basic human right.

Fianna Fáil leader Micheál Martin told an IRN conference on March 8 that his party would not introduce stronger collective bargaining rights in Ireland, including making trade union recognition mandatory.

He said there must be a balance between "our capacity to attract inward investment and the creation of employment." What this means is Fianna



David Gibney

Fail will not legislate to give Irish workers their human right to collectively bargain because they do not want to upset American multinationals. It's a "jobs at any cost" policy.

Bizarrely, most American workers have a legislated right to collectively bargain, something Fianna Fail appear to want to deny to Irish workers.

The right to freedom of association has been a fundamental right protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution since the 1950s.

In 1948, following World War II, the whole world adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which included the rights of people to form and join trade unions which was



Fianna Fáil leader Micheal Martin

recognised as a fundamental human right (Article 23.4).

A year later the International Labor Organisation (ILO), an international agency created by the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I in 1919, promoted Conventions 87 and 98 which protect freedom of association and the right of collective bargaining. These conventions apply to workers without distinction.

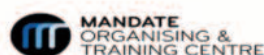
So why is it that Irish workers, despite their government signing up to these conventions, still cannot avail of the human right to collectively bargain? The answer is political – and it's because we allow them to circumvent the intentions of these conventions.

When the Decency for Dunnes Workers campaign was set up in 2014, a survey of more than 1,400 workers was conducted. Some 98% of respondents want Dunnes to respect their right to trade union representation. Yet still, those workers cannot avail of that right because Ireland has a "voluntarist" industrial relations model.

What that really means is that powerful and wealthy companies can voluntarily ignore their workers when they join a trade union. As Mandate General Secretary John Douglas points out: "it's like being allowed to join a golf club, but not being allowed to play golf."

The denial of full collective bargaining rights for Irish workers is a key reason we have such high at-work poverty rates, a deeply unequal society and such a high proportion of low pay. A recent editorial in the Irish Times stated: "More than 100,000 people in employment fall below the poverty line, out of a deprivation total of 780,000, one-quarter of whom are children. The EU sets the poverty line at 60 per cent of national median income and Ireland performs badly in that regard, ranked among the least developed European countries.

"One in six Irish people, or 16.5 per cent, live below the poverty line. In the absence of social transfers, such as State pensions, children's allowances, unemployment assistance



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 Workshops

Our House Committee Workshops are designed to assist Activists in their role as Union Representatives. Our Workshops run for about 3 hours and can be delivered and tailored by your Mandate Trade Union Official/Organiser to ensure the best time and location is used for our member's convenience.

Learning Outcomes:

- Briefing on Current Industrial Relations Environment
- Understanding House Committee Roles and Structures
 - Communication Skills
 - Workplace Organising
- Dealing with Workplace issues
- Tips for Representing Member/s in Grievance Meetings
- Tips for Representing Members/s on Disciplinary Matters
 - Principles of Natural Justice and Fair Procedures

Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course can apply to do our Union Representative Introductory training which is currently delivered over 3 days.

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



Backing unions:
UK Labour Party
leader Jeremy Corbyn
and Pope Francis

Pictures: Garry Knight (CC BY 2.0); European Parliament

and other measures, that figure would rise to 45 per cent, which suggests serious underlying problems."

More than €400 million is spent every single year on Family Income Supplement (FIS) in order to top up the incomes of families on low pay – many of whom are working for highly profitable multinationals who can afford to pay a decent living wage. This

is the Irish state facilitating low pay.

If workers could organise in their unions, and unions had a right to access workers, like in New Zealand and Australia, it is entirely possible that those workers would not need supplementary social welfare transfers and that €400 million could be spent on building badly needed homes or on our delapidated public

healthcare system. Collective bargaining rights would help workers to improve their lot. Around the world we see political leaders celebrating trade unions and calling for stronger rights:

● "Trade unions are a force for good – a force for a more equal society." **Jeremy Corbyn**, UK Labour Party leader.

● "In Finland, where 80 per cent of workers belong to unions, all employees enjoy at least 30 days paid vacation, and the gap between the rich and poor is far more equitable than in the United States." **Senator Bernie Sanders**.

● Even **Pope Francis** backs trade union rights: "Trade unions have been an essential force for social change, without which a semblance of a decent and humane society is impossible under capitalism."

In Ireland, though, we must accept our fate as a low paying economy which circumvents human rights when they get in the way of powerful elites making more profits.



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

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

Salaries Employment Health Grievance Protection Law
Issues Representative Employment Process Negotiation
Costs Participate
Limits Work-air Salary
Regulate Contract
Employer Union Wages Group
Overtime Safety Establish Cost

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



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

'Trail of Tears' and Doolough tragedies and their link with the 1984 Dunnes strikers...



Ciaran Campbell

WHAT have the Irish famine, the Native American Choctaw tribe and the Dunnes Stores Anti-Apartheid strikers got in common? Probably very little, I hear you say. But the following might persuade you otherwise...

The Irish government's official recognition of the Choctaw tribe's charitable contribution towards victims of the Great Famine, recently announced during the Taoiseach's St Patrick's Day celebration tour of the US, acknowledges the organic link of Irish suffering during that terrible period and the Choctaw people's similar plight immortalised in the 'Trail of Tears' tragedy.

Historical calamities

However, the context of these historical calamities weaves together not only the episodes, the peoples involved and their areas but also, believe it or not, the Dunnes Anti-Apartheid strikers of the 1980s.

The Choctaw people, far from being materially and financially rich, demonstrated incredible and meaningful solidarity to Irish famine victims when they heard about the heartrending 1849 Doolough Tragedy. Doolough is an extremely remote area of breathtaking beauty where high mountain ranges and a deep lake serve as the backdrop along the Louisburgh to Leenane route skirting the Mayo/Galway border. But this route and its eerily silent surrounds embraces a terrible historical legacy.

During the Great Famine on Friday, March 30, 1849, two officials of the Westport Poor Law Union arrived in Louisburgh to verify whether local people in receipt of outdoor relief should continue to receive it. The Louisburgh inspection did not take place as arranged, the officials having travelled on to Delphi Lodge – a hunting lodge that currently stands and operates as a luxury country house accommodation 19 kilometres (12 miles) south of Louisburgh. Those that had gathered for the inspection were instructed by the Westport Poor Law Union to travel to and appear at Delphi Lodge for 7am the following morning if they wished to continue



Inscription at Doolough, left, honouring the Dunnes Stores strikers and, below, members of the Choctaw tribe take part in the Afri Famine Walk in 2011



Picture: Afri

receiving relief. For much of the night and the following day hundreds of destitute and starving people had to experience extreme weather conditions which for them, given their existing state of debilitation, was an extremely fatiguing and – ultimately – tragic journey.

Shortly after this event, the Mayo Constitution reported that the bodies of seven people, including women and children, were subsequently discovered on the roadside between Delphi Lodge and Louisburgh overlooking the shores of Doolough lake and that nine more never reached

their homes. Local folklore maintains the total number that perished because of their ordeals was far higher.

Some 17 years before the Doolough Tragedy, the Choctaw people – along with numerous other American indigenous tribes – had experienced a similar fate on the infamous 'Trail of Tears' tragedy.

This was a series of forced relocations of Native American peoples from their ancestral homelands in the Southeastern United States, to areas to the west (usually west of the Mississippi River) that had been designated as Indian Territory.

The forced relocations were carried out by government authorities following the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830. Many of the relocated people suffered from exposure, disease, and starvation while travelling to their new designated reserve, and many died before reaching their destinations.

The displaced Choctaw people, on hearing of the Doolough Tragedy in 1849, incredibly collected \$170 and donated it to the Quakers' Irish Relief Committee in New York as a clear sign of heart-warming solidarity.

But what about the Dunnes Anti-

Apartheid strikers' part in this story?

The 1849 Doolough Tragedy is annually commemorated by a pilgrim-style Famine Walk between Louisburgh and Doolough. Notable participants on these walks have included the likes of Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Kim Phuc – forever remembered in an iconic Vietnam War image as the naked running girl horrifically burned by an American napalm bomb.

This tragic event is also remembered on a cross at Doolough where passers-by and tourists regularly stop to read the inscriptions and to photograph the monument or the magnificent scenery in which it is set.

One inscription, from Mahatma Gandhi, reads: "How can men feel themselves honoured by the humiliation of their fellow beings?"

Human rights

On another side of this cross there is a plaque with the following inscription: "Unveiled by Karen Gearon, Dunnes Stores strikers, 7th May 1994. Erected by Afri."

Afri is a highly-regarded Irish human rights group that promotes debate and seeks to influence policy and practice in Ireland, often responding to injustice across the world, global militarisation, the threat of climate change and corporate control of food and natural resources.

It was Afri in their outspoken support of the 10 courageous Dunnes Stores strikers that set up a meeting with Archbishop Desmond Tutu in Ireland as he travelled to receive his Nobel Peace Prize, thus raising the profile of the dispute even further. These retail workers' actions are now recognised and connected through that cross in a remote part of West Mayo to the Choctaw people and the tragic events of 1849.

Given the Irish government's very welcome recent recognition and regard for our shared tragic histories with the Choctaw people, it wouldn't do them any harm to formally and officially recognise the heroism of the Dunnes Stores Anti-Apartheid strikers.

Ciaran Campbell is a Divisional Organiser with Mandate



Liam Berney

ON February 28, the Government published a position paper entitled *A Roadmap for Pension Reform 2018 – 2023*. This long-awaited report details a number of reforms that the Government plans to implement over the next five years.

The plan includes, among other things, a significant reform to how eligibility to the state old age pension is calculated, a new mandatory occupational pension and changes to the rules governing the running of occupational pensions including improved regulation of defined benefit schemes.

State Old Age Pension: 'A total contributions approach'

As part of the reform plan, the Government is proposing that from 2020, a person's entitlement to the contributory old age pension is to be determined by reference to the total amount of social insurance contributions, made or credited over their working life.

This is a potentially welcome reform as the current averaging can significantly disadvantage people who, during their working life have taken time out to raise children or to care for a relative. As part of the total contribution approach, a person can claim credits for periods out of the workforce if they were involved in caring or in raising a family.

While the move to total contribution approach is potentially progressive, there are a number of issues that need to be resolved prior to the implementation of the planned reform. Congress continues to have concerns about the impact of the change in the age at which workers can claim the state pension.

The move to 67 in 2021 and 68 in 2028 could have very serious consequences for anybody currently in work who does not have an occupational pension. Equally, it is proposed under the total contribution approach a person would require 40 annual contributions to obtain the maximum state pension.

The figure of 40 years seems to Congress to be entirely arbitrary. In Britain, the number of annual contri-



Illustration: Creative Commons (CC0)

Govt's Pensions Roadmap is potentially significant...

butions is 35. The Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection will shortly launch a consultation seeking views on the rules that will underpin the total contribution approach to the state pension. Congress will be arguing for a set of rules that is fair, reasonable and equitable and that addresses the issues that arise from an increase in the pension age.

A Mandatory Occupational Pension

Congress has for many years been highlighting the very large number of workers who do not have an occupational pension and who are dependent solely on the state pension when

they retire. The most recent data shows that some 60% of workers in the private sector do not have an occupational pension.

The Government as part of the pension reform programme plans to introduce a mandatory occupational pension. Under this proposal all workers above a certain income, and who are not already in an occupational pension, will be automatically enrolled into a pension scheme.

Under the scheme the individual worker, their employer and the Government will pay a contribution into the pension fund of the worker concerned.

Workers after a certain period will have the option to opt out of the

scheme. However, in other countries where such schemes exist the numbers of workers who have opted out is relatively small. As with the proposals to change the state pension, the Government plans to consult with stakeholders about the design of the new scheme.

While Congress supports the proposal there are a number of important issues to be determined. For example:

- What will be the level of worker, employer and state contribution?
- How will contributions be collected?
- Who will administer the scheme?

“ ICTU continues to have concerns about impact of the change in the age at which workers can claim the state pension ”

● How will the funds be invested?

Congress is strongly of the view that the state must play a direct role in both the collection and investment of contributions and in the administration of the scheme.

As with the move to the total contribution approach for the state pension, the proposal for a mandatory occupational pension could be a positive development for workers who currently do not have an occupational pension. The new scheme will start in 2022 so there is sufficient time to ensure that the design is fair and capable of providing workers with a decent income in retirement.

Strengthening Governance of Occupational Pensions

Alongside the reforms discussed above, it is planned to make significant changes to the law governing the regulation of occupational pension schemes. The measures proposed will require trustee boards to fully qualified to meet their obligations to schemes and new powers will be given to the Pensions Authority to ensure compliance with the new standards.

Congress has also called for a change to the law so that employers cannot unilaterally cease contributions to defined contribution schemes. Measures to curtail the capacity of employers to close down defined contributions schemes are contained in the Social Welfare, Pensions and Civil Registration Bill 2017 and Government is committed to seek to enact this legislation by the end of the second quarter of 2018.

Next steps...

Congress believes that the Government Roadmap could be potentially significant in the development of future pension policy. The extent to which this potential is realised will depend on how the detailed design issues, referred to in this article are addressed. The Government is committed to consulting with key stakeholders on these proposed reforms and Congress looks forward to participating fully in the process.

Liam Berney is Industrial Officer with ICTU

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Tír gan teanga...

NELSON McCausland, a former DUP MLA, has recently suggested that there is a nefarious plot to undermine British control of the 'wee six' by the liberal use of Irish language street signs. Then again he thinks the world is six thousand years old and dinosaur bones are an atheist plot to undermine the Bible.



Stephen Nolan

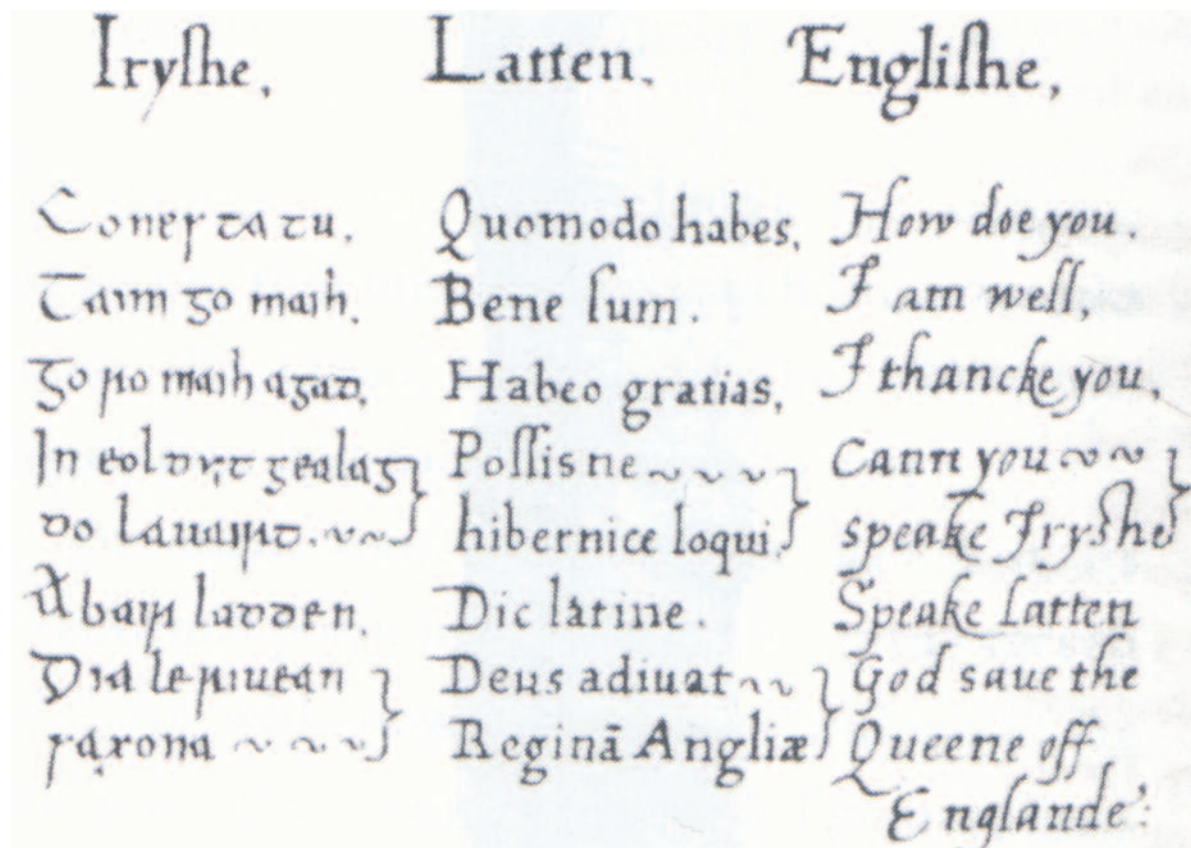
There was a time in the not so distant past when the Catholic middle classes were being wooed by unionism and convinced of the benefits of the union. The now old adage that republicans are too clever to admit they've lost and unionism is too stupid to realise it's won, appears increasingly apt because the rough wooing of nationalism is over and unionism seems to have absolutely no cogent strategy that might involve convincing the nationalist population that a genuinely shared future in the six counties is possible.

Its recent decision to stand fast against an Irish Language Act is

weakening not strengthening the union.

This latest strategic blunder emanates from a resistance to the rather clumsily entitled 'de-Britishification' of the North. But the idea that the North is less British than before is not credible. Institutionally, militarily, politically, and culturally the North is still a very British place.

The number of loyalist marches and marching bands has reached an all-time high, while the presence of 2,000 British troops, several major military bases, the (albeit controversial) presence of MI5 and the trans-



Cúpla focal, yer Maj? Queen Elizabeth I's Irish language primer

Picture: Public Domain

fer of further covert policing functions to the 'National Crime Agency' are just some examples of Northern Ireland's full integration into the British security state.

Further, it is almost entirely integrated into the British state economically - its media is almost wholly

Anglo-centric with a sprinkling of Gaelic games (Ulster teams only) and a cúpla focal on BBC2; many of the laws that govern the North are (when they're not European in origin) have a very British origin indeed, the parliament of Westminster, where they are signed into law by a British monarch.

There is also the not insignificant issue of 900,000 unionists, who after 25 years of conflict have perhaps a stronger and more desperate British identity than ever.

So if it isn't less British, what's the problem? The problem might be that it's less Orange. While the institutions that govern Northern Ireland remain fundamentally wedded to British traditions, cultures and laws, significantly they are no longer under the direction of a Protestant religious organisation and its political outrider, unionism. It's no surprise that the Orange Order was central to blocking the Irish Language Act at the last minute.

Its latest tactic points to levels of stupidity that would make a box of hair look clever. In setting its stall out against an Irish Language Act they are, by extension, setting their stall out against any form of an Irish identity within the 'British' north.

The debate itself is confused by lies and propaganda, encouraged by the on-air buffoonery of my name sake, which suggests that the campaign is pushing compulsory Irish in schools,

quotas for Irish speakers in the Civil Service and the imposition of Irish language street names in unionist areas. None of this is true. God forbid that Ballymena might get confused with *Baile Méanach* or that the Shankill might be 're-named' with the gibberish that is 'Sean Cill'.



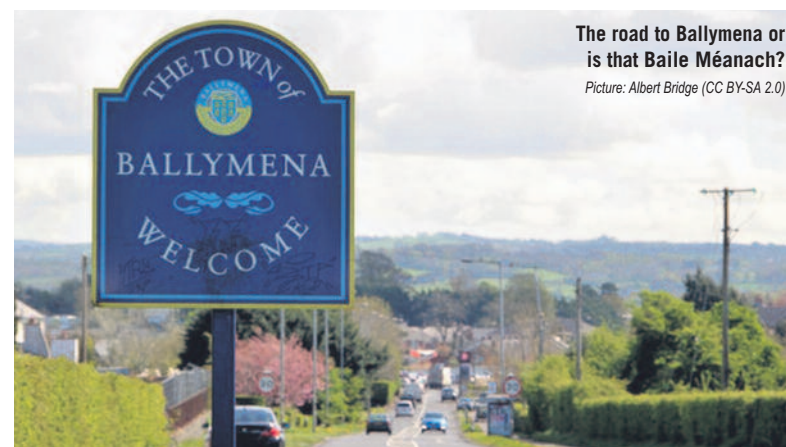
Nelson McCausland
Picture: NI Executive (CC BY 2.0)

And if I hear anyone say "There are more Chinese speakers than Irish speakers" or "Why isn't Chinese an official language?" I am going to leave a dump on their doorstep wrapped in paper, light it, ring the bell and run.

For those numpties who have uttered these tiresome, punch-worthy words, please listen - Irish is the native language of Ireland, that means something, legally, politically culturally, historically (read a book) and it is an officially endangered language requiring and expecting state-level support and promotion.

The last time I checked Mandarin had 960 million native speakers and surprisingly is not on the endangered list. It does not therefore require support and promotion to protect it from extinction. So, *druid do bhéal nó dún do chlab!*

Tír gan teanga, tír gan anam - A country without a language is a country without a soul



The road to Ballymena or is that Baile Méanach?
Picture: Albert Bridge (CC BY-SA 2.0)

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Beware! Bosses are watching you



**Gareth
Murphy**

...and they want to squeeze every last drop of value from your work

EMPLOYERS are increasingly watching, monitoring, recording, analysing and controlling every second of every day of their workforce in order to drive efficiencies in labour processes and get every last effort out of their workers. They want to control every aspect of your day to make more money and more profit.

Some workers might be familiar with the periodic, once every three or four years, time in motion studies that employers conduct. Usually someone with a flip chart and a stopwatch recording a day's work.

Well, imagine that on a constant continuous basis where new 'big data' storage and analytics devices and software can then instruct employers on how to get more out of you. That is not the future of work – that is increasingly the now for many millions of workers.

UPS trucks are now full of sensors that record every second of driving, stopping, opening and closing doors, loading and unloading, seat belts buckled or unbuckled.

The Head of UPS Data argues the data is as important as the package to UPS – just one minute saved per driver per day is \$14.5 million saved for the company over the course of a year. That could be a nice bonus for the top executives!

The UPS union in the US has successfully doubled wages over the last 20 years and also has collective agreements on the protection of employee data to ensure that the workers at least are getting some benefits from the increase value they are cre-

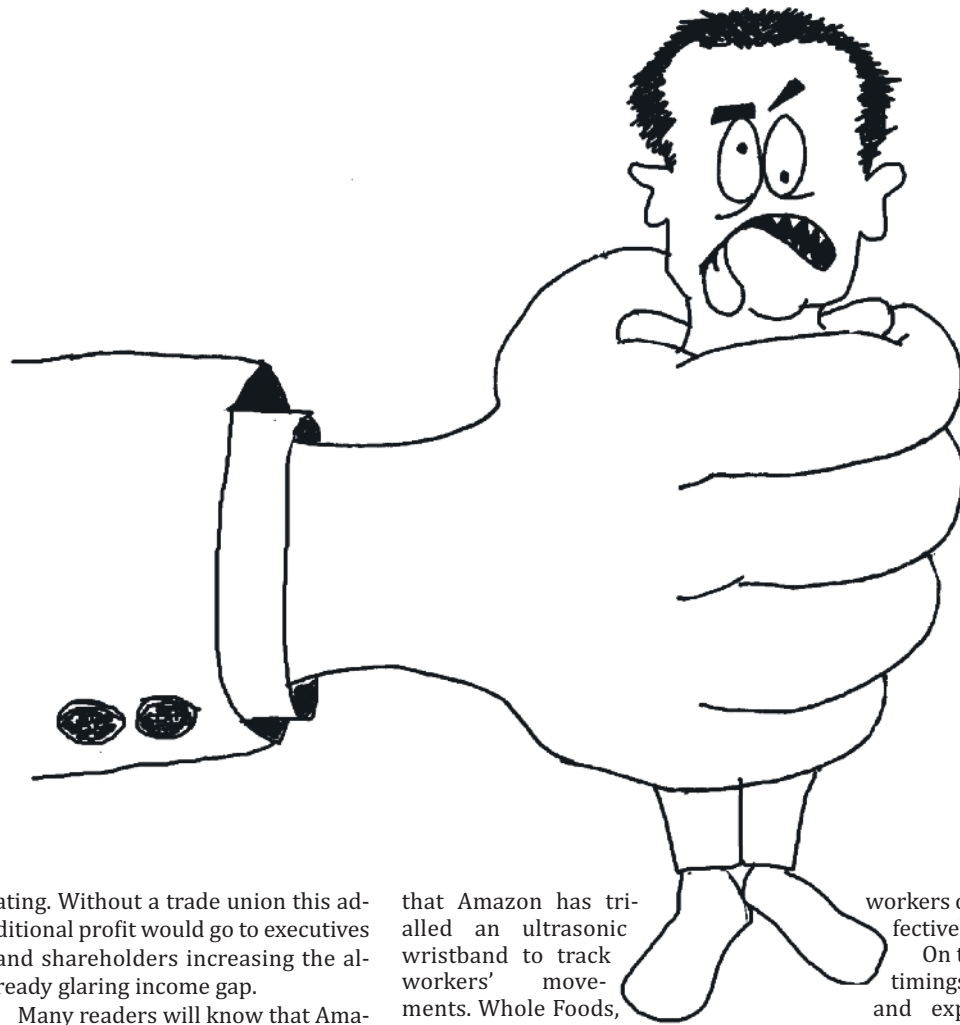


Illustration: Ben Piddington (CC BY 2.0)

ating. Without a trade union this additional profit would go to executives and shareholders increasing the already glaring income gap.

Many readers will know that Amazon has trailblazed on poor working conditions and practices in its warehouses. So it comes as no surprise

that Amazon has trialled an ultrasonic wristband to track workers' movements. Whole Foods, a subsidiary of Amazon, has instituted a punitive inventory system which scores and grades

workers on how quickly and effectively they work.

On top of movements and timings, now tone, behaviour and expressions are being analysed, monitored, judged and fed into performance ratings and whether a worker will be hired, or

Without doubt the use of 'big data' and HR analytics in the world of work will lead to a standardisation of workplace personality to the detriment of diversity and inclusion. Employers will select personality types they can control and mould

potentially fired. This kind of monitoring is unregulated.

MIT has fashioned a badge that listens to tone, length of conversation and more to identify 'natural leaders' for promotion in companies. They are now adding an app that will instruct workers on correcting their tone or behaviour in real time.

Some critics, such as economist Richard Wolff, point out that this will deepen antagonism and reduce morale to such a point that employers will blame workers leading to an intensification of automation and digitalisation.

Without doubt the use of 'big data' and HR analytics in the world of work will lead to a standardisation of workplace personality to the detriment of diversity and inclusion. Employers will select personality types they can control and mould.

Unions need to secure collective agreements and push back on the drive. Governments need to regulate in the interest of workers.

Gareth Murphy is Senior Industrial Relations Officer with the Financial Services Union



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Repealing the 8th is about giving women access to healthcare in their own country

By David Gibney
Mandate communications officer

FRIDAY 25th May 2018 will be an historic day.

This is the date when we will be asked whether we want to vote Yes to repeal the 8th amendment, or vote No and maintain it in the Irish constitution. The implications of this vote are enormous. And there are no second chances.

This referendum promises to be one of the most divisive in recent decades, and with that, you can expect a lot of misdirection, untruths and lies.

The truth is, abortion already exists for Irish women. It's just that they cannot avail of the badly needed care, support and healthcare they need in their own country when they make the difficult choice to terminate a pregnancy.

Former Supreme Court judge Catherine McGuinness recently said: "Saying there is no abortion in Ireland is a fairytale and is utter hypocrisy. It's time to end the pretence."

Every single day more than nine women leave Ireland for the UK in order to have an abortion, with figures showing that more than 170,000 have travelled there since 1980.

In 2016, for example, a total of 3,265 girls and women gave an Irish address when attending an abortion clinic in the UK. This is an underestimation because many don't give their real addresses when availing of the service, while others choose to attend clinics in other parts of Europe such as Amsterdam.

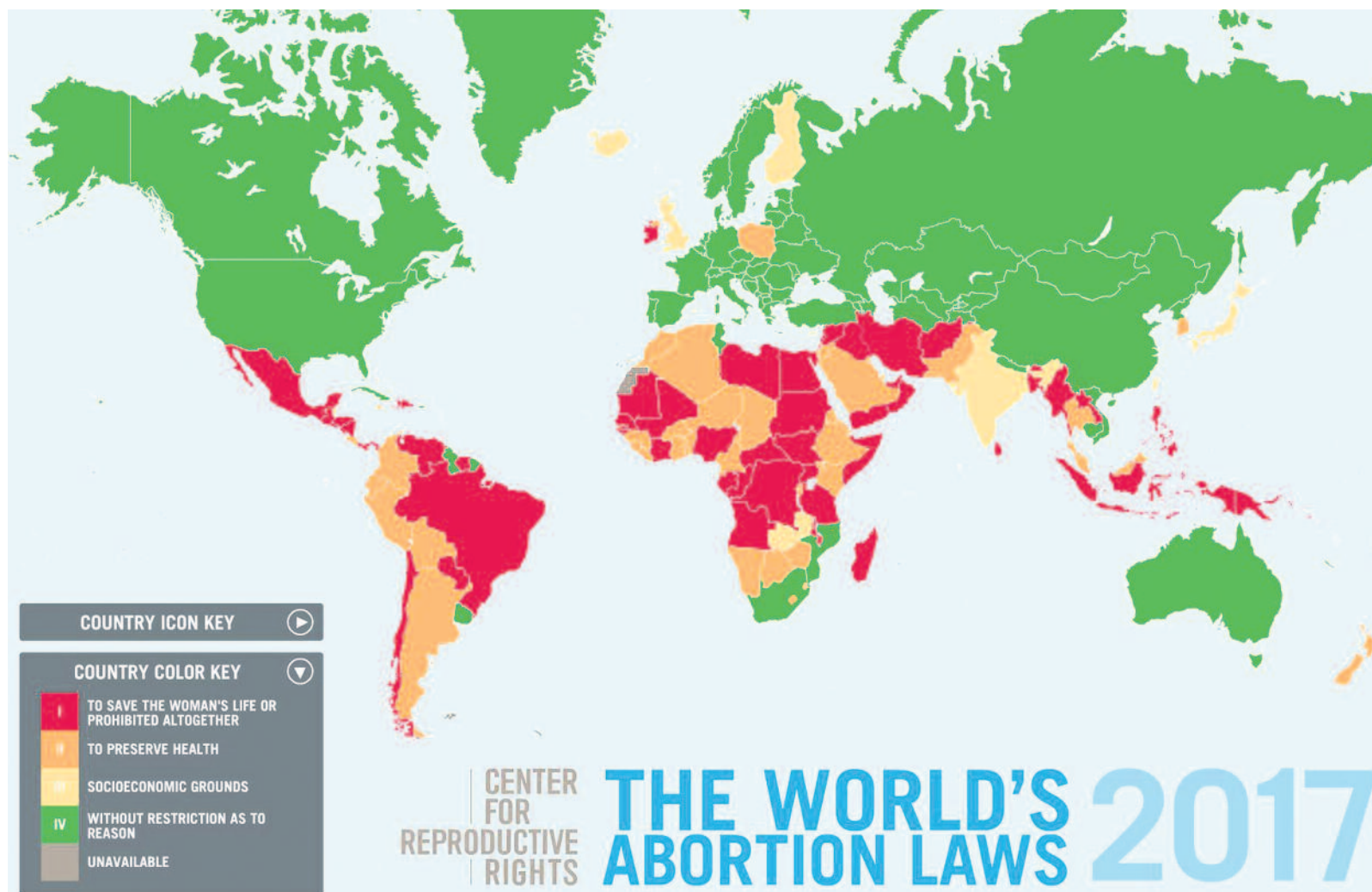
For low-paid workers, those on social welfare or those from low income backgrounds, they simply don't have the option to travel because they cannot afford to take the trip.

1,642 abortion pill packages were also sent to Ireland in the period 2010 to 2012 by a single provider. So, now it is thought more than three women per day are taking abortion pills without any medical supervision across the country.

The stigma and fear many of these women face is exacerbated by the knowledge that if they are caught taking these pills, they could face up to 14 years in prison.

So, women who have been impregnated through rape or incest, who are suffering with cancer or other medical complications, or who are carrying a foetus that cannot survive outside the womb, are all faced with an extremely difficult choice – gather money together to travel overseas to end their pregnancy, or else take an abortion pill and risk both their health and their freedom.

And every single day more than 13 women make that choice. So saying Ireland does not have abortion is a fallacy. Sadly, because of the ban on abortion, women from Ireland tend to access abortion later than those living in the UK or elsewhere.



“ Have confidence in yourself. Trust your mothers, daughters, sisters and all of the other women in your life to make the right decision about their own bodies. A Yes vote is not a vote for abortion, it's a vote for choice ”

However, recently Liverpool University Hospital, which attends to a lot of Irish women for cases of fatal foetal abnormality are now turning them away because they cannot deal with the sheer volume of Irish women in the hospital and must prioritise NHS patients. So women are either being forced to go further afield than the UK or take babies that will not survive to full term.

Ireland is relatively unique when it comes to women's reproductive choice. In Europe, only Malta does not allow abortions alongside Ireland. Whereas the UK, France, Germany, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Russia, Norway and almost every other developed country around the world – including the USA, Australia, China, Canada,

Uruguay and South Africa – all allow women a choice.

Ireland, shamefully, remains in the same category as countries like Afghanistan, Nigeria, Congo, Iran, Colombia and Papua New Guinea when it comes to women's bodily autonomy.

What do trade unionists think about the 8th amendment?

Mandate Trade Union along with a number of other trade unions commissioned research on this issue to establish what our members' opinions were. The report Abortion as a Workplace Issue was published a number of months ago with significant findings:

When asked about the circum-

stances when abortion should be available:

- 77% said when a woman's life is at risk;
- 66% said when the pregnancy is the result of a rape;
- 64% said when the pregnancy is the result of incest;
- 65% said in cases of serious malformation of the foetus;
- 62% said when a woman's health is at risk; and
- 51% said when a woman asks for an abortion.

Only 9% said "none of these" options. Significantly, 87% of respondents said women should not be arrested and prosecuted for having an abortion. One of the important themes that came across in the study was the workplace implications of having an abortion. Almost half of all

YES REPEAL



TRADE UNION
CAMPAIGN TO
REPEAL THE 8TH

those surveyed said they had struggled to pay for the costs of the abortion. 23% said they needed time off after the abortion but could not afford to lose wages and 20% saying they needed sick leave, but could not take it, possibly due to the illegality of having an abortion.

Women should not be put through all this extra trauma when they make any choice about their own body.

What does the public think about the 8th amendment?

The Citizens' Assembly, which was established by the Government with randomly selected members of the public, made a number of recommendations on this issue:

- 89% expressed support in the case of pregnancy as a result of rape.
- 89% supported in the case of the unborn child having a foetal abnormality that was likely to result in death before or shortly after birth.
- 78% supported there is a risk to the woman's physical or mental health.
- 48% said there should be no restriction up to 12 weeks.

This 12-week proposal is now being supported by the Joint Oireachtas Committee and, in the event the 8th amendment is removed, will likely serve as the legislated form of abortion in Ireland. This is the norm

around the rest of the developed world.

When you go to the polling station on Friday, May 25, 2018 to decide whether to repeal the 8th amendment or not, please remember that voting No and retaining the 8th amendment will prevent women who have been raped from availing of the healthcare they require.

By voting No, women will still be criminalised for accessing abortion in Ireland. By voting No, you could be preventing cancer victims from accessing life-saving healthcare services. And by voting No, you could have a damaging impact on life-saving maternity care because doctors cannot intervene to help a woman due to the possibility of a heartbeat in some circumstances.

Whatever your opinion is about the circumstances when access to abortion should be available, the Irish Constitution is no place for the regulation of women's bodies. Voting Yes is the only way to ensure women have bodily autonomy and they can get the care they need in a crisis pregnancy.

Have confidence in yourself. Trust your mothers, daughters, sisters and all of the other women in your life to make the right decision about their own bodies. A Yes vote is not a vote for abortion, it's a vote for choice.

Vote Yes and let's bring Ireland into the 21st Century.

THINKING OUT LOUD

Does the truth matter?



Picture: Creative Commons (CC0)



Mel Corry

WHILE the extreme weather conditions distracted our attentions over the last few weeks in the political arena the row rumbles on about whether or not agreement had been made between the DUP and Sinn Fein to restore an Assembly in the North.

Is there anyone in any doubt that they had a draft agreement? We have seen it, we've talked about it, we've heard them talking about it. We now know that Arlene Foster handed it directly to Michelle O'Neill.

Michelle O'Neill and her party believes that there was sufficient progress made to enable the prime ministers of both governments to fly in with all the media scrum that accompanies it and resurrect the Assembly.

Arlene Foster says that while documents were exchanged they were in draft form and were part of a series of documents that were continually being exchanged, and nothing was agreed.

I'm sure that she believes what she's telling the public - that's how politics works on this island and it's no different in the Republic. The problem is that any sensible person looking at this would clearly come to the conclusion that the DUP are back peddling and using semantics to try and cover their tracks. The voting public are not stupid and can clearly see the word games being played.

The question must surely be put to those who vote for the various political parties: is this the best you should expect from your political leadership? They depend on our silence and if there was an election tomorrow there is no doubt that this team of deceivers would be returned. The people of no property deserve better.

Another story that emerged recently, and is still evolving, exposing the horrible crimes of a paedophile priest in the Diocese of Dromore. The details of the abuse were graphically doled out by the BBC under the guise of revelations. The result was that the Bishop of Dromore John McAreavey

fell on his sword and resigned. The bishop had lost the faith of the faithful.

The institutions of the church, and that includes the school, has broader questions to answer. They knew this man existed among their number: when did they start to consider the children? When did they report his activities to the authorities? What action did the board of governors take? What action did the police take and why did it take a BBC programme to make the general public aware?

The Bishop said that he took action but didn't explain why he allowed this beast to concelebrate Mass with him and then when he died officiated at his funeral.

As he was confronted with this reality he put it down to an error of judgment. He was also said to be surprised when the priest appeared on the altar with him, but he's the Bishop - surely he can use whatever authority is vested in him?

Saying nothing

As the dust was settling on this case, revelations of another paedophile priest in the same school, at the same time emerged, suggesting this may be the tip of the iceberg. The Church authorities are masters of making statements that say nothing.

Just like the political question, practising Catholics should be asking questions again - their silence allows for these things to happen. Whether it's institutional abuse, the Magdalene Laundries, the Tuam baby scandal or any other of the countless scandals that has come to light, a vague statement from a diocesan sec-



Michelle O'Neill; Arlene Foster and Jeremy Corbyn



Pictures: Sinn Fein (CC BY 2.0); NIO (CC BY 2.0); Public Domain

retary which admits nothing but calls for compassion seems to be enough.

I'm sure you, like me, were raised by parents who instilled in you the importance of truth. My old school motto was *Veritas Vincit* - truth conquers. It was instilled in us that when we did something wrong - own up and your honesty would make your punishment lighter.

Something has changed in this day and age when truth seems to be a value of the weak or the stupid. The ability to meander around a truthful statement seems to be how we measure a canny civil servant or politician or political commentator.

Our media now is less concerned with actual facts than how the story can be spun to fit the values of the outlet. Just this week the BBC photo-shopped a photograph of Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn wearing a Russian-style hat against a backdrop of the Kremlin, clearly suggesting he is some sort of Soviet stooge.

All this for asking for evidence in the case against the Russian regime who may have attacked a double agent on British soil. So tell me when does telling the truth matter? And if it does matter, why don't we demand it?

“ Our media now is less concerned with actual facts than how the story can be spun to fit the values of the outlet... ”



Paul Dillon

Picture: Solidarity Centre



Guatemalan workers protest repression – union density in the country in under 2%

BEING a union organiser in Guatemala is dangerous. In fact, it can get you killed. According to the Solidarity Centre, more than five dozen trade unionists have been killed there since 2007.

The backdrop to the anti-trade union violence is a deeply unequal, hugely divided society. The country is wracked by gang violence, poor services and weak protection in law for human rights.

Immunity for prosecution for those who abuse human rights, a legacy of the 36-year long civil war that caused the deaths of 200,000 people, remains widespread.

Guatemala has remained relatively untouched by the Latin American 'Pink Tide' which saw leftist governments elected, or challenge for power, throughout the continent.

It is the only country in Central America without an active communist party. Unlike neighbouring Mexico, where the leftist Andrés Manuel López Obrador is challenging for power, or El Salvador, which has twice in a row elected left-wing supported presidents, there are few obvious signs of hope for major social movement backed initiatives to challenge for or win power.

This is the context in which the trade unions, with a density of under 2%, operate. It is worth noting, however, that figures for density and membership in Guatemala are highly unreliable, as unions routinely under-report membership for fear of employer reprisal.

It was not always like this. The trade unions played a key role in Guatemala's "10 year spring" which ended in 1954, the year progressive President Arbenz was overthrown in a CIA-backed coup.

Arbenz was elected in 1951 on a progressive platform to develop the

Guatemalan unions struggle on despite bitter repression...

indigenous economy, implement land reform, increase social assistance and invest in infrastructure.

The defeat of Arbenz and the progressive forces ushered in 40 years of US-backed dictatorship, with widespread abuse of workers' rights and indigenous movements. Workers' movements and self-organisation were relentlessly suppressed.

Laws governing trade union rights in Guatemala are notoriously weak. The International Congress of Trade Unions (ITUC) has devised a category system for trade union rights, which rates countries from one to five. They produce a *Global Rights Index*, which rates 139 countries on the degree of respect demonstrated for workers' rights.

The ITUC rates Guatemala as a category five country where "there is no guarantee of rights". Latin America countries feature prominently on the list: Mexico, Honduras, Colombia and Ecuador are also on the list as category five.

Ireland, incidentally, is rated as a category two country where there "is repeated violation of rights". The most recent report, issued in 2017, states "Greece, Portugal and Ireland having (sic) suffered contraction in the scope of coverage and greater centralisation as part of the conditions for financial assistance." Greece is the only European country to feature as a category five nation.

Repression

The ITUC rates Guatemala as one of the worst countries in the world to be a trade unionist reporting that an "atmosphere of repression continues to be pervasive with workers vulnerable to systematic physical violence, intimidation, kidnapping and death threats, which severely undermines freedom of association."

Achieving trade union recognition in Guatemala is very difficult, even for well-organised, active unions. According to Melvin Hernandez of the union Sitrabimbo, the union for workers in the baked goods manufac-

turer Bimbo, laws for union recognition are extremely weak, meaning making gains for members is an extraordinary challenge.

Bimbo is the largest bakery in the world, with a presence in Guatemala since 1989. It employs 130,000 people worldwide. It boasts of its status as an "ethical company". Despite this claim, Hernandez reports works shifts of up to 14 hours, discrimination, harassment of women, and frequent threats of dismissal.

For Hernandez, the problems experienced by the union are symbolic of the broader issues facing unions in Guatemala.

He said: "For 18 months now, the Ministry of Labour has refused to recognise the legal status of the union. Since the autumn of 2017, the company has fired more than 400 members. There are a small number of union members in the company, who are anonymous members as they fear a witch-hunt."

Hernandez pointed out that his

union had connections with colleagues in the company at international level, and that union recognition issues are not restricted to Guatemala. He claimed: "In countries where workers organise themselves, Bimbo responds with total fury."

Guatemalan unions represent workers in an economy where casualisation of work and insecure work is a part of everyday life. When I spent time in Xela, the country's second city, I witnessed the sort of casual hiring policies which were once part and parcel of the era when work was unorganised in Ireland.

People from rural villages would gather in the city in the hope of getting employment early in the morning. Those turned away would often struggle with the cost of the fare to take them home.

Efforts by trade unionists to organise continue in the face of great repression and difficulty. *Shopfloor* readers will be aware of efforts by companies here to strike down trade union laws. In Guatemala there is an ongoing campaign to undermine what trade union protection currently exists. It is a country where the wealthiest 10% receives almost one-half of all national income and where a staggering 80% of the population lives below the poverty line.

Carlos Enrique Mancilla García, General Secretary of the Confederation of Trade Union Unity of Guatemala CUSG recently told the ILO: "We face a whole campaign against collective bargaining that starts from the position of the government and the Attorney General of the nation."

The stakes, however, are far higher than attempts to de-recognise trade unionists and make life awkward. In the words of Mancilla García: "The murder of union leaders is a common and recurrent practice. The state does not perform investigations, does not clarify the facts, does not condemn the guilty and does not even obligate public and private companies that dismiss trade unionists to be reintegrated into their jobs."

Paul Dillon is an organiser with the Financial Services Union

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Sinéad
Pembroke

IMAGINE you have an excruciating backache that won't go away. What if you have a virus that you need a prescription of antibiotics to cure? Or what if you experience other symptoms that are alarming that you worry might be something more serious?

For those of us who can, we wouldn't hesitate to go to our GP. But for many precarious workers, they are financially precluded from doing so.

TASC's report on the social implications of precarious work, investigates the effect this type of work has on the personal lives of people. The report, which will be launched in April, looks at the effect of such insecure work on health and accessing healthcare, but also housing and family formation.

The results are based on 40 interviews with precarious workers, aged 18-40, who live in Ireland and work on a temporary, part-time/irregular hour and/or self-employed basis.

Our report found that for the majority of our participants, there was a financial barrier to accessing GP, dental and other primary care services.

While there are means-tested medical cards and GP cards that do give access to a number of primary care services for free, most precarious workers fall outside of the eligibility criteria. This means that they have to

Difficult choices

Precarious workers and health care

pay the GP fee and the cost of any medication or treatment that they need, which is costly, especially for someone who has no guaranteed income.

Sickness is not an option

The majority of our participants admitted that they avoided going to the doctor out of financial concern. For those who avoided going to the GP, this often resulted in their health deteriorating further.

It is not just the cost of seeking medical treatment, but the loss of wages that creates a situation where

illness is a major financial burden for precarious workers.

Elaine revealed that the last time she was ill: "between the doctor's appointment, the antibiotics and the four days off work, it was approaching €600 that I will never see back again."

And when a person on a precarious contract has a recurring or chronic health condition, then accessing healthcare services becomes a long-term financial burden that cannot be avoided.

Often participants with chronic conditions, such as asthma, recounted the difficult decisions they

had to make in order to afford medical treatment.

Barbara revealed: "I remember the feeling of, 'Shit, what am I going to do, I don't have enough money to do me for the next week?!' I didn't even have €40 a week to buy food; my limit was €40 a week. It would have had to come down to one or the other: food or inhaler."

It was also evident that financial barriers to accessing primary healthcare services had serious consequences for female reproductive health.

Paula revealed: "I used to be on the pill but you have to go back every six months to see your doctor again, which is 60 quid. So I've come off that. That's since I started part-time."

Dependency on family

The majority of participants relied on a network of people, such as parents or a partner for financial support. This was particularly pertinent when it came to accessing healthcare services. Participants described numerous incidences where they were forced to pay for private healthcare services – such as tests – because the symptoms of their condition became too acute to wait for public services.

Health insurance was not an option for precarious workers we interviewed. Furthermore, Lifetime Community Rating legislation (2015) further prejudices those who cannot afford health insurance, because those aged 35 years and over who do not have health insurance and who decide to take a policy later in life, pay more for coverage. Therefore, the Lifetime Community Rating is preju-

dicted against those who cannot afford health insurance.

Ultimately, the privatisation of healthcare services privileged those with intergenerational dependency. However, as a consequence of this predicament, those who received financial support for their health expenses admitted they would prefer this not to be the case.

Sara revealed: "At the age of 31, having such a low income, you already feel a little bit less successful in the traditional way. So trying to maintain some kind of independence is really important – just for a sense of self-worth."

Precarious work creates a scenario whereby people's ability to live an independent life, something normally associated with being an adult, is severely restricted.

Universal healthcare need

If we compare a precarious worker in Ireland to a precarious worker in the UK, there is one fundamental difference: people in the UK have access to universal healthcare that is free at the point of entry and paid for by taxes. In Ireland, we do not have that security. Therefore, Irish precarious workers face double precarity; contractual and health precarity. This has major implications for health inequalities in Ireland because it places precarious workers at a disadvantage. If we want to reduce inequality, we need to introduce universal healthcare that is paid for by our taxes and free at the point of entry.

Dr Sinéad Pembroke is a researcher at TASC on the Social Implications of Precarious Work project.

By Greg Godels

US-based Marxist blogger

WITH both the Italian elections and the German effort at a so-called “Grand Coalition” in the recent news, much attention has turned to political developments in Europe.

For those of us in the US, interest comes not only from the impact of European politics on our own affairs, but also from the fact that US and European trends have often travelled on parallel tracks.

For example, in much of the post-war period, governance in Europe has revolved around two centrist political poles that can be roughly characterised as Christian democracy and social democracy.

Insofar as both poles defend capitalism and oppose Communism, support capitalist institutions, and are content to peacefully alternate rule, they mirror the US two-party system without the stricter institutional backstops that preserve the electoral system for the Republicans and Democratic Party in the US.

Certainly, the Western European political systems were nominally multi-party after the war, but the dynamics of those systems steered political developments toward the centre. The far right was appropriately neutered by the discrediting of Nazism and fascism as a consequence of World War II.

Hand-in-glove

The revolutionary left – the Communists – were overtly and covertly thwarted by the Cold War, the NATO consensus. Where the Communists enjoyed formal legality, the centrist parties, the US, and the NATO allies worked hand-in-glove to deny participation in government.

While both European Christian democracy and social democracy were firmly committed to the capitalist course, social democracy wittingly served as a buffer against the attraction of a workers’ state by advocating a kind of faux-socialism, a socio-economic safety net.

As an insurance policy against the ascendancy of European Communist parties, Christian democracy tempered the right’s conventional economic liberalism of minimalist government, unfettered markets, and austere budgets, grudgingly accepting social spending and a more “humane” social contract.

Frustrated with the de facto barrier against Communist parliamentary success, many European Communist parties began a process of concessions, of shedding revolutionary principles and prospects, creating a left-social democracy dubbed ‘Euro Communism’. A few parties resisted this opportunistic path.

The demise of the Soviet Union and the European socialist states proved to be a watershed for European politics and, particularly, the left. The Euro Communist left, stripped of its untenable *raison d’être* – Communism without Communism – collapsed, leaving a void to the left of social democracy. Social democracy, in turn, cast off faux-socialism for public-private partnership under the direction of monopoly capitalism: markets, and not social policies, were to provide for the



Hillary Clinton: ‘Deplorables’

THE COLLAPSE OF



Far right take to the streets: ‘March for England’ protestors in Brighton

Picture: Pavin Pavan (CC BY-SA 2.0)

masses. And, without the threat of Communism, the right returned to its fundamental character, aggressively pressing unrestrained class politics: anti-trade unionism, fiscal austerity, deregulation, privatisation, and chauvinism.

Without the fear of Communism, capitalism found no need for an accommodation with the working class.

In the 1990s, Continental Europe followed the path blazed in the UK and US over a decade earlier by the Thatcher/Reagan axis. Faced with shifting alignments and the 1970s failure of Old Labour/New Deal policies (specifically, the Keynesian economic framework underlying both approaches), a new consensus began to emerge in both countries.

From the mid-1980s into the next decade, the new consensus spread to nearly all major political parties and around the globe. In its essence, it was a return to Whiggism – the political, social, and economic ideology of the bourgeoisie – parliamentarism, negative rights, and the economic liberalism of minimal regulation, preference for private over public initiative, and markets as decisive of all matters and in the last

instance. Pundits are fond of labelling this development ‘neo-liberalism’, a statement of the obvious. But the superficiality of that term obscures the fact that the turn is more than a mere policy. In fact, it is a response to the failings of the previous consensus and it constitutes the capitalist norm when the spectre of Communism does not loom large over the future.

Capitulation

Social democrats in the US and Europe promoted the notion of a ‘third way’ to mask their capitulation to classical capitalism and its totalising influence over all aspects of society, over every global nook and cranny. In fact, after the demise of the Soviet Union and its socialist neighbours, there was the one way in the US and EU.

With capitalism marching triumphantly into the 21st century, most of the US and European left conceded that capitalism was resilient and here to stay. An inflated memory of a kinder, gentler capitalism might be the best that could be imagined.

But the triumphant project ran aground, crashing on the rocks of economic crises. The capitalist accumulation process imploded in 2000 and, again, even more severely, in



Opportunistic path: Euro Communism

2007-2008. “Recovery” re-established accumulation, but left millions of broken, desperate people in its wake. Inequality, unemployment, underemployment, poverty, insecurity, and alienation afflicted millions in the US and the EU (and, of course, the rest of the world). Capitalism recovered, but the people did not. For the people, the entrenched ideological options of conservatism and social democracy offered only the thin gruel of austerity.

Mesmerised by rising equity values and restored profitability, and impressed with the growing wealth and well-being of the bourgeoisie and the visible and vocal petty bourgeoisie, ruling elites labour under the illusion that all is going well.

In Europe and the US, the never-changing meal of celebrity-worship,

sports, anti-social social media, and other distractions nourish a false sense of security and satisfaction.

But in towns and villages, neighborhoods and suburbs, people are suffering. Alcoholism, drug abuse, and other addictions are taking a demographic toll, unseen by high-income, physically segregated elites. As insecurities and dysfunctionality grow, millions feel a growing difference – an often poorly expressed class difference – between the beneficiaries of the capitalist economy and themselves, the losers. Anger seethes.

Without the compass of a revolutionary ideology, without the vision of socialism, this anger remains unfocused, directed vaguely at government, the media, existing political parties, and, too often, convenient scapegoats.

As the anger emerges politically, it is met with elite derision, contempt, or condescension. It is seen by their ‘betters’ as a product of the uneducated, the backward, the uncultured. As Hillary Clinton so famously put it: “the deplorables.”

The insularity of US and European elites – divided from the masses by culture, social practices, power, status, and wealth – leads directly to the political crisis that spawned Brexit,

THE CENTRE ... BUT WHERE IS THE LEFT?

Trump's election, the rise of 'populist' or alternative political parties, and most decidedly, the discrediting of historically centrist parties.

The recent desperate attempt to preserve a coalition of the centre in Germany and the collapse of the centre left and the shocking success of the Five Star Movement and extreme right in Italy only underscores the distance between the masses and the political parties carefully crafted by the bourgeoisie to contain the aspirations of those masses.

Behind these political developments lies a stagnant, sputtering global economy. It is apparent that segments of the ruling classes are uneasy with or reject the globalist ideology of open markets and are moving towards economic nationalism. The failure of growth to return has led many in the capitalist class to call for a change in direction – protectionism. The emergence of support for nationalism and protectionism has energised the Euro-skeptics, the extreme right, and Trump.

Of course, the other side of this political coin is the failure of the left, es-

pecially the left that is yet untainted by the stain of ineffectual social democracy. For the most part, the non-establishment left has failed to deliver a militant, persuasive message to the working people in Europe and the US.

And where there is still a credible militant Communist left, the waters have been muddied by false prophets – for example, SYRIZA in Greece.

In many countries, the retreat from Marxism became a rout after the fall of the Soviet Union. In its place, ideologies like anarchism, utopian socialism, and cooperativism – ideologies that had long been discredited by Marx himself – are revived.

The peculiarly North American mania for procedural democracy – the view that justice will flow spontaneously like a natural spring when we unleash a radical version of Robert's Rules of Order – has returned to prominence as shown by to the now-collapsed Occupy movement. And of course, left-lite liberals immerse themselves in the battles for self-identity and against 'micro-ag-

gressions' while minority identities are actually ravaged by the macro-aggressions of class war and capitalist exploitation. In light of recent poor electoral showings, some have sought to explain the sorry state of the US and European left as a result of structural changes in capitalism. They see a new working class, the 'precariat', as superseding the traditional proletariat (even The Wall Street Journal has fancied the term). The 'precariat' notion derives from the realities of a changing workplace of part-time, contract, temporary, and dispersed employment, an optimal realisation of the classical liberal economic dream. This trend in employment has made organising workers difficult, certainly more challenging than with the world of the traditional worker engaged in one lifetime or semi-lifetime job under a factory roof.

Of course, the structural changes cited are, to a great extent, the result of the failure of trade unions and political parties to defend the interests of workers against predatory capitalists.

Obstacles

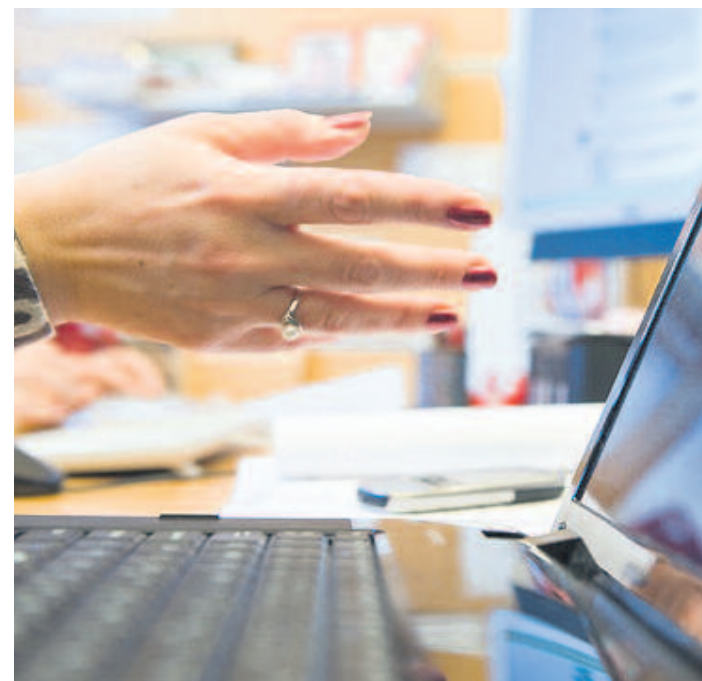
Moreover, the difficulties that these changes bring forth are obstacles to union organising, less so to political parties. And history teaches that establishing militant political parties precedes organising militant trade unionism.

No task before the union movement today presents greater impediments than was the task of building industrial unions in the US in the 1930s. The challenge of establishing the CIO was only met, was only possible, because of the leadership and effort of Communist and socialist workers.

Needed is the return in influence of historically informed workers' parties that draw upon the social theory of Marx and the organisational insights of Lenin (that is to say, parties that reject the backward Cold War dogma of 'Anything but Communism'), Without the strong option of Communist or workers' parties, the European and US working class will continue to face the repellent choice between decadent, rotting centrist parties and a host of new charlatan parties offering fool's gold policies, magic elixirs, and vulnerable scapegoats.

Only an independent, working class-oriented movement informed by Marxism-Leninism can provide a 'third way' apart from the disaster of free-market globalism or the trap of economic nationalism.

The old saw that workers deserve their own party is more true today than ever – an authentic anti-capitalist party that returns to the revolutionary legacy surrendered to opportunism and parliamentary illusions.



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Picture: European Parliament

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By John Carty
Mandate Divisional Organiser

WHERE did employers come up with the notion that they have a right to manage? Is this right absolute or limited? Why should workers collectively or individually allow themselves to be managed when there exists the possibility they can be negotiated with instead?

To answer these questions it is necessary to revisit the Industrial Revolution. Previously, most people either as peasants eked out a living on the land or craft workers produced goods in their own cottages. They were not employees in the modern sense of the meaning.

Old system

The transition to the factory system created the concept of employees and with considerable reluctance by these now classed as employees. As to why the old system gave way to the Industrial Revolution is beyond the scope of this article, but can be addressed in a future issue of *Shopfloor*.

The kind of formal employment offered in the new system, with the employer having control over starting and finishing times, pace of work etc. was unattractive to those entering the factories. Workers in the early factories would often take days off when they wished to leave work early as this is what they did previously before becoming employees.

Employers unsurprisingly were unwilling to accept what they saw as the undisciplined work habits of the displaced peasant or cottage craft worker. The employers in response to such difficulties responded with disciplinary rules.

This right to discipline, however, did not fall from the sky, it had to be created. Two ideologies were used. The first was the right to own private property and the second was the right of contract. Those without enough private property to live off its returns had no choice but to work for someone who had, and on the terms they offered.

Someone with enough wealth could decide if it was worth their effort, time and investment to set up a factory or not – and, if so, either man-

Picture: WTTTC (CC BY 2.0)



Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary

Managers have the right to manage... [if workers let them, that is...]

age it themselves or get others to do so. For workers, the choice was either employment or unemployment.

The result was a system where the employer's decisions were based on economic *opportunity*, but the worker decisions were based on economic *necessity*. The law incorrectly

views both buyer and seller of labour as equally free parties that decide to enter a contract of employment.

This is a legal fiction because one party to the contract makes decisions out of freedom *'of'* opportunity to set up a business to manufacture X or a shop to sell Y, hire worker A instead

of worker B etc. The other party to the contract – the worker – has to make decisions because they don't have the freedom *'from'* the necessity to feed, clothe and house themselves.

Philosophers distinguish between *'freedom of'* and *'freedom from'*. For example, if you don't own your own

newspaper or television station and you don't own a house, which freedom would you prefer, the *freedom of* the press or the *freedom from* homelessness?

Because most workers have only freedom of while their employer has both freedom of and freedom from, the contract of employment is uneven. Between the right to own private property (if you have enough of it) and the law of contract being neutral, but neutral on the side of the more economically powerful in the labour market, leaves us with the right to manage.

Total subordination

The next consideration is – is that right to manage an absolute authority or not? Total subordination by workers is not what employers want. They want workers who will work willingly. Willingly is the key issue here.

Sociology (or even Hollywood movies) shows that in a prison environment, wardens who have more authority than a workplace manager, still need inmates to cooperate willingly with the prison regime.

It has been argued by some historians that forced labourers in Nazi concentration camps were able to slow down production by up to 80% by being completely subordinate (in a workplace, this is known as a 'work to rule'). Therefore, if absolute subordination is not what employers want, then it follows that they do not have absolute authority.

Those in authority, therefore, often have to use motivation, manipulation, misdirection, withhold information, bend their own rules, turn a blind eye, do favours, request rather than instruct etc. to get workers (or inmates) to cooperate willingly.

When workers are aware of this they can even get management to negotiate. This is all the more likely when workers stick together on an issue. They can even get management to negotiate with them as a group or with their freely chosen representatives, otherwise known as collective bargaining. Just ask Michael O'Leary of Ryanair.

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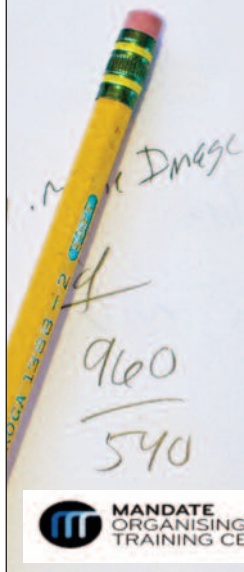
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Employment Law Level 2	Sept 3	1 day	Dublin	23/07/2018
Communications & Personal Development QQI Level 5	Sept 11 - Dec 4	14 weeks 1 night p/w	Dublin	23/07/2018
IT Skills QQI Level 5	Sept 11 - Dec 4	14 weeks 1 night p/w	Dublin	23/07/2018
IT Skills Advanced	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
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ABOVE Union Representative Introductory Course February 5-7 at the Mandate Training Centre. From left to right: Shauna McCracken, Martina Farrell, Jason Kavanagh, Catherine Feerick, Ann Higgins, Daniel Surma, Lynn Boland, Ben Donohoe

RIGHT Communications & Personal Development QQI Level 6 Course currently running on Tuesday evenings with tutor Michelle Thomas. Back row from left: Elaine Nolan, Aisling Ryan, Jessica Hughes, Stephen Whyte, Marianne Gaffney, Patycia Jakubiec. Front row from left: Jacqueline Greeg Fields, Marija Pedic, Renee Fox, Agnes Achramowicz and Marta Owczarek



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