

# SHOPFLOOR



# RETAIL WORKERS FIGHTING BACK

- Minister supports striking Lloyds Pharmacy workers
- Customers in their thousands back the stoppages
- Trade union movement rolls in behind brave strikers

**FULL COVERAGE - PAGES 2,3,4,5 & 7**

**John Douglas** *General Secretary  
Mandate Trade Union*

## STRAIGHT TALKING

# We must punish bad employer behaviour

**IT'S proving to be a long hot summer for Mandate members as they attempt to vindicate their basic human rights to have a voice at work through a union of their choosing.**

Given the recent reactions of employers, such as TK Maxx, Tesco, LloydsPharmacy and others, one would have to ask why should decent, hard-working employees have to endure taking to the streets so that they can have a voice at work through their union? Why should workers – the majority of whom are lower paid – be forced by large corporations to lose wages in order to be heard?

The same corporations have a plethora of employer organisations to which they belong to represent their best interests – from IBEC, Chambers of Commerce and a battery of high-powered legal firms and consultants. Deep pockets can buy you a voice as an employer and, at the same time, be used to stop and intimidate workers having any say whatsoever.

**One would have to ask themselves what are employers afraid of when workers combine and join unions – what are they trying to hide?**

There can be only one answer to the above question – that is that workers combining and joining unions tips the power balance relationship away from the employer and towards the workers, and in doing so gives workers a very real chance of improving their wages and other terms and conditions of employment.

The LloydsPharmacy example is a case in point. For years the employer simply ignored the predicament of their employees, who were on low wages, zero-hour contracts, no sick pay or pension scheme etc., etc. Finally a sizable group of workers decided to stand up to this exploitation and join Mandate and collectively

fight for better wages and conditions. As soon as they did this, there was an immediate response from LloydsPharmacy, their employer. They started throwing money at the workers to buy them off: they improved wage rates (but not nearly enough); they introduced a sick pay scheme (substandard); they said they would end zero-

hour contracts (they did not); they even went as far as setting up their own in-house “yellow union” – and all of this because they feared the collective strength of workers with a voice in an independent union.

**Their first bribe to employees failed miserably and they have promised that they will further increase pay and improve conditions again – all within the space of 10 weeks when they did nothing for the previous 10 years. It just goes to prove that the surest way to improve your wages and conditions is to join and be active in your union – solidarity and collectivism pays dividends for workers.**

TK Maxx followed a similar pattern of behaviour. Despite the Labour Court advising them to engage with the employees' union, Mandate, they instead choose to try and buy the loyalty of workers at local level – why??? Because they know workers united will make a positive difference to terms and conditions. Again, our members are smarter and wiser than to fall for the short-termism of money today, but employer payback down the road.

Sadly, this is the approach Tesco Ireland is exploring following the recent strike. Regardless of the rights or wrongs of the strike – and there were many rights/wrongs on both sides – the recent behaviour of Tesco is a clear indication that they are choosing a path of closing down free and independent workers' voice at work.

This is regrettable because Mandate has in the past always held Tesco up as being an employer of high standing and while at this moment their terms and conditions are among the leaders in retail, Tesco workers would have to ask themselves as to why the company is spending so much time and effort in trying to snuff out a free and independent workers' voice via their unions (Mandate/SIPTU)?

It is difficult to come to any conclusion other than Tesco is prepared to invest large sums of money and effort in the short term to buy its employees with the long-term aim of removing employees' future ability to independently improve their own terms and conditions, by collective means.

**In other words, tipping the power balance relationship at work fully in favour of the employer. If this happens workers need to ask themselves are they prepared to settle for the crumbs off the rich man's table into the future?**

Our members and this union – indeed, the whole trade union movement in Ireland – are not prepared to stand idly by and allow employers to do this. We are prepared to engage in genuine and good faith bargaining with any employer, but for those employers who set out to deny or remove workers' voices in independent and free trade unions, then we must all stand united together and fight back by all means at our disposal.

We, the 700,000 union members and our families, must vote with our feet. We must only spend our union euros where workers count. We must punish bad employer behaviour.

**Stronger together, united in solidarity.**



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## NEWS

# Lloyds workers in battle for decent work and trade union rights

**By David Gibney**  
Mandate communications officer

MORE than 250 workers in Ireland's largest pharmacy chain, Lloyds Pharmacy, have now gone on strike five times for their basic human right to be represented by a trade union of their choice.

As *Shopfloor* is going to print, the workers are preparing for their sixth action on Friday, 20th July 2018.

The strikes relate to a claim by Mandate on behalf of its more than 250 members employed by LloydsPharmacy including:

- A pay increase and incremental pay scales;
- The introduction of a sick pay scheme;
- Security of hours and the elimination of zero-hour contracts; and
- Improvements in annual leave entitlements and public holiday premiums.

Earlier this year, the Labour Court issued a recommendation stating: “the Court recommends that the parties engage in order to seek agreement in relation to the matters raised by the Trade Union.”

Lloyds management have refused to accept this recommendation, leaving the workers with no alternative but to go on strike.

June Kelly, a Lloyds Pharmacy worker from Ballyfermot, said: “It's heartbreaking. None of us want to be on strike. We don't want to let our customers down. Our customers are very important to us because we work within the community and we know them on a first name basis. I

just wish it could be sorted as quickly as possible.”

Mandate highlighted the hypocrisy of the company who are happy to accept very beneficial financial contracts from the State through the HSE, but refuse to accept a recommendation from the State's industrial relations body, the Labour Court.

Mandate has apologised for any inconvenience caused to the public but insists any blame for the action must be directed towards the company who have forced their workers into taking industrial action.

### Supportive

Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: “The public have been very supportive. They understand what this dispute is about. LloydsPharmacy is part of a highly profitable multi-national corporation who can easily afford to pay their workers a decent wage with fair conditions of employment, including the elimination of zero hour contracts and an adequate sick pay scheme.”

“These workers look after their communities and, in turn, their company should look after them and respect their right to representation.”

McKesson Corporation is the largest pharmaceutical company in the world with revenues of €177 billion for 2017/2018.

In a letter to Mandate, Heather Humphreys TD, Minister for Business, Enterprise, and Innovation has called on the company, “in line with the Court's recommendation”, to “proactively and constructively engage in order to find an acceptable



LloydsPharmacy workers at Nutgrove on the picket line during the first stoppage

# US-style union busting must be defeated

THE damage LloydsPharmacy are doing to their reputation in Ireland by prolonging an unnecessary industrial dispute is immeasurable. Their dominant ideology is to avoid dealing with unions 'at all costs' even if it impacts on their business, reputation and once loyal customer base.

This approach by LloydsPharmacy is replicated by other anti-union employers across retail including Tesco, Dunnes, Aldi, Lidl, IKEA, Paddy Power and a host of others. It is long past time for robust and effective union recognition, collective bargaining and access legislation in Ireland.

Ireland remains one of the shittiest nations in Europe for workers exercising their collective voice in the workplace. It's a cold place

**Brian Forbes**

Mandate  
National  
Coordinator



for unions and getting colder, which inevitably will see even more frequent attacks on workers' pay and conditions by the employer class and their right-wing political allies.

Workers in Ireland are wage slaves, in eternal debt and controlled by those who have no interest nor regard for working people or anyone for that matter. To employers and

capital we are all merely a number and a piece of labour property they believe they own.

LloydsPharmacy by their anti-union and anti-worker behavior are exhibiting all the characteristics of a typical American union-busting corporation which is clearly not the 'Irish way' and is a tactic which could very well backfire on them over time.

LloydsPharmacy customers have a high regard for striking workers which has been manifested publicly in many different ways over the past four weeks. There is no nuance or subtlety to LloydsPharmacy's attacks on workers or their ham-fisted attempts to 'bribe' them back to work.

The LloydsPharmacy dispute has become

an important dispute in terms of union recognition and the human right of workers to be represented by their union in their workplace.

The entire union movement must roll in behind this dispute and collectively flex its industrial and political muscle or we continue to fail the memory of Connolly and Larkin. Failure to secure a successful and satisfactory outcome to the LloydsPharmacy dispute for striking workers will be a failure for every single union member in both the public and private sectors.

*LloydsPharmacy can and will be brought to the negotiation table by workers, unions and our collective strength! Together we must win this!*

resolution to the matters at issue."

Mr Light said this was a significant boost to the workers.

"Since the beginning of this dispute, the public have been very supportive of the striking workers, but now they have the backing of the Labour Court, the Minister for Business and politicians from every political party in the Oireachtas. The Seanad also unanimously passed a motion tabled by Sinn Féin's Senator Máire Devine in support of the workers a number of weeks ago."

"Furthermore," he added, "The

Irish Congress of Trade Union is currently preparing members in other trade unions who deliver to LloydsPharmacy for an all-out picket. This is a highly unusual action and, if successful, will mean their members would not pass any of our members' pickets."

The company argues that it allows its workers representation through a management established and company-funded 'CRC'. Mandate say the CRC is a "creature of the company" used in order to avoid allowing their workers independent representation.

Mr Light continued: "This is a well known and sophisticated US-style, union-busting tactic.

"The company admitted to the Labour Court that they funded the CRC to the tune of €10,000. There is a phrase often used, 'Those who pay the piper calls the tune', and it couldn't be more apt.

"What our members want is independent and professional representation, and nothing less will do. This is their right, and they are fighting to obtain that right and Mandate will support them to the hilt."



Colm Kinsella, Treasurer of Unite 102 Branch, Dublin, presents General Secretary John Douglas with a generous solidarity cheque of €500 for the LloydsPharmacy dispute. Sincere thanks to the 40,000 Unite members on the island of Ireland for their solidarity and support. Together we are stronger!

# LLOYDSPHARMACY STRIKE

Stoneybatter



Blanchardstown



Tallaght



Wicklow Town



Killester



Neilstown



Omni Santry



Rowlagh



Bray



Tonlaugee Road



Shankill

# LLOYDSPHARMACY STRIKE

Baltinglass



Stonybatter



Clondalkin



Kilbarrack



Lucan



Blanchardstown Main St



Artane



Ballyfermot



Castleknock

Coolock Village



Sligo



Drumcondra



Killester



Wellington Bridge

# Key changes benefit members

## Successes on lookback period, banded hours contracts and working hours

By David Gibney  
Mandate communications officer

FOR the past three years Mandate members, particularly those employed in Dunnes Stores, have been highlighting the plight of low hour contract workers with insecure work.

In recent months, their activities have intensified with local lobbying meetings taking place all across the country where members called on politicians of all hues to support the *Secure Hours = Better Future* charter.

The charter sets out the minimum terms necessary from any Bill enacted by the Oireachtas to ensure workers have secure hours and secure incomes.

At a Select Oireachtas Committee Hearing on Thursday, 17th May, a number of key amendments to the proposed Government 'Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2017' were voted on and adopted.

In total, there were 50 amendments proposed by the Government, Willie O'Dea (Fianna Fail), John Brady and David Cullinane (Sinn Fein), Willie Penrose (Labour Party), Roisin Shortall (Social Democrats) and Joan Collins and Clare Daly (Independents4Change).

Effectively, Mandate members had all of their key demands adopted.

### Lookback period

The first major success on the day was in relation to the lookback period. This is the period within which an employee on a low-hour contract (for instance 10 hours), but working in excess of their contractual hours (for instance 30), may seek a review of their hours and is then issued with a new contract that accurately reflects the hours they actually work.

The Government had proposed an 18-month lookback period. Mandate members had been seeking a maximum lookback period of 12 months. After some debate, it was agreed that 12 months should be the lookback period.

### Banded hour contracts

The Government had proposed a banded hours structure as follows:

A	1 hour	7 hours
B	8 hours	15 hours
C	16 hours	24 hours
D	25 hours	34 hours
E	35 hours & over	

Mandate had pointed out that the above bands left too much flexibility for workers hours at the discretion of their employer.

For instance, Band B facilitates a total reduction in hours of almost 50% - which would constitute a corresponding reduction in income of 50%. Band C facilitates a reduction in hours and therefore income of 33%.

And, as we know from our survey of members in Dunnes Stores, unscrupulous employers use flexibility around hours and income to control and discipline staff (85% of Dunnes workers say allocation of hours is used as a control mechanism).

A number of amendments to these bands were proposed but following Mandate members' lobbying efforts, where we sought a maximum flexibility of five hours between bands, the following amendment from David Cullinane and John Brady was adopted:

A	3 hours or more	Less than 6 hours
B	6 hours or more	Less than 11 hours
C	11 hours or more	Less than 16 hours
D	16 hours or more	Less than 21 hours
E	21 hours or more	Less than 26 hours
F	26 hours or more	Less than 31 hours
G	31 hours or more	Less than 36 hours
H	36 hours or more	

As you can see, the above bands are much tighter and provide for much more security of income for workers. The next amendment reinforces and strengthens the above provisions.

### Ability to seek more hours

Following the Government's refusal to implement the Part-Time Worker Directive correctly in 2004, Mandate had lobbied for a provision in law whereby workers would have the legal right to seek more hours at work.

Currently a worker in Ireland can seek fewer hours at work and transfer from full-time work to part-time, but they cannot move from part-time work to full-time, even when an employer has the capacity to facilitate this.

This culminated in an amendment tabled by Clare Daly and Joan Collins from Independents4Change inserting the following: "In the event of hours becoming available an employer shall be required to offer any surplus hours to existing part-time employees first."

This key provision had the capacity to transform the working lives of tens of thousands of workers who want more hours at work but cannot access them. These people are often referred to as "underemployed" or "involuntary part-time workers", and, according to recent figures, Ireland had the second highest rate of underemployment in the EU15 behind Spain.

While this amendment was passed at the Committee stage, following intensive lobbying from the employers' groups including IBEC and the Chamber of Commerce, Minister Regina Doherty tabled an amendment in the Dail to have this provision removed.

On Wednesday 11th July, the Minister had her way. With a 54% turnout for the vote, 38 TDs, mostly from Fine Gael, voted to disallow workers the right to seek more hours at work. Only 35 TDs voted to keep the provision.

What is so infuriating is that Tanaiste Joan Burton, as the Minister responsible for the cuts to lone-parents allowance, said back in 2015 that the Government was cutting the allowance in order to "incentivise lone parents to seek more hours." Now the Government has prevented those same workers from seeking extra hours at work and many of the TDs who cut the allowance, including Joan Burton, didn't bother to turn up to vote.

Crucially, it was Fianna Fail's decision to abstain on this provision that helped the Minister to allow the employers' lobby to have their way. Also disappointing is the fact that some political parties, such as Sinn Fein and Independents4Change, imposed a whip on their TDs and ensured they turned up to vote, whereas the Labour Party did not and only two out of their seven TDs voted.

### Conclusion

The May 17th hearing of the Select Oireachtas Committee was a massive success in the cam-



Briefing the politicians: Mandate organisers Moira Murphy, left, and Gerard Halligan with Denise Curran, centre, of Tesco Sligo

Our special thanks go to...



John Brady TD



Joan Collins TD



David Cullinane TD



Clare Daly TD



Brid Smith TD

campaign for decent work in Ireland. There is no doubt that the efforts by Mandate members across the country in recent months was the key reason these amendments were adopted. Unfortunately we have lost one key amendment, but it is still a step forward for low-paid precarious workers.

Mandate would like to offer a special thank you to the TDs and Senators in Dail Eireann who have pushed this issue relentlessly in recent years, including David Cullinane TD, John Brady TD, Clare Daly TD, Joan Collins TD and Brid Smith TD. We would also like to thank all the TDs who supported the amendments as well as

those politicians who have signed up to the *Secure Hours = Better Future* charter.

Last, but not least, we want to thank all of our members who lobbied TDs in recent months, all the Dunnes Stores members of Mandate who took industrial action to highlight this issue in 2015, and the delegation of Mandate members who attended the May 17th hearing.

The legislation has now passed the Committee and the Report stage in the Dail and has to now progress through the Seanad. Following that, the President will need to sign the Bill before it becomes legislation.



# workers in Arklow strike over firm's Lab Court refusal

MANDATE members working at TK Maxx in Arklow, Co Wicklow, went on strike on Saturday, July 7th after the retailer refused to accept a Labour Court recommendation calling on the multinational retailer to recognise and engage with their union.

The union had taken the case to the Labour Court over banded hour contracts, pay scales and advance notice of rosters. But TK Maxx, through the employers' organisation IBEC, informed the Court they would not be attending or heeding the Labour Court process because they had "direct employee engagement processes in place."

Mandate had previously written to TK Maxx offering to meet "at the



TK Maxx workers in Arklow join the picket line on July 7th

shortest possible notice" to discuss the issues in dispute in a bid to avert the July 7th stoppage but management refused to meet with the workers' representatives.

In February, the Labour Court issued a recommendation that stated: "...the Court recommends 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..." Mandate claimed the company's refusal to allow their workers representation had left them with no alternative but to strike.

Arklow TK Maxx worker Cian

Keogh told *Shopfloor*: "It's very disappointing that it's come to this. We don't want to strike. We'd much prefer to be at work, but we want that work to be with decent conditions of employment."

He added: "We don't understand why we cannot have the same representational rights as tens of thousands of other workers in the retail sector. We hope the public understand why we have to take this action and we hope they'll support us."

Michael Meegan, Mandate's Divisional Organiser for Wicklow, said: "Once again we have a highly profitable and very successful multinational retailer refusing to engage with their workers through their representatives and ignoring the State's industrial relations processes."

### Regrettable

"This is regrettable and very frustrating for our members who have very reasonable demands."

Explaining that TK Maxx workers are low paid and have insecure work, Mr Meegan continued: "Many of the workers on strike earn slightly over €11 per hour after several years of service. The company makes €125 million in pre-tax profits per year and can easily afford to not only pay their staff more, but they can afford to bring in pay scales and ensure workers have certainty over their earnings by implementing secure hour contracts."

Mr Meegan, speaking on the day of the strike, added: "We have been receiving supportive phone calls and emails from other TK Maxx workers across the country and we are hopeful that those workers will join their colleagues in the fight for decent conditions of employment in TK Maxx."

## INTERNATIONAL



Christy Hoffman: 'united front to meet challenges'

# Christy Hoffman elected to head up UNI Global

UNI Global Union's new General Secretary Christy Hoffman has expressed her commitment to fighting inequality and expanding collective bargaining across the world, following her election at the labour federation's Fifth World Congress in Liverpool in June.

Hoffman, who started her union career as a shop steward at a jet engine factory in Connecticut in the 1970s, vowed to take on the systemic problems caused by an economic model that works for the few, not the many.

She was an accomplished attorney for the US Teamsters union and later headed up SEIU's international organising department before becoming UNI deputy secretary in 2010.

Hoffman said: "We must address our biggest challenges as a united front. No solitary worker, no single union, and no individual country can turn the tide in a world with multinational corporations setting the rules of the game."

She succeeds UNI's previous General Secretary Philip Jennings, who led the organisation for 18 years.

Jennings predicted: "Under Christy's leadership the organisation will go from strength to strength and continue on the path to breaking through and organising."

## UK

# Usdaw Gen Sec Hannett retires

LEADING trade unionist John Hannett retired in late June as General Secretary of UK shopworkers' union Usdaw to be succeeded by his deputy Paddy Lillis.

It was under his 14-year stewardship that Usdaw experienced an unprecedented 50% increase in membership when trade union membership across Britain was generally in decline.

He said: "I am proud to have served the union in many roles during my 43 years' membership. Usdaw's members, activists and reps not only gave me the opportunity to lead the union, but enthusiastically supported everything we are trying to achieve. I am very proud of the work our reps have done."

## Calling all Mandate Local Councils. Your union needs you!



Three very successful public events have recently taken place in Bray, Arklow and Athlone with an array of guest speakers on the theme of **Organise for €15**. Local council activists have been to the forefront in organising and participating in these local events and already local activities in a number of these areas have been happening and led by Mandate activists as a direct consequence and follow-on from holding a public event. **Every Mandate local council is being encouraged and invited to begin preparations for having a local event in your area.** So talk to your union official or organiser and let's kick-start the Mandate fight back at local level for retail and bar workers in your area.



# €15/hr campaign signals fight for decent hourly rate

By Roisin Ni Dhalaiagh

IRELAND has the worst trade union recognition in Europe and this is linked to growing inequality, a public meeting in Bray has heard.

Speaking at the 'Organise for €15' event in the Martello Hotel on Bray seafront on June 18th, Dr Stevie Nolan of the Belfast-based social justice co-operative Trademark said that "there is a genuine crisis of inequality in Ireland, in Europe, in the world".

Describing austerity as a redistribution of wealth, he highlighted that Starbucks paid just €261 in tax in 2014 and €45 in 2015 – the equivalent of 13 grande lattes priced €3.45 each.

Nolan added that McKesson, the US healthcare giant which owns LloydsPharmacy, has yearly revenue which is twice that of the Irish state. At the same time, workers at LloydsPharmacy have no sick pay and many are on zero hours contracts.

The 'Organise for €15' campaign is Mandate's fightback by and for bar and retail workers. Mandate will campaign for all bar and retail workers to immediately receive the Living Wage (currently €11.70 per hour), moving to €15 per hour in time.

Mandate sees €15 per hour as both a fair wage and achievable; if the unionised major retailers can afford it, so can the non-unionised, explained National Coordinator Brian Forbes.

The campaign is not focused solely on €15 per hour; it's about building



'It makes sense to pay people a decent living wage', Brian Forbes told 'Organise for €15' meeting in Bray

up a strong union membership to fight on three fronts:

- Industry: pay increases; security; respect.
- Political: taxation policy; access to workplaces by trade union activists; collective bargaining.
- Challenge the market.

Building trade union power will take place by re-energising Mandate's local councils, which comprise workers from different employment in a local area. One of the reasons Bray was chosen as a starting point of the campaign is because it is "probably one of the best functioning local councils that we have in the locality", said Forbes.

"I just felt that this was a good place to start because it shows and demonstrates to other local councils what a fully functioning and what a

half-decent local council can do in their local community. And if we can build Bray and make it stronger then the others will follow by their example."

Forbes is clear about the positive benefit this campaign could have on towns like Bray. He explained: "You hear many employers saying 'we need to cut wages'. All that does is drain the local community, drain the local businesses of that money that low paid workers use in their local economy.

"So if you give pay rises to workers who are living and who are spending their money in the local domestic economy that's going to help businesses as well. So it's a no-brainer for a lot of businesses to want people to have more disposable income in their pocket so they can spend it in their

business.

"Any employer who is calling for a reduction is actually calling against their own best interest. It makes sense for us to pay people a decent, living wage, moving towards €15 per hour."

Muireann Dalton, secretary of Mandate's Bray local council, saw the changes that came with a strong union, having gone out on strike as a Dunnes worker three years ago: 3% pay rise each year, a four week roster rather than just getting it on a Tuesday, monthly communications meetings, and the use of grievance procedures "so the managers aren't bullying the staff as much because

“They're organised and we need to get better organised if we're going to fight back...”



they know that you're going to stand up for yourself." She added: "Our contracts are flexi, they're 15 to 38 hours, so it's a huge difference. When you have the four week roster you can plan financially, social engagements, doctor's appointments, holidays for the kids."

For the chair of the local council, Brian Fogarty, being in a union has positive benefits across all aspects of his life: "For someone who left school at 16, with no Leaving Cert, it's great for me to be able to get qualifications through the union, through training. I'm actually a tutor for Mandate now. It's great to be able to train fellow members now."

Having brought workers out on strike several times in recent years, Mandate is not naive about the tactics employers' will use to undermine trade unions.

"Tesco are engaging in very clear, determined, considered and long-term campaign of union busting," said Forbes. "This is a long-term objective to take the union out of their company. And they're not the only ones, by the way. We're ready for it. We've been used now to dealing with

these types of employers.

Dunnes have their own specific type of union busting. And it's not dealing with outside companies; they're just bred to be union busting in their DNA and they train their managers to be that type of manager.

"But it's clear now that there's a very significant number of retailers in the Republic that are using very, very similar tactics to what was used on the US unions. These companies are using similar tactics to those used by American firms for decades to keep American unions down and to keep them out."

However, Forbes sees few other options available to anyone who believes in equality: "They're organised and we need to get better organised if we're going to fight back".

*This article first appeared in LookLeft magazine*

## INFODESK CHILDCARE

# New Congress survey confirms childcare 'like second mortgage'

A NEW survey from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has confirmed that childcare is one of the top two out-of-pocket costs for over two-thirds (71%) of working families with young children.

The national opinion poll of 1,000 trade union members on early-years childcare costs was conducted online between June 10th and 23rd.

The results informed discussions on the issue during the Labour Employer Economic Forum talks between Government, union and employer representatives on July 5th.

Congress Social Policy Officer Dr Laura Bambrick told *Shopfloor*: "This survey focused on the impact of government underinvestment in early-

years education and childcare for working families, to allow us take a detailed look at the implications of what many parents describe as 'a second mortgage'."

Commenting on the survey, Congress General Secretary Patricia King said: "Our findings on high childcare costs and the number of families struggling to cover them will surprise few working parents."

The Oireachtas passed the Childcare Support Bill in June, providing for the first time a legal entitlement to financial support to all parents with young children who use registered childcare services.

Ms King continued: "This legislation provides a vehicle for addressing

childcare affordability for families. Removing this employment barrier for mothers who want to return to work will increase the skills level and size of the workforce.

"This is vital for sustaining spending on public services and payments, such as the old age pension, into the future.

"However, while encouraging, this support to parents will do nothing to help professionalise the early-years education and care sector with pay and conditions that make the workforce feel valued and attract and retain qualified professionals.

"This other side of the childcare coin needs urgent action," she added.

## Key findings...

● Childcare is one of the top two out-of-pocket costs for over two-thirds (71%) of all working families with a pre-school child.

● Early-years childcare is the biggest cost for one-third (32%) of all working parents.

● For the other one-third (39%) the amount spent out of their family budget on childcare is second only to the amount they spend on mortgage or rent.

● For half (52%) of families with two or more children in childcare these costs are their biggest expense each month.

● For another one-third (34%) of such families, childcare costs are the second biggest bill they face after mortgage or rent.

● Three in five (61%) working families are struggling to cover their childcare costs. These families have had to borrow or go without an essential item, such as food and heating, in order to pay for childcare in the past year.

● Over half (56%) of working families have worked fewer hours in the last year because childcare costs are too expensive to make it affordable to work full-time or overtime.



## WORKERS RIGHTS

# Updated Accord covers 2 million garment workers

By John Douglas  
General Secretary

IN JUNE 2018, the Bangladesh Transition Accord took effect working to make garment factories in Bangladesh safer for workers.

This Transition Accord follows on from the original Bangladesh Accord of 2013, agreed in the aftermath of the deadly factory collapse that year in Rana Plaza in which 1,134 garment workers were killed and hundreds of others injured.

The old Accord put in place a safety inspector regime which was independent and verifiable; it closed unsafe factories; it monitored major safety renovations; and it set up a compensation fund for those families that lost loved ones or who were injured. The Accord of 2013 heralded a new beginning for workers in the garment industry in Bangladesh. It gave them some hope of a safe and free working environment rather than the

sweat-shop and near slave-like conditions that existed before.

But a safe working environment is the least workers should be entitled to. No-one should be killed producing throw-away fashion for western consumers. Workers also need a decent living wage, a fear free working space, an end to sexual harassment, free trade unions and a right to collective bargaining.

The new 2018 Transition Accord has now been signed by 175 garment and textile companies, including some of the main companies sourcing in Bangladesh, such as Primark, H&M, C&A and Aldi.

More than 1,300 factories and two million workers are covered. The original accord was signed by more than 220 companies, so there are some notable companies that have refused to sign this time.

These include Abercrombie and Fitch and other companies that never



Above: Bangladeshi garment workers at union demo; Top: cramped working conditions on factory floor

signed the first Accord, preferring to do their own thing – companies such as North Face, GAP, IKEA, Walmart. We call on all companies to join the Transition Accord 2018.

One of the new features of the Transition Accord is that it also covers the production of home textiles, fabric and knitted accessories – this extends protection and safety to smaller craft and home producers in Bangladesh.

The Accord offers any company sourcing garments an excellent opportunity to guarantee factory safety through a collective and transparent proven scheme.

Cheap fashion need not be stained with the blood of vulnerable workers. It need not be tainted by poverty wages and unsafe working conditions.

We, as consumers, have a responsibility to shop with our conscience.

For more information go to [www.cleanclothescampaign.ie](http://www.cleanclothescampaign.ie)

Pictures: Clean Clothes Campaign (CC BY 2.0)

## INFODESK EMPLOYMENT

# Revenue's mean-spirited change on uniform expenses

By John Douglas  
General Secretary

FOLLOWING a review of flat-rate (employment) expenses by the Revenue Commissioners, they have decided to cease the current automatic system which applies to shop assistant grades with effect from the end of the 2018 tax year.

Essentially, all shop assistants were entitled to an un-vouched income disregard allowance of €121 per year to

cover the purchase and maintenance of staff uniforms necessary for the performance of their retail duties.

So for workers earning more than €16,500 per year this meant an annual net benefit of either €24 or €48 depending on their tax band and earnings.

Mandate made a detailed submission to the Revenue Commissioner seeking the retention of the old flat rate expense system but to no avail.

We understand that other groups of workers – hotel workers, bar staff (€93), construction workers (€103 - €175), Rail/bus staff (€160) – have also had their 'flat rate' expenses targeted and withdrawn.

This is a clear case of those in public office not understanding the realities of working in the real world. Our members in Mandate are lower paid and while €24 or €48 per year might not seem too much to lose to the pol-

icy mandarins in the Revenue Commissioners, it means a lot to lower paid workers. Mandate will continue to lobby with other unions for a full restoration of this allowance.

In the meantime, if you do earn more than €16,500 per annum (i.e. the national minimum wage – below which you pay no tax) and you have not got your €121 flat rate allowance each year, contact Revenue Online Service (ROS) via 'My Account' and

make a claim to be backdated for the allowance.

From 2019, if you continue to spend money on either purchasing or maintaining your uniform, or any other expenses "wholly and exclusively necessary in the performance of your duties at work", make sure you keep receipts and make a claim with these receipts at the end of 2019.

# SHOP STEWARDS TRAINING PROGRAMME 2018

Course Title	Course Dates	Duration	Location	Closing date
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](mailto:mandateotc@mandate.ie)

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



House Committee training in progress at Tesco Birr with Mandate Midlands Divisional Organiser Mandy Kane, far left



## Union Representatives Introductory Course



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

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

### CERTIFICATION AND PROGRESSION:

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

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

# Understanding Palestine's terrible beauty

By Ruairí Creaney  
Communication Workers Union

RECENTLY I visited Palestine to speak at the conference of the Palestinian Postal Service Workers' Union (PPSWU) in the West Bank city of Jericho on behalf of my union, the CWU.

My visit to the occupied country was easily one of the most powerful experiences of my life. Before I went, I thought I had a fairly extensive knowledge of what is happening in Palestine, but experiencing the occupation and Apartheid at first hand was a massive shock for me.

It forcefully brought home the utter humiliation that is inflicted on the Palestinian people by Israel.

Established in 2012, the PPSWU is a young union but already represents the majority of workers in Palestine Post, and is one of many independent trade unions that have been formed in the past 10 years. The growth of these unions is an impressive achievement, given the harsh social conditions under which they were built.

The two things that had the most profound effect on me throughout the trip were the Israeli 'settlements' in the West Bank and the abject hopelessness of the youth of Palestine.

Firstly, the 'settlements'. I use inverted commas when talking about them, as the term 'settlements' implies that they are small villages. Israel's 'settlements' in the West Bank are actually sprawling cities housing tens of thousands of people, most of whom are actually from the United States.

These are cities complete with shopping malls, universities, fire departments, luxury apartment complexes, hospitals, schools and factories. Around them is a fortification of heavily armed soldiers, military jeeps and electrified razor wire designed to keep out the indigenous people.

The settlers, too, are heavily armed. When I was in Hebron, a gang of around 40 settlers passed us on the street, many of them openly brandishing M-16 rifles, an obvious attempt to intimidate any Palestinian that lives anywhere near them.

Being so close to such fanatically supremacist people was a scary experience even for a white Western European like me, so I can only imagine



Top: Former Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem now occupied by Israeli settlers  
Above: Illegal settlement in the West Bank  
Left: The Apartheid Wall in Bethlehem

the terror these settlers inflict on Palestinians.

Literally every Palestinian city in the West Bank is surrounded by these ever-growing metropolises. The arterial routes between the main Palestinian cities are intersected by settler-only roads which the natives are banned from using as well as permanent army checkpoints, making a Palestinian state within the confines of the two-state solution totally impossible.

These injustices are compounded by the fact that these Jewish-only cities are built on what was, until very recently, Palestinian villages and farmland that were ethnically cleansed.



Checkpoint in Bethlehem

Secondly, the youth. From those I spoke to, Palestinians in their 20s and 30s have close to zero hope that they will ever see justice and freedom for their country. Many of them, seeing no way of effectively resisting the US-backed system of Apartheid, have given up hope of flourishing in their own country and have now become resigned to the idea of eventually trying to emigrate.

They are rightly asking how people living in refugee camps can ever defeat a brutal Israeli army that is funded and armed by the most powerful empire in human history, the United States. They are asking what they can do when the international community allows Israel's racist regime to act with impunity.

On the day I landed in Palestine, Israeli tank fire murdered a 24-year-

old protester in Gaza during the Great March of Return. A 17-year-old was murdered by a direct shot to the head at the same protest. The following day, an 11-year-old boy was murdered by an Israeli sniper. Israel's strategy of murdering and crippling young Palestinians is how they sow this hopelessness among the youth.

However, I also found that the brutal occupation and Israel's attempt to humiliate an entire nation have led to an incredible resilience among Palestinians and a desire to better themselves collectively.

They are obsessed with education. Most of the Palestinians my age are able to speak two or three languages and have Masters degrees in education, computer science and finance. The first question that got asked of me every time I met a young Palestinian was about my university education.

I was also asked about Irish history and literature, and their grasp of both was impressive. One lad, Ishmael, was quoting lines of James Joyce and Oscar Wilde and asking if I had read their books and was aware of the quotes. To my embarrassment, I had to answer, "no".

The youth of Palestine recognise that education is a weapon of the oppressed, and one day they will use this education to smash the Apartheid system. The Palestinians are a warm, beautiful, strong and determined people. They ask us not for our charity, but our solidarity. They are not charity cases; they want to be treated as equals with the rest of the human race.

The huge solidarity that Irish people continually express for their struggle does not go unnoticed in Palestine. In times of abject hopelessness, strong displays of international solidarity can lift spirits in the darkest of situations, and many Palestinians expressed their gratitude to me for Ireland's role in giving them this small bit of hope when much of the rest of the world turns a blind eye.

It has given me a much deeper respect for the tireless solidarity activists in Ireland in the vital and often thankless work that they do.

Palestine is a beautiful country with a beautiful people. I hope, one day, we can visit Palestine again when it is free, from the river to the sea.

Ruairí Creaney is an organiser with the Communications Workers' Union

## INFODESK MANDATE TRADE UNION

# Retired Workers' Group – get involved!

A GROUP of Mandate Trade Union activists has decided to set up a Retired Workers' Group within the union.

This group will be a national group comprising of retired Mandate members who will advocate on behalf of retirees on issues, including pensions, social welfare, healthcare etc, with the Government, the trade union movement and local authorities.

It is planned – subject to numbers – that the new group will arrange a half-day inaugural conference to agree and set out an agenda for the future as well as to elect a steering committee.

There can be no doubt that retired Mandate members and retired retail workers generally have many pressing concerns such as inadequate or no work pensions, poor health-

care as well as a lack of access to some State services.

So, if you have retired or are about to retire, or know a colleague who is, or has, retired, please bring this notice to their attention.

You – or they – can express your/their interest by emailing [sbrowne@mandate.ie](mailto:sbrowne@mandate.ie) or by contacting Mandate Head Office on 01 8746321



Picture: Public Domain

# Mayo ROC committee meet up in Castlebar to plan campaign

By Ciaran Campbell  
Divisional Organiser

THE Mayo 'ROC' Committee (Recruitment, Organising and Campaigning), right, which was formed in early 2017, held a very successful meeting of all the Mayo Local Councils on May 17th in the Breaffy Hotel, Castlebar – a 'Fair Hotel'.

Each of the Mayo Local Councils was represented at the meeting. There was discussion and analysis of the Biennial Delegate Conference, and – importantly – how best to implement subsequent union policies and how they relate to the Mayo ROC's 'Decency at Work' campaign.

This campaign, which was successfully launched in May last year, embraced and re-invigorated the union's 'Respect for Retail Workers' Campaign.

In October 2017, the Mayo ROC Committee also hosted a trade union delegation from Germany setting out for the visitors the hard economic facts for workers and their families living in Ireland's northern and western regions.

The delegation was also informed of ongoing workplace pressures faced by retail workers as well as Mandate's continuing struggles to combat these in the face of hardening employers' attitudes and behaviours – not least the lack of legislative collective bargaining rights.

While still in its formative stages, those attending the May 17th meeting agreed to press ahead with the Mayo 'Decency at Work' campaign.

A further meeting was scheduled for June 7th with a view to involving activists from across the county in the implementation of the union's full strategy on zero hour and banded hour contracts, respect for retail workers, retail pay, and terms and conditions.



## HEALTH

# Cervical Check scandal flags up need to reshape health service

THE Irish Congress of Trade Unions has claimed the Cervical Check scandal highlights the "danger of outsourcing in essential services such as health" and reinforces the need to move to a publicly controlled and universally accessible single-tier national health service.

General Secretary Patricia King said: "The scandal highlights the danger of outsourcing in essential services such as health, where direct control is transferred to a private sector organisation abroad, as happened in this instance. Some women may now have paid the ultimate price for this. It is completely unacceptable."

Ms King said the Oireachtas Sláintecare Report recognised the need to move towards a universal, fully integrated, single tier public health service that guarantees access and quality care, regardless of income.

"This will require very major additional investment and Congress believes that a long-term target of 10% of GDP should be set for health spending."

She added: "It is time to immediately end the outsourcing of critical health services and to provide a road map towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Slaintecare report."

"Only then will women and their families be wholly confident that we have a health system capable of providing the highest standards of care, with respect to cancer prevention and overall health care for women in Ireland."

## Veronica's 25 years of service

**VERONICA Madden receives a well-deserved floral presentation from General Secretary John Douglas as a mark of appreciation on her retirement as a shop steward after 25 years serving colleagues in Dunnes Stores on Cardiffsbridge Road, Finglas, Dublin.**

Industrial Officer John Callan told *Shopfloor*: "Everyone at Mandate wishes Veronica all the very best as she steps

down and thanks her for the many years of loyal service she has given to members in Dunnes."

However, he pointed out that Veronica "wasn't going quietly". Callan added: "She has already plans in place to elect a new shop steward in her store and has also promised whoever takes over that role her continued support and guidance. Now that's organising at its best!"



Alke Boessiger chosen as next UNI deputy general secretary

## Alke, friend of Mandate, gets leading UNI role

A LONG-TIME friend of Mandate has just been chosen as the next deputy general secretary of UNI Global Union. Alke Boessiger will take up her new position during the UNI World Congress in Liverpool in June.

She has had a long career at UNI Global Union in a variety of different roles and sectors including as Head of ICTS and UNI Commerce.

"I am incredibly happy to be chosen as the next UNI deputy general secretary," said Boessiger. "I have been at UNI for much of my life as a trade unionist and have held many different responsibilities in various departments and sectors."

"My trade union roots are in Germany, where I learned what our work is all about – making workers' lives better. Fighting against inequality, unfair treatment and striving for an equal society that is inclusive and gives opportunities to all."

Commenting on the appointment, Mandate General Secretary John Douglas told *Shopfloor*: "Alke has shown over many years that she is a wonderful advocate for workers – and I have no doubt that she will put that experience to great use in her new role at UNI. She has also been a valued guest at our Mandate conferences in Ireland when she headed up UNI Commerce. We wish her every success in her new position."

**Connect  
with  
Mandate**

[www.mandate.ie](http://www.mandate.ie)

Picture: Rodrigo Senna (CC BY 2.0)

**Keyboard warriors:** why there's nothing wrong with click click click campaigning...

Brian Forbes



# Revolutionary pyjama activists really matter

MORE THAN half the population of the globe now has access to the internet. The use of social media towards developing online support for social justice campaigns has risen dramatically over the past number of years.

There are two differing opinions on the actual value of social media and in particular towards measuring its effectiveness and value.

Some feel that it is merely a conscience cleanser for people who feel the need to empathise with others in struggle while others feel it is a method of channelling anger and discontent.

Whatever your feelings, one thing is clear, social media is here and it's here to stay.

Political parties, always looking for an edge over opponents, have fully embraced the concept of effective digital media campaigning and the influence it can bring to bear on voters.

Demos research from late 2016 found that 23% of UK adult social media users believe social media platforms help them "understand parties' policy positions" prior to election and 26% said it made them more likely to vote.

It took Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party until 2017 to really exploit the massive potential of social media by not only investing capital but also through tactically pushing ads that were highly targeted and positive in nature in comparison to the Tories who stayed negative and failed to engage their audience.

Although Corbyn wasn't elected Prime Minister

in 2017 he did successfully manage to win significantly more seats for the Labour Party and a 40% share of the vote. Corbyn's increased social network activity has also proved very popular with a younger demographic.

Mandate understands the increasing value of social media in speaking directly to our members and we are increasingly providing tailored messages for our members in our many different unionised employments.

As campaigners we must embrace the obvious potential in social media messaging and outreach to members and also – critically – the outreach to those future union members who have yet to join us in struggle but who definitely will if we are relevant and reach them with a cause that is just

and winnable. In 2011, researchers in Georgetown University studied what they termed "slacktivism" and which I term "pyjama activism" and found that contrary to popular belief the critics of "pyjama activism" were wrong.

They found those who use social media twice as likely to volunteer their time and concluded that promoting causes on social media can increase – and certainly does not decrease – offline engagement.

A more recent study on youth empowerment through social networks in Spain found that 44.9% of young people considered themselves regularly committed to social causes. A majority – 64% of those surveyed – stated they'd signed an online petition, with 44% saying they'd attended a demonstration and 39% donating to an NGO.

Furthermore, they found my so-called "pyjama activists" to be a "critical periphery" towards mobilising action. By sharing a tweet their actions help to double the reach of the core protestors.

It is clear that boosting the overall digital visibility of one of our union campaigns is important but the real key to success for trade unions in utilising petitions is combining the online activity with a well organised network of core protestors.

It is a well organised online digital platform with traditional trade union mobilising and organising that will achieve success and a better working environment for retail and bar work-

ers in Ireland. Mandate will not ignore the obvious advancements in social media technology and will always organise and mobilise our members when required.

Social media, like garlic bread, is part of the future as long as it is not solely relied on for outreach to our members. It must and it will be used by Mandate as part of our armoury against bad employers.

On their own, a rally and an online petition separate from each other could be as useless as each other. However, combine that online petition with a well-organised public rally and coordinated, ongoing online and offline campaigning and you create a savage beast of worker power that will force any and all bad employers to sit up and take notice or face the retail consequences.



Pictures: Zeyus Media (CC BY 2.0); monicasecas (CC BY 2.0); Public Domain

DO YOU HAVE A MANDATE-THEMED STORY OR PIC?

Email us at [news@mandate.ie](mailto:news@mandate.ie)



OVER THE last two years Mandate Trade Union has cemented our position as the foremost campaigning union in Ireland.

Our members have fearlessly fought to defend not only their rights, but injustice in society both here and abroad.

Our members continue to campaign and struggle for legislation which would outlaw zero hour contracts and precarious employment contracts – our members in Dunnes Stores are spearheading this campaign bringing their message to every TD across the country and our message to these TDs from today's conference is simple: *"No more delays – Just do the right thing and do it now!"*

Our members continue to campaign against water charges and water privatisation and they are demanding the referendum on water ownership which was passed by the Dail.

Our members continue to fight for decency and respect at work including the right to be a member of and be represented by a union of their choice.

Struggles and campaigns are in our DNA, whether it was Apartheid South Africa or Apartheid Israel, whether it is Tesco workers or Dunnes workers, housing or healthcare – our moto is *"an injury to one is an injury to all."*

Our members will not be bullied or silenced by multinationals, our union will not turn our backs on our members, we will not take the path of least resistance, for it's struggle that makes us stronger – our activists have cut their union teeth on adversaries.

So for those employers who believe they can browbeat Mandate and our members – they are sadly mistaken – their vindictive actions only make us stronger and more determined.

And, a warning to any employer wishing to inhabit the space recently vacated by Ryanair:

*We will not go away! We are prepared to play the long game! We will overcome!*

At this point I would like to pay a special tribute to the Tesco workers.

The workers in 22 stores who stood in solidarity with their pre-96 colleagues who were being unfairly targeted by the company.

Those 2,000 union members stood on the picket line for 11 days, not for more money, not for better conditions, but in solidarity with their fellow union members and colleagues. They lived that motto *"an injury to one is an injury to all."*

The bravery of these Tesco workers, young and old, was humbling. They endured a bullying and victimisation campaign by the company, but still they stood solid. Even as we speak here today, many of those brave members are still being targeted and victimised.

The company is still attempting to damage and destroy this union, *'Project Black' has not gone away.*

Let Tesco hear this and hear it clearly, Mandate Trade Union can be reasonable when faced with reasonable employers and reasonable actions, but we will fight to the last member standing to defend workers' rights and the rights of workers to be represented by this union – the workers in Ryanair played the long game and won. Our Tesco members will do whatever it takes and for as long as it takes: *We will not be defeated! We will*



John Douglas: visionary speech to conference

## General Secretary John Douglas' address to conference

# Organise and mobilise to seize the future!

*not surrender! We will not tip the forelock!*

Now before we re-engage in a long war of attrition, we call on Tesco to cease 'Project Black' and return to the negotiating table, there is but a short window of opportunity.

It has been my privilege over the last 40 years to stand side by side, often on the line with Dunnes workers, M&S workers, Tesco workers, bar workers and workers right across the retail sector. I have witnessed incredible bravery and unselfish sacrifice, I have watched young men and women step up and become leaders.

*This union is in strong hands, it's in the hands of the members.*

Connolly and Larkin, and indeed Michael O'Lehane, the ex-General Secretary of the IUDWC, understood the importance of and the relationship between the industrial struggle and the political struggle.

We are continuing their mission of building a strong industrial movement and a strong political movement – for what good is a 3% pay increase if your members cannot afford to put a roof over their heads?

Our political education programme and organising programme are the foundations for everything we do.

So whether it is decent wages, health care or housing, our members and their union will be on the front

line. Our recent struggles have shown us the importance of public support and the support and solidarity of other unions.

The Irish public can spot injustice a mile away. We don't like bullies in Ireland, and we have a history of standing up against the odds. The public get it, they voted with purses and feet and stood shoulder to shoulder with our members in recent disputes.

On behalf of Mandate I want to say a big thank you to the shopping public for their support and solidarity.

The support and solidarity from other unions was also amazing, they put their hands into their pockets,

they stood on the line and they held the line.

Only a few times in the past have I witnessed such strong shows of solidarity from the public and other unions. One was the Dunnes Stores Strike in the 1980s and the second was the Miners Strike in the UK when Margaret Thatcher tried to smash their union.

The challenges facing Mandate Trade Union are many and serious. Our sector is going through fundamental and radical change – self-scanning and internet retail technology are having a profound impact on the structure and delivery of retail. The jury is out as to the future of bricks and mortar stores.

But change is inevitable – the retail sector in five or 10 years will be a totally different one than the one we know today. Our union will have to adapt and evolve to meet these challenges. We have to consider all our options and take all opportunities.

There is no room for personal agendas or big egos. The next Mandate Conference in 2020 could possibly be my last but I can assure you that it will not be the last retail workers' union conference. It is vital that the incoming National Executive Council understand these challenges and do all in their power to ensure that when we meet again in 2020, we have an army of motivated activists in every town and city across Ireland.

So, that is our overall mission. But what should it mean to retail workers on the shop floor? There are some basic and fundamental rights which should be at the core of our mission and which we should fight for, in short 'A Union Charter for Decency and Respect in Retail' to include:

- No retail worker in Ireland should earn less than the living wage (currently €11.70 per hour)

- The union rate should be at least 30% above the living wage [i.e. an hourly rate of over €15 per hour] – we have already achieved this in some companies.

- Every worker should be treated with dignity and respect at work – this includes the right to be a member of, and represented by, a trade union.

- Contracts of employment should offer workers a certain and decent weekly wage. Exploitative flexibility is replaced by fair and reasonable work/life balance agreements.

- Workers have access to a home, education and health care.

- All workers will have an adequate retirement income from the State/Employer.

*This is the union's vision of the future of work in retail. If workers share our vision, then they should organise and mobilise – this vision is achievable, but it must be won.*

This mission and our vision for retail workers starts here today with you, each and every one of you must return to your shop, your town and organise. Together we must build a union network across Ireland, a voice for workers in every town (the farmers can do it, the employers can do it).

*We must do it!*

Our officials and staff are fully committed to working with you to create a national Mandate community across Ireland. So thank you delegates, thank you National Executive Council and thank you staff.

*Stronger together, Organise, Organise, Organise!!!*



# We need statutory collective bargaining rights

**By David Gibney**  
Mandate communications officer

MANDATE Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light has slammed the “anti-union behaviour” of retailers such as Dunnes, Tesco, Paddy Power, LloydsPharmacy, IKEA, TK Maxx, Lidl and Aldi and called for statutory collective bargaining rights for workers in Ireland.

He made the comments as he spoke to 300 shopworkers and bar workers gathered for the Mandate conference in Wexford in April.

Mr Light insisted the entire trade union movement had to mobilise ahead of the next election to make sure that workers’ have a stronger voice in the workplace.

He told delegates: “In recent years



**Gerry Light: ‘balance skewed in favour of bosses’** employers have decided, probably in collaboration with each other, to hide behind an extreme interpretation of the voluntarist industrial relations model of engagement.

“They believe that volunteerism means an absolute right of not having to engage with workers’ representa-

tives when requested to do so. Such an approach also has the effect of rendering the value of a worker’s constitutional right to association to that of junk status. The balance as it currently exists is totally skewed in favour of the employer.”

Ireland is one of the few countries in the European Union without a legislated right to collective bargaining.

Mr Light claimed that a “voluntarist model” only works when both sides are prepared “to volunteer [and] to engage”.

He warned that while trade unions were always happy to negotiate, employers were increasingly refusing to participate in the process.

He added: “In recent months Mandate members have seen high-profile

and highly-profitable employers ignore their human right to be represented by a trade union of their choice.

“Dunnes Stores have been consistent in ignoring not only Mandate, but also the Labour Court and the state’s industrial relations mechanisms,” he said. “However, now we see Tesco, Paddy Power, LloydsPharmacy, IKEA, TK Maxx, Lidl and Aldi, to name but a few, who are refusing to engage with workers through their union.”

Anticipating resistance from employers’ representatives who are expected to vigorously campaign against stronger workers’ rights, Mr Light said they only had themselves to blame.

“Do they never stop for one mo-

ment to recognise and accept that the momentum for such change comes from the behaviour of their own members like Dunnes who constantly refuse to reasonably recognise the legitimate right of their workers to be represented by a trade union?”

He continued: “Employers cannot have it both ways. They cannot be allowed to refuse to collectively bargain while at the same time bemoan and fight against the introduction of statutory measures designed to protect some of the most vulnerable workers in our society.

“So let IBEC go knock on their members’ doors and explain that the potential introduction of new legislation is only coming to the fore because of their behaviour.”

# Low pay ‘predicament’ caused by denial of basic rights

CONGRESS General Secretary Patricia King has claimed the “predicament” of the prevalence of low pay in Ireland is a direct result of the absence of the right to collectively bargain.

In a wide-ranging speech to the Mandate conference in Wexford, she pointed out to delegates that 70% of workers “earn at or below the average industrial wage”.

Ms King said: “That predicament arises directly as a result of the absence of a right to collectively bargain in this state.

“As you know our current laws don’t even officially recognise our right to exist as a movement. We did make some progress in the 2015 Act and throughout the decades through relentless efforts and battles of the trade union movement, have sought to mitigate the power imbalance between labour and capital.

“But this situation will only be addressed when we achieve collective bargaining rights, where workers can bargain the value of their labour, without fear and claim their fair share and where members of trade

unions can exercise their right of access to be heard.”

And Ms King also pointed out that around 160,000 workers were in precarious jobs across Ireland.

She claimed the Government’s approach to precarious working as contained in the Employment Miscellaneous Provisions Bill was “deficient”, she suggested, and needed several amendments.

Ms King continued: “We need to see the total abolition of zero-hour and ‘if and when’ contracts. We need to see, the establishment of a minimum three-hour payment for workers at their normal rate including at JLC and SEO rate, even if no work is provided.

“We need to see the proposed bands for banded hour contracts narrowed with a look-back period of no more than 13 months.”

Ms King told conference: “Over the past decade imposed austerity measures have resulted in a level of social scarring not seen in this country before. One such scar evident to all of us, is the current housing emergency.” Attacking the “unforgivable”

policy of past governments to cede the housing market to developers and landlords, Ms King said that as a result “profit and greed” had “replaced social need”.

This had led in turn to thousands of people – “including thousands of children” – being either homeless or living in totally unsuitable accommodation. She continued: “The damage done to those children in their formative years will never be undone and they will never regain their lost childhood which is surely a cause for national shame.

“While some of our politicians try to normalise the scandalous extent of this housing emergency we in the trade union movement continue to demand that they act to end the misery of thousands of people.”

In response, Ms King said that Congress had produced a *Charter for Housing Rights* with five straight forward demands: a major public house building programme; a legal right to housing; protection for the tenants; an end to forced evictions; and a national land management policy.

She informed delegates that all



**Patricia King: cause of progress needs unions**

TDs had been asked to sign the *Charter* and that “we intend shortly to publish the names of those who supported and – importantly – those who did not support the *Charter*.”

On Brexit, she suggested there was “no such thing... as a positive Brexit”

and warned that it must not be used as a “pretext” to “dismantle hard-won social rights and protections or drive down employment standards”.

Turning to women’s rights, she predicted that 2018 would be a “significant year for women” – as the year marked the centenary of women over 30 being awarded the right to vote as well as the then-upcoming Eighth Amendment referendum.

“We know from experience,” she told delegates, “that each progressive move we make would not be realised without the involvement and advocacy of the trade union movement.”

Ms King continued: “Laws and state agencies can write and regulate our rights in the workplace, but it takes union members to observe and enforce them on the ground, in the factories and shop floors and building sites and offices and classrooms and hospital wards.

“There can be no doubt that without the recent action of Tesco or Dunnes stores workers the Government would not be contemplating legislation to improve the rights of low wage workers.”

# Call on retail and bar workers – organise for €15 an hour

**By David Gibney**  
Mandate communications officer

GENERAL Secretary John Douglas called on all workers in the retail and bar trades to join their union and win pay rates of at least €15 per hour.

Speaking at the union's Biennial Delegate Conference in Wexford on April 23, he said "no retail worker in Ireland should earn less than the living wage," currently set at €11.70 an hour.

And he went further, stating that the "union rate" should be "at least 30% above the living wage", which equates to €15 per hour.

Mr Douglas claimed Ireland had a "very serious problem" – low pay and insecure work coupled with a high cost of living. "This is leading to many

of the social problems we see today including the dramatic increase in homelessness across the country, along with high poverty and deprivation rates.

"If we are to tackle this crisis," continued Mr Douglas, "it will mean winning significant pay increases for many low paid workers."

Mandate has been winning pay increases for its 40,000 members since 2013 with the union quantifying these at more than €60 million.

A survey conducted by Mandate in 2016 showed that unionised workers in retail outlets earned 30% more than those in non-union outlets.

The union has also won secure hour contracts in a range of employments including Tesco, Marks &

Spencer, Boots, Penneys, Supervalu and others and has led the way in lobbying for legislation to protect low hour contract workers from exploitation. "The benefits that our members enjoy in retail, including pay rates in excess of €15 per hour in some instances, were not handed to them freely by some benevolent employer. They were fought for and they were won through workers joining their trade union and getting active," said Mr Douglas.

"Ireland is one of the most profitable countries in the world to be a major retail outlet, and we know that Tesco Ireland make approximately €250 million in profit every year while Dunnes Stores make €200 million," he said. "There is absolutely no

doubt that many employers can afford to increase pay rates for their staff and give them secure hour contracts. They simply choose not to, and instead prioritise shareholders and wealthy owners over their workers.

"There is only one real and effective solution to this, and that is for all retail and bar workers to get organised and prepared to stand up for better conditions of employment."

Mr Douglas said that Mandate is a responsible trade union and if an employer can prove they have a genuine inability to increase wages, his union will not be left wanting.

"During the financial crisis, our union and our members behaved responsibly and reluctantly did deals to protect jobs. That often meant pay

freezes or reduced terms and conditions. But now that the economic crisis is coming to an end and we are supposedly experiencing an economic recovery, it's only fair that retail and bar workers share in that recovery," said Mr Douglas.

Mr Douglas said Mandate had already lodged claims in a number of retail outlets to achieve the union's objective of decent work in the retail sector.

"Mandate has lodged claims in Dunnes Stores, Tesco and others which would have life changing impacts for our members. We intend to follow up with these claims, and to campaign and mobilise to win significant and lasting change for workers in the retail and bar trades."



**CONFERENCE PICTURES: Tommy Clancy**

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## NEWS

### INTERNATIONAL

## Brands probe abuse claims

H&M and Gap are to probe reports overseas garment workers supplying the top brand fashion chains have faced a “daily risk” of being abused sexually at work.

According to rights organisations, victims working in supplier factories in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka faced retaliation if the attacks were reported.

The allegations were based on a series of interviews carried out with more than 500 workers across the region.

H&M have reacted to the reports by stating that local teams would carry out a review at factory level and insisted that “all forms of abuse or harassment” were against what the global retailer stood for.

Meanwhile, US fashion giant Gap said it would launch an investigation and “address these issues”.

### PUBLIC FINANCE

## Over a million don't pay tax because they're so poorly paid

FIGURES released by the Revenue Commissioners show that more than a million workers won't pay income tax this year, flagging up how Ireland continues to be a low pay economy.

According to the data, a total of 956,000 tax “units” – a term that covers both individual workers and working couples who are jointly assessed – won't be taxed in spite of earning an income.

Mandate General Secretary John Douglas told *Shopfloor*: “The number of people who have ‘tax exempt’ status is nothing for this Government to be proud of.

“It may be a much trumpeted policy goal of theirs to remove people from the tax net – but again it just underlines the fact that so many of our workers are so badly paid, that they fall below the tax threshold. That's one in three workers. Industry and retail bosses have been getting away with paying workers peanuts for years.”

Income tax and USC are not the only taxes working people face. PRSI as well as indirect taxes, such as VAT, excise duties and levies are other burdens on people's incomes.

The figures do not include people on State pensions or the long-term unemployed. Currently, single earners must pay income tax on earnings of €16,501 or more.

And, according to the Revenue Commissioners, 769,800 people won't pay the Universal Social Charge this year, which is levied on those earning €13,000 or more.

## COMMENT

# Our union offers us opportunity to challenge stasis...

By Amy Moran  
Mandate Youth Committee

CONTEMPLATING the lot doled out to Ireland's youth, it's easy to see how many of us have become despondent and cynical.

Issues affecting younger workers have been met with a dismissive indifference and disregard by our current political establishment.

If you were to accept uncritically the conventional wisdom given due prominence in the media, you'd think that young people are responsible for the abject material deprivation in which they try to eke out an existence, rather than it being the responsibility of the state and capital.

Confronted with the crisis in precarious work, mental health and housing – all issues which disproportionately affect young people of our class – those in power have unburdened themselves of any guilt.

We are told by our betters to avoid holding businesses accountable for the ruthless pursuit of their ever-increasing profit margins through the manipulation of an insecure and underpaid labour force.

Conventional political and economic ‘wisdom’ would like you to believe that younger people prefer insecurity of income and hour. We are told it is ‘flexibility’ that we want.

Crucially, however, this flexibility to which we, as young workers, are so encouraged to aspire and practice does little to benefit us. Instead we see businesses' exploit our ‘flexibility’ for their own gain.

Employers and landlords have been profiting off of the back of a general culture of insecurity and desperation, in which they played a key role in creating in Ireland since 2008.

As young workers who have come of age in the era following the recession, we are actively challenging

through our trade union, the overwhelming consensus that there is no alternative to the current cruel orthodoxy.

At present, those in power see young people's discontent with our working-lives as a hazard to be nullified and made impotent through a series of HR-sponsored productivity strategies.

These strategies are attempts made by those in power to encourage among us a convenient type of political quietism. The individualisation of culpability for the circumstances we, as workers, find ourselves in has prompted some to embrace a resigned acceptance of ‘how things are’.

But as young workers, we have had enough of being told it's just ‘how things are’. In response to this we say, it may be how things are but that doesn't mean we need accept it.

The trade union offers to us an opportunity to challenge this stasis, and a vehicle through which to demand our vision for a more equitable and just society. We wish to mobilise young members of Mandate toward achieving this vision for Ireland's youth.

As young workers in Mandate, we are going to begin organising, campaigning and challenging the current orthodoxy with which we are faced.

We will achieve this through organising in our respective communities for an active and enthusiastic participation between young workers, activists and the Irish trade union movement.

Following our Biennial Delegate Conference the decision was taken by a group of young workers to reinvigorate our youth committee. For ourselves, and for the future generations to come, we feel that organising for decent working lives is no longer a choice but a pressing necessity.



Following Mandate's BDC in Wexford, decision was taken to reinvigorate Youth Committee

# WRC: 'Bogus self employment' on Govt projects

SIX members of the Operative Plasterers and Allied Trades Society (Opatsi) on two separate building sites have been awarded almost €20,000 in compensation by the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) over "bogus self employment" issues.

Two schools were built on government procured sites in Bray, Co Wicklow, and Cabra, in Dublin 7, but Opatsi say the workers on the sites were given an ultimatum to work as self-employed contractors or lose the work completely.

The six plasterers were contracted by Kas Plastering, which was in turn sub-contracted by Sammon, which is now in liquidation.

Opatsi took the cases on behalf of the six members on a number of is-



Billy Wall: 'Workers losing out'

sues including wages, contracts of employment, holidays and compensation for work on the two building sites.

Opatsi General Secretary Billy Wall claimed these examples show how

privatisation is circumventing workers' rights. Opatsi have also argued that regulation is non-existent on many building sites, even government procurements.

Mr Wall told *Shopfloor*: "We presented our case to the WRC last December. We explained that the workers were given a choice to register as self-employed workers or stay at home. This has been a growing trend for some time and is costing the State millions in lost revenue."

Employers who hire workers on bogus self-employment contracts save money by not contributing employers' PRSI and not paying annual leave entitlements, for example, but the workers lose out on social welfare entitlements.

He continued: "For the duration of

the time these workers were on site they were under the control of the contractor. They received a predetermined wage, they could not provide materials nor could they profit from the job. They were very clearly employees and not self-employed contractors."

Criticising the growing practice of bogus self-employment, Mr Wall said: "There are no regulations of workers' rights on these sites, which is a requirement under the procured contract. Main contractors, such as Sammon, are required to declare that all workers are paid their entitlements and workers are not owed more than one month's wages. Yet when Opatsi advised Sammon of the shortfall, the company claimed it was not their problem, but so too did the

Department of Education."

He added: "This decision shines a light on local authorities and other government agencies."

Opatsi is now calling on the Minister for Education to settle the workers' unpaid wages because it was the department's lack of protocols that caused this issue for our members.

Mr Wall said: "These decisions show how the revenue commissioners eRCT system is facilitating this precarious work practice. We know that parents are encouraging their teenage children away from the construction sector because employers are openly circumventing employment legislation. How can the industry attract new blood into it when craftsmen are being treated in such a shoddy way?"

## INFODESK HOUSING CRISIS

### SHOCK SURVEY

# RENT THEN FOOD!

ONE in two young workers are struggling to cover their housing costs and are going without meals and other essentials to pay their rent according to a new survey from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The national opinion poll of 1,500 trade union members under the age of 34 on their housing costs was conducted online between June 1 and 14.

The survey was carried out by Congress ahead of the Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) discussions between Government, union and employer representatives on housing.

According to ICTU, it recognises the significant and unacceptable impact of Ireland's broken housing system on vulnerable individuals and families with young children experiencing homelessness.

Congress is lobbying TDs to commit to adopting its *Charter for Housing Rights*, which sets out key principles on the creation of a secure and sustainable housing system.

These include: declaring a housing emergency; establishing a legal right to housing; guaranteeing tenants' rights; preventing evictions into homelessness; and developing a national land purchase policy,

Congress Social Policy Officer Dr Laura Bambrick told *Shopfloor*: "This particular piece of research focused on the impact of the housing crisis on



Picture: woodleywonderworks (CC BY 2.0)

a generation of people who are sandwiched between high housing costs and low wages, to allow us take a detailed look behind snappy terms such as 'generation rent' and 'delayed adulthood'."

Commenting on the survey findings Congress General Secretary, Patricia King said: "The findings are worse than feared. Lives are being damaged and destroyed and a whole generation of young workers are now feeling alarming levels of frustration, insecurity and despondency with their housing situation. We are failing badly our young people."

Ms King added: "Congress will use these stark findings to continue to put pressure on Government to take action through our ongoing housing campaign and in the upcoming social dialogue with ministers and employers."

## Key findings...

- **Over half (54%) of all young workers are struggling to cover their housing costs. One in every two have had to borrow or sacrifice another basic need, such as food, heating and transportation, in order to pay their rent or mortgage in the past year. Of those young workers struggling to make the rent, one in six (17%) are unable to keep their head above water and are in to arrears.**
- **Two in five (40%) of all young workers are spending in excess of the 30% rent-to-income ratio of housing affordability. One-quarter are spending between 41% and 50%. The other quarter are spending above 51%, which represents one in 10 of all young workers spending more than half of their wages on housing. Half of these workers are spending between 31% and 40% of their take-home pay on rent.**

- **Almost half (46%) of all young workers are dissatisfied that they are renters or that they remain living in their parents' home. One in six (18%) are very dissatisfied with their current living arrangements.**

- **One-third (33%) of all young workers are blighted by housing insecurity, with one in three having little or no confidence in being able to continue living in their current home for as long as they would wish.**

- **The vast majority (74%) of young workers have little or no confidence in being able to buy a home in the future should they wish to.**

- **Over eight in 10 (84%) of all young workers say housing will influence how they vote in the next election.**

# Five years on... we must never forget Rana Plaza and our duty as consumers



Gerry Light

IT'S HARD to believe that five years have passed since the deaths of 1,134 garment factory workers in the Rana Plaza collapse on the outskirts of Dhaka in Bangladesh.

This tragic occurrence led to the Bangladesh Accord which was, in essence, a safety agreement reached between unions and the well-known high street brands who use similar manufacturing plants.

The accord expired at the beginning of June and for the rest of the year it will be replaced by a similar agreement, the Alliance for Worker Safety. At their core both agreements have a stipulation that factory owners are required to improve structural and fire safety in order to keep their production lines open.

The reason why the new agreement only runs to the end of the year is because it is being currently challenged in the Bangladesh High Court by unhappy factory owners. It would appear that the Bangladesh government along with powerful industry



Rescuers scramble in the debris following the Rana Plaza collapse in a desperate search for survivors

Picture courtesy of IRLF

groups are also keen to shy away from the concept of international agreements favouring the monitoring of worker safety themselves.

This form of self-regulation clearly does not deliver for workers as International Labour Organisation figures show – as of February 2018, less than 15% of employers operating outside of the international agreements had

only fixed half of the dangers that required attention.

On the contrary the experience of companies operating within the agreements have experienced a dramatic fall in worker fatalities, with more than 100,000 issues resolved over the past five years.

On the positive side, about 176 companies – including the likes of

Primark, Zara and H&M – have signed up to the new agreement. However, worryingly, about 44 of those who had been part of the previous accord have not yet signed up. The stark reality of this means that over 250 factories will now fall outside the scope of the agreement.

Can it be that the passage of such a short period of time has diminished

the importance of these type of agreements in the eyes of the hugely-profitable worldwide brands and also the Bangladesh government, or is it a mistake to believe they ever cared in the first place?

Importantly, the latest agreement also seeks to involve non-garment producing companies within its terms of reference. This brings the likes of IKEA into focus, whose initial response was to state that while they shared the objectives of the agreements they preferred to work under their own internal company code of conduct, called IWAY.

While parts of this code are seen to be progressive it significantly does not make public any findings with regard to site inspections or where they were carried out.

Sadly, it would appear that the intensity of focus and the importance of worker safety seems to be lessening and we are being asked to trust those who were responsible for creating the deplorable conditions that these workers found themselves in in the first place to monitor the situation going forward.

While others are prepared to do so, we – as consumers – must never forget our fellow workers who tragically lost their lives in the Rana Plaza building five short years ago. The best way we can honour their memory and to ensure they will never be forgotten is to think about and question the origin of manufacture of every product prior to purchase.

If you are not satisfied that it has been ethically sourced, then put it back and let the seller know why you are taking this action. The alternative product may cost a few cents more but sometimes doing the right thing is a price worth paying.



## 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](mailto: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](mailto:mandateotc@mandate.ie)



# On to the next phase of the struggle...

By Dr Sean Byers  
Trademark Belfast

THE overwhelming vote for Repeal of the Eighth Amendment represents a cathartic, watershed moment for Irish society. But the result should not be seen as Ireland's coming of age, as its entry into the modern world, or as a gift conferred on us by the establishment parties with the blessing of the liberal commentariat.

Instead it has to be understood as the product of sustained and determined struggle by thousands of (working-class) women over the past 35 years, with the support of allies in the progressive trade union movement, in communities and on the political left.

Their job seemingly done, the political establishment and the economic interests it serves will now return to business as usual – the business of low wages and precarious work; rising wealth and income inequality; industrial-scale corporate tax avoidance; homelessness, property speculation and rack-renting; two-tier and crises-ridden health-care; systemic abuse and cover ups; and endemic police corruption.

But having decisively broken the moral authority of the Catholic Church, stemmed the tide of attacks on women's rights and invigorated an entire generation of young people across the island, many involved with the Repeal campaign will now be looking to push on.

Already there is intense pressure for reform of the North's abortion laws in the face of DUP reaction, while the accompanying campaign for marriage equality, too, raises the unfulfilled demand of 'British rights for British citizens' first articulated in the 1960s.

In the South, the next phase for the Repeal movement is securing the proper legislative provisions for abortion. Others are turning their attention to the Church's grip on education, which is anathema to the fundamental republican principle of Church and State separation and, as we know, has caused untold damage to the lives of Irish children.

Still others are keen to use the momentum achieved by the campaign to build and mobilise a movement capable of transforming Irish society, to



Unpaid labour: cooking up a storm in the kitchen...

Picture: Michelle Hartman (CC BY 2.0)

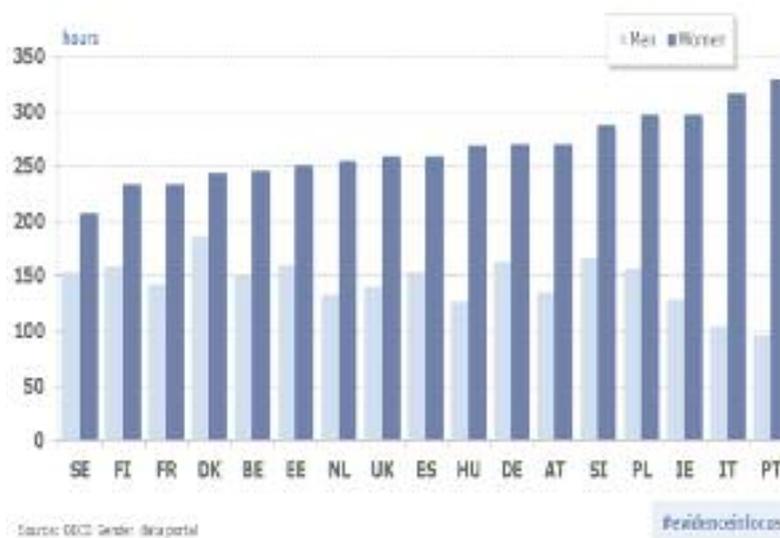
which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."

In other words, women shall be instructed by legislation and cultural norms established by the Church, state, and economic and political elites to engage primarily in the gendered tasks of cooking, cleaning, caring etc., both to the detriment of their participation in the workplace and without due recognition that such tasks themselves constitute important forms of labour.

Over the past century women in Ireland have struggled against the established gendered and class rela-

“ Whatever transpires in the coming months and years, we can be sure that Ireland has entered a new historical moment ripe with possibilities for profound change ”

FIG1 Time spent in unpaid work by gender



challenge existing social and economic relations and, against the backdrop of Brexit and Unionist intransigence, to create something anew.

Whatever transpires in the coming months and years, we can be sure that Ireland has entered a new historical moment ripe with possibilities for profound change. One issue that is both pertinent to the current conjuncture and neglected as a potential site of struggle for the trade union movement is that of unpaid and reproductive labour i.e. the unpaid work that takes place outside the sphere of production yet is fundamental to Irish capitalist survival and accumulation.

Article 41.2 of the Irish Constitution reads: "The State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without

tions that have seen them confined to the home or, worse still, forced into Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes where they slaved in appalling conditions, for no pay and under the constant threat of abuse.

While these struggles have brought about significant advances, the social, economic and cultural dynamics that reinforce gendered (and class) roles persist. One manifestation of this is the fact that, according to OECD national time use surveys, Irish women carry out more than 70% of unpaid work. To this it should be added that the majority of these women are likely to be from working-class backgrounds, unable as they are to afford the costs of childcare and other domestic supports.

Dr Sean Byers is a Research Officer at Trademark Belfast

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# The future is here, do not ignore it

**TAKE a look at the following list which represents in the main the estimated 35,000 retail job losses that have occurred in the UK since the beginning of 2018: Tesco 2,200, Marks & Spencer 1,880, East 314, Morrisons 1,500, Debenhams 320, Warren Evans 287, Toys R Us 3,000, Maplin 2,500, New Look 980, Littlewoods 1,992, Carpetright 300, Calvetron Brands 1,000, Carphone Warehouse 500, Mothercare 800, Poundworld 5,000, House of Fraser 6,000.**

Clearly a revolution of sorts is taking place and it isn't good for retail workers and their dependents. Many of the household names listed above have retail operations in this country and there is a concern that much of the negative fallout already witnessed in their home country will impact here sooner rather than later – in some cases the chill winds have already been felt.

The rapid growth in online sales along with the advances made in in-store technology are without doubt the main driving forces behind what is happening. However, other factors such as unsustainable increases in rents, rates, insurance, energy costs along with less-than-impressive consumption figures, the decline of town centres and downright inept senior management are also contributing to the mix.

It is estimated that more than £1 billion is now spent every week in the UK on online purchases. Out of the total annual retail spend of €40 billion in Ireland, €5 billion is being purchased online and 60% of this is going to foreign retailers.

Another indicator is reflected in recent figures released by An Post that show an increase in their parcel delivery volume of 30%. Given the inexorable growth that is taking place surely the time has now arrived for the Government to ensure that in this year's budget traditional bricks and mortar retailers are treated no less favourably when it comes to taxation policy. Of

course, throw in the still unknown impact of a hard Brexit and you have all of the ingredients of a perfect storm.

A recent report from PricewaterhouseCoopers predicted that more than 10 million jobs will be at risk in the UK over the next 15 years due to automation alone. Whilst not all of these jobs will be directly lost to retail, many of them represent workers who on a regular basis dispose of their incomes in retail businesses and without this revenue they will invariably suffer and run the risk of disappearing altogether.

The classic knee-jerk response by many of the top executives in suffering retail businesses is to target the terms and conditions of their workers and, in many cases, unilateral reductions are attempted against the will or without agreement of the workers concerned.

We have already seen some examples of this type of behaviour here which is clearly learnt and demanded by the corporate parent across the Irish Sea. Recently in the UK we witnessed Sainsbury's attempt to cut without agreement the pay of over 9,000 of their staff by an average of £400 a year through the removal of paid tea breaks, annual bonuses and premium payments. Think something similar couldn't happen here, then you better think again.

**The role of your union is to work in a constructive and progressive manner with businesses that employ our members to ensure the maintenance of as many quality jobs as possible. For those employers who don't wish to engage in this manner then we must resist and construct a robust defence.**

Of course the best protection against these savage attacks on workers hard-won entitlements is the existence of a strong and active trade union within the business in question. Clearly the secret is not to wait too long before making this reality happen. The extent of the challenges and the real threats to workers in retail should not be considered likely anymore, the fact is they are going to happen, it's now a matter of when.

The key consideration is are workers capable of dealing with the unsavoury and dramatic consequences that will undoubtedly unfold. It's only workers themselves who can decide what model to adopt in order to defend their interests and not allow others to make these critical decisions for them.

If there was ever a case of forewarned being forearmed, this is it. Don't put off until tomorrow what is required today.

**An effective and strong union on the ground is the only way to mount a credible defence. If workers wait for somebody else to do this for them they will be left waiting and – sadly – they will ultimately pay the greatest price for not organising in time.**



## COMMENT

### TOURISM INDUSTRY

# IMF backs ICTU call to end tax subsidy



Macdara Doyle

THE International Monetary Fund (IMF) has backed a Congress demand for the abolition of 'tax subsidy' for the tourism sector that may have cost the state almost €3 billion in lost revenue, to date.

In its regular report on Ireland issued in May, the global agency recommended ending the special lower 9% VAT rate that has been enjoyed by the sector since 2011.

Congress has consistently opposed the subsidy and repeatedly raised the matter directly at ministerial level, with government and with all political groupings.

In March 2017, Congress General Secretary Patricia King wrote to members of the Seanad, on the matter: "Despite this large, ongoing loss [of revenue] to the state and its citizenry there is no verifiable evidence and not a single independent study to show that benefits have been passed on to the consumer, in the form of lower prices, or to the thousands who work in the sector, in the form of higher wages."

In its 2016 and 2017 pre-budget submissions, Congress noted the refusal of employers in the sector to engage with the Joint Labour Committee process: "It is inappropriate that the tax subsidy should continue alongside high rates of low pay and precarious work practices in the sector."

A delegation from Congress met with IMF representatives recently and highlighted concerns about the tax break, along with the ongoing failure of government to invest properly in high quality public services and skills training and tackle the housing crisis.

The Accommodation and Food Services have the highest incidence of low pay with nearly 75% of workers earning €400 per week or less. In addition, the industry has failed to produce any evidence to back its claim

that the special rate led to the creation of thousands of new jobs and lower prices for consumers.

Figures from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) show that job creation in the sector tracked the wider economic recovery from 2013 onwards.

The latest IMF report concurs with the view put forward by Congress and calls for the elimination of tax breaks, such as the lower VAT rate for the tourism sector.

The Department of Finance has estimated that the *de facto* subsidy resulted in the loss of some €2.2 billion in revenue, between 2011 and 2016. A 2017 assessment from the Department stated: "It is estimated that the

**“ The Accommodation and Food Services have the highest incidence of low pay with nearly 75% of workers earning €400 per week or less ”**

abolition of the 9% rate and a return to 13.5% for the goods and services in this sector would result in increased revenues of around €500 million (per annum)."

The subsidy was introduced in 2011 as a 'temporary measure' for the sector, in the midst of the economic crash. However, it has been renewed every year since, despite the sector enjoying strong bookings and profit levels.

Overseas visitor numbers are now at record levels, with almost 10 million arriving in Ireland in 2017, with figures up a further 7% in the first quarter of 2018.

Dalata – the state's biggest hotel chain – saw its rates in the capital rise by some 16%, in 2016. An August 2017 report revealed that hotel room rates in Dublin had soared above the boom time record levels, last seen in 2006.

Meanwhile occupancy rates have steadily risen across the country since 2014, according to an industry survey carried out by Crowe Horwath, in 2017. Picture: Nicolas Raymond (CC BY 2.0)

Tourist attraction: Poul nabrone Dolmen



**Brian Forbes**



*“One day Alice came to a fork in the road and saw a Cheshire cat in a tree. ‘Which road do I take?’ she asked. ‘Where do you want to go?’ was his response. ‘I don’t know,’ Alice answered. ‘Then,’ said the cat, ‘it doesn’t matter.’”*

BORN 150 years ago, Marxist socialist James Connolly, a true leader and intellectual, was executed by the British 102 years ago for his leadership role in the 1916 Easter Rising.

For it was that Connolly and his comrades had the temerity to seek an independent Ireland free from imperialist shackles – to establish a new socialist 32-county island republic for the many not just the few.

For many people the defining image of Connolly strapped to a chair at Kilmainham Gaol while having his battered body riddled with British bullets was – and is – a defining moment in Irish political history.

It changed forever the hatred and disdain felt by Dubliners of the time towards these “unwelcome revolutionaries” who didn’t know what side their imperialist bread was buttered on.

## Paraded in defeat

The brave but defeated revolutionaries were pelted with rotten vegetables by angry Dubliners as they were paraded in defeat through the streets of the capital – their leaders marching towards execution and ultimately revolutionary immortality.

There is no Irish revolutionary who commands greater national and international interest in his developing political journey and his writings than James Connolly.

Following Connolly’s passing in October of that same year, a little known Russian revolutionary Vladimir Llyich Ulyanov, better known by the alias Lenin, in admiration of Connolly and the 1916 Rising wrote a salient observation on the need for national uprisings: “The misfortune of the Irish is that they have risen prematurely when the European revolt of the proletariat has not yet materialised. On the other hand the very fact that revolts break out at different times in different places guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement, only in premature, partial, scattered and therefore unsuccessful revolutionary movements do the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught.”

Lenin in these words acknowledged and linked the importance of national struggle in Ireland to the advancement of socialism across nation states. Now we all know that Lenin didn’t lick his revolutionary theory



Illustration: Public Domain



Picture: Yanni Koutsomitis (CC BY 2.0)

# Beware the grinning cat of EU domination

off a stone as two previous reasonably well known revolutionary thinkers and influencers, Marx and Engels, wrote in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*: “Though not in substance, yet in form, the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie is at first a national struggle. The proletariat of each country must, of course, first of all settle matters with its own bourgeoisie.”

Therefore, it would appear that the unsuccessful 1916 Rising and the more successful 1917 October Revolution in Russia followed this original 1848 Marxist train of thought through direct military action and towards national insurrection and revolution.

Those two revolutionary uprisings mirrored decisions taken at the 1915 Zimmerwald anti-war conference in Switzerland but in particular the defeated resolution proposed by the Bolshevik left-wing bloc, aka the Zimmerwald Left, who disagreed with Leon Trotsky’s less Marxist-orientated resolution by insisting on the need to not merely seek peace but to utilise the First World War by establishing “a clear-cut Marxist position in regard to the tasks with which the epoch of imperialism has confronted the proletariat.”

In other words, a Marxist struggle for the ultimate over-

throw of capitalism. There is no denying that Connolly’s death and that of his comrades inspired, albeit through a violent civil war struggle, the move towards an Irish Free State. Connolly’s final words to his wife Lily, “wasn’t it a full life Lily and isn’t this a good end?” had in them hope in death for a better Ireland.

However, Connolly’s vision of a 32-county republic with national independence and a socialist transformation of society was betrayed by those left behind.

The likes of Fine Gael poster boy and sell-out Michael Collins and Fianna Fail’s Catholic conservative Eamon de Valera as well as subsequent generations of their gombeen political acolytes have betrayed Ireland through acceptance of partition and set back any possibility of a 32-county socialist Ireland for the foreseeable future.

Collins and de Valera by their treacherous actions were two anti-revolutionary political opportunists who weren’t fit to lace James Connolly’s boots.

Today, Ireland remains under the jackboot of imperialism and as unfree as it was in 1916 under British imperialist rule. Ireland blindly surrendered its national independence over decades to the newer and shinier jackboot of the European Union. The un-

elected and unaccountable anti-democratic bureaucrats running the EU now hold an economic and political ‘sword of Damocles’ over the heads of every Irish citizen.

They’d be well prepared, for the protection of global capital, to use that imaginary sword to chop Ireland off the edge of their European project if we didn’t act subservient to our European lords and masters and behave like good boys and girls as Brussels and Germany demand.

## Heckles

Often, I try to imagine if Connolly was alive in 2018 what he would make of our circumstances today. The lack of union recognition and collective bargaining rights more than 100 years after the 1913 Lockout would surely rise the hackles of the auld revolutionary.

The rampant inequality and the exacerbating homeless and housing crisis would be a cause for anger and surely subsequent direct action by the 2018 Connolly.

In fact, I’d say Connolly would be at the vanguard of a radical Irish trade union movement calling and fighting for a 32-county socialist republic free from the strangulation of free market capitalism.

I am convinced that James Connolly would be a proud Brexiter and an Irish revolutionary defender against the excesses of European imperialism. He’d probably even agree with the “right-wing Brexiters” about the need for an independent and sovereign Ireland while vehemently disagreeing with every reason those fascists have for wanting out of Europe. The left in Ireland today has

ceded far too much anti-EU ground to right-wing racists and fascists. What is so wrong with Irish political and economic self-determination separate from a federal Europe while working alongside other nation states? Switzerland survives very well indeed at the heart of Europe while staying outside the EU.

The British are no longer the biggest threat to Connolly’s vision, rather it’s the EU and the Eurozone that now hold that dubious honour.

In a previous article for *Shopfloor* I suggested the unlikely scenario of an Irish Brexit (Irexit) precipitating the political, societal, economic and democratic shift back from Europe to Ireland of our sovereignty and to reinstate control of our national destiny. Global capital facilitated by Europe and our own political class has taken complete control over our country and hand in hand with European Union treaties they invariably force impotent EU countries, such as Ireland, to “toe the line” or else.

The 2018 Connolly would be conspiring with anyone and everyone to ensure Ireland’s freedom from European debt slavery passed on to future generations by inept and out-of-their-depth Irish politicians and their EU puppet masters.

It is strange to see so many of our political parties advocating membership of the EU as the only show in town – in many ways mirroring the Thatcherite claim that the capitalist market economy is the only system that works and that there is no alternative (TINA).

That particular ideological orthodoxy has had its day and kowtowing to it is deserving of a severe ‘slap up the bake’, as they say in Belfast.

Globalised capitalism is killing our country and also our citizens and the Thatcherite mantra that free markets and free trade are the best ways to create wealth is one brilliant way of delivering an increasingly unequal and divided Ireland with the 1% massively wealthy and the 99% of the rest of us just barely scrapping by.

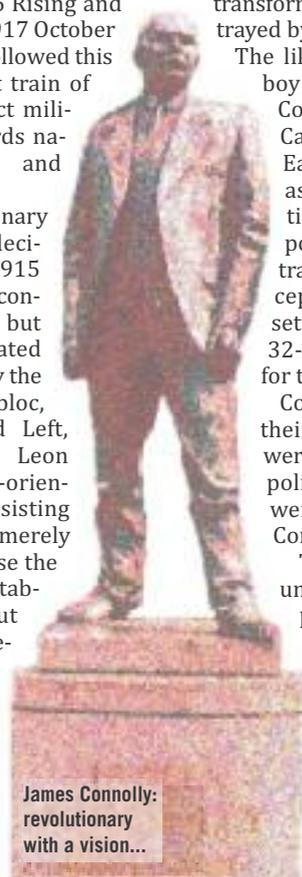
Ireland is a bit like poor Alice in the quote at the beginning of this article, lost and directionless economically and socially as the big grinning Cheshire cat of federal Europe leads us blindly and merrily down the path of deeper concessions to eternal capitalism, debt slavery and generations of lost opportunities for the delivery of even a small part of Connolly’s vision for Ireland.

The fight that Connolly and James Larkin led for a decent, secure job and the fight we, as trade unionists, must lead today for a decent living wage is one and the same.

Connolly’s vision for a more equal society is not yet won and that struggle between the elite class and working class people still rages. Unfortunately, the key difference between 1916 and 2018 Ireland is that we don’t have a James Connolly fighting in our corner.

150 years after the birth of James Connolly, the time is long overdue for revolutionary thinking in the trade union movement. Our sleeping and subservient proletarian masses must be educated and encouraged into collective action through a programme of aggressive organising in every single workplace across the country.

*Connolly would expect nothing less, we should expect nothing less!*



James Connolly: revolutionary with a vision...

# FOOL ME O FOOL ME T



**Union officials BARRED**

**Labour Court SNUBBED**

**Shop Stewards DENIED**

**THEIR CLAIM**

**THE TRUTH**

**THEIR CLAIM**



MANDATE members employed by Tesco Ireland are no fools, they understand the day-to-day reality of working on the frontline in retail, often understaffed, under appreciated by local management and certainly underpaid.

*The hourly rates, the premiums and overtime rates, the banded hours, the sick pay scheme, the bonuses, the pensions, the scheduling etc., were won by workers coming together collectively in their union and having democratic voice at work.*

The corporate bonuses of CEOs and directors are a long way away from the weekly struggle for survival on retail wages and retail hours.

That is why it is vital for the future of decent work in Tesco that these hard won conditions are not only protected but improved upon, i.e. better rates of pay, a living wage, more full-time jobs and more family-friendly scheduling.

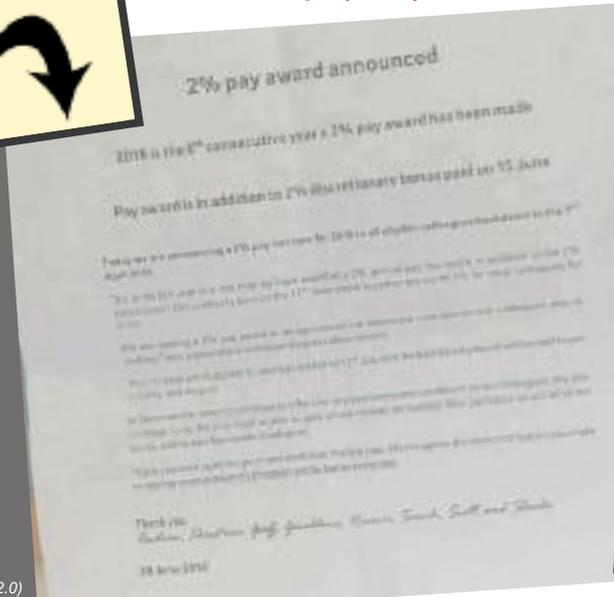
No more can retail workers aspire to buying their own homes, or indeed even renting a home, no more the aspirations of a job for life with decent basic pay topped up by a bit of overtime which allowed retail workers the luxury of an annual holiday or a school trip for the kids.

Workers need to be ever vigilant, they need to recruit and organise, mobilise for decent retail jobs – nothing is given, it must be won. The collective power and strength of workers is the only sure way of a better future.

There was a time when all of this was possible and a full-time job meant something. But that was before the corporate bosses decided that these jobs were "old fashioned" and did not fit with the "modern" way of doing business. These jobs were targeted, the workers were vilified and worker was turned against worker, all in the name of greed. Let's be clear, there is nothing "old fashioned" about a decent living wage and there is nothing "modern" about exploitation.

That is why companies such as Tesco and others are systematically engaging in the destruction of the collective strength of their workforce by attacking their unions and by a "charm offensive" to fool staff and

*Every existing wage rate and every term and condition of employment in Tesco was negotiated by your Tesco activists' negotiating team and voted on democratically by all MANDATE members employed by Tesco.*



**Tesco's June 28 announcement of 2% pay award and management's proud boast of being the 'only food retailer to give... banded hours contracts across all our stores and rosters four weeks in advance'... GUESS WHO NEGOTIATED THOSE TERMS?**

Picture: Gordon Joly (CC BY-SA 2.0)

# ONCE, SHAME ON YOU TWICE, SHAME ON ME

hide their real intentions.

Tesco has been consistently attacking your union for more than two years now. They are trying to remove your democratic right to an independent voice at work and remove fair and professional representation from their workers.

“...it would appear the company is determined to spend time, resources and money attacking workers' rights. The trade union movement will not allow this to happen. More than 40 unions, (comprising 700,000 members) have pledged both their financial and manual support of their organisations and members in any upcoming campaign.”

Tesco has:

**1. Barred union officials from many Tesco locations across Ireland.**

**2. Refused to meet with your activists' lead negotiating team to discuss improvements in pay, full-time jobs etc.**

**3. Refused to provide union listings to unions so as to reconcile union subs paid by their employees via payroll.**

**4. Refused to attend the Labour Court on a range of important issues impacting on workers.**

**5. Taken down union notice boards in stores.**

**6. Refused release for shop stewards to attend training courses and their Delegate Conference.**

**7. Attempting to change working contracts – removing any mention of unions.**

**8. Holding disciplinary hearings in lobbies of hotels and other unsuitable venues, and on one occasion held a “very personal” grievance hearing in a cinema.**

The list goes on and on. This is an outright and blatant attack on your union(s), and your voice at work, which goes hand in hand with a charm offensive in the local community, the personalised pay increase notifications from head office, the “great place to work” etc., etc.

All this while Mandate and SIPTU have been working quietly behind the scenes with the officials of the Labour Court in an effort to bring about a peaceful and sustainable resolution to this very dangerous situation, but all to no avail, presumably because Tesco is unwilling to engage with the Labour Court in exploring solutions. Rather, it would appear the company is deter-

mined to spend time, resources and money attacking workers' rights.

The trade union movement in Ireland will not allow this to happen. More than 40 unions, (comprising 700,000 members) have pledged both their financial and manual support of their organisations and members in any upcoming campaign.

In addition, unions in the UK, Europe and the USA have also pledged support. From our lived experiences on the picket lines in Dunnes, Tesco, LloydsPharmacy and TK Maxx disputes, the Irish shopping public are clearly on the side of Irish workers. They will shop with their conscience. They will not reward appalling behaviour. They expect good service and good value, but they also expect that workers have a free and independent voice at work.

Mandate, SIPTU and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions have been meeting to draw up plans to expose the dirty tricks of employers. We intend to out those who are attacking workers and their unions – a large scale public information campaign is in the pipeline.

In the meantime, all workers in Tesco need to see through the company's spin. You need to organise and recruit and rally yourselves for a fight back against attacks on your terms and conditions.

Mandate Trade Union will be hosting a major Tesco activists' event in early September 2018 at which we will develop the strategy further and bring all activists up to date. Make sure your store is well represented at this event. This is your chance to have your say on your future, on decent jobs and a living wage.

You are where you are today because you and previous generations stood shoulder to shoulder for rights at work. We must continue this struggle – a weak union or no union means no hope and no future. Workers will be isolated and forced to accept whatever management decides.

***Don't let this happen – stand up and join your fellow workers in the fight for a better future.***



GAZA SHOOTINGS

# Irish Govt must consider expelling Israeli diplomats

THE Executive Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has hit out at the Government's "inadequate response" to the recent massacre of civilian protestors in Gaza and called for consideration to be given to the expulsion of Israeli diplomats and the withdrawal of Irish diplomats from Israel.

Members of the Congress Executive Council observed a minute's silence for those killed and injured in Gaza at their meeting on May 16th.

In a letter to Minister Coveney, Congress General Secretary Patricia King claimed the shootings by Israeli Army snipers in Gaza were a "shameless violation of international law" and pointing out that Israel had shown no sign that "such excessive force" would be reined in.

She continued: "The Irish government must not only strongly condemn these actions but must also be to the fore internationally, at the UN, calling for an independent investiga-

tion into these incidents and to hold the Israeli government to account in the EU by calling an emergency meeting for European ministers to consider a proportionate response, including through the imposition of trade sanctions.

Ms King added: "Ireland needs to lead the way in its own right also by supporting the urgent passing of Senator Frances Black's Occupied Territories Bill and by formally recognising the decision of the Dáil and finally recognise the state of Palestine."



Bill: Frances Black



Call: Patricia King

OCCUPIED TERRITORIES BILL



Picture: Alan Whelan/Trócaire

# Heed the cry of Palestine

By Gerry Liston

Sadaka - the Ireland Palestine Alliance

AS *Shopfloor* goes to print, the Seanad is set to vote on the Occupied Territories Bill, 2018. It was introduced to the Seanad in January by Senator Frances Black and is supported by Mandate, ICTU, Trócaire, Christian Aid, Sadaka and the Irish Palestinian Solidarity Campaign, among others.

If enacted, it would ban the sale in Ireland of goods produced in settlements established by Israel on the land it has illegally confiscated from Palestinians over the course of its 50-year occupation of the Palestinian West Bank.

On the one hand, this Bill is a very modest measure. It is not an enactment of BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) called for by Palestinian civil society. All it does is stop trade with settlements which are not just 'illegal' but amount to war crimes under international criminal law. This is exactly how any other illegal situation is automatically treated by the international community (think of the response to Russia's annexation of Crimea).

tion of Crimea).

One the other hand, the significance of this measure, if enacted, cannot be underestimated. Back in 1980, Ireland, under a Fianna Fáil-led government, became the first European country to call for the establishment of a Palestinian State.

Almost immediately, several other European countries followed suit, as did the EU (or EEC as it was). There is every possibility that the same would happen if Ireland once again took the lead and enacted the Occupied Territories Bill. And if Europe stopped trading with Israeli settlements, that would simply cripple them.

Never before has a measure of solidarity like this one been so needed by the Palestinian people. The recent slaughter of unarmed protesters in Gaza by Israeli snipers served as a horrific reminder of the contempt with which the Israeli government and its military views Palestinian life.

Meanwhile, in the last year, Israel has announced settlement expansion plans on a scale not seen in 20 years.

The Israeli government is making hay while Trump, whose administration is the most anti-Palestinian U.S. administration yet, is in office.

The Green Party, Fianna Fáil, the Labour Party, Sinn Féin and the Social Democrats have all committed their support for this Bill as have a number of independents. That means a majority of TDs and Senators now support it. Unfortunately, the Government is opposing it, claiming it is incompatible with EU law.

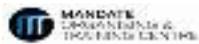
This is despite the fact that several eminent legal experts – including former Attorney General Senator Michael McDowell and judge on the International Court of Justice Professor James Crawford – have said that EU law does not prevent Member States from banning trade with Israeli settlements.

Palestinians desperately need this Bill to pass. So please contact your local TDs and make sure that they support it.

Gerry Liston is Legal Officer with Sadaka – the Ireland Palestine Alliance



Picture: Garry Walsh/Trócaire



## 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](mailto:mandateotc@mandate.ie). Check out [www.mandate.ie](http://www.mandate.ie) for further

SUNDAY TRADING

# Usdaw hails Belfast Council vote

SHOPWORKERS union Usdaw has welcomed the decision by city councillors in Belfast to reject proposals that would have seen the extension of current Sunday trading hours.

The proposals were overwhelmingly rejected in a key vote during a meeting of Belfast City Council's Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on May 18th.

The vote followed a protest by shopworkers organised outside Belfast City Hall earlier that day.

Usdaw Divisional Officer Mike Aylward told *Shopfloor*: "Our members are delighted that city councillors again rejected extended Sunday trading by 16 votes to 4, which is the same 80% opposition as the last time the committee considered the proposal.

"We said at the beginning of this campaign that nothing had changed since last year and that proved to be the case. Usdaw ran an evidence-based campaign to demonstrate

that longer Sunday trading hours are not wanted by the vast majority of shopworkers and would be a threat to the profitability, productivity and viability of many retail businesses.

"So we are very pleased that city councillors have listened to those concerns, supported our campaign and recognised the efforts Usdaw has made to illustrate the detrimental effects longer Sunday trading would have on Belfast."



Sunday best: Usdaw's Mike Aylward and Michala Lafferty (front, centre) lead a protest of shopworkers outside Belfast City Hall

Picture: Kevin Cooper/Photoline



Meeting of minds: Seamus McNamee, James Rabbitte, Kevin 'Boxer' Moran, Christy McQuillan and Daniel Troy

Picture: SIPTU

## 'Boxer' quizzed on housing

AN ICTU housing campaign lobby met recently with OPW Minister of State Kevin 'Boxer' Moran calling for action to resolve the housing crisis.

Mandate's James Rabbitte and David Troy along with Seamus McNamee and Christy McQuillan of SIPTU spoke to the Minister about the five-point *Congress Charter for Housing Rights* at his constituency office in Athlone on 26th March.

The delegation underlined the need to build 10,000 public houses on public land over the next five years with a key role being played by local authorities. In response, Kevin Moran

voiced his total backing for the five principles contained in the *Congress Charter*.

He gave a commitment that in his next meeting with Ministers for Housing, Eoghan Murphy and Damien English, he would advocate in favour of the principles as offering real and long term solutions for both social and affordable housing.

The delegation also discussed the extent of homelessness and damage being done by Vulture Funds.

Minister Moran agreed to get back to the delegation after meeting with his Government colleagues.



## 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](mailto: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](mailto:mandateotc@mandate.ie)



# Infernal machine exposed

**The Adoption Machine**  
 By Paul Jude Redmond  
 Published by  
 Irish Academic Press



I FIRST met Paul Redmond in 2013 at a press conference in Buswell's Hotel. The press event was being held to highlight the denial of access to birth records for illegally adopted people in Ireland.

Before that day I knew nothing of Ireland's illegally adopted or of forced adoption or the nature of the state's collusion with religious institutions to conceal the history and identity of thousands of people born in the seclusion of so called Mother and Baby Homes.

What Paul Redmond, and his colleague Theresa Tingall, divulged that day, of their own personal stories and the wider damage to society that can never be undone, enrages me still.

All of the lives destroyed by cold forced separation, itself an unimaginable hurt that will never fully heal, is magnified by the wilful collusion, lies and deliberate covering up by the state and the institutions over the decades and may prove impossible to untangle.

## Personal story

Nevertheless Paul Redmond has, in this book, made a serious attempt to unravel the whole sad story from the opening of the first foundling hospitals in Dublin in the 1730s through to the 20th century institutions and the most recent discovery of infant burials at Tuam. For Paul it is a personal story – however, it is much more than autobiography.

The book is divided into four sections organised chronologically. This provides the reader with a thorough historical background of the institutions involved and the conditions that existed inside them. The majority of space is naturally given to the 20th century and the early decades of the current century, when Paul's own quest for justice began.

The release of Martin Sixsmith's story of Philomena Lee, as a movie in 2013, went some way to highlight the practice of illegal and coerced adoptions in Ireland and shockingly brought attention to the practice of deliberately misleading family members attempting to locate one another. It was, of course, the more recent press coverage surrounding the discovery of the burial site at Tuam that blew the story wide open.

While the consistent and forensic work by journalist Conall O'Fatharta



Hard at work in a Magdalene laundry

Picture: Public Domain



Angels plot at Castlepollard

at the *Irish Examiner* has also exposed much of the illegal activities carried out at all of the state's Mother and Baby Homes, including unregistered burials. If it were not for O'Fatharta's persistence much evidence would not have seen the light of day.

By way of context, Redmond explains his own personal story of how his first visit, as an adult, to Castlepollard Mother and Baby Home, where he was born, profoundly affected him.

He described the visit as "life changing" and the impetus for his campaigning work: "I hunted down every scrap of information I could find about Castlepollard and in particular the Angels Plot."

Over the years I have got to know Paul Redmond on a personal level and the fact that he was not prepared to stop there, but to go beyond his own experience, does not surprise me; he has unselfishly taken on a momentous task on behalf of all those stolen lives.

In his own words, "I became an activist by default. The 'something' I wanted to do, I realised afterwards, included never letting people for-

get." The author has taken on a difficult task of rescuing history from those Angel plots. This is literally a history from below and a thoughtful attempt to tell the story of so many who were buried without a name.

*The Adoption Machine* traces the development of orphanages back to the establishment, by Captain Thomas Coram, of London's first foundling hospital in 1739.

## Survival rates

Before this babies were often abandoned or became the inmates of workhouses where survival rates were perilously low. It was Coram who introduced the practice of changing the babies' names upon entering the hospital and therefore losing their identity. Almost 20 years after Coram's initiative the first Magdalene laundry was opened in Whitechapel in London, its function to house 'fallen women'.

Meanwhile, in Ireland legislation did provide for similar institutions, but as Redmond points out the conditions appear to have been significantly inferior to Coram's London-based hospital.

Of the 51,000 children who entered the Dublin hospital between 1796



Castlepollard Mother and Baby Home

Picture: Adoption Rights Alliance

and 1826, more than 41,000 died. Furthermore an investigation by the British government found that in a six-year period between 1790 and 1796, 12,768 babies had been admitted and 9,786 of them had died.

On top of those figures another important statistic was revealed, that of 2,847 vanished babies with no record of their existence. This is an important precedent in terms of a culture of undocumented infants held by institutions without a record to identify them and, sadly, that practice carried through to the modern era.

Redmond provides a factual guide to the various 'homes' established throughout Ireland, beginning with the Rotunda Girls Aid Society in 1881 through to those currently under investigation in the Commission of Investigation into the Mother and Baby Homes.

The hard attitude to single pregnant women in the early 20th century is put in context in terms of both Catholic prejudice and the reign of Queen Victoria. A public policy existed in both Ireland and Britain to "dispatch single pregnant girls to public workhouses where they were separated from the 'respectable poor'



Judi Dench played role of Philomena Lee

and treated appallingly."

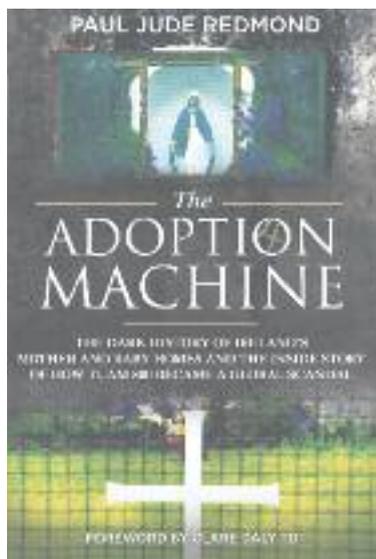
Naturally the appalling treatment of unmarried mothers had a detrimental effect on the health and well being of their babies. Apart from this, the stigma and prejudice against illegitimate children persisted in Irish legislation until the 1980s.

As Redmond comments they were "vilified as bastards, weaklings, runts" and so on but it is the statistical evidence he provides of mortality rates that really indicates their disad-



Entrance to the site in Tuam where some 800 babies are thought to be buried

Picture: RollingNews.ie



vantaged status. Throughout the 1920s infant mortality rates for illegitimate children ran as high as 34%, this was approximately four times higher than the rate for legitimate children.

The central theme of the book is evident from the title; the issue of how so many children were removed from the care of their natural mothers and placed for adoption.

It is very important to note that Ireland did not have adoption legislation in place until 1952, unlike our nearest neighbours who had introduced legislation in the aftermath of the First World War. So effectively all adoption before that date was illegal.

The different circumstances of separation are described with great care in this book. Redmond explains that some were taken for long-term boarding before being sent to industrial schools aged from three or four years until the age of eight, or for adoption after 1952. Other records show mothers and their children being transferred together to country homes before they were split up when the child reached six or eight years of age when they could then be sent to an industrial school.

Adoptions were particularly harrowing as the following paragraph testifies:

“Adoptions and transfers generally happened with little or no warning. Sometimes mothers returned from their work assignments to be bluntly informed that their baby was gone for ever. Mothers were normally called to the office and ordered to return to the wards to prepare their babies by dressing them in their best clothes. They were then instructed to carry them to the front room in the convent. Any protestations were met with a battery of standard responses common to all homes. Mothers were told to ‘Get over it! You knew this day was coming. What else did you expect? How can you possibly look after a child on your own? Isn’t your child better off with a good Catholic mother and father?’”

This book can be added to a small canon of material on the subject including, in particular, Mike Millotte’s *Banished Babies* of



Entrance to Castlepollard

1997. Millotte specifically focused on the illegal trade of babies during the mid-20th century from the homes to Catholic couples in the UK and US.

The extent of this was revealed in records of the Department of External Affairs discovered in 1996 by the archivist Catriona Crowe. Those records relate to the illegal documents, passports and birth registration that recorded the names of adoptive parents as the natural parents. This practice essentially obscured the identities of possibly tens of thousands of people, the true figures can never be known.

The second half of *The Adoption Machine* deals with the attempts of the adoption community to organise and form associations, to lobby for their rights, and to have their stories brought out into the public domain.

The campaigning work has two main aims: the first being to highlight their story and to have a thorough investigation of the past which involves access to all records held in the hands

of agencies, institutions and private individuals.

The right to those records is tied to the second aim and that is to give adopted people a right to their true identity.

The manipulation of the truth, of birth records and other data has made the task of tracing a natural parent or child extremely difficult. That experience is fore-fronted in the movie about Philomena Lee and her son’s attempts to find each other. Their efforts were maliciously thwarted by lies and misinformation.

### Birth records

This was not unique to them it is a common experience for the adopted community. The adopted community have campaigned for decades for legislation to give them a right to access their birth records. That legislation was eventually drafted in 2015 and moved as a bill, the Adopted Persons Tracing Information Bill 2016, but has made no further progress since.

In their attempts to highlight their stories and further their aims many in the adopted community have used social media as an organising tool. Redmond goes into some detail here of the problematic nature of using social media, Facebook in particular.

This makes for interesting reading and will no doubt be a feature of commentary in the future as the problems he highlights are part of a wider pattern on the use of social media for political activity. The breakdown in communication often caused by mis-

understanding has a tendency to escalate online to a greater extent than in the real world and this has had devastating effects on online political activity. Redmond gives a very good account of this here.

The intricacies of the disagreements between the various personnel may be superfluous information for the general reader but it does reflect on the problematic nature of trying to organise from a position of limited resources.

Overall this work provides a good and balanced history of the various institutions that incarcerated women and their children in Ireland. It goes further to describe the lasting impact and damage that a policy of incarceration and forced adoption has had on our society and in particular on those directly affected.

The fallout is very much to the fore at present and as a society we are likely to grapple with it for some time to come.

For anyone interested in learning more on the history of forced adoption and the Mother and Baby Homes, this book is a good place to start; it gives a comprehensive overview of the history of the institutions from their establishment up to the most recent official investigations into them.

It is important that this narrative be owned by those affected from the survivor community and in that sense Paul Redmond, as a leading figure, has taken a very important step.

Rhona McCord is the Parliamentary Assistant to Clare Daly TD

# 'Organise for €15' strategy tops meeting agenda

By **Ciaran Campbell**  
Divisional Organiser

SLIGO and Leitrim Local Councils held a very successful joint meeting on June 6th in Carrickon-Shannon to discuss and agree a campaign strategy centred around Mandate's 'Organise for €15'.

The meeting was very well attended, picture below, with a notable and sizeable travelling contingent from Sligo. After active participation and contributions, the following was agreed:

- A Sligo/Leitrim Joint Council ROC (Recruit-

ment, Organising and Campaigning) Committee was set up comprising of Jason Kavanagh, Oisín O'Dwyer and Tony Meehan from Leitrim and Sligo's Ryan Martin, Thomas Cummins and Saoirse Curran.

- Letterkenny Local Council is to be invited to join the campaign and have full representation on the Sligo/Leitrim Joint Council ROC Committee and subsequent organising of the campaign.

- In the event that Letterkenny Local Council take up this invite, the Sligo/Leitrim Joint Coun-

cil ROC Committee will be renamed the North West Councils ROC Committee.

- Consideration is to be given to the hosting of two public meetings of 'Organise for €15' on selected dates on each of the first two weeks of August or as soon as possible thereafter.

- Dr Stevie Nolan of Trademark is to be invited to speak at these public meetings, with the remaining keynote addresses from shop workers themselves as well as a contribution from Mandate's Organising Department.

- The following two days after one of the

public meetings is to be set aside for a political economy course for key activists from the involved local councils to be conducted by Dr Steven Nolan and Trademark.

- Local politicians, unions, community group activists and media will be invited to attend the public meetings following which the related ROC Committee will meet to assess the event and consider possible next steps.

*Well done all that attended!*



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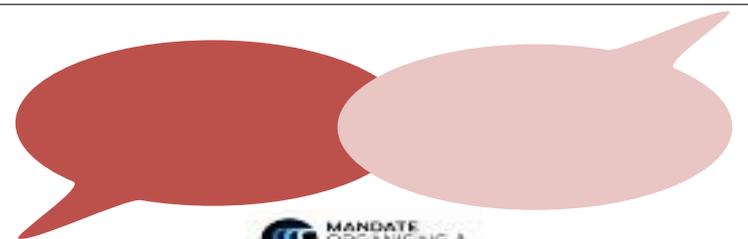
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Tommy McKearney



AS HE concluded what may yet prove to be an epoch-marking address, Mandate General Secretary John Douglas urged those gathered for the union's Biennial Delegate Conference in Wexford in April to "Organise! Organise! Organise!"

This call could hardly be more timely or necessary and not just for those trade unionists in attendance. Notwithstanding a welcome and positive referendum result, the Republic of Ireland appears intent on taking a lead from playwright Sean O'Casey and rebrand itself 'the state o' chassis'.

An outside observer would be forgiven for believing that this state is managed on the basis of ongoing chaos. As one crisis reaches mid-life, another seems always to emerge and eclipses the previous emergency.

A cynic might well say that this style of governing benefits many of those who must be held responsible for an endless series of scandals. The Minister for Homelessness could heave a sigh of relief and return to inactivity as the spotlight was turned on his colleague in the Department of Justice.

**Siege lifted**

The siege on Eoin Murphy was lifted, at least temporarily, as Charlie Flanagan wrestled timidly with the lengthy tale of Garda mismanagement. Then, while the frantic but fruitless search by the Disclosures Tribunal for the commissioners' missing iPhones and laptops continued, focus was diverted from the 'law and justice party' minister by still more distressing revelations.

Citizens of the state were left aghast as they learned of the HSE's botched cover-up of tragic misdiagnoses of cervical smear tests.

Worth noting by the way, was how one private sector institution reacted to the cervical cancer story. Ulster Bank's release of disturbing information about selling off of domestic mortgages just as the smear test scandal was receiving maximum attention, was hardly coincidental.

The bank is putting 6,500 Irish mortgages (including 3,600 belonging to standard owner occupiers) on the market in the latest mass sale of home loans by an Irish bank, and presumably selling to overseas vulture funds.

It may be tempting to attribute much of the above to incompetence, ineptitude or cynical opportunism. However, that would be to miss the underlying cause or indeed rationale for this. The Republic of Ireland's ruling and governing elite is driven by a commitment to pursue a neoliberal, free-market agenda that ultimately accepts no compromise with the common good.

Make no mistake about what this means. The neoliberal economic model favoured by the two largest parties in the Dáil ruthlessly promotes the private sector with its absolute commitment to profit-making to the exclusion of all else.

This model only ever benefits a



Rallying cry: John Douglas at Mandate's BDC in April

Picture: Mandate Trade Union

# We need to put a positive programme on the agenda

privileged minority as wealth is invariably accumulated by those with access to sufficient resources and thereafter becomes concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

It doesn't take much imagination to understand why this system is so appealing to the well-to-do and why they are so anxious to keep things as they are. Simply put, it means they hold on to and increase their wealth regardless of the consequences for the rest of us.

It is not by chance, for example, that we have a housing crisis. The state refuses to instigate a meaningful programme of public house building; an initiative that would definitively address the issue. Why? Because of its dogmatic insistence that the answer lies through housing provided by private sector entrepreneurs.

Unsurprisingly, this assessment is

heartily endorsed, by the banks, by property speculators, by large contractors and buy-to-rent landlords, among whom are many TDs, senators and county councillors.

No surprise either that we have a two-tier health system where, scandalously, money buys access to preferential treatment. Some medical practitioners, health insurance companies and shareholders in private hospitals benefit financially from this arrangement. Meanwhile, public health services are starved of adequate resources resulting in the type of corner cutting that led to the misdiagnoses calamity.

And the list goes on. Care for the elderly is increasingly becoming monetized to the detriment of patients who can't afford private facilities. An underfunded public transport system is being downgraded in favour of private operators

## CWU's 4 point plan

- All unions to agree a common bargaining agenda to tackle insecure employment
- The TUC to call a summit meeting for unions to agree a charter to bring about greater cooperation in recruiting millions of unorganised workers.
- All unions to publish a manifesto of demands on what constitutes a new deal for workers
- The TUC to announce a date later this year where all UK workers can participate in some form of action

CWU General Secretary Dave Ward



Picture: Garry Knight (Public Domain)

while the roll out of high-speed broadband to all areas (an essential facility in this high-tech age) is dependent on profit-seeking companies listed on the stock exchange.

In a nutshell, society in the Repub-

lic of Ireland is organised in favour of the better off and to the disadvantage of a majority of working people.

In order to deal with this situation and create a fair society, we need to carry out a fundamental re-evaluation of the Irish economy, how it is structured and thereafter act to change it for the better.

It is important that the received wisdom relating to neoliberal economics is challenged both in public discourse and, just as importantly, through practical politics. This is not something that will come about spontaneously or fortuitously.

A conscious and coordinated effort will have to be made by the working class and its different organisations in order to carry out this task.

It is in this light that we should understand the real import of John Douglas' address. After stating explicitly the Mandate mission of "... building a strong industrial movement and a strong political movement ...", the general secretary continued by saying, "... whether it is decent wages, health care or housing, our members and their union will be on the front line."

These are powerful, promising and inspiring words. Few can underestimate the significance of a senior Irish trade unionist highlighting his union's determination to combine industrial and political activity.

**Crucial issue**

There are obviously echoes here of the Right to Water campaign, assisted and facilitated as it was, by progressive Irish trade unionists. That struggle provided an example of organised labour making a decisive impact on a crucial issue at an important time.

However, it is now necessary to recognise that Ireland's working people need to move forward and advance a coherent package of demands. For too long we have been in defensive mode struggling to defend public services on the one hand and to stall the imposition of stealth taxation on the other.

There is now a need to put a positive programme on the political agenda and demand that the much-touted economic recovery benefits the working class.

Such a move would also be timely. Progressive unions in Britain are currently encouraging the TUC to demand what is being described as a new deal for workers.

While still at an early stage, Communications Workers Union leader Dave Ward has outlined a basic four-point action plan that includes calling on the TUC to announce a date when British workers would participate in some form of coordinated action. There is a message in this for Irish trade unionists and indeed all citizens committed to ending the current chaos and replacing it with a better Ireland.

We have seen with recent referenda in Ireland that deep running and positive change is possible. What we're lacking is unity as a movement. Mandate's general secretary has made a valuable contribution towards rectifying this situation. It would be a crime not to avail of the opportunity offered within his call.

By Eugene McCartan  
Communist Party of Ireland

ANTONIO Gramsci, the famous Italian Marxist, described the crisis in Italy back in the early 20th century as an interregnum, in which “the old is dying and the new cannot yet be born,” and during which time “a great variety of morbid symptoms” can appear.

This insight can be applied to the present political crisis in Italy but also, more importantly, to the European Union itself. The crisis in Italy is a product of the growing economic crisis and the crisis of legitimacy of the European Union.

Italy was one of the founding members of what was then the EEC. The present crisis grows out of decades of imposed “austerity,” a combination or an alliance of interests between the EU as a bloc, which functions in the interests of European monopoly capital, and the needs and interests of the Italian ruling class.

The Italian national debt has grown to an unsustainable level. Italy holds the world’s third-largest public debt, totalling €2.3 trillion at the end of March 2018. The Italian Treasury plans to issue €240 to €250 billion in bonds this year, rising to €400 billion when short-term notes are included.

The two-party coalition that has reached agreement on a programme for government is made up of the Five-Star Movement, which won 32.5%, and La Lega (the League) – formerly the Northern League – which won 17.5%. These were the undisputed winners in the last general election on March 4th.

### Northern frustration

The Lega expresses the frustrations of the north of Italy, which is still productive (some high-quality products, including clothing, and services) and demands lower taxes, as Italian taxes are among the highest in Europe. It also wants a parallel national currency, a reduction in circulation of the euro (which slows down exports, especially to Germany), and limits to immigration.

Some members of the Five-Star Movement see themselves as heirs to the historic Italian Communist Party (PCI), with a social base consisting of elements of the working class, those in precarious employment, the unemployed, marginalised youth, rural poor, and small businesses.

It advocates a moral renewal of Italian politics and of Italian political parties. It campaigned on a platform of a universal basic income of €750 per month for the poorest, to reduce the effects of the social crisis that is affecting most heavily the south of the country, which in the last 10 years has suffered 20% unemployment, and 40% among young people.

Internal difficulties for the European Union will intensify with the election of and now the formation of a new Italian government. Both parties in the new coalition are, to various degrees, critical of the European Union.

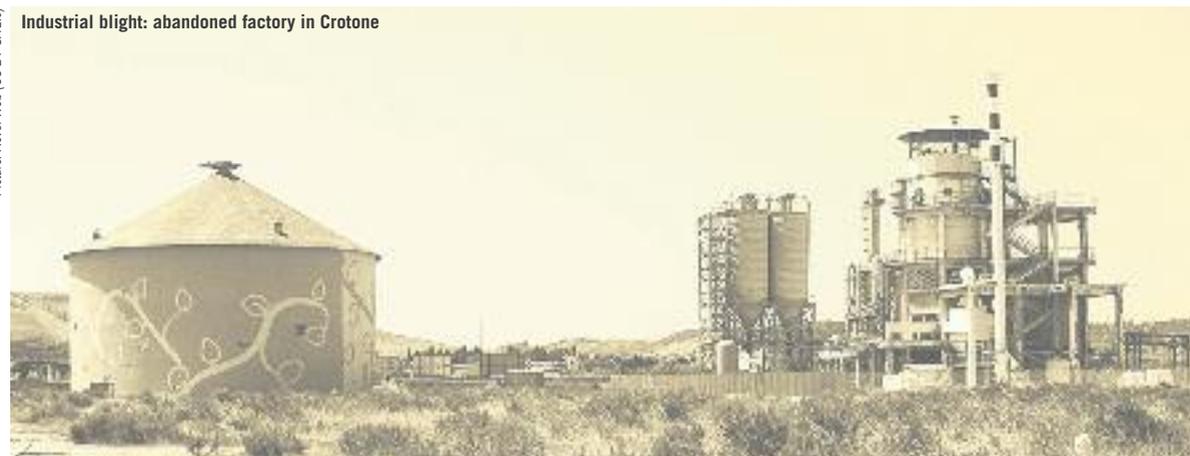
The president of Italy, Sergio Mattarella, first rejected the the new coalition government’s nomination for finance minister, Paolo Savona, who is a fierce critic of the euro. Then he attempted to put together a “technocratic” government, believing this would placate the EU.

This is the second attempted par-

# Italy’s troubles flag up instability of EU project



Ghost town: Sesto San Giovanni



Industrial blight: abandoned factory in Crotona

liamentary coup in Italy, following the imposing by the EU of Mario Monti, an economist who served as prime minister from 2011. But the EU knows that this would only cause it further difficulties and would further strengthen anti-EU forces within Italy and throughout the EU in general. Better to have the new coalition government in office and emasculate it.

This approach poses some interesting questions for those who support the EU, and in particular such elements here in Ireland. Simply put, democracy has no meaning if it becomes a mere function of serving capricious greed and “market forces.”

It raises the question, What should

we look to? The volatile stock exchange, productivity, trade, investment, or growth? And who is in a position to speak on behalf of the markets? The rating agencies? The International Monetary Fund? Do working people not count, only the rich owners of capital?

The priority of the Italian president and the Brussels bureaucracy is to protect the euro and safeguard the fiscal commitments that Italy has already entered into.

The EU commissioner for the budget, the German Christian Democrat Günther Oettinger, was very clear in expressing the attitude of German banks and large industry when he suggested that the markets would demonstrate to the Italian voters the dangers in voting for populists.

### Signal to voters

On May 29th the German news network *Deutsche Welle* stated that “Italy’s economic development could be so drastic that this could be a possible signal to voters not to choose populists from left and right.” In other words, the people must be taught a lesson.

The warning is clear: you can vote for whomever you like so long as they follow the diktats and abide by the EU fiscal rules and treaties. If not, then we will use all economic and political levers to bring you back into line.

Within the European Union we have multiple political parties, but only one manifesto is allowed, that which is agreed by the EU and operates within the EU economic strait-jacket and fiscal controls. Democratic choice is permitted only within agreed parameters.

The two parties involved in the latest attempt to form a government are very critical of immigration, of EU fiscal controls, of the euro, and of greater EU military integration. They are both concerned about the growing power and control by Germany within the EU – what some characterise as German imperialism.

The economic policies pursued by successive Italian governments, in alliance with and in adherence to EU policies of deregulation and privatisation, have facilitated a massive growth of the mafia and organised crime, now the biggest “employers” in the most critical southern regions.

The agreement reached between the Lega and the Five-Star Movement proposed a relaxation of fiscal rules governing the euro zone. Support for further integration in other crucial areas, including an integrated European military policy, may turn more lukewarm or reverse altogether. The



Günther Oettinger: market warning to voters



Sergio Mattarella: pro-EU Italian president



A crumbling factory in the Alto Adige region mirrors an economy in ruins Picture: Thomas Kohler (CC BY 2.0)

# Níl uainn ach an Domhan!



By Cllr Micheál Choilm Mac Giolla Easbuig

MÁS saoránach na hÉireann thú, beidh a fhios agat gurb í an Ghaeilge céad teanga na hÉireann, de réir bunreacht an tSaor Stáit. Ach is cosúil le go leor atá scríofa ann níl beart á dhéanamh de réir na briathra sin. Má bhrúnn tú an cnaipe sin, 'Uimhir a 2', más Gael thú nó gur mhaith leat bheith i do Ghael, beidh tú ag glacadh ceann de na roghanna is cinniúnaí, is réabhlóidí, is cróga, i do shaol agus beidh ort fanacht muna níonn muid gníomh fá dtaobh dó.

Fud fad na tíre uilig, chasfá le tuismitheoirí is le pobail, le daoine aonaracha, atá ag iarraidh sochaí agus saol ghaelach a chothú. Tá borradh agus borradh, i measc na ndíograiseoirí atá ag iarraidh Gaeilge a chur chun cinn le ranganna, scoilteacha, clubanna peile, tob-ghaeltachtaí, ionaid chultúrtha agus le réabhlóid. Díograiseoirí agus feachtaseoirí an chuid is mó acu nó bíonn na daoine ceannann céanna i dtoiseacht ar achan feachtas a bhaineann le leas na ndaoine, ó chearta oibre go cearta na mban, go hagóidí in éadan impiriúlachais. 'Daoine iad seo atá ag iarraidh a bheith saor agus a thuigeann nach dtiocfadh leat bheith saor agus tú faoi thioncar agus faoi smacht teanga thír do chiaptheora.

Another victim is the town of Sora, with a population of 25,000, 80 km (50 miles) east of Rome. Until recently Sora was an affluent commercial city, with medium-sized paper factories and hundreds of shops. Today all the factories are gone, and half the shops have closed. The economic crisis of the system that erupted in 2007, coupled with the imposing of "austerity" policies by Brussels, has only accelerated the sharp decline in the Italian economy. The solution to the problems of the Italian working class – as with the Irish working class – is not more EU integration and stronger controls from Berlin but rather the assertion of national democracy and sovereignty, giving working people real power and control over economic and social policies.

## IN THE PICTURE...



NEC member Keith Leonard, far right, with other Together for Yes activists in front of the 1798 monument in Castlebar, Co Mayo

the full truth. The real unemployment figure is 30% – again the highest in Europe. In addition, 23% of the population, about one in four people, are now at risk of poverty – the highest level since 1989.

The depth of the crisis in Italy is reflected in areas such as Sesto San Giovanni, a town on the outskirts of Milan, which used to be one of the industrial capitals of Italy. With about 200,000 inhabitants, including 45,000 blue-collar workers and a robust middle class, it was the site of some of the most dynamic Italian companies, including Magneti Marelli, Falck, Breda, and many more. Today Sesto is an industrial desert. The factories are gone, the professional class has fled, many shops have shut down.

Twenty-three km (14 miles) to the north of Sesto the town of Meda was the seat of various symbols of Italian excellence, including Salotti Cassina and Poltrona Frau, both of which exported high-quality furniture all over the world and employed tens of thousands of workers and designers. Today both companies are gone.

### Factories gone

With a more EU-critical government in Italy, and Britain on its way out, the EU is looking even more precarious than ever. The crisis within the European Union is multiplying the morbid symptoms within the member states. People are demanding less EU and more accountable democracy at the national level. Unfortunately, much of the left, including some communist parties, are only offering more EU, while the right wing captures the mood, the frustrations and aspirations of the working class. But these forces are not concerned with weakening the system but rather with strengthening it.

Eugene McCartan is General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland

sochaí agus cultúr an caipitealachais.

Tógadh le Gaeilge mé, ón chliabhán aníos, mar a togádh mo shinsear is sinsear mo shinsearsa leis an teanga is ársa san Eoraip. Ba mhaith liom, mar atá ceartaithe domhsa sa cháipéis údai, mo theaghlach féin a thógáil le Gaeilge agus a maireachtáil ann. Is mé atá bródúil as m'oidhreachtsa ach deirtear go dtig bród roimh an tit. Is amhlaidh atá sé sa Ghaeltacht do dhuine ag iarraidh ár saol a chaitheamh fríd ár dteanga féin agus muid ag titim lá in aghaidh lae.

Tá titim scáfar i líon na ndaoine le Gaeilge sa Ghaeltacht nó tháinig laghdú de 10% ó 2011 go 2017 agus suas le 50% ó chéad bunaidh an 'stáit' seo. Níl aon iontas ann nó tá titim i líon na ndaoine atá fostaithe sa Ghaeltacht agus titim arís sa mhéid a gheibh siad dá saothar. Tá titim i soláthar seirbhísí, titim sa chóras léinn, sa léigheas agus cúram leanaí. Go fóill, 2018 níl téacs leabhair Gaeilge le fáil don chuid is mó de na hábhair ar an ard-teastas cionn is gur céad bliain i ndiaidh don chigireacht sasanach a mholadh go gcuirfí ar fáil iad.

Ni inniu nó inné a thoisíodh ag tabhairt 'teanga na mbocht' ar an Ghaeilge nó is fíor é. Bainnean meath na Gaeilge leis an chóras lofa seo a chuireann luach níos airde ar bhrabús an aicme bourgeois, na huaisle ná ar rud ar bith eile sa domhan seo. Is le bochtanas agus míroinnt luach ár saothar atá siad ag leanstan leis an slad ar anam na tíre.

Dá mbeadh a laghad crann de chineál amháin fágtha ar an tsaol bheadh lucht caomhnaithe specis ag cruinniú airgid dár dtarrtháil. Nil ach fíor bheagán daoine sa domhan mhór seo le Gaeilge ón chliabhán acu agus níos lú á usáid i rith an ama. Má

thuigeann tú teangacha nó foghlaim ar bith fiú bheadh a fhios agat luach an fhoinsé sin. Thuigfeá gur taisce fiachmhar í an ghaeltacht. Thuigfeá gurb uirlis iontach sa chogadh in éadan domhan gan éagsúlacht theacht ar an fhíor fhréamh as a d'eascair rud ar bith, gan trácht ar sochaí beo.

Thuigfeá gur fhiú na céadta uaire í ná ag léamh as leabhair a scríobhadh fá dtaobh de. Is sinne an taisce deireaneach dár gcultúr féin agus an tobar a thiocfas tarrtháil na teanga as, nó fiú, go fóill, tá Gaeilge na gaeiltachta mar a bheadh uachtar ann i gcomparáid le rud ar bith atá ar fáil áit ar bith eile. Tuigeann daoine sin nó thig na mílte agaibh chun na gaeiltachta achan bliain leis an uachtar sin a shú isteach agus fáilte rómhaibh.

Ach faraor gear, ní bheidh a neart ar an scéal seo gan athrú iomlán sa chóras chaidheach seo. Ni fheicfidh na rialtais seo thuaidh nó theas gur fiú eolas, teanga nó cultúr. Deirfidh siad leat go gcosnódh sé barraíocht airgid postanna a thabhairt do mhuintir na gaeiltachta, go gcosnódh sé barraíocht iad a íoc mar is gceart, léigheas, léann nó fiú leabhair scoile a thabhairt daofa.

"B'fhéarr an cur i gcéill a choinneáil a' ghabháil agus ligint orainn go bhfuil muid ag iarraidh, le brúigh uimhir a 2, seirbhís go bhfuighfidh siad lag, go bhfuighfidh siad tuirsech agus sa dierieadh go bhfuighfidh an t-iomlán bás. Ach is duine saor i mo mheon is mo ghníomh mé, cosúil libhse agus tá me ag troid in éadan an iomláin ag súil le athrú córais agus saol. Tá mé ag súil le Poblacht na nOibrí, áit a bheas meas ar dhaoine, eolas, cultúr agus an Ghaeilge. Ni thiofáidh sé gan obair, gan gníomh, tá go leor le déanamh againn.

Éirimís, níl uainn ach an domhan.



## ITALY

AT A GLANCE...

**GDP**  
€1,734,982,692,016

**Population**  
60,795,764

**Interest per year**  
€91,751,859,974

**Interest per second**  
€2,909

**Debt per citizen**  
€39,485

**Debt as percentage of GDP**  
138%

present crisis can only pit the will of the Italian people against the EU establishment and the global markets.

The backdrop to the election results is that about 20% of Italy's industrial capacity has been destroyed, and 30% of the country's firms have defaulted. Such destruction of wealth has sent shock waves through the country's banking system, which was (and still is) heavily exposed to small and medium-sized businesses.

Unemployment continues to be one of the worst in Europe, with an official unemployment rate of 11% (12% in southern Italy) and a youth unemployment rate of 35% (with peaks of 60% in some southern regions). But these figures do not tell

# Thinking the unthinkable on the EU

AS THE European Union reels from one catastrophe to another, not least the recent Italian situation and the never ending Brexit saga, a recent European Workers Conference hosted by the French Independent and Democratic Workers Party – *Parti Ouvrier Independent Democratique* – held on May 12th and 13th May in Paris, commemorating the 25th anniversary signing of the Maastricht Treaty clearly outlined an imperative for workers to internationally enjoin and fight the obvious ills and impacts of the EU's neo-liberal economic agenda.

Keynote speakers and conference audience contributors laid bare the effects of this agenda – war, immigration, job losses through privatisation, social charter and wage erosion, union de-recognition, flexible insecure working practices, denial of rights towards women and minorities, education and health care budget ravages, capital over labour... and so on and so on.

In fact, one couldn't help wonder



Ciaran Campbell

that Ireland and the UK were well ahead of the pack compared to some of our European counterparts. That said, it's saddening that countries constituted to provide full and wide social inclusion and supports are now coerced by the EU, the IMF and the World Bank to sell off national utilities, embrace privatisation and scale back on financing those very same supports such as health, housing and education.

In 1989, Bulgaria had 220,000 mine industry workers but by 2015 this figure had been cut to 20,000 due to the country's mining industry being privatised and the wholesale closure of many of its operations. Many of Bulgaria's brave trade union-

“ Many have queued up to denounce Brexit, to broadcast the EU's effectiveness in delivering societal wealth and benefits, employment rights but none have examined what is actually happening on the ground ”

ists who fought to prevent this happening as well as the other devastating impacts of neo-liberal economics on the country have been and continue to be jailed because of their activism. One of them died while in prison.

It shouldn't go unnoticed that this unfettered pursuit of capital dominance over labour has led to war and subsequent widespread immigration

coupled with an incredible rise in far right nationalist politics across the globe, appearing at best to be unfettered, if not totally out of control. The world's Big Powers' relentless pursuit and monopolising of capital presents very real dangerous prospects for all of us.

The time has now come for the EU model – while its origins were arguably morally aspirational and principled – to undergo an examination on a proper class perspective and a critical analysis that sets aside the obvious puerile bashing of those who argue its days are numbered and set out the reasons why.

Many from all quarters have queued up to denounce Brexit, to broadcast the EU's effectiveness in delivering societal wealth and benefits, employment rights but none have examined what is actually happening on the ground.

To suggest that those that voted for Brexit are like “Turkeys voting for Christmas” and/or “It was a racist vote” is insulting. To suggest that so-

cial wealth and benefits as well as employment rights were solely based on membership of the EU is to be totally disingenuous.

Is it conceivably possible that Brexit might not materialise as the evil everyone appears to suggest it will be? Is it also not the case that socially-focused, national economic self-determination might actually deliver more in terms of wealth, benefits and rights for all citizens?

At this European Workers Conference keynote speaker after keynote speaker from many different parts of Europe – Belarus, Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Macedonia, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, the Spanish State, Switzerland and Turkey – spoke of their current experiences and struggles against the impending demise of their hard-won rights, all of which had a particular resonance.

Common to all of these addresses was the EU's capitalist model, driven and replicated across all its member states, which along with other global



## 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](mailto: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](mailto:mandateotc@mandate.ie)



Picture: Doreen Hill (CC BY 2.0)

Street artist Banksy's take on Brexit – perhaps it's time to reconsider our own participation in the whole European project...

punches well above its weight on EU lobbying practices.

A recent Irish Times article (4th June) pointed out that Ibec was the third biggest lobby spender across the EU's 28 member states – lagging behind the BDI (the Federation of German Industries) and the BDA (the Confederation of German Employers' Associations) – spending €1.3 million on EU lobbying activities in 2017.

Ibec has four full-time staff based in Brussels who are also supplemented by employees based at its Dublin Head Office regularly visiting Brussels on business and lobby missions. This equates to an Ibec self-declared full-time staff equivalent of 10 for the purposes of its EU interactions in the same year. As the Irish Times reports: "Ibec is also the busiest lobbying group by far in Ireland, giving it an influential voice with Government."

No wonder it feels like we are trying to push back the tide in defending workers' hard fought and won rights!

powers is savaging a collectivist understanding of what constitutes the common good across the planet.

While many Irish workers and their representative organisations

will bemoan any and all criticism of the EU, they should be fully apprised of the fact that Ibec – the Irish 'trade union' like body that represents more than 7,500 Irish businesses –



MANDATE  
ORGANISING &  
TRAINING CENTRE

## 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](mailto:mandateotc@mandate.ie)



## Union Representative Advanced Senior Course

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

### Course content

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

*Certification and Progression: Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate certificate.*

*They may progress to the FETAC level 5 Certificate in Trade Union studies or other relevant training courses offered by Mandate.*

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

# US unions vow to fight back after Supreme Court ruling

AMERICAN public sector unions have slammed as a “nefarious political attack” the decision of the US Supreme Court to overturn a 40-year precedent that compels non-union workers to pay agency – or “fair share” – fees to trade unions.

Those fees, approved by the court in the 1977 *Abood vs. Detroit Board of Education* case, cover collective bargaining costs, such as contract negotiations.

The June 27 *Janus vs. AFSCME Council 31* ruling is being seen as a major blow to workplace organising Stateside – but unions have vowed to fight back.

Mark Janus, an employee at the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, had claimed the fees were a form of political advocacy and infringed on his First Amendment rights.

AFSCME countered by insisting the fees prevented “free-riding” from employees who benefit from the union’s

negotiations. Following the ruling, AFSCME President Lee Saunders said: “Despite this unprecedented and nefarious political attack – designed to further rig the rules against working people – nothing changes the fact that America needs unions now more than ever.

“We are more resolved than ever to fight like hell to win for our members and the communities they care so much about.

“AFSCME members don’t do this work to get rich. They do it because it’s a calling – and for that service, they deserve respect.”

AFGE National President J. David Cox said: “On behalf of the wealthiest one per cent and special interest groups, the Supreme Court has attempted to strike the death knell for public-sector unions, but the workers themselves will ultimately decide their own fate. Workers know the importance of unions in the workplace and they will survive.”



Union Representative Introductory course participants proudly display their certificates at the Mandate Training Centre in Dublin in May. Standing (left to right) are: John O'Reilly, Joanna Paszkiewicz, Thomas Griffin, Thomas Carroll, John Murphy, Robert Butler, and tutor Martin Mahony. Front Row: Mandate Dublin North West Divisional Organiser Keith Pollard and Lorraine O'Connor.

# Why I'll be jumping at next available course

AFTER completing his course Thomas Griffin (Garveys SuperValu Limerick) spoke to *Shopfloor* about his learning experience.

He said: “After feeling a bit nervous I was put at ease within a minute of

arriving. I honestly didn't think I'd enjoy the course as much as I did and, as true as God, I've been recommending it to other members.

“[The course was] interesting from start to finish, with some great dis-

cussions – and the learning was made easy.”

Thomas added: “On top of that I met some fantastic people who I look forward to seeing again. I'll be jumping at the next available course.”



## 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](http://www.mandate.ie)**



House Committee training in Portlaoise. Pictured far right is Mandate Midlands Divisional Organiser Mandy Kane



Left: Participants in the Employment Law Level 1 course in the Connolly Room, Mandate Training Centre in Dublin



Right: Union Representative Introductory course held in Cork in May. Mandate President John O'Donnell, who dropped in to meet the new shop stewards, is pictured with the group, back right

# The next step... women's rights in the workplace



**Michael Taft**  
SIPTU Research

NOW that women have secured a basic human right denied them by the constitutional caprice of the now defunct 8th Amendment, what is the next step?

It depends on how people see the issue. If it was about secularising the constitution, then the next step would be to dis-establish the church in the provision of health and education. If it was seen as a woman's issue – an issue of choice and autonomy – then the next step would be to address issues that continue to deny women their rights. (By the way, we can take these and other steps in tandem).

In the workplace, this means the continuing discrimination against women – in pay and working conditions. The usual way of measuring this is the gender pay gap, a simple calculation that measures the earnings inequality between men and women. This has rightly received a lot of attention. However, there are problems with this measurement.

A pay gap can be due to structural factors, not outright gender discrimination. For instance, occupational segregation could explain the difference in earnings. While 24% of women work in the low-pay distributive and hospitality sectors, only 19% of men work there. Because of this and other factors (occupational segregation, educational achievement, number of working years), this simple measurement is called 'unadjusted'. The EU Commission states: "... the unadjusted GPG (gender pay

gap) entangles in its measurement both possible discrimination between men and women, in terms of 'unequal pay for equal work', as well as the impact of differences in the average characteristics of men and women in the labour market."

Eurostat has been working on an 'adjusted' gender pay gap – one which removes these structural factors. What is left is called the 'unexplained' pay gap and it is in this measure we will find actual pay discrimination.

## Performance

So how do these compare? Ireland performs comparatively well in the 'unadjusted' pay gap with a lower percentage than the average of our EU peer group (13.9% as opposed to 16.9%). However, when we turn to the adjusted, or unexplained, gender pay gap a different picture emerges. [SEE FIG 1]

Ireland shoots up to the top. While it cannot be assumed that the entire amount of this gap is due to actual pay discrimination, it suggests such discrimination is the highest in our peer group.

When we turn to the wholesale and retail sector we find that while Ireland is not at the top of the league, the

“ When people work together – whether in a social organisation campaigning for the repeal of an odious amendment or in the workplace campaigning for equality – positive change can occur... ”



Picture: Joseph Francis (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Irish gender pay gap is significantly above its own national average. [SEE FIG 2]

The national gender pay gap is 13.9%; in the wholesale and retail

sector it is nearly 21%. Again, it must be stressed that this is not all down to actual pay discrimination. But it does point to serious disparities and inequalities (including actual discrimi-

nation) in the sector.

There are a number of strategies to end the gender pay gap: legislation (and highly resourced monitoring and compliance) and transparency which the Government intends to introduce, requiring companies to publish gendered payroll breakdowns.

One strategy that doesn't get much mention is the attempt to rebalance, however slightly, the power relationships in the workplace; namely, collective bargaining. Where collective bargaining exists there is a tendency for the gender pay gap to fall. There are two examples of this in unadjusted figures.

First, in the public sector – where workers benefit from collective bargaining – the gender pay gap is much less than in the private sector, where only 15% of workers benefit. In the public sector the gender pay gap is 9.7%; in the private sector it is more than double – 19.7%.

Second, those economic sectors with higher levels of union density (the number of workers who are members of trade unions – this can be used as a proxy for collective bargaining) tend to have lower gender pay gaps.

## Union density

Not only is the gender pay gap lower in health, education and public administration; the transport sector has a lower gender pay gap. And the transport sector has the highest union density in the market economy.

There is a strong and positive relationship between the ability of employees to negotiate collectively with their employer and a lower gender pay-gap. The European Trade Union Confederation found this:

"... systems with a focus on centralised bargaining (sectoral and cross-sectoral) and high collective bargaining coverage tend to have been more successful in integrating gender equality issues into collective bargaining... the most successful gender equality outcomes are found where sectoral and company bargaining co-exist."

This shouldn't be too surprising. When people work together – whether in a social organisation campaigning for the repeal of an odious amendment or in the workplace campaigning for equality – positive change can occur. These are persistent lessons.

And when people work together, the next steps and the steps after that become a little bit easier.

Note: This data was presented by Ethel Buckley, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, to a Unite seminar on collective bargaining.

FIG 1

Adjusted Gender Pay Gap (% of average gross hourly earnings of men): 2014

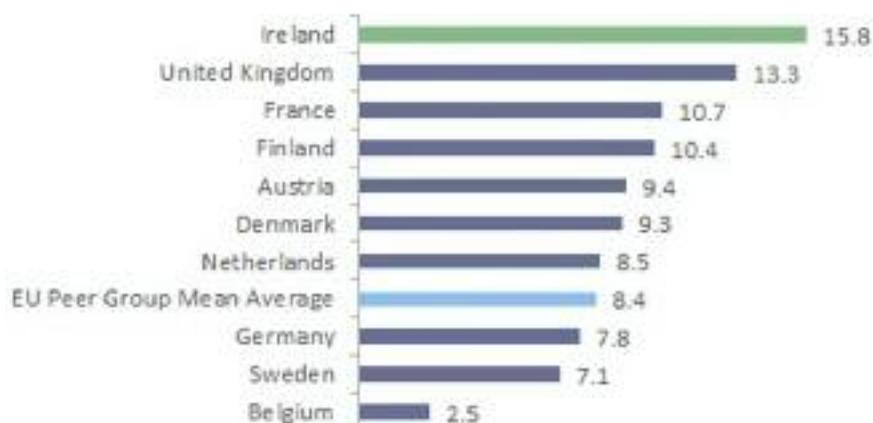
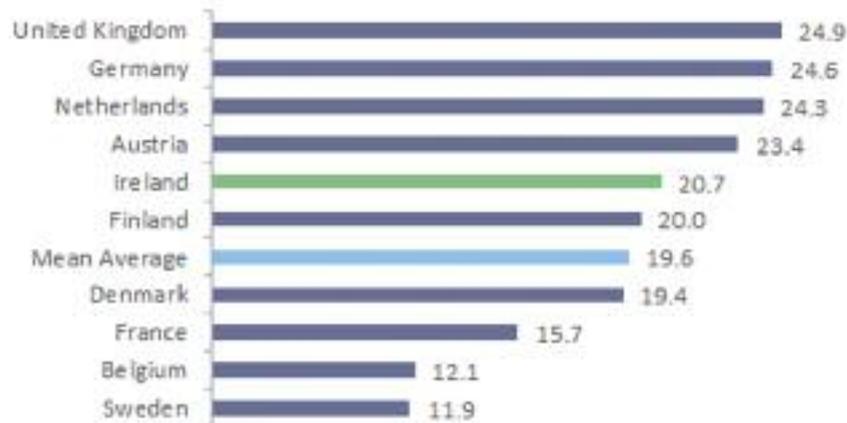


FIG 2

Wholesale / Retail Sector Gender Pay Gap: 2014 (% of average male earnings)





Mel Corry (above left) and Stephen Nolan of Trademark (below far right) who took the Advanced Senior Reps course in Galway in late June, pictured with course participants

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

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



Illustration: Daniel Huntley (CC BY-SA 2.0)

# Link between low pay and in-work poverty...



THERE has long been an assumption that work is the best and most effective route out of poverty.

This maxim, however, has been questioned recently by a report published by Social Justice Ireland that posits that there are more than 104,000 people in employment in Ireland who are living in households with an income which is less than the official poverty line – about €250 per adult per week. The working poor.

Social Justice Ireland argues that in-work poverty and the fact that poverty figures for those in employment have moved very little over the last 10 years reflects a persistent problem with low earnings.

Some commentators, however, have been highly critical of the proposition that low earnings are the key explanation of in-work poverty, arguing that the explanation put forward by Social Justice Ireland is at least imprecise, if not incorrect.

What then can we make of these conflicting claims? Is low-earnings the best explanation for in-work poverty? Or are the responding commentators correct in saying that this explanation is an inaccurate one? As like most social issues, the answer to this question is less straight-forward than a simple Yes or No.

To be counted as in-work poor one must have a job and, at the same time, belong to a household at-risk-of-poverty. This is because low earnings are measured at the individual level, while risk of poverty is measured at the household level.

What this means is that you can have a low paying job, but not live in poverty. And, despite having low earnings, substantive proportions of low-paid workers do not live in households which are classified as poor.

We can conclude from this that there is some merit to the proposition that being in low earnings employment does not necessarily imply that you will have a low standard of living, or that you will live in poverty. This is because the household circumstances of individual workers are key in determining whether or not a low-paid worker will be classified as poor.

Nevertheless, how much you earn does play a significant role in increasing your chances of being in poverty. Those with a low paid job are much more likely to be poor.

But, as said, risk of living in poverty for low earning individuals also depends importantly on the household in which they live – and indeed it is the role which low earnings play in the household that is critical in determining the likelihood that the household will be in poverty.

So, if you are a low paid worker and the sole earner of the household there is a much higher risk that your household will be classified as poor, than if you live in a household with one or more other workers.

Some of the latest figures show that 17% of low paid individuals who are the sole earner in their households are poor. This figure drops to 1% or 2% for those low paid individuals who live with another worker.

We can conclude from this then that for a significant proportion of the low paid – work only becomes a route out of poverty if one lives with another worker. Thus, for low paid workers, work is by no means a guaranteed route out of poverty.

This is all the more concerning in the context of research which shows that the in-work poor have a higher risk of being in poor health than the unemployed or economically inactive.

Additionally, there has been much debate and discussion lately about the extensive number of jobless households in Ireland with many commentators arguing that if we are serious about reducing poverty we

“ We can conclude from this then that for a significant proportion of the low paid – work only becomes a route out of poverty if one lives with another worker ”

must concentrate on reducing joblessness and getting more people into work.

In the context of the above data – which suggests that for many people work only becomes a route out of poverty if a second member of the household also works – we must tread with caution.

At the same time, the types of jobs available and the nature of employment has changed, becoming more precarious, marked by a reduction in full-time, permanent jobs and a general decline in the terms, conditions and quality of employment.

This has especially been the case for younger workers; those with fewer qualifications; those employed in certain sectors such as retail or the accommodation and food sectors; or those in lower skilled occupations such as routine or elementary occupations.

Labour market activation strategies for reducing the number of jobless households could have the unintended consequence of increasing in-work poverty. This could happen if one becomes employed in a low paid job which does not pay enough to bring the household above the income poverty threshold. We must ensure that the jobs created to reduce joblessness are decent ones.

Lisa Wilson is an Economist at the Nevin Economic Research Institute

# Abortion IS a workplace issue, here's why...



Thomas Pringle

AFTER a forceful 'Yes' win in the Referendum the 8th Amendment will now vacate its long established home within our constitution. Women today and in future generations will finally have access to what was rightfully theirs in the first place: healthcare at home.

Now that the priority is on drafting legislation to make this a reality for the first time in Ireland it got me thinking what other areas apart from our healthcare system needs to adapt to this momentous result? And what can we do to dismantle and prevent the shame and stigma that has been plaguing women and their families for too long?

While I believe there are many areas in Irish life that will have to play catch-up, an important area will be the workplace environment. In the context of the repeal of the 8th Amendment abortion should now be formally recognised as a workplace issue. For years it was a secret one.

The basis for this was staunchly validated in a report published last February by Mandate and other trade unions, titled *Abortion as a Workplace Issue: A Trade Union Survey North & South of the Island*.

The long awaited and much needed survey on abortion provided a valuable insight into abortion in the workplace in a way never seen before. A total of 3,180 members responded to the survey while 48 took part in online discussions.

It continues to be a vital piece of research that will, if supported and acted upon, help bring along employers, employees and their colleagues



All changed, changed utterly: crowds in Dublin await the result of the referendum on repealing the 8th Amendment

Picture: Mandy La Combre

into facilitating a compassionate and understanding work environment for staff undergoing terminations.

The basis for such a need to recognise abortion as a workplace issue was established through some revealing statistics in the report worth considering in the context of Repeal Ireland.

For example, in those with direct experience of abortion as a workplace issue, almost half (42%) stated that the person concerned had struggled to pay for the costs of the procedure. Related to this were issues such as time off and sick pay, with 23% wanting time off after the abortion but unable to afford to lose wages,

while 20% stated the person had wanted sick leave after the abortion but could not take it.

A further 11% needed time off and were able to get sick pay, whereas 10% needed time off and used unpaid leave.

In addition, 28% stated that the person had needed time off and used annual leave to facilitate this.

As we can see from the figures, supports ranging from disclosure, advice, support, time off and sick pay will need to be facilitated to ensure that workplaces are compassionate and understanding places for staff who find themselves in this situation.

How can the Government and em-

ployers ensure that abortion is recognised as a workplace issue and secure supports necessary for female staff members seeking healthcare at home and in some rare cases abroad?

Firstly, employment legislation may have to be amended to place the onus on employers to recognise the rights of women to access healthcare at home. Whereas before a women would take annual leave or unpaid leave to travel to the UK we now agree that women should be facilitated here at home. It makes sense to ensure women are entitled paid leave for seeking medical attention of any kind during pregnancy, including in the case of termination for whatever

reason. That's why I believe the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme should be expanded to cater to the needs of women seeking a termination. Currently it provides an initial examination, if possible before 12 weeks, and a further five examinations during the pregnancy, which are alternated with visits to the maternity unit/hospital. It also includes free in and out-patient visits to the maternity hospital.

The next step would be to ensure that employers recognise the scheme and adhere to it by providing paid leave to a staff member seeking a termination.

Furthermore, it would mean the woman would not have to disclose the reason for seeking leave as long as it was a recognised maternity service and privacy would be preserved. Not everyone has a positive relationship with their employer, so this needs to be respected.

Much of this will have to be addressed between various Departments but I am hopeful that the Government will recognise the importance of this so that workplaces across Ireland can cater to the needs of women at this difficult time.

We have a lot of work to do to make up for the 34 years of the 8th Amendment hovering over the lives of women and their families in Ireland. But let's not forget how long it can take for culture to change and for stigma and shame to dissipate into the past.

For that reason it's important that abortion as a workplace issue is recognised and kept firmly on the Government's agenda. I will do my best to make it so and I've no doubt that Mandate and the trade union movement will be pushing hard on this issue as the legislation progresses through the Dáil.

Thomas Pringle is an Independent4Change TD for Donegal



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Evening Courses take place one evening per week for a duration of 14 weeks.

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

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

# EU Parliamentary Left group report's Apple tax allegations

A REPORT commissioned by the Left group in the European Parliament claims it has found examples of systematic tax evasion and abuse of legal loopholes by tech giant Apple between 2015 and 2017.

It examines the corporate tax rate paid by Apple globally and in the European Union after it made significant changes to its corporate structure in 2015.

The GUE/NGL report also looks into the methods Apple uses in handling its tax affairs today, and how it deploys features of Irish tax law and policy that help with what the report authors claim is the company's ongoing tax avoidance.

The publication of the report coincides with Apple's recent refusal to appear before MEPs in the Parlia-



Picture: Filip Maljkovic (CC BY-SA 2.0)



A series of shock claims involving tax arrangements by Apple have been made in a report by the Left group in the European Parliament, above

ment's TAX3 committee over the *Paradise Papers* revelations.

Claims in the report include:

Apple has no geographical disclosure of profits and taxes wherever it operates – paying \$13.9 billion in taxes for the Americas but

only \$1.7 billion for the rest of the world combined. The research suggests that Apple could be paying as little as 0.7% tax on its EU profits;

The report claims Ireland plays a crucial role in Apple's company structure – with five of its seven most significant subsidiaries (owning more than 20 other subsidiaries located around the globe) being incorporated here. These subsidiaries have been crucial in holding cash – none of which is disclosed or subject to EU taxes;

Apple has used pre-2015 Irish laws to enact tax avoidance strategies – from residency to intellectual property laws, and transfer pricing to APAs (advanced pricing agreements). Intellectual property, in

particular, has been central to profit-shifting involving Ireland;

Along with Apple, US multinationals such as Starbucks, Microsoft, Google, Facebook, AirBnB and Pfizer have used tax mechanisms such as the 'Double Irish', the 'Dutch Sandwich' and even the 'Single Malt' (Ireland-Malta treaty);

The Irish government has been slow or reluctant through delays to phase out the many legal loopholes, which has allowed Apple to exploit the tax system;

Apple does not disclose any financial information from its Irish subsidiaries that are taking advantage of Irish financial secrecy allowance for unlimited liability companies.

## SUMMER SCHOOL

# Unions' youth committees share knowledge and discuss strategy

TEN young members from Mandate Youth took part in a summer school in Carlingford on Friday, 22nd June and Saturday 23rd June. The event was a cross-union initiative between Mandate Youth and the CWU Youth Committee.

The event was named after two young trade union activists Francis Gormley (29) from Nightline and a CWU activist, and Mandate member and young activist Daniel McCarthy (26) from Penneys in Cork who passed away in September 2016.

Mandate President John O'Donnell said Daniel was instrumental in ensuring the underage rates of pay were abolished in Penneys and helped to bring in secure hour contracts as an

activist. The event began with a presentation from Stevie Nolan from TradeMark Belfast who explained to participants the history of trade unionism and capitalism. This was followed by a briefing titled 'Neo-liberal Turn and the Rise of Disaster Capitalism'.

Participants discussed the great recession before a small social event allowed everyone to get to know each other a bit more. The second day consisted of a presentation about low pay, insecure work, housing and the importance of trade unions being active both industrially and politically.

Mandate Communications Officer David Gibney said: "Irish workers,

particularly retail and bar workers, are extremely low paid by EU standards. We need to win pay increases, and secure hour contracts. However, there's no point in winning a 3% pay increase if the Government can come along and introduce water charges making you worse off than you were before."

Housing was also discussed along with the homelessness crisis. "Almost 50% of all those categorised as homeless are under the age of 24. This is a scandal and young workers need to get organised and fight back," added Gibney.

The final part of the event discussed how young workers can get organised, culminating in the ques-

tion about how the two youth committees can work closer together to achieve shared objectives.

James Callaghan, from SuperValu in Swords, took part in the conference and told *Shopfloor* he "thoroughly enjoyed" the experience.

### Engaged

He said: "Being engaged with like-minded people my age is great because we can share our experiences and learn together. It was also great to speak with activists from another unions and realising that they share similar conflicts in their jobs."

"The political economy education is vital for anyone wanting to understand how the world works and how

history has developed into the modern world. I attended the full three day political economy course last year but this condensed version was still useful as it's so dense with information that I still learned a bunch the second time round."

Callaghan added: "Going forward, our youth committee will stay in touch with the CWU youth committee so that we can work together on a few key issues we had agreed upon at the conference."

● Mandate Youth hosted a conference in Dublin on Tuesday, 17th July for members under the age of 35. Further details in the next edition of *Shopfloor*.



EYES LEFT! Introducing our new column...

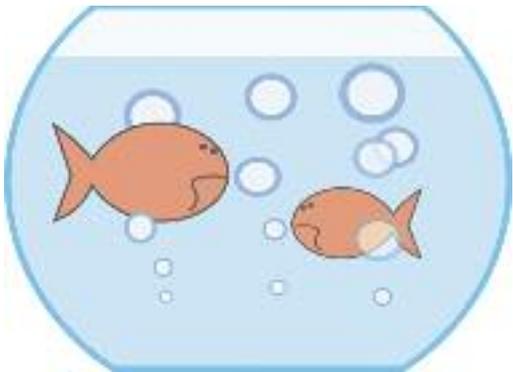
# Biffo



The Eye That Never Sleeps

Yes Minister, remember your roots!

Biffo's Dail spy tells us that a certain TD who's a dapper chap, always well-tanned and beautifully coiffured, walked past the open door of the AV Room in Leinster House recently where a group of LloydsPharmacy workers were presenting their personal stories to assorted TDs and Senators about being denied by their employer their basic human right to belong and be represented by a trade union in their workplace. The dapper chap had received an invitation and a reminder to attend the presentation but instead proclaimed to his adoring entourage: "I must go and check into the hotel now." Life must be so difficult for ex-Workers Party alumni, imagine this poor dapper chap having to book into a nice hotel while low paid workers only a few feet away desperately seek help from political influencers and legislators, people just like him.



## A fishy tale!

TK & Maxx are the glorious names of the two goldfish brought to staff in TK Maxx in Arklow by management in a last-ditch attempt at getting them to abandon their recent successful strike. The big fish who made the staff an offer they couldn't refuse is now referred to locally in Arklow as The Codfather! Their diabolical fishy plan sank without trace and one of the workers commented: "It really wasn't the time or the place to start coddling about something so serious. It was a soFISHticated plan but they failed to hook us this time." Rumours are now rife in Arklow that management are hatching a devious follow-up plan to introduce a piano to the staff canteen. One worker source quipped: "We will not be caught out as everyone here knows the difference between a piano and a fish. You can tune a piano but you cannot tuna fish."

## Knight Rider Bertie

Ex-Taioseach the bold Bertie Ahern was loitering with no intent close to a LloydsPharmacy picket line in the Northside of Dublin recently. He was draped across his car like the Hoff on his beloved car KITT from the 1980s TV series *Knight Rider*. When a lone striker, crouching tiger, approached Bertie for a selfie, he made like a startled gazelle or one of those *Dukes of Hazard* boys diving into his car as if he was at the starting line of the Donegal Rally. On hearing this picket line tale it struck me on the similarities between Bertie and KITT the car which are actually quite startling. In the *Knight Rider* TV show KITT was described as "an advanced artificially intelligent, self-aware and nearly indestructible car." Substitute "car" in that sentence with "Smithwicks swilling chancer with a neck like a jockey's arse accompanied by Presidential delusions of grandeur" and KITT and Bertie could be one and the same.

## NEWS

En francais s'il vous plait... Mandate organiser Ciaran Campbell spoke to *La Tribune des travailleurs* on the referendum result...



# An historic victory...

**The turn-out seems to have been important with a big mobilisation of the electorate. Can you confirm?**

This is very much the case. There was a 64.1% electorate turn-out in this referendum election. The electorate – and particularly youth and women – were motivated and mobilised to have their democratic voices and ultimately to emphatically defend their rights. This has been a momentous and historic day for Irish women and Ireland in general.

**What are the obstacles to be overcome in order to reach such a result?**

The obvious obstacle in this referendum was the Catholic Church and its influence in Irish society and politics and that the trade union movement is not excluded. While many Irish politicians showed leadership in advocating change, others were very active in declaring for the 'No' side, most notably the many Fianna Fail TDs. Sinn Fein also experienced similar but lesser problems. However, probably the most worrying were some of the serious mixed messages or silence emanating from the Irish trade union movement. This is indicative of the obvious institutional fear to embrace radical and progressive change, to remain entrenched in a comfort zone that denies real democracy and people politics. Thankfully the Irish electorate haven't listened to or followed that message.

**What will be the immediate impact of this result on women's rights and particularly working women's rights?**

The obstacle preventing any pro-

abortion law in Ireland has been overcome but abortion has not yet been legalised. There are already signals that some of those that canvassed and campaigned for no change will now mobilise to influ-

ence that legislation in such a way that those rights will be restrictive. We will also need to mobilise again to ensure that the huge democratic mandate of the Irish electorate is legislatively delivered.



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# Workers Uniting

## A worldview that builds bridges across oceans...



**Mel Corry**

IN MAY this year I was privileged, as a member of Unite, to be selected to take part in a course run by Workers Uniting, a global union created by the USW (United Steelworkers) USA and Canada and Unite the Union in Britain and Ireland.

The union boasts a combined membership of more than three million members on both sides of the Atlantic and has also strong links with trades unions in Mexico, Brazil and South Africa.

The goal is to maximise solidarity with workers in struggle anywhere in the world in a bid to match the globalisation of capitalism.

I was interested in acquiring new insights into education that would enhance and develop my own political education work in Trademark and indirectly the trades unions to which we deliver services. I was not disappointed.

The Irish/British delegation spent two days in the facility in Linden Hall in rural Pennsylvania acclimatising and getting to know the union structures in our respective organisations and gaining an understanding of the legislative framework for employment law in the various jurisdictions.

Our first guest lecture by Guillermo Perez was pitched as a workshop on immigration and fresh from the Brexit experience some of the participants approached this session with some trepidation.

We need not have worried as Guillermo skilfully and comprehensively laid out the positive role played by immigrants not only in the development of the United States but also the American Labour movement.

We learned about the history of the AFL-CIO, the American union federation, and about how the AFL (American Federation of Labor) organised craft workers resisting immigration and organising among immigrant workers. The CIO (Congress of Industrial Organisations) organised all industrial workers. The AFL-CIO came together in the 1950s.

It was from the CIO tradition that the United Steelworkers emerged and they are very proud of their roots. The USW is a diverse organisation – as you would expect from a

union that organises across all sectors – and as such addresses this diversity in its education.

We left Linden Hall and on our way to Pittsburgh we stopped off in Brackenridge and visited a local steel mill owned by ATI. Brackenridge is a town ravaged by industrial decline and clearly dependent on what jobs were available.

We toured the plant in groups, some led by HR managers and some by shop stewards. The plant was running at 30% of its capacity but is the most modern steelworks in the world.

While its operation was impressive the group couldn't help noticing the absence of workers on the factory floor.

The answer of course was automation and what few workers were there were on computers driving the mill. Of course, automation is one of the greatest challenges we face in the coming years and we need to be having conversations about how we survive it or, indeed, harness it.

In a question and answer session after the tour the company reluctantly told the delegation that they



Main picture: Workers Uniting delegation visits the Lincoln memorial in Washington DC  
Below right: Mel Corry and Laura Duggan, the Irish contingent in the Workers Uniting delegation, on the heights overlooking Pittsburgh, home of the United Steelworkers



Picture: Gage Skidmore (CC BY-SA 2.0)



USW leader Leo Gerard points out that Trump is a huckster

Picture: US Dept of Agriculture (CC BY 2.0)

had made a significant investment in the site despite the fact that the numbers employed had gone from 5,000 at its height to around 450.

The union side were reluctant to talk openly but referred to a dispute which the company called 'the event' and it was clear there was more to the story as I will outline later.

We proceeded to Pittsburgh and the HQ of the USW. Pittsburgh is a city steeped in industrial and trade union heritage. Steffi Domike, an extremely committed educationalist within the union, who was more than generous with her knowledge, gave us a tour of the city's important labour sites.

We also met USW President Leo Gerard who gave us an overview of the political situation in the USA from the union's standpoint. He described

Trump as a huckster who had stolen the labour message and convinced many USW members to vote for him. President Gerard was very clear about the need for the union to connect with its members and make sure that Trump is confronted for his deceit and that the union focuses its resources to international solidarity such as Workers Uniting.

Every minute of our time was packed with activity but all of it good quality engagement. We had an excellent presentation from John Lepley about fascism and the rise of right-wing populism. As someone steeped in this kind of education, I was extremely impressed by John's content, style and delivery.

He was very clear about what constituted fascism and what was right-



wing populism. Many of us were of the opinion that there were dangerous parallels between the Trump regime and 1930s Italian fascism. John was also clear that fascism will not accede to reason and needs to be confronted at every turn by progressive people.

We then met with USW Vice President Tom Conway. Tom wanted to give us more detail on the ATI plant we had visited earlier in the week.

He informed us that what the company had dubbed 'the event' was in effect a lockout lasting many months. The union prevailed during the dispute and the company had subsequently paid a lot of money to the union for breaches of the law.

However, Tom said the hardship inflicted on workers' families during the dispute was unforgivable. He used colourful language to describe ATI management – the people who had seemed so accommodating just a few days earlier.

We spent time preparing for the union's rapid response conference in Washington DC. The USW had a different position to Unite and other unions affected by Trump's proposed tariffs on imported steel. We talked through the different positions and it helped us gain a greater understanding of each other's concerns.

The rapid response conference lasted three days and culminated in 650 delegates descending on Capitol Hill to lobby politicians about the needs of workers in their local districts as well as big national issues such as 'Right to Work' and the National Wage Act.

We participated fully along with USW colleagues meeting senators and House representatives and some had bigger fights than others. I was lucky in that the senators I lobbied – Senator Sherrod Brown and Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur – on behalf of USW workers from Ohio were labour-friendly.

What was most impressive about this mass lobby was how the union officials took a back seat and let the workers lead the charge. The rapid response co-ordinators had their members well prepared for what might have been a daunting experience for some.

The glue that held our group together was the fantastic facilitation of Lisa Jordan from the USW and Ben Richards from Unite ably assisted by Pam Cantolina, Steffi Domike and the others mentioned.

The need for structured political education mainstreamed in union education has never been more evident.

In this regard the USW are ahead of the game, pointing to the enemy of the workers and reminding us of our rich history of struggle against those who would exploit every bead of sweat from our labour.

It certainly sharpened my understanding and knowledge on a range of issues and will greatly enhance the political education I deliver, but the style, passion and commitment of all of those who assisted us was inspirational. I look forward to a return event in 2019.

Mel Corry is a trade union coordinator with Trademark Belfast

Address (abridged) delivered by Gearóid Ó Machail at CPI Arbour Hill commemoration...

# Connolly's vision for today

JAMES Connolly's formative years brought him face to face with the cruel realities of grinding poverty, labour exploitation and life in the imperial British military.

In 'Official Ireland' the great man's teachings are at best ignored, and at worst defiled and debased in a state where the noble ideals of socialism, workers' democracy, economic planning, redistribution, and political and economic sovereignty are drowned out in a contemporary clamour of consumerism, individualism, identity politics and deference to the neoliberal and imperialist ideology of the European Union and their US associates.

While the First Dáil Éireann give democratic and tangible expression to the honourable ideals of James Connolly and his republican allies, the counter revolutionaries of the new

“ Connolly's Marxism has always made him an uncomfortable figure among the 1916 leaders – now deemed safe for beatification by the modern bourgeoisie ”

free state bourgeoisie recognised the *threat* posed by the Democratic Programme's egalitarian and socialist principles and moved quickly to first marginalise and then eradicate the more progressive economic and social ideologies stirred by the Irish Revolution.

James Connolly's Marxism has always made him and continues to this day to make him an uncomfortable figure among the leaders of the 1916 Rising – now deemed safe for beatification by the modern bourgeoisie.

Buoyed by their temporary success in turning the last financial crisis and the weakness of organised labour's response into a golden opportunity to roll back the modest gains made by the working class in the last 60-odd years, the capitalist robber barons have now unleashed a full-frontal assault through the adoption of neoliberal economic prescriptions. Profiteering landlordism, rack-renting, evictions, epidemic homelessness, economic insecurity, food banks, child poverty and malnutrition have all returned to haunt modern urban and rural Ireland.

In almost 100 years of existence, the Irish state has failed to provide a universal healthcare system or comprehensive, secular state education for our people, funded by general taxation and free at the point of delivery – two cornerstones of basic provision in any republic worthy of the name. It's tempting to ask 'what would Connolly have to say?' or 'what would



Address: Gearóid Ó Machail

“ We must harness the energy of resistance. We must combine, unite and give leadership to disparate political, social, cultural & economic points of struggle ”

Connolly do today?' But these comrades are the wrong questions!

James Connolly clearly understood the futility of attempting to duplicate historic blueprints for revolutionary action or of replicating the political techniques of past eras, divorced as they are from their specific historical context. In the 102 years since Connolly's execution, Irish society, the global economy, technological progress and the very structure of capitalist enterprise have all changed beyond recognition. The British Empire that executed Connolly has been superseded by a new imperium of globalised finance and unrestrained markets.

### Contradiction

None of us are naïve about the difficulties we face in reorienting the struggles of the working class into a cohesive and ideologically-driven challenge to the capitalist state. However, the strengthening of monopoly capital is bound to bring a further sharpening of the contradiction between capital and salaried labour and, thus, a sharpening of all social contradictions.

These are contradictions that arise from the built-in reproductive cycle of capitalism. Co-existing extreme opulence and mass poverty, surplus and want, economic growth and wage restraint, full employment and in-work poverty. These are not blips, mistakes, the product of corruption, or bad policy. They are as much a by-product of capitalism as the ecologi-

cal destruction of our planet and obliteration of our natural resources.

Working people need to understand the interconnected relations between the state, establishment political parties, and the powerful economic forces that control their lives. Workers need to understand who really runs the Government and whose interests it serves.

Historically women have been subjected to discriminatory laws in relation to employment, healthcare and family planning. This is a legacy of the alliance of a reactionary state, a state created by the victory of counter-revolutionary forces, with the moral authority of the Catholic Church.

Women, who played such an important role in the revolutionary decade from 1913 to 1922, had to be driven back, repressed, and controlled – just as the state had to drive the working class and revolutionary forces back so as to cement its victory. While the right of access to safe and secure abortion is an issue for all women, it is also one that tells the story of a class-divided society.

As women make up the majority of low-paid workers, it is working women who mainly experience precarious employment and zero-hour contracts. For them to gather the necessary funds both for travel and to have a termination in Britain, and also to secure the necessary time to do so, has an inordinately discriminatory effect on working-class women.

In the six counties there is also a

growing campaign for a change in the law governing abortion. There is a spirit of co-operation between the campaigns in both parts of the country.

Fundamental to our strategy is identifying the weak points of capitalism here in Ireland and putting forward demands that bring about long-term change through the mobilising of working people and in so doing affecting the balance of power between labour and capital in a direction favourable to labour.

### Resistance

We must harness the energy of resistance. We must combine, unite and give leadership to disparate and seemingly unrelated political, social, cultural and economic points of struggle.

Housing provision in Ireland must be transformed into a system where every citizen has a right to a decent, secure home, available for rent from the state, as part of the social contract between citizen and state.

These homes could be designed, built and fitted out by a state-owned building company and the local authorities, reducing costs by up to a half and ensuring that homes are built to a decent, safe standard. This would help bring to an end the precarious nature of employment in the building industry and the widespread use of bogus self-employment.

The EU has built a neo-liberal constitutional framework around the

functioning of capitalism within its member-states. Our strategy will bring the state and working people into conflict with that framework. Building socialism, *by definition*, will bring us into conflict with the EU.

James Connolly was keenly aware of the nature of imperialism and stressed the importance of broad working-class unity in resisting its insidious threat to our democracy, independence and sovereignty.

Connolly developed a number of innovative theoretical positions regarding the relationship between Marxism and anti-imperialism. He was among the first to combine the politics of anti-imperialist nationalism with international Marxism in the colonial arena.

His fundamental teaching is that the struggle for national liberation is not opposed to the struggle for socialism but an integral and necessary part of it.

The Irish state and the political establishment are currently using crises developed by the long-term planning of hawkish elements within military-industrial nexus of the US to advance their strategy of aligning this state with NATO and the military strategy of the EU.

Clearly what is needed is to end this obsequious and collaborationist approach of the Irish political establishment to both the EU and NATO. Shannon Airport should be closed to the US war machine. All co-ordination and involvement in EU military strategies, including the battle groups and PESCO, should be ended. Irish soldiers should be withdrawn from NATO Headquarters in the Hague and from NATO military engagements around the world. And Irish military neutrality should be enshrined in the Constitution.

*We are the many; they are the few. We only want the earth!*

# Recently retired activist **George Lacey** looks back... but not in anger

GROWING up in the 1950s and 1960s was indeed tough. At that time most people were poor. Work was scarce a lot of the time and our parents had their hands full trying to put food on the table and clothes on our backs. The surprising thing was that we did not realise we were hard up.

The main reason for this was that our elders then were fantastic money managers, not that there was much to manage. Borrowing a cup of sugar or a loaf of bread was common enough, paying it back when the wage packet arrived on Friday evening. We never went hungry and did get the odd treat.

If we got a penny or two pence for doing a chore, it was straight down to the corner shop for a liquorice string or a few sweets. This was the highlight of the day. Yeah, Heaven on Earth.

Playing cowboys and indians (indians were always the bad guys, as portrayed in the films) we would climb over a wall and enter an old cemetery, staying there for hours. Disrespectful, I hear you say? This graveyard had not been used for burials for over a hundred years and really we did no harm.

Not like kids of today with their smart phones and computer games, we spent all our free time outdoors, playing football and all kinds of games until it got dark. We didn't need to count sheep to nod off at night.

Very, very few people had phones way back then. Television was only starting and cars were few and far between. Cycling or walking was our only way of getting around but it certainly kept us fit.

During the summer a real treat was travelling by train to the nearby beach. There we would have a picnic after our swim (well, paddling mostly). Later on as a Boy Scout we would board an open coal truck and camp for a fortnight in Dunmore East or Fethard-on-Sea. Very basic but it toughened us up a lot for the years to come. I would suspect that younger readers would find it hard to believe our lifestyles at that time. Of course it was hard, of course it wasn't easy

# It's been a great 48-year journey

but – believe it or not – life was good, most times anyway. School days, we were told, would be the best years of our lives. Did we believe our parents? Not a bit. Having said that, education gave us a good foundation for the future.

Weekends were my favourite time of the week. Saturdays nearly always meant going to the local cinema. Here we would cheer on "The Chap". He was the hero who would win every battle almost single handed. Afterwards there would not be hair out of place and showing no scars as he walked off into the sunset with the girl in hand. Yeah, simple stuff – but we really looked forward to it and after the film we would try to emulate what we had just seen in the action sequences.

## 42 years

At 17 years of age I took employment with W&G Hadden. This was in 1970. Six years later the Hadden Group – consisting of three shops, Wexford, Dungarvan and Carlow – was taken over by Shaws. I continued to work for this company for the next 42 years. Coupled with the time spent with Haddens, gave me a grand total of almost 48 years.

The retail trade was so different in those days. We, as apprentices, were given morning duties to perform, such as sweeping large areas of bare floorboards. Sprinkling of water was necessary so as to keep the dust down. A keen eye was kept on us



making sure we completed our tasks to their satisfaction.

My charge-hand was an elderly gentleman who lived above the store. Every day he would send me out to buy groceries in the nearby shops. On my return he would go to his room (he had two rooms, bedroom and a kitchen-come-sitting room) and prepare and start his cooking process insuring that it was ready an hour-and-a-half later. He was the caretaker and opened and closed up every day. He lived alone except for a small dog.

Most staff, up to 1965 lived indoors as they were from all over the country and were looked after very well

by the domestic staff.

Haddens was seen as one of the best department stores in the country for apprenticeships and many who trained there went on to bigger and better things.

I will now quote from the excellent recent publication by Avril Hogan, titled *Haddens – Wexford – Dungarvan – Carlow, 1848 – 1976, A Social History*.

## 'Honest woman'

Incidentally Avril is the daughter of the late Director Mr Victor Hadden. This piece I took from the book is quite humorous. It is a letter from America (by an 'Honest Woman'). In May 1958, a letter was received in Wexford branch from Oakland, California:

*Dear Mr Hadden, I am enclosing four dollars on account of a bill owed to you in 1915. Sorry to have kept you without it so long. We had a hard time getting work after leaving home. Going from one city to another. If I can remember it was a coat I purchased for 17 shillings. Hope the enclosed will pay for it. If not please let me know. I'm a widow and not in too good circumstances and business isn't so good here and I'm too old to work. Sincerely yours, Mrs M.E.C.*

Another extract from Avril's book is from W&G Hadden notes from 1954 and titled *A New Depression*:

*It set in with rising unemployment generally and the drapery trade experienced a decline which has continued*

*ever since, but the summer wasn't a summer and the winter wasn't a winter and what with one thing after another we thought that drapers generally just hadn't a chance!*

My gratitude to Avril for her kind permission to include the above pieces from her book.

I must say that working for Haddens and Shaws was, by and large, enjoyable. I along with my fellow work colleagues went through good and bad times, as did people in other walks of life. The recessionary periods were difficult, we all suffered, but we survived. It was a case of belt tightening and wading our way through it.

As the years rolled on wages improved. This was due largely to long and tough negotiations by the union. We became stronger and this resulted in our members having a better lifestyle. I got involved with IUDWC, as it was called then and the name was later changed to IDATU.

I, as a shop steward would collect union dues every Saturday and bring them to the Secretary. It is easier now being deducted from wages – no hassle, no arrears. I became Chairman of the Local branch in the late 1970s and I still hold that position to the present day. I took up that post all those years ago mainly because I believed in justice and fairness for everyone and if I could contribute in a small way then it would be worthwhile.

Having recently retired after nearly 48 years I would encourage anybody approaching this milestone to embrace it. Do not resent it, as there is no point fighting it and giving yourself unwanted stress.

The best way to deal with retirement in my opinion is to plan in advance what you intend to do. Perhaps this could be a mixture of leisure pursuits, exercise, exploring new interests and, of course, rest. Remember this will be the beginning of the rest of your life, not the end.

I would like to thank all those who have helped me in my working life and in my involvement with the union. It's been a great journey.

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# Forum tribute to ICA

By Eogan Fox

ON 13th May 2018, the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum, including members of the Mandate Trade Union, held a wreath-laying ceremony in Eyre Square, Galway to commemorate the 1916 Rising, in particular the contribution of James Connolly and the Irish Citizen Army.

The event took place, fittingly, at the Liam Mellows statue at the top of the square. Connolly had met Mellows in Tuam, Co Galway, while recovering from his hunger strike of 1913 and was impressed telling his daughter Nora, "I have me a real man here".

Mellows, a committed revolutionary, was active in the IRB, and was a founding member of the Irish Volunteers. During the 1916 Rising, he led the operations in Galway where despite the rebels being badly supplied, they held Athenry for a week.

In 1918, he was elected to the First Dáil as a Sinn Fein TD for Galway East and Meath North. He considered the Anglo-Irish Treaty to be a betrayal of the Irish Republic and took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War.

In June 1922, along with a number of other leaders entered the Four Courts in Dublin which had been occupied since the previous April. After two days of shelling by Free State forces they surrendered.

Mellows and the other leaders were captured and imprisoned. They were subsequently executed in Mountjoy Gaol on 8th December 1922. Peadar O'Donnell wrote about the executions and the impact on fellow inmates in his prison memoir *The Gates Flew Open*.

In 1957, the statue of Liam Mellows was erected in Eyre Square and



Eoin Ó Murchú delivers address

became a focal point for annual events remembering the Easter Rising. In recent years there have also been ceremonies by left and trade union groups commemorating the radical and revolutionary contributions our own movements have made to the struggle against imperialism.

Ian Daly, chairing the event on behalf of the Peadar O'Donnell Forum, introduced Eoin Ó Murchú who gave an address highlighting the connections between Connolly, Mellows and Peadar O'Donnell.

He spoke of the important role, as set out in their writings and actions, they gave the building of a sustainable society, not one reliant on the financial backing of others to the

detriment of our people.

Ó Murchú quoted Connolly in the words of the banner hung above Liberty Hall in 1916, 'We serve neither King nor Kaiser but Ireland' and warned of the European Union and its complete disregard for society in the economic crisis of recent years.

After the address there were two wreaths laid at the base of the statue on behalf of the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum and Mandate Trade Union.

The event was well attended and we hope to continue the work of the forum in Galway, recognising and commemorating our history, to continue the struggle today.

Neither King nor Kaiser: floral tributes, including one from Mandate, placed at the Liam Mellows statue in Galway's Eyre Square



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**REVIEW** By Tomás Mac Síomóin

WHEN we were taught that “one million died, one million emigrated” during the Great Potato Famine of 1845-47, our history teacher was unwittingly propagating a lie. Christopher Fogarty’s *Ireland 1845-1850: The Perfect Holocaust, And Who Kept It ‘Perfect’* nails that lie, essential reading for all who would know the real facts of history rather than depend on official narratives.

Contemporary reports (*Cork Examiner*, 1848) refer to this famine more graphically (and accurately) as a “Holocaust”. For rigorous scrutiny by researchers of official Irish mortality data for that period reveals a figure of at least five million deaths, roughly as was the case for Jewish World War II Holocaust victims.

The 1845-47 Holocaust was but one major traumatic event of English colonial rule in Ireland, a regime imposed with extreme brutality from the beginning of the 17th century up to this day, as recent Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) data for Northern Ireland reveals.

And this has consequences. Descendants of early 20th century Turkish pogroms of Armenians, World War II concentration camp and Leningrad Siege victims, for example, have behavioral tics rooted in genetic/epigenetic changes caused by ancestral trauma.

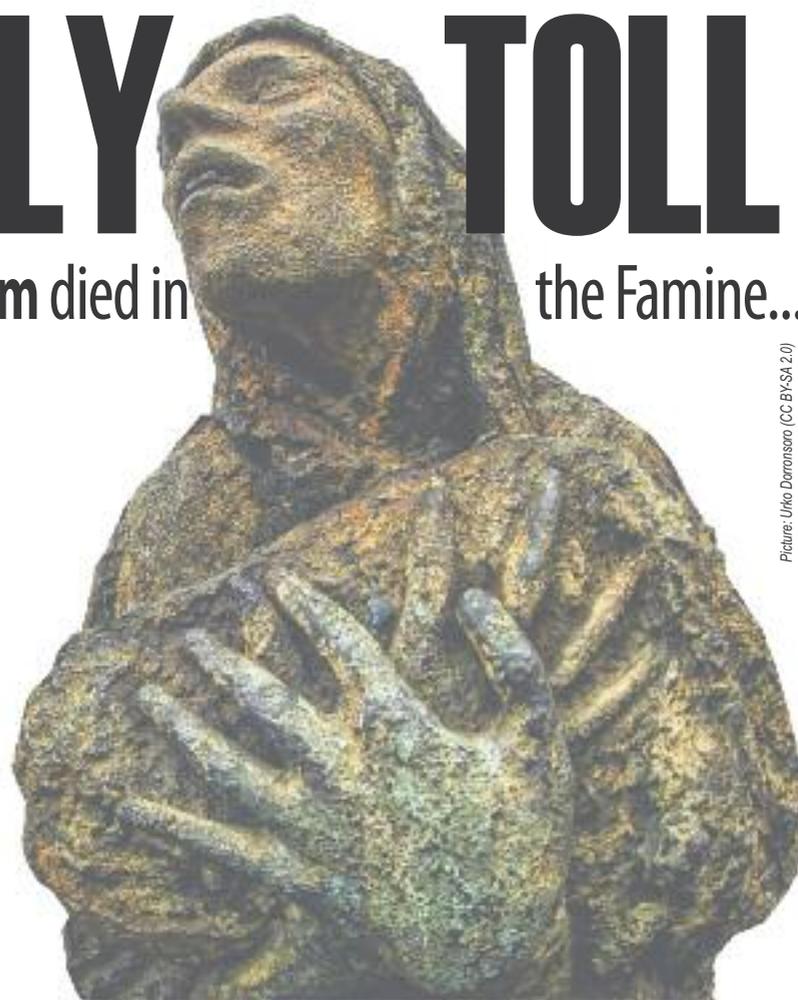
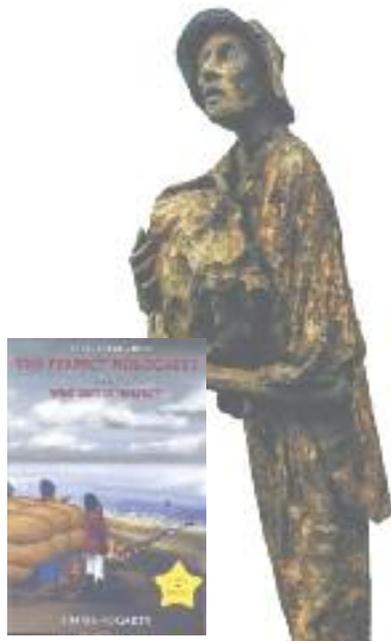
Published psychological studies suggest that certain Irish behavioral traits are consistent with a history of violent colonization. Salient features of contemporary “Irishness”, as expressed culturally and politically, are explicable on this basis.

Chicago researcher, Christopher Fogarty opines that Irish Potato Famine casualty figures must be greatly increased upwards. Working from official, British census data for Ireland, they demonstrate that the “one million died, one million emigrated, due to potato blight” myth taught to generations of Irish schoolchildren is false.

The real murder figure, was about 5.16 million. The basis of this famine death calculation is discussed in

# DEADLY TOLL

Author claims 5.16m died in the Famine...



Picture: Ulko Dorransore (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Chapter 6 of the new edition of the book, written by experienced census investigator Jack Lane.

Fogarty argues as follows: The 1841 census of Ireland showed a population of 10,897,449. Accepting a 1.63% rate of annual population increase until mid-1846, the 1846 population would have been 11,815,011 and in 1851, about 12,809,841. But as the 1851 census recorded a population of 6,552,385; 6,257,456 “disappeared” according to the British government’s own data.

This includes roughly 1,000,000 who emigrated (many on the notorious “coffin ships”) and another 100,000 unborn between 1846 and 1851 due to malnutrition-induced infertility, amounting to 1.1m persons lost to Ireland but not murdered.

Thus, the British government’s own figures show that it murdered approximately 5.16 million Irish men, women and children.

The German government repented and paid \$100 billion reparations to survivors and relatives of the six million World War II Jewish Holocaust victims. The Irish Holocaust? Not even an official apology! According to Fogarty, drawing on his own experience: “But, while the British government and its Dublin surrogates still use terror and slander against those who commemorate the Irish Holocaust, it is still dangerous – after 172 years – to reveal the truth of it.”

Ireland didn’t starve because of potato blight, it starved because of lack of food. Some 40 to 70 shiploads of foodstuffs per day were removed at

gun- and bayonet-point by the British police and military, battleships, excise and Coast Guard vessels.

More than half of the British army perpetrated that robbery – some 67 out of its total number of 130 regiments.

On behalf of English landlords claiming ownership of Ireland and all its produce, they robbed tens of millions of head of Irish livestock; tens of millions of tons of flour, grains, meat, poultry and dairy products. This was enough to feed 18 million persons, while starving to death over five million of them.

They left thousands of mass graves behind them. The author’s map shows the locations of 180 of them: mute testimony to the rapacity of unbridled capitalism and the vicious,

ever-present, anti-Irish racism of Britain’s ruling class.

The British Public Record Office admitted that their British regiments’ Daily Activity Reports of 1845-1850 had “gone missing”. These recorded each regiment’s cattle drives and the grain-cart convoys it escorted at gunpoint from their assigned Irish districts.

Also “missing” are the receipts issued by the British army commissariat officers in every Irish port tallying the cattle and tonnage of foodstuffs removed. However, *The Times* of London and other periodicals recorded regular landings in England of massive amounts of Irish food.

What instigated this unparalleled atrocity? When potato blight appeared in Europe in 1844, food prices rose and Britain sent troops to Ireland as a precautionary measure. When its own potato crop succumbed to the blight, and being grossly overpopulated relative to its food supply, industrial England faced famine unless it imported vast amounts of food. But it didn’t stop at robbing Ireland’s surplus food to save England; it robbed more, for profit and to exterminate the Irish.

Queen Victoria’s economist, Nassau Senior, complained that existing policies “will not kill more than one million Irish in 1848 and that will scarcely be enough to do much good.” When an eyewitness urged a stop to the genocide-in-progress, Lord Trevelyan replied: “We must not complain of what we really want to obtain.”

He further said all reports of starvation were exaggerated, thereby refusing entry to the American food relief ship, *Sorcière*.

The influential English essayist Thomas Carlyle, wrote: “Ireland is like a half-starved rat that crosses the path of an elephant. What must the elephant do? Squelch it – by heavens – squelch it.”

*A new edition of Christopher Fogarty’s Ireland 1845-1850: The Perfect Holocaust, and Who Kept it ‘Perfect’ (2014), will be available shortly in book form.*

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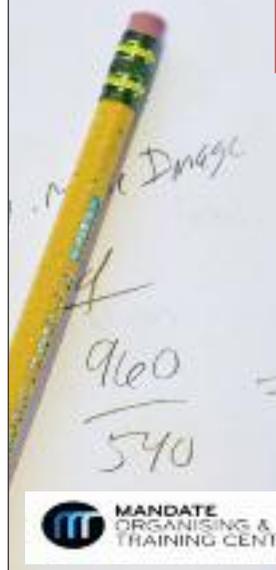
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