

MANDATE TRADE UNION

DECEMBER 2019

# SHOPFLOOR

## MOST DANGEROUS SHOP WORKERS IN THE WORLD



...On the day black South African team captain Siya Kolisi lifted the World Cup we were celebrating our own heroes who fought Apartheid...

**TWO DAYS OF MUSIC, THEATRE AND DISCUSSION - see pages 4&5**

# Collective rights of workers must be protected

**YOUR right as a worker to become a member of a trade union is enshrined in the Irish Constitution, so you might be forgiven for believing this bestows rights that allow you to have that union represent and collectively bargain on your behalf – but, alas, not so.**

Irish law does not give workers the collective right to have their union negotiate on their behalf. It's akin to being allowed join a golf club, but not being allowed to play golf.

If workers desire to have their union negotiate terms and conditions of employment, they often have to forcibly convince their employer of this course of action. But more and more employers are unwilling to engage, leaving workers with little option but to take to the picket line to win what is essentially a basic human right.

These recognition strikes are often difficult, employers pile massive resources into fighting against the rights of workers to have a collective voice at work, even though the right to a collective voice at work is enshrined by the ILO (International Labour Organisation) Conventions, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and United Nations' Declarations etc.

Indeed many major employers, many of whom are in retail, have idealist corporate social responsibility policies covering their own supply chains declaring the rights of workers in their supply chain to join and be represented by free

## STRAIGHT TALKING John Douglas

General Secretary,  
Mandate Trade Union

trade unions, but when it comes nearer to home they will deny these basic rights to their own workers.

**Why are employers and employers' organisations (employers' unions) so afraid of workers getting a collective union voice at work? The answer is simple: they fear workers uniting and fighting for decency and respect.**

Employers want to remain the sole arbitrators of wages, of benefits, of hiring and firing. It's about control, it's about bullying and intimidation – essentially it's about keeping workers in their place.

The irony of the situation is that employers are members of their own unions (employers' organisations) such as IBEC, SFA and ISME. These employer organisations give employers a voice about work, about their sector and effectively lobby authorities on matters of importance to employers.

The Government has deliberately failed Irish workers. They have never introduced or proposed adequate legislation to protect workers' rights to organise and collectively bargain, and instead they have introduced weak and ineffective legislation

which continues to give control to employers and forces workers to struggle for what is a basic human right.

The result of this imbalance of power between capital (employers) and labour (workers) is that hundreds of thousands of workers are consigned to work in lower-paid, precarious jobs, fearful of organising and without any rights.

The share of productivity and profits produced by workers has been dwindling and the share going to investors and management has been steadily increasing. Ireland now has one of the highest proportion of lower-paid jobs as a proportion of total employment of all EU countries. We are second only to the United States in this regard.

In the Nordic countries and Germany – where collective bargaining and a voice at work are commonplace – workers earn more wages, enjoy more leave and are treated more fairly than their counterparts in Ireland.

**And here lies the nub of the issue – employers here fight to keep workers out of unions and forming collective bargaining because it gives them a bigger share of the pie. They are fully aware that a voice at work leads to better conditions of employment.**

The trade union movement can no longer fight with one hand tied behind our back. We

will no longer accept that employers and employers' organisations hold all the cards. We are demanding equal rights and protection for workers and their unions.

We demand legislation to give effect to this equality, we demand a Trade Union Act which gives workers legal protection to organise and to have their union collectively bargain on their behalf.

The general election early next year will present the trade union movement with the opportunity to highlight and campaign across all political parties for this basic demand.

**We will engage with all political parties and report back to you, our members and your families, the position of the various political parties so that you can make an informed decision at the ballot box.**



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## PADDY POWER

### Recruitment drive boosts membership

MANDATE membership at the betting chain continues to rise following a very successful organising and recruitment drive. A pay claim has been served on the company, which has moved on to the Labour Court. The union is awaiting a date for the hearing.

Meanwhile, Mandate continues to take successful rest break claims for members working at Paddy Power with hearing dates pending on many more.

## Penneys shop stewards back Labour Court pay proposal



Lead Organiser Bill Abom addressing Penneys shop stewards meeting on November 19th

By David Gibney  
Communications Officer

A national meeting of Mandate shop stewards recommended in favour of accepting the pay recommendation of 2.25% issued by the Labour Court on Wednesday, 20th November.

There was discussion at the meeting about the 2.25% recommendation not achieving demands made by the Penneys national negotiating team, but consensus emerged around a recommendation for acceptance.

Mandate will now commence a ballot

of all members in Penneys over the coming weeks.

The national shop stewards meeting also endorsed a new claim for 2020 in relation to a cost-of-living pay increase, banded hours, rostering and holidays.

Mandate Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light thanked the Penneys workers on the national negotiating team for their diligent work over the past 12 months, as the new team of Kay Fox, Cathy O'Connor, Olive Lowry, Carol McNamara and Oskar Goldman were elected as the 2020 negotiating team.

## Big welcome: new era for the union as bakers join Mandate



Above: Mandate General Secretary John Douglas with Bakers' Union General Secretary Martin Hanlon and Assistant General Secretary John Martin



Right: Former Dublin Lord Mayor Michael O'Halloran with John Swift (son of the late John Swift, Bakers' Union general secretary)

# Combining a traditional craft with progressive politics...

By John Douglas  
Mandate General Secretary

MANDATE Trade Union is delighted to welcome into membership the members of the Irish Bakers', Confectioners' and Allied Workers Amalgamated Union (the Bakers' Union).

This union has a proud history in the social and political struggle in Ireland, and at its height was one of the most progressive trade unions on these islands led by their visionary then-general secretary John Swift.

John Swift saw the role of trade unions and trade union membership as holistic, from the cradle to the grave. The Bakers' Union ran its own bakery schools; opened a library in its then-head office, 'The Four Provinces', on Harcourt Street; it involved its members in the Arts, culture and

music; and it played an important role in every aspect of its members and their families' lives.

Mandate Trade Union will continue this proud tradition. We will assist the bakery workers of Ireland to regain their pivotal position in the sector and respect for the trade.

Like many sectors, the bakery sector has been de-skilled and industrialised with many products being produced on a factory scale by underpaid and undervalued workers.

The major bakery brands have been resisting union rights for some time now but we in Mandate believe that we can support bakery workers' craft and production in winning a voice at work and improving their terms and conditions.

On a recent visit to Mandate Head

Office, the last general secretary and assistant general secretary of the Bakers' Union, Martin Hanlon and John Martin, presented on permanent loan to Mandate Trade Union a bust of James Connolly by noted Irish artist Hilary Heron.

The Connolly bust was commissioned by John Swift in 1946 and was once displayed proudly in the Bakers' Union Head Office, The Four Provinces.

Mandate will keep the Connolly bust on display in our Head Office as a reminder of the strong links between the bakers and retail workers, who now together in one union will fight to fulfil Connolly's vision of a united socialist Irish Republic.

Opinion: Michael O'Halloran p14

## IN BRIEF

### Tesco Ireland

MANDATE'S National Negotiating Team are constructively engaged in continuing discussions with Tesco Ireland about Pre-1996 staff and further meetings are planned. Along with these discussions, Mandate is to seek further information from Pre-96 members through a members' survey.

### Marks and Spencer

A NATIONAL forum meeting with Marks and Spencer was held on Wednesday 6th November. At the meeting senior management outlined in full the challenges facing the business in Ireland. Following the presentation the managers in turn faced a number of probing questions from local union representatives.

### Debenhams

FOLLOWING a national ballot, proposals containing a modest pay increase were accepted by Mandate members. Meanwhile, against the continuing backdrop of difficult trading conditions there was a positive outcome from the UK courts recently over a challenge to the recently-agreed Company Voluntary Arrangement.

### Arcadia

SHOPFLOOR can report that only one of the planned 10 Irish stores earmarked for closure will now cease trading. It follows negotiations with various landlords that resulted in more favourable lease terms for the retailer.

### MOPI

AS A result of a term contained in our last pay agreement, discussions are continuing over the company's absenteeism policy. A set of proposals has also been agreed which contain enhanced terms for Mandate members employed as online delivery drivers.

### McCauleys

MANAGEMENT have made a unilateral decision to award a 2% pay increase. The move follows a formal request from the union for a meeting to consider a pay claim for Mandate's growing membership base at the pharmacy chain. Outstanding matters with this anti-union company have now been referred to the WRC for conciliation.

### Boots

TALKS are ongoing over a claim for the introduction of a new pay structure for Mandate members employed as dispensers. Further details will follow in updates to members.

### Dunnes Stores

A NEW pay and benefits claim has been launched with Dunnes Stores which is similar to Tesco pay and benefits claim and follows on from the union's Decency Retail Charter. Assistant General Secretary Gerry Light told *Shopfloor*: "Online endorsements of the claim by Mandate members in Dunnes has exceeded all our expectations. This excellent initial endorsement of our Dunnes claim demonstrates a strong desire for our campaign and we will continue seeking endorsements until at least the end of this year."

## LEGISLATION

# Mandate backs SF bill on rip-off premiums

**MANDATE has given its full backing to Sinn Féin TD Pearse Doherty's legislative efforts to bring clarity to the insurance industry in Ireland and stop customers having to pay rip-off premiums.**

**His Insurance Contracts Bill passed its final stage at the Dail on November 14th and, as *Shopfloor* goes to print, it is set to go before the Seanad.**

**Speaking to the Dail, Doherty said the legislation – if enacted – would ensure that "the interpretation of a contract of insurance will be interpreted to the benefit of the consumer where there is confusion."**

**He added that it would also stop insurance companies using "issues such as warranties" to "wriggle out**

**of paying legitimate claims" and ensure that claims could not be totally invalidated because of minor discrepancies in what customers tell insurers when taking out cover.**

**Backing the move to regulate pricing and standards in the sector, Mandate Organising & Campaigns Co-ordinator Brian Forbes said: "Our members and their families will welcome Doherty's continuing interventions in the Dáil and on the public record questioning the insurance industry in Ireland.**

**"Escalating insurance impacting on the working class is another example of the 'rip-off Ireland' mentality that many organisations sign up to."**

Opinion: Pearse Doherty p29

# DUNNES ANTI-APARTHEID STRIKE

MANDATE co-hosted a celebration of the 35th anniversary of Dunnes Stores Anti-Apartheid Strike in Liberty Hall on Friday, 1st and Saturday, 2nd November 2019.

The event, titled *The Most Dangerous Shop Workers in the World*, was sponsored by the Communications Workers' Union, the Financial Services Union, SIPTU and Unite the Union, and involved a weekend of theatre, music, spoken word and panel discussions. All proceeds from ticket sales went to MASI – the Movement of Asylum Seekers in Ireland.

In 1984, Mary Manning, a young Dunnes Stores worker, followed a union directive and refused to handle goods from apartheid South Africa. This led to one of the most protracted industrial disputes in Irish history lasting two years and nine months.

The determination of the 11 striking workers prompted the Irish government's ban on importing produce from South Africa and is credited with contributing to the end of the apartheid regime.

At the time of the strike, all South Africans were categorised based on their race into: Bantu (black Africans), Coloured (mixed race), Asian (meaning Indian and Pakistani) or white.

The government forcibly removed black South Africans from rural areas and sold their land at low prices to white farmers. From 1961 to 1994, more than 3.5 million people were forcibly removed from their homes and they were plunged into poverty and hopelessness.

Black people had segregated schools, education systems, churches, public toilets, and they were denied access to 'white' areas, including beaches and swimming pools. They were prevented from working in certain jobs and were often subjected to beatings and imprisoned for campaigning for equality and human rights.

Nelson Mandela, who visited the workers in Dublin after his release in 1990, said the actions of the Dublin retail workers helped keep him going through some of his most difficult days in prison.

"Young workers who refused to handle the fruits of apartheid 21 years ago in Dublin provided inspiration to millions of South Africans that ordinary people far away from the crucible of apartheid cared for our freedom," said Mandela in 2008.

The strike was also supported by Nobel prize winners, including Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Irish poet Seamus Heaney who joined the workers on the picket line.

Karen Gearon, shop steward during the strike, said: "Ireland in the 1980s had an undercurrent of racism so it wasn't popular to stand up for the rights of black South Africans who lived thousands of miles away. Unfortunately we are now witnessing another increase in racism so this event is happening at a very appropriate time."

She added: "We were victimised by our employer and ridiculed by our former work colleagues. The gardai and the Special Branch would harrass us, while the Catholic Church and many media outlets condemned us for our stance. But we stood our ground and ultimately our action was successful."

"What brought about our victory was our collectivism and our solidar-



# A strike for justice and freedom celebrated in words and song

## Standing ovation for Strike! drama

**THE play 'Strike!' received a standing ovation from all gathered in Liberty Hall Theatre.**

**And the passionate portrayals by the actors playing the roles of the strikers brought back memories for many of those involved in the original action.**

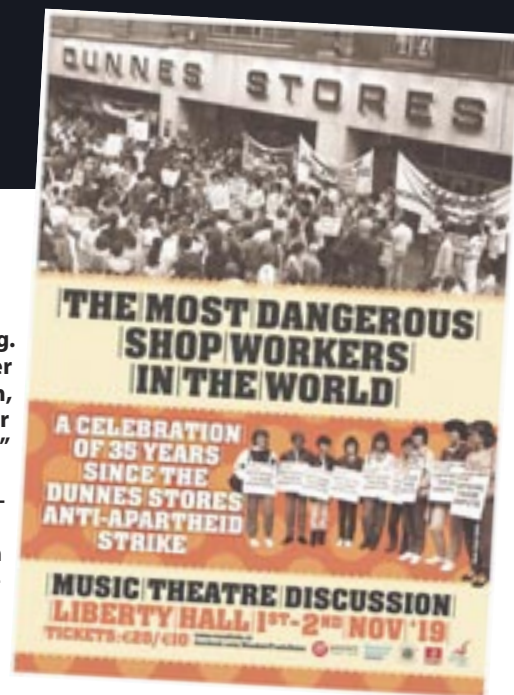
**The story of the strikers and their humanity – as well as that of unsung heroes such as former Mandate official Brendan Archbold – resonated with the audience.**

**The villains of the piece – Ben Dunne, the local manager and assorted scabs who crossed the picket line – also drew strong emotional reactions from those present.**

Most of the strikers were at the reading. When the play ended, and as each character was asked if they would do it all over again, each striker stood up in the audience as their name was called and gave a resounding "YES!" in reply.

In short, a phenomenal action and a phenomenal play.

The audience was then entertained by Farah Elle, Natayla O'Flaherty and Yankari performing spoken word, music and energetic dance that infected the whole auditorium as they danced around the aisles.



ity and if there's one thing we'd hope young workers today can learn from us, it's that if you stand together and remain strong you can achieve anything."

Mandate General Secretary John Douglas said: "The Dunnes Stores anti-apartheid strikers stood on the right side of history. They helped change the world for the better. Their principled stance and their solid determination is something we should all take inspiration from."

He continued: "Mandate was de-

lighted to host this celebration because we believe tackling racism is a trade union issue. Workers throughout the world – whether in Great Britain, India, Nigeria or South Africa – have far more in common with each other than with the class that oppresses them and our solidarity with each other should not be based on nationality or skin colour."

The Dunnes Stores Anti-Apartheid strikers included Mary Manning, Karen Gearon (shop steward), Cathryn O'Reilly, Theresa Mooney,



Dunnes strikers (below and above from left) Liz Deasy, Mary Manning, Karen Gearon, Cathryn O'Reilly and Michelle Gavin outside the Liberty Hall Theatre Bernardette Devlin McAliskey (second left) and Mandate General Secretary John Douglas



Ireland Palestine Solidarity Campaign chairperson Fatin Al Tamimi surrounded by comrades who are demanding Israel ceases the Administrative Detention of Palestinian prisoners and releases all Palestinian prisoners without delay! #stopAD

Vonnie Munroe, Sandra Griffin, Alma Russell, Michelle Gavin, Liz Deasy, Tommy Davis and Brendan Barron. The lead official for the strike was the late Brendan Archbold who coined the phrase “the most dangerous shop workers in the world” following the deportation of the workers from South Africa by armed guard in the 1980s. ICTU General Secretary Patricia King opened proceedings on Friday, 1st November with a call on trade unionists to remember the tremendous deeds of Dunnes Stores strikers.

She said: “I think we can reliably conclude that all the accolades, plaques, street names, songs and memoirs, national and international recognition, are all very well deserved by this group of workers. “While the dispute is certainly embedded in the history of the Irish labour movement it has probably received more international than national acclaim. “I recall a short anecdote to illustrate this... I know of two senior trade union officials who attended an inter-

national conference in South Africa some years ago. “During their stay, they arranged to take a trip to Robben Island to visit the prison where President Mandela was incarcerated. En route, the tour guide, a native of Robben Island, drew their attention to a nearby cemetery where many Irish nationals were buried. “He then told the group that of another Irish connection, whereby he recalled that a number of young female shop workers went on strike supporting black majority people of South Africa and won. “The two trade union officials on the bus – John Douglas and Steve Fitzpatrick – were astonished because for once, they were unknown to the group, and here in Robben Island the story and value of the Dunnes Stores strike was recounted.” Patricia King also pointed out that 35 years on Irish trade unionists could still draw lessons from the strike. She continued: “In an era when we are experiencing a distinctive rise in global inequality, when the world looks on ineffectively and impotent at the continued plight and devastation of the Palestinian people, and when we in this First World economy rarely if ever consider the plight of 170 million children subjected to child labour, 48% of whom are between the ages of five and 11. “Indeed when we take opportunities to turn our backs on migrants seeking sanctuary on our shores we must embrace the persistence demonstrated by the Dunnes Stores strikers and believe that we can effect change, despite the obstacles put in our way, and ultimately such commitment will deliver a difference.”



## PANEL DISCUSSIONS Lessons to be drawn from the action

PANEL DISCUSSIONS began in the early hours of Saturday morning, 2nd November. The first panel, titled *Back to the future: discussing the political context of 1980s Ireland and South Africa today*, was chaired by veteran activist Betty Purcell. The panel comprised of SIPTU's Frank Connolly; political activist Tommy McKearney; Bulelani Mfaco, an asylum seeker from South Africa who is now an activist with MASI; and Christabel Gurney of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The second panel, titled *Boycott: the power of the boycott movement throughout history*, was chaired by award-winning Irish Times journalist Kitty Holland and made up of Fatin Al-Tamimi of the Irish Palestinian Solidarity Committee (IPSC); noted historian Margaret Ward, Mandate National Co-ordinator for Campaigns Brian Forbes and MASI's Lucky Khambule. Fatin outlined the connections between apartheid in South Africa and the current treatment of Israel towards the Palestinian people while Margaret spoke the Irish origin of the word ‘boycott’. Lucky expressed his great joy at seeing a black South African team captain lift the Rugby World Cup trophy that morning, while Brian spoke with equal pride about about his union having the famous Dunnes strike as part of its history. The final panel discussion was titled *Linking struggles: the importance of solidarity between movements and campaigns*, and chaired by Sinead Kenndy for the Coalition to Repeal the 8th. Bernadette Devlin McAliskey discussed the state of the Irish left. She pointed out how everyone on the



Lucky Khamule, draped in South African flag, was overjoyed at his country's success at Rugby World Cup that morning... Irish left seemed to flag up everyone else's errors and suggested it was perhaps time to work together and respect differences. Gethin Roberts whose campaign Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners was portrayed in the award-winning movie, *Pride*, expressed his solidarity with the Dunnes strikers. Emily Waszak from MERJ spoke of the need to express solidarity with those struggling in Ireland and throughout the world, including in Rojava. Mandate General Secretary John Douglas then explained that all battles and struggles, whether won or lost, left behind them what he called a legacy of activists. He also posed the question as to whether the Irish trade union movement needed a new political arm. The final act of the day was when the Echo Chambers podcast team interviewed five of the the Dunnes Stores Anti-Apartheid Strikers who spoke of the strike, its implications on them personally and their commitment to the cause of anti-racism. ● Their inspirational story is now available on Echo Chambers podcast website – check it out at: <https://tinyurl.com/DunnesPodcast>

# TAKING ACTIVISM TO THE NEXT LEVEL

## Mandate holds successful first- ever National Activists School

THE inaugural Mandate National Activists School was held at Lusty Beg on Lower Lough Erne, Co Fermanagh, over three days in October.

Members drawn from six out of 10 Mandate divisions attended the very successful event which ran from Wednesday 16th to Friday 18th October.

The numbers and the geographic spread of those taking part is a significant indicator of the genuine interest activists have towards progressing the union's political and social agenda through genuine discussion and subsequent direct action.

Event organiser National Coordinator Brian Forbes told *Shopfloor*: "Listening to the thoughts and views of our activists on a wide range of issues over three days was genuinely empowering."

"It indicated a level of class consciousness and commitment to national and international solidarity that certainly gives me massive hope for the organising and campaigning



General Secretary John Douglas (above left) speaks via Skype to UFCW activists from the Safeway and Giant Union Bargaining Committee who received a strong message of solidarity from Mandate activists gathered in Lusty Beg. Alan Hanson, Mobilising Director for UFCW Local 400 (above right), joined the discussions also via Skype to talk about the union's organising campaign at Safeway and Giant in the US

future direction of our union. "If we are to declare ourselves a members-led union, then we must listen to the viewpoints of our activists in shaping our union's strategies for the future."

He added: "Personally, I learned a great deal from these three days with some of our most dedicated and effective activists."

Brian Forbes described the agenda as "eclectic", covering a wide range of issues of importance to members. These included: union democracy, structures and decision making, climate change, Mandate local council structures, the important role of women in trade union political organising, building union power and the urgent need for public housing.

There was a range of excellent speakers drawn from both inside and

outside of Mandate ranks, including Ciaran Campbell; Dave Gibney; Bill Abom; Stevie Nolan; and Sinn Féin TD and housing spokesperson Eoin O'Brien.

Brian Forbes said: "There was also a transatlantic hook-up with a good friend of Mandate, UFCW Mobilising Director Alan Hanson and our brothers and sisters in the UFCW Local 400

“...an innovative and extremely encouraging first-ever Mandate Activist School well worth repeating and building upon on an annual basis”



Stephen Nolan spoke on the political economy of climate breakdown



Eoin O'Brien TD (above) speaks to Mandate activists about the urgent need for a state-sponsored programme of public housing. Bill Caine at the flipchart (Tesco, Westport) (right) reports back on behalf of his workshop team on the theme of workers' rights in Ireland





Dave Gibney gave a presentation on the theme 'Union History, Union Identity'

Forbes said that it had resulted in "many shared experiences" and "first-rate inter-divisional engagement" on the need for a well-organised, campaigning and fighting Mandate Trade Union.

Follow-up action is planned with those divisions who took part and the union is to monitor – hopefully – any subsequent increase in

union activity both at local and national level.

"It was an innovative and extremely encouraging first-ever Mandate Activist School which is well worth repeating and building upon on an annual basis. So members should watch out for news of our second Mandate National Activists School in 2020," added Forbes.



Ciaran Campbell delivering a session on union democracy and decision making within unions

## FEEDBACK National Activists School...



"The importance of this kind of activist training to a union on the front line of defending workers' interests cannot be over stated. We need to learn how to organise in our communities as well as our workplaces in order to be able to further our members' interests, and build a fighting union. The activists school in Lusty beg is an important aspect to this work."

Eoghan Fox, M&S, Galway



"Having the opportunity to attend the first-ever Mandate Activists School was a great experience. As an activist I'm always looking at ways to get more involved in our local council meetings and to participate much more in our union campaigns and organising. I'd highly recommend this Mandate School to any member seeking to learn more about both the world we live in and the role of our union in leading a worker-led drive for increased class consciousness and a better future for us all on this island."

Aaron Nolan, Pygmalion Bar, Dublin Central & West Division

## Mandate National Activists School

MORE  
FEEDBACK ON  
PAGES 16,33 & 39



## DELFIN TEACHERS STRIKE

# Thanks for the solidarity, the pizzas and the cups of tea!

THE striking teachers at Delfin English School have through their union, Unite, sent a message of thanks, appreciation and solidarity for all the support shown to them in their continuing industrial action to secure decent pay, working conditions and union recognition.

And the teachers have singled out their near-neighbours at Mandate for particular mention.

In a statement, a spokesperson said: "Given the icy winds of the past few weeks, members have been glad of the warm welcome and hot tea and coffee in Mandate headquarters just a few doors down.

"Thanks to Mandate General Secretary John Douglas, as well as Dave Gibney, Gerard Halligan, Muireann Dalton, Moira Murphy, Ger Ryan, Maria Nolan, Mandate NEC member

Ken Reilly and everyone else in Mandate – and a very special thanks to Sandra Stapleton for all the coffees and biscuits delivered to the picket line!"

The statement went on to thank Brid Smith of PBP and Solidarity's Ruth Coppinger of Solidarity, who both came down with cheques for €500 towards the Unite Hardship Fund. €500 donations from Unite's 102 branch and the Construction Branch were also received as well as a further €500 from the IWW.

"Pizza-bearing" Atlas teachers were also name checked by the Delfin strikers as were fellow language instructors from Grafton, IBAT and the English Language Studio.

Mandate National Co-ordinator Brian Forbes told *Shopfloor*: "On be-

half of Mandate we wish to extend our ongoing deep solidarity for the actions being taken by the English language teachers at Delfin English School.

"Withdrawing your labour is never an easy decision to make but when an intransigent management consistently refuses to address teachers' concerns or to negotiate with them collectively through the union of their choice, then workers are left with little choice but to strike.

"Retail employers engaging in similar anti-union tactics would be wise to pay heed to the inevitable consequences of anti-worker actions. Mandate is proud to stand in solidarity with our Unite brothers and sisters in struggle. Victory to the Delfin Strikers!"



Above: Step Up's Muireann Dalton and NEC member Ken Reilly line up with the Delfin strikers

Left: Mandate Tesco activist Ciaran Niall (front centre) visited the Delfin picket line on October 15th



Alan Monaghan: praise for Mandate negotiators

IT PAYS TO BE IN THE UNION...

# 2.5%-8.5% rises for Kavanagh Group workers



MANDATE has secured a new pay deal for members working in the Kavanagh Group SuperValu chain which has eight stores located across Counties Mayo and Donegal.

The newly-agreed pay award provides for a range of wage rises from a minimum of 2.5% to 8.5%.

Ciaran Campbell, who is Mandate's Divisional Organiser for its North and West Division, said the rises on average represented an annual pay hike of €1,300 for a full-time worker. He also pointed out that some members would be better off by €2,000 a year.

He said: "This has come at a time when unions and businesses are op-

erating in the unknown because of Brexit. It should also be noted that some retail employers feel that the National Minimum Wage (NMW) is a benchmark in terms of pay. Because of that, this agreement – while it's nothing to be sniffed at – is only a work in progress.

"We have already signalled that the current pay regimes in this and many other similar type of employments

are not fit for purpose as staff are not being adequately rewarded for their work and efforts and the contributions they make to their employers' profits." Campbell said that while it was accepted that the retail industry generally was operating in "very challenging and competitive times", this could not mask the fact that most businesses in the sector were "in the main profitable".

"It is in those workplaces that Mandate is intent on securing rates of pay, and terms and conditions for its members that are not only meaningful but that actually matter.

"We're already preparing the

ground for our next set of negotiations which are still more than a year away," he added.

To this end, both Ciaran Campbell and his fellow organiser, Gerard Halligan, are currently engaging with members in a couple of stores in Co Donegal.

Campbell explained: "It's a strategy that we hope to roll out over the following 12 months across all the stores so that we can actually take the pulse of the members – on not only their wishes, but their real employment needs.

"The results of these types of engagement will help formulate our agenda going into the next pay round. We've a bit of work to do – but seeing a member better off by €30 or €40 a week is not only pleasing... it represents a tangible start!"

Meanwhile, SuperValu Castlebar shop steward Alan Monaghan has put on record his thanks to that Mandate negotiators over the deal that was brokered.

He told *Shopfloor*: "The recent negotiations with Kavanagh Group have been positive, especially around the pay scale – the time taken to reach the higher rates of pay have been greatly reduced.

"Let me be absolutely clear in stating that this could NOT have been achieved without Mandate and the efforts of Gerard Halligan and Ciaran Campbell."

Solidarity visit:  
The LO delegation  
proudly display  
their Mandate medals



CLASS ACTS...



## Phil of wisdom...

IN THE first of our new *Shopfloor* section highlighting the class-conscious, publicly-uttered views of well-known celebrities, we begin with comedian **Phil Jupitus**.

Writing under the pseudonym of "Porky the Poet" Phil had this to say about workers standing strong on a picket line...

*"I have always thought there's an unrecognised grace and beauty in a picket line. Also, they are a huge embarrassment to the organisations being picketed. The fact that, for centuries, news organisations have portrayed the objectives of those who stand on them as avaricious, unreasonable or somehow evil is a testament to the strength of the image.*

*"A picket line is the simplest most direct manifestation of the will of people to be treated with some measure of fairness. Ordinary workers, forced to stand outside a place of work, because they simply won't take shit any more. Thank you for supporting everybody out on the line. Don't cross them!"*

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# Delegation from LO visits Mandate HQ

By Eoghan Fox  
M&S Galway, Mandate Western Division

A DELEGATION from the LO confederation of unions visited Mandate's Head Office in Dublin on 21st August to share stories about organising in Norway.

General Secretary John Douglas gave a presentation to the seven visiting Norwegian comrades, who came from the port city of Drammen, setting out Mandate's deep history of struggle and outlining its many achievements since its foundation.

In particular, he flagged up Man-

date's transition from being a servicing-model organisation to an activist-based, organising union.

Communications Officer David Gibney spoke about a number of the union's current campaigns and highlighted the importance to Mandate of work done, for example, in defeating water charges.

He emphasised to the visitors no matter how many wage increases were secured for members, without challenging austerity measures – such as water charges – these victories on pay would be null and void.

Jonathan Hogan, who heads up the union's Training and Development Department, gave a brief overview of the work done to develop Mandate's educational capacity, and the important role it played in strengthening the union as a whole.

For their part, the comrades from LO (Landsorganisasjonen i Norge) spoke about their organising work in various respective sectors – LO represents a number of different unions. They also set out a number of concrete examples of youth participation in LO activities.

Mandate was given an informative presentation looking in particular at the work of LO summer camps. Each summer a large number of young activists come together to visit shops and businesses in a bid to ensure compliance with collective bargaining agreements and to recruit young workers into the unions.

The visitors were presented with Mandate medals of our founders as a token of solidarity between us. Both groups agreed to work closer together into the future on campaigns and issues that affect us all.

# Union's pioneering on-field initiative... Champs Cup first for Unite

By Rhona McCord

Community Coordinator, Unite the Union

THE Champions Cup is a three-year initiative sponsored by Unite the Union that brings together, in a two-leg play-off, the winners of both football leagues in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

This year's fixtures, between Linfield FC and Dundalk FC, were held in Windsor Park on Friday, November 8th and at Oriel Park on Monday, November 11th. The games ended in victory for Dundalk (7-1 on aggregate). Well done, Dundalk!

Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey attended both fixtures and the tournament ambassador was legendary Arsenal, Spurs and Northern Ireland goalkeeper Pat Jennings.

Well-deserved congratulations to both teams for taking part and for their support for this cross-border initiative.

As part of the Champions Cup, a quarter of the sponsorship money was allocated to local community projects and charities. A cheque was presented on the night of the final match to Temple Street Children's Hospital and to Baldoyle Football Club.

Unite also teamed up to support two grassroots football teams – from Mosney direct provisions centre and Quay Celtic in Dundalk – in recognition of the great work shown by volunteer coaches who give their time and commitment so that young people can enjoy sports and integrate with other. Both teams provided mascots for the second leg match in



Above: Mubarak Olumegbon of Mosney FC and Pat Jennings present Dundalk's Chris Shields with the man of the match award

Left: Dundalk FC winners of 2019 Unite the Union Champions Cup



An all-female team of officials presided over the second leg of the competition at Oriel Park



Unite Senior Officer Brendan Ogle and Mags O'Brien, of Show Racism the Red Card, presenting €2k cheque to Baldoyle United, winners of the grassroots competition for best integration initiatives

Oriel Park. A key part of Unite's sponsorship of this competition is to promote diversity, equality and community throughout society and to challenge the intolerance that only serves to divides us.

## Grassroots clubs

A competition open to grassroots football clubs throughout the country was launched to find the best integration initiatives taken by local football teams.

The judging panel, made up of members of Show Racism the Red Card, had a difficult task in reading through the details of the excellent and inspirational work being done at local level throughout the country.

All of those initiatives are worthy of praise and we congratulate each and every one who entered the competition. The overall winner was Bal-

doyle United followed by excellent runners-up Courtown Hibs, Macroom United AFC and Star Rovers, Limerick.

Baldoyle United is a football club in north Dublin. This year it celebrates 50 years of football in the local community. They currently have 25 boys, girls and adult teams, and they run a fun 'junior academy' every week for four to seven-year-old boys and girls.

Baldoyle United is an inclusive club that promotes equality, diversity and has a strong anti-racist message.

Both the judging panel and Unite were very impressed with Baldoyle United and their commitment to equality and diversity that is so clearly represented in the activities of the club with girls, boys and adult teams.

The club's participation in a range of multi-cultural and cross-border events sends a positive message to our communities about friendship and respect. They should be very proud of all their volunteers and players. Well done, Baldoyle United! The Champions' Cup is a celebration of football and community. We acknowledge that people are different and we acknowledge the right of each of us to celebrate our traditions but football brings us all together to a place where we can respect and celebrate that difference.

We look forward to continuing this initiative and working with more clubs and players for the 2020 Champions Cup.



Rhona McCord and Brendan Ogle of Unite with Mosney football coach Robert Fimbo (right) delivering 180 pairs of football boots to players at the direct provision centre

## Coaching opportunities for Mosney young adults

THROUGHOUT the build-up to this year's Champions Cup, Unite Community members linked up with coach Robert Fimbo and young players from Mosney direct provision centre to forge links and support for asylum seekers in Ireland.

This work will continue over the months and years ahead. And as a result of talks with the young players at Mosney, Unite teamed up with Toplion Sportswear to

supply the boys' and girls' teams with new football boots. Unite is also supporting an initiative, along with the FAI, for young adults living in Mosney who have expressed an interest in coaching football to pursue that goal.

Supported by FAI community development officers in liaison with the centre and their coach, 20 young adults from Mosney will attend child safeguarding awareness training over the coming

months. This is a mandatory requirement for getting into football coaching. This will be followed by attendance at the FAI's first level coach education course where the fundamental skills will be taught. After the young coaches have completed their initial training, they will be facilitated to take up coaching opportunities with local clubs as well as helping with the running of weekly football sessions at Mosney.

ROADSHOWS LAUNCHED

# Rolling initiative to build a momentum for United Ireland

TRADE unionists from across Ireland North and South gathered in Dublin on Saturday 9th November to discuss their vision of what a United Ireland should look like.

The seminar, titled *Uniting Ireland – Uniting Workers*, took place in Mandate Head Office, Dublin, and was hosted by Trade Unionists for a New and United Ireland (TUNUI).

This was the first in a series of roadshow events to be held across the country that will gather opinions from trade unionists on a number of vital issues in the context of the Irish unity debate.

Mandate General Secretary John Douglas gave an opening welcome to a packed main hall in the union's Parnell Square headquarters, extolling passionately the need for trade

unionists to take a strong lead in discussions towards how we might achieve a socialist 32-county Republic of Ireland.

Two superbly researched economic and political presentations followed. The first by Conor McCabe, author, researcher and educator, ably followed by SIPTU political economist Michael Taft, both of whom perfectly set up the day for further discussion on the theme *Uniting Ireland – Uniting Workers* and moving towards establishing an Ireland for the many and not just the few.

Attendees were then asked to give their views on universal health care, workers' rights and tackling climate breakdown in a United Ireland context during a series of coordinated workshops. TUNUI intends to develop a policy document based on the



Dublin Council of Trade Unions' Mick O'Reilly (above) speaks from floor. Union activist Noirin Greene (below) did a superb round-up of day's discussions

consultation with trade union members on these issues during a series of Uniting Ireland – Uniting Workers roadshows.

Group spokesperson Ruairí Creaney described the first roadshow event as “the start of a major debate within trade unions on the prospect of Irish unity”.

He said: “Trade unions have been a key driver of social and economic change throughout Irish history. In recent years, we stood by women in the repeal referendum and we stood by our LGBT brothers and sisters in the marriage equality referendum. “One of the biggest changes coming down the road is Irish unity, and trade unionists need to put their stamp on that debate.”

He continued: “We want to ensure that a United Ireland is a New Ireland that enhances the rights of workers and gives them a bigger say in their workplaces and in wider society.

“We can't leave this debate to the boss class. If we do, they will carve out a new Ireland in their interests and it will be trade union members who pay the price for that.”

Creaney pointed out that the roadshows would be focusing less on issues surrounding identity and more on the material benefits that will flow from Irish unity.

“The main themes of discussion will be centred on how we can achieve an all-Ireland universal health service free at the point of need. We will also be discussing what workers' rights will look like in a new



country and how we can better tackle climate breakdown as a unitary state.

“This is part of a series of events across the country to gather the opinions of trade unionists on what a new and United Ireland should look like and to encourage the wider trade union movement to advocate for it.”

He added: “We had an extremely successful event in Dublin and we

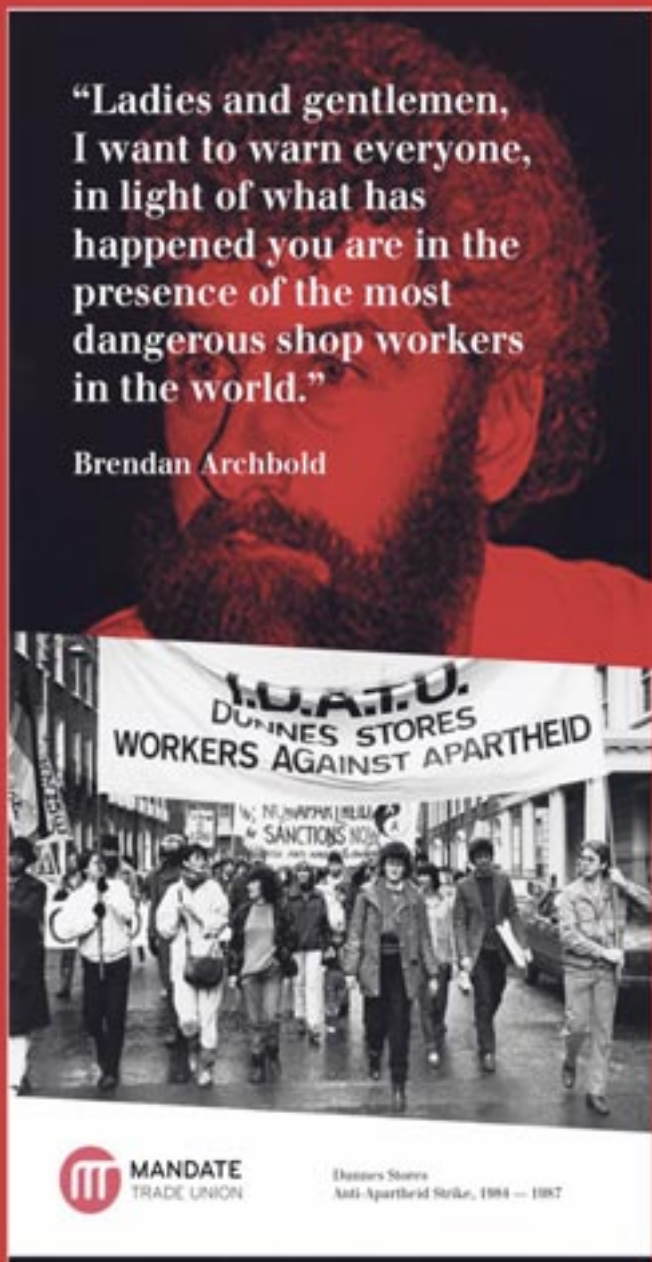
“ We want much, much more than a fairer Ireland... we don't just want a piece of the cake, we want the whole bloody bakery! ”

now look forward to visiting places like Derry, Galway, Cork and Belfast, among others, to listen to the wide variety of views that exist within the trade union movement.”

Speaking following the event, Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes told *Shopfloor*: “We were delighted to be able to host this first event here in our historic head office on Parnell Square, Dublin.

“This is an important first gathering of a series of trade unionist-led debates, both North and South, on the desperate need for a new Ireland.

“Our aim, as trade unionists, shouldn't be that of just seeking a fairer Ireland – no, we want much, much more than that. We don't just want a piece of the cake, we want the whole bloody bakery!”



## TRAINING



Participants in the Workplace Union Reps Intro course which took place from October 21st to 23rd at the Training Centre in Dublin



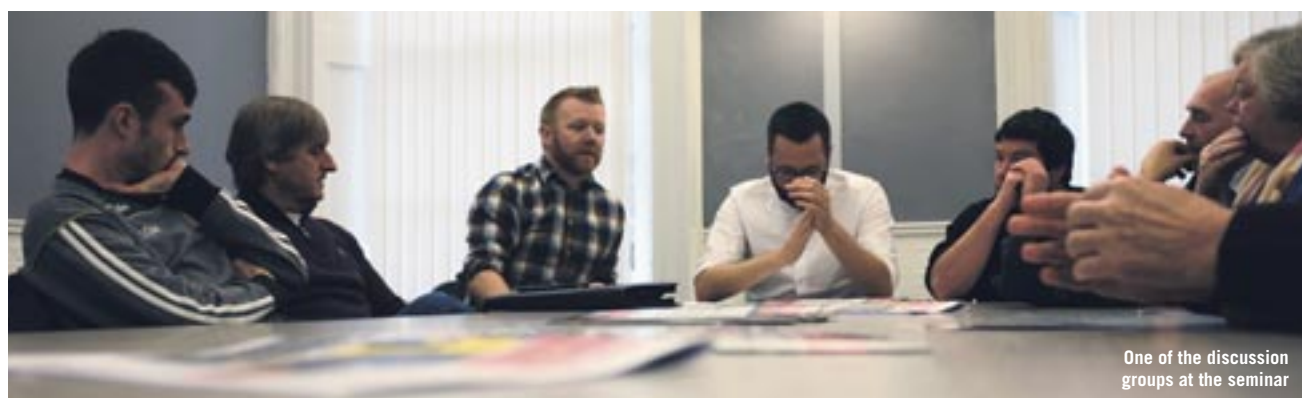
Conor McCabe delivers his presentation at the seminar



General Secretary John Douglas



Ruairí Creaney said TUNUI wants a new Ireland that enhances workers' rights and gives them bigger say in society. SIPTU researcher Michael Taft (below) speaks at seminar



One of the discussion groups at the seminar



Pictures: Donal Higgins

He continued: "We are always mindful that building a new 32-county socialist republic from the remnants of a failed republic will not be easy and will inevitably take time.

"However, trade unionists the length and breath of this country, discussing and sharing views on a more

equal and egalitarian Ireland is an essential first step towards achieving James Connolly's vision of an Ireland from the plough to the stars.

"Given our deliberations here today in Dublin we are minded to remember the immortal words of Connolly, 'For our demands most moderate are,



Noel Martin from Navan being presented with James Connolly statue after winning the draw made at the meeting



## Workplace Union Representative Advanced Training

This three day course is designed to provide trade union activists with the knowledge and skills to effectively contribute to and participate in their unions Recruitment & Organising strategy.

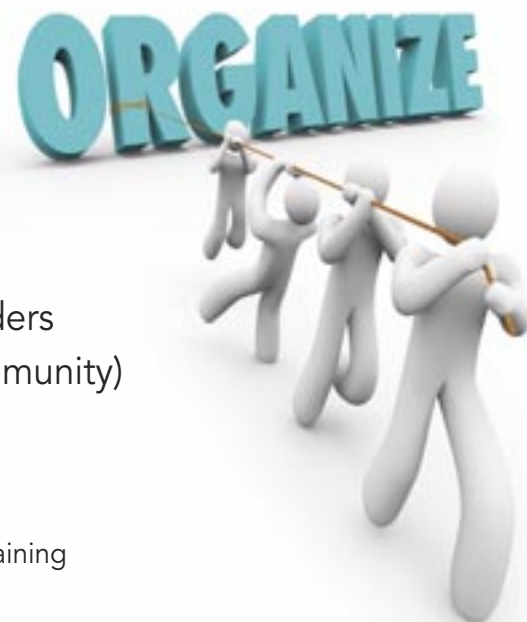
### Course Content:

- Building workers power
- Engaging workers
- Talking to the undecided
- Handling objections
- Base building and collective action, identifying and recruiting leaders
- Mapping (workplace and community)
- Understanding power

### Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate Certificate.

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.





Mandate NEC member Martin Mahony (centre) underlines his point that improved legislation on industrial issues can be achieved...

## Remove the handcuffs: ditch 1990 Act!

By Jimmy Doran  
Trade Union Left Forum

A WELL-attended meeting organised by Unite in the Community, in conjunction with Communities Against Low Pay (CALP), was held in Dublin recently.

The aim of the meeting was twofold: to organise low-paid restaurant workers into a union, and to actively identify rogue employers who are exploiting workers by paying poverty pay and the manner they deal with tips for waiting staff.

The campaign against the Ivy restaurant over employees' tips was explained to the meeting.

One of the speakers was Julia Marciniak, a former member of staff at the Ivy, who was sacked for fighting back. Her dismissal is currently being fought by her union.

Councillor Cieran Perry explained that CALP was a grassroots organisation for campaigning against low pay and organising actions during trade disputes when trade unions are banned from doing so – in particular by the Industrial Relations Act (1990).

Cieran described how CALP had been active during the Greyhound, Lloyds Pharmacy and Tesco strikes. Not being part of the trade union movement or officially on strike, it was able to place pickets where unions were forbidden to place them – for example, in shopping centres during the Lloyds and Tesco disputes. CALP members manned pickets and blocked bin lorries where unions were forbidden from doing so.

Martin Mahony, a retail worker based in Dublin, speaking on behalf of Mandate, outlined his union's support for the campaign, citing the need for unions and community action groups to collaborate more in order to achieve robust legislation to stop wage theft by unscrupulous employers.

The meeting was told that for every inspection carried out in the retail sector, a sum of more than €1,000 was returned to workers in unpaid wages.

Martin explained: "Mandate has achieved more than €100 million in pay increases across the retail sector in recent years.

"However, despite this significant achievement, retail workers are being continuously undermined by other retail workers who are not in a union. This freeloader mentality must be challenged at every opportunity," he added.

### Lobbying

"Mandate launched our 'Secure Hours = Better Future' campaign and working alongside other unions in a concerted lobbying campaign, which was led by our members in Dunnes, we won the introduction into legislation of the Employment Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2018.

"Workers in Ireland now have a right to seek a contract that reflects the actual hours they work – thus proving that improved legislation can be achieved, especially when unions collectively combine their campaigning activities."

There was a call at the meeting for a radical trade union campaign to fight back against low pay and precarious employment. The question has to be asked: are workers able to

... retail workers are continuously undermined by other retail workers who are not in a union. This freeloader mentality must be challenged at every opportunity

have a "radical trade union campaign"? Anti-worker legislation is so restrictive that if workers were to have such a campaign they would need a senior counsel in one hand and the 1990 Act in the other in order to navigate all the legislation that is used to stop workers' resistance.

Let us look at three issues discussed at the public meeting: the Ivy Restaurant, the minimum wage, and tip theft.

If there was no 1990 Act in place when Julia Marciniak was sacked from the Ivy Restaurant, her fellow-workers could have gone on strike and placed a picket on the premises immediately and shut it down.

This could have brought the owners of this business to the negotiating-table. But under the 1990 Act, single-worker disputes are drawn out for months, and by such time all the energy is gone out of the dispute.

Individual workers are at a huge disadvantage; but even a group of workers must now give a minimum of seven days' notice, and have to abide by a huge number of rules and regulations in the balloting of members, which often leads to long gaps between dispute and strike.

This tips the balance of power firmly towards the employer—as it was designed to do.

When the Government refused to increase the minimum wage by 30 cents in the recent budget, low-paid workers on the minimum wage could have downed tools in a strike against the minimum wage. This is also outlawed under the 1990 Act as "political strikes" are banned.

### Collective

The tips issue could have been dealt with in a collective manner. The workers in all restaurants that are stealing tips could have gone on strike in support of each other as an industry-wide strike. Restaurants not directly involved could have had support strikes. This would give the workers involved a much stronger position for fighting back against this outrageous policy that is now common across the country.

'Social partnership' and its legislation, the Industrial Relations Act, has led to union density being at its lowest level in the history of the state, hovering at around 24% of the work

force. Many of these workers are in their fifties, while younger workers coming through are not joining unions, so it's on a downward spiral. Many young workers have not even heard of trade unions: they hardly know they exist. This is because of the side-effects of 'social partnership'.

Unions are inactive and are not seen on the streets or on strike fighting for workers' rights. Despite 'social partnership' being abandoned many years ago, this mentality continues today, largely thanks to the anti-union legislation enacted as part of it, which restricts unions in taking strike action.

Under the voluntarist trade union system there is no right to union access; we do not have collective bargaining rights; and there is no right to union recognition.

We may have the right to join a union, but without these other rights it is akin to having the right to own a bike but not being allowed to cycle it. It puts handcuffs on workers.

We need to remove these handcuffs. Then, and only then, can workers take off their gloves, roll up their sleeves, and fight back. Then, and only then, can workers have a radical trade union campaign against precarious work, poverty pay, and all the other inequalities being imposed on the working class.

There is very little power in a union today. This power must be regained if we are to get a just share of the wealth that we produce.

If we had 100% union density without power we are fighting a losing battle. What is needed is a radical workers' rights campaign to tip the balance back in our favour.

We must fight to have the 1990 Act abolished and take on the employers, with a ballot box in one hand and strike notice in the other.

Unions must become radical or become redundant.



Supporters from other unions show solidarity with striking Lloyds Pharmacy workers

# All weather activism on show at claim update

ENTHUSIASTIC members of the union working in Tesco Clearwater Finglas braved some particularly nasty autumnal weather to attend an update on the 2019 pay and benefits claim lodged earlier in the year.

Industrial Officer John Callan told *Shopfloor*: “We had a large turnout on a particularly bad night, weather-wise. Clearwater is – and always has been – a strong union shop.

“The local reps and house committee continue to maintain a strong union structure in the store and this was evident by the enthusiasm on the night.

“The union is seeking a pay in-



crease and pay equality as well as fairer scheduling with more set hours and predictable working patterns. The claim is also demanding 1,000 extra full-time jobs as a recent survey of

members showed only 13% of Tesco workers were on full-time contracts.

“The union is also seeking Tesco to engage with the union on terms and conditions of employment – the claim

demands that Tesco management fully respect and comply with all existing collective agreements and engage on both individual and collective issues.”

He added: “All those present at the

meeting on 30th September endorsed the claim and committed to support the claim as well as ensuring the union remains strong in Clearwater.”

Sligo Mandate activist Denise Curran (back row, centre) with other attendees at the Traveller Equality Network launch



## SOLIDARITY

# Mandate backing for Fórsa Traveller equality initiative

By **Garan Campbell**  
Divisional Organiser

PUBLIC sector union Fórsa recently launched the Traveller Equality Network to highlight the many issues that affect the Traveller community in the workplace.

These issues include dealing with the depth of structural inequalities facing Travellers from accessing workplace as well as socio-economic rights to public policy provisions affecting the community.

The initiative was officially launched at Sligo Town Hall on Saturday, 9th November by Mayor Gino O’Boyle.

His introductory remarks were followed by contributions from INVOLVE CEO James O’Leary, Martin Ward of the Galway Traveller Move-

ment and Bernadette Maughan of the Sligo Traveller Support Group.

Among the many Fórsa members, Traveller community representatives and guests at the launch was Mandate’s longstanding Sligo activist and NEC member Denise Curran.

Denise told *Shopfloor*: “I cannot stress enough the importance of these trade union-organised campaigns and facilities which serve to highlight the continued inequalities within Irish workplaces and the wider society.”

“At a local level Mandate is only very proud and privileged to lend what support it can to Fórsa on this very worthy cause. I am delighted to represent that backing by being present at the event. Fair play, Fórsa!” she added.

# Ex-Roches employee wins Transfer of Undertakings claim against Debenhams

CHRISTMAS came early this year – or should that be very, very late – for a former Roches employee after she was successful in a claim at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) over disciplinary action following a staff search and the non-payment of a ‘Christmas Box’ bonus way back in 2017.

Welcoming the move, Divisional Organiser John Carty flagged up the importance of Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) legislation, otherwise known as TUPE, in a case such as this one.

He said: “Mandate welcomes the WRC adjudication officer’s findings on the TUPE aspect of the dispute, as it will remind Debenhams of their contractual obligations to ex-Roches workers.”

The WRC adjudication officer had accepted the complainant’s evidence that “despite having been searched on a number of previous occasions, this may have been the first time that she was requested to have her handbag included in such a search”.

The adjudication officer also accepted the complainant’s evidence that there “may have been confusion in relation to management’s right, based on the policies, to make such a request” and that the final written warning could be viewed as “somewhat harsh, in the circumstances”.

According to the adjudication officer, the final written warning was moot due to the passage of time [it had expired at the time of the WRC recommendation].

As the Mandate member was not paid

her bonus payment, this was in breach of Statutory Instrument – S.I. No. 131/2003 European Communities (Protection of Employees on Transfer of Undertakings) Regulations 2003.

The Adjudication Officer concluded that the complainant’s terms and conditions of employment, as they transferred from the transferor (Roches), currently apply (in Debenhams) and “that there is no link to the disciplinary process as it exists in the respondent’s (Debenhams) current policies in this regard. Therefore, I find that the respondent’s (Debenhams) view that the complainant (Mandate member) was not eligible for the payment of a ‘Christmas Box’ bonus for 2017 is not consistent with her terms and conditions of employment.”



# It's time for you get active in the union...

**A NUMBER of recent stories from the world of international retail prove once again the additional difficulties faced by workers in badly organised employments as they attempt to stave off savage attacks by their employers on well-established terms and conditions of employment.**

In the UK, the third largest supermarket chain, Asda, recently



## VIEW *from the* SHOPFLOOR Gerry Light

Assistant General Secretary  
Mandate Trade Union

announced what appeared on the face of it good news – an 18p an hour increase for staff.

However, the 118,000 workers who will receive the increase must accept unilateral changes to their contracts, including the loss of paid breaks, the introduction of variable shifts and a reduction in premium pay for bank holidays and night shifts.

Remarkably workers were given one week to accept the new terms or face the reality of losing their jobs. In what was presented as a row-back from this position management then stated that instead of being sacked the workers would simply be moved on to the new contract against their will.

The hugely ironic fact is the majority of staff members are on an hourly rate of only £8.21 which is the national statutory minimum wage in the UK while the

“ So forewarned is forearmed. A well-organised workforce offers the best protection against whatever is coming down the track ”

business has just announced an increase in profits of 13% to £805 million.

Maybe we should not be surprised at these latest developments as Asda is owned by the notoriously anti-union US retail giant Walmart.

In Australia, Woolworths admitted to owing 5,700 of its staff \$300 million due to an underpayment in their wages for as much as nine years. However, this figure is likely

to increase when former members of staff are factored into the equation.

When finally concluded the probe currently being carried out by Australia's Fair Work Ombudsman is likely to result in the biggest case relating to underpayment of wages.

It would appear that the treatment of workers in this fashion is not that uncommon in Australia: other firms – such as Qantas, Commonwealth Bank and Super Retail Group – have also been found guilty of what can only be described as wage theft.

Westfarmers, another household retail name Down Under, was caught owing \$15 million to its workers stretching back as far as 2010. By way of an explanation the employer stated this arose from an “inadvertent error”.

**At a time when the threat to retail jobs and hard-won terms and conditions is on the increase, retail workers must become more determined to protect their livelihoods.**

In the UK alone this year more than 85,000 jobs have been lost. Recently businesses such as Moth-

ercare, Bonmarché, Karen Millen and Coast have closed. Others like Marks and Spencer, House of Fraser, Boots and Debenhams have announced a programme of store closures and staff reductions.

Worryingly, some of these retail stalwarts have a presence here in Ireland and with the full impact of Brexit still to unfold, it is reasonable to assume that some negative knock-on effect will be felt this side of the Irish Sea.

So forewarned is forearmed. A well-organised workforce offers the best protection against whatever is coming down the track. Already Mandate has shown an ability to protect workers against the full ravages of cuts envisaged for them by their respective employers.

The recent journey of the Debenhams Irish business through an Examinership process is a good case in point.

**Apathy and a lack of action are among the biggest dangers facing workers at this time but remember these traits are entirely within their capacity to avoid.**

# A proud history and a future filled with hope



**Michael O'Halloran**

Trade unionist,  
Bakery Workers Union  
member/activist &  
former Mayor of  
Dublin City

BAKERS in Ireland have a long and honourable history. It is a history of achievement, struggle, and success along with failure. However, over the last decade there has been a decline in the influence and importance of the bakery workers' organisation due to technological change and a growth in non-union bakeries.

The union in trying to arrest this difficulty amalgamated with the British Bakers' Union. The amalgamation was not a success and this union has now withdrawn from Ireland.

Many of the union's members have joined Mandate. They now have an opportunity of rebuilding the organisation of bakers through their participation in Mandate.

The bakers bring to Mandate a great tradition in trade union organisation. And this tradition is marked by many great past achievements.

The Dublin Bakers' Union Rule Book of 1875 outlines the benefits that the union had put in place to assist with the welfare of their members. This included: unemployment benefit, sick benefit, the provision of free doctors and funeral benefit. These generous benefits were provided because of the willingness of mem-



Picture: Kyle Strickland (CC BY-NC 2.0)

bers to pay a high rate of contributions. These benefits continued into the 20th century but, with state benefits improving, the union benefits were eventually abolished.

The union was not only concerned about the working conditions of its members but also their education and cultural life. The union promoted an orchestra as well as a choir and was probably the only union in Ireland to establish its own trade school. This was to improve the skills and knowledge of its members so as to lay a foundation for improved management opportunities for bakery workers as well as improving the quality and variety of bakery-produced

goods. This objective of providing management candidates was never properly realised and its failure to achieve this may have contributed to the demise of unionised bakeries in Ireland.

Many of the managers dealing with the changes that were taking place in the bakery industry had little or no understanding of the culture of bakery workers. This affected their ability to lead and communicate the challenge of change. Another contribution by the Bakers' Union was the building of a new headquarters in Harcourt Street. The general secretary of the Bakers' Union, the late John Swift, identified a site on Harcourt Street where there was a Bap-

tist Church. He persuaded the union to purchase this church and build on the site a headquarters for the Bakers' Union in Ireland – which had members in the whole of the island. That was why the headquarters building was named 'Four Provinces House'.

In its day, this building was the finest trade union centre in Dublin. It contained a conference hall which was decorated by murals of scenes from Irish labour history which were painted by well-known Irish artists. It also had a restaurant and a library for members.

The Executive Room contained a bust of labour Irish leader James Connolly who had worked at a bakery in Scotland in his younger years.

All of this was achieved with a membership of 4,000 which indicates the importance that leadership and commitment can play in the development of trade unions and, as such, is of equal importance to that of financial resources.

General Secretary John Swift was the person who drove this vision. It was his vision that established the trade school. In the History of the Bakers' Union all of these achievements are listed in greater detail and are worth reading to see what can be achieved through a combination of leadership and vision.

Inspired by past achievements, bakers now have an opportunity of overcoming their present difficulty. And their involvement in Mandate provides a strong basis for the rebuilding of the organisation of bakery workers in Ireland.

# Biffo

## The Eye That Never Sleeps



### It's a daff-a-down dilly Chitty Chitty Bang Bang yarn...

THIS is an actual mural on a wall in East London of working class hero and general diamond geezer Eddie Dempsey from the RMT!

And it was pure Donald Duck that the following conversation was overheard on an East London Uncle Gus between two billy bunters:

**"Ere me aul dinner plate, who's that geezer's boat race on that wall over in East London?"**

**"Awright me aul china, I fink it's some left-wing struggle and grunt from the RMT."**

**"Ah yeah, it's that union geezer**

**Eddie Dempsey off the custard and jelly. He's been having an argy-bargy with those Berkeley Hunts from New Labour who need a right kick in the Berlin's."**

**"Cheese and rice that Dempsey geezer does a fair bitta rabbit and porking but he's a right wee Charlie Pride all the same."**

**"I'd give 'im a cattle truck alright."**

Proof, if needed, that witty conversations on an East London bus are no different than those wee gems overheard on our own Dublin buses.



### Hot drinks for the homeless...

THREE lads were spotted on O'Connell Street in Dublin recently carrying a Burco water boiler to give out hot drinks to our homeless on the soaking wet streets of our capital city. This demonstrates that while humanity and dignity is clearly missing from those heartless sociopaths who pass our laws, there still remains hope clearly shown in the well-meaning actions of these teenagers that our future society might not be as doomed as people would have us believe.



# Love, peace and socialism, comrades, and Nollaig Shona Daoibh from Biffo!

## Kerry's very own Time Lord



VLADIMIR Lenin reserved some of his choicest epithets for one form of representative institution, namely "the venal and rotten parliamentarism of bourgeois society."

Biffo reckons auld Vladimir must have spent a day or two in the company of

Kerry's wisest of the Healy-Raes, the bold Michael.

Just a few days after the Dáil controversy over voting in the chamber, which led to some TDs making public apologies, Michael Healy-Rae seemed to have mastered the extremely difficult art of bilocation.

On Monday 21st June 2018 he was registered as being in the Dáil on the day EU leader Jean-Claude Juncker came to preach austerity to our TDs. He also managed to be at a funeral that very morning in Sneem, south Kerry, for the burial of an uncle of his son-in-law. In

order to claim full expenses TDs must register their attendance at Leinster House using the electronic fob system. However, the system does not record the time at which TDs fob in.

Michael Healy-Rae, who coincidentally is chairman of the European Affairs Committee, was forced by the media to defend his Dáil attendance record by going on the offensive, declaring, "I can't be in two places at the one time" and "If you're trying to give the impression that I worked only an hour a day... get your facts right" which would in this particular instance seem to contradict his fobbed-in presence in the Dáil and his attendance at a funeral in Sneem.

Setting the controversy of his alleged time travelling aside, his contrite confession that he "wasn't at the funeral. It was the burial I made. I didn't make the Mass. I was late for the Mass," could yet prove to be his biggest mistake.

Declaring so brazenly that he missed Mass won't go down well with his voter base in Kerry.

God love him!

Fobbed off: Michael Healy-Rae



### Active shopping unit on Grafton Street

THERE WAS no quarter given as shoppers ridicule an attempt at re-branding Grafton Street in Dublin. Twitter was alight with the craic and plenty of piss-taking but winner of Tweet of the Day goes to comedian PJ Gallagher who posted this picture of the IRA doing their Christmas shopping on the historic Grafton Quarter.

**2019 Trump Award for UK Political Oxymoron of the Year ...**  
**Winner – Vote Conservative to undo nine years of Conservative policies!**

# Revolutionary Munster celebrated

By Breandán Ó Conchúir  
Industrial Officer, Southern Division

THE role played by Cork trade unionists during the revolutionary period from 1916 to 1921 was celebrated at a conference in University College Cork on 19th October.

Focusing on the theme 'Labour in the War Zone', the event was organised by the Cork Council of Trade Unions, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and the School of History at UCC.

The conference, which was open to the public, was attended by both academics and trade union activists. They heard contributions delivered by a number of leading labour historians.

Emmet O'Connor spoke on the the labour movement's role in the independence struggle throughout Munster; while Dominic Haugh – who has published a book on the subject – spoke about the 'Limerick Soviet' of 1917. Theresa Moriarty's talk was titled 'Underpaid, underfed, hard-driven: women workers in revolutionary Munster'.

The one-day conference was organised at a time when across the country the centenary of many historically significant events is being celebrated.

While the events of the War of Independence are well known and have been celebrated for many years, the



One of the contributors to the 19th October conference at UCC

Picture: SIPTU Twitter

important actions taken by trade unionists in this period have received much less coverage.

This is despite militant trade unionism taking an active role in the social struggle aimed at improving the lives of ordinary workers and landless rural labourers.

Conference attendees heard presen-

tations on the most high-profile events of this period of military and social struggle such as the series of workplace occupations across Munster from 1919 which have been referred to as 'Soviets' by both the workers who took part and by historians since.

These occupations saw workers in workplaces – such as creameries, flour

mills, and Cork harbour – take control of the management and oversee their continued operation.

The workers were motivated by both economic and political concerns and the soviets reflected workers' demands for fairer wages. Workers called for the removal of particularly unpopular managers and the occupations featured overt political statements such as the painting of slogans and the raising of red flags over buildings.

The slogan 'We make bread not profits' was painted over the door of the Bruree Soviet in Limerick. There, workers occupied a bakery and flour mill and continued to produce bread but sold it at a much lower price than normal.

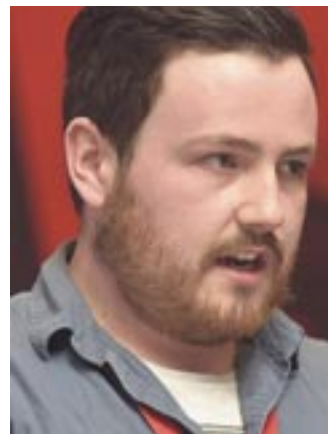
Other speakers covered the important role of trade unionists in the struggle for independence through general strikes against conscription and in support of republican prisoners and the refusal to transport arms.

As the decade of centenaries continues there will be more events such as this to celebrate the history of Ireland's revolutionary period. It is important that the vital role played by trade union movement in this period is remembered and celebrated as part of these centenaries.

## FEEDBACK

### National Activists School

Full report p6/7



**"This course not only proved very informative, it gave me an insight into how the union's real decision making operates. This further emphasised the need for real member participation to make and defend the decisions that drives the union policies and strategies. Meeting and conferring with other activists helped the courses learning processes, and likewise the venue contributed to that. A great course and hopefully more to follow..."**

Mar Drewe - Tesco Castlebar,  
North & West Division



## 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**



## Presentation & Public Speaking Skills

This two day course is designed to provide trade union activists with the knowledge and skills to prepare, present and deliver presentations effectively within their roles.

### Day 1 - Course Content:

- Designing a Presentation
- Preparation & Practice
- Methods of Presentation
- Structuring a Speech
- Not Overloading
- Individual Task (Beginning your Speech)

### Day 2 - Course Content:

- Engaging the Audience
- Communication Skills Verbal and Non-Verbal
  - Verbal: Time, Pitch, Create Effect
  - Non-Verbal: Physical Orientation, Posture, Breathing Exercise
- Active Listening, Speech Timing
- Speech Delivery
- Overcome Nerves & Anxiety
- Individual Speech Practical Exercise

### Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate Certificate.

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.



# Decision not to boost NMW 'shows contempt for vulnerable workers'

MANDATE has condemned the Government's decision to set aside an increase for minimum wage workers while also increasing their cost of living through the carbon tax.

Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection Regina Doherty deferred the implementation of the Low Pay Commission's recommendation for a 30 cent-an-hour increase in the National Minimum Wage, which currently stands at €9.80 an hour.

Defending the decision not to implement the miserly 30 cent rise, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar said that Government was merely following the Low Pay Commission's advice on increasing the minimum wage only in the event of an orderly Brexit.

The 'get out clause' for government, unfortunately ceded by the Low Pay Commission (LPC), was most likely an 'unintended consequence' as the Commission's recommendation was framed on the basis of assuming an orderly transition for the exit of the UK from the EU.

The LPC report furthermore states: "The Commission acknowledges that in the event of a 'hard' Brexit the Government may need to review the recommended rate."

Given its long lasting love affair with austerity and fiscal conservatism this Government didn't need to be offered the chance to dodge giving a pay rise to low paid workers twice. Slamming the move, General Secretary John Douglas claimed it showed "contempt" for the most vulnerable workers in our society



John Douglas: 'contempt for the lower paid'

He said: "In recent years, low paid workers have been battered by rising rents and housing costs, as well as food prices and essential goods. The only thing that helps them to maintain any standard of living is when their pay is increased through the minimum wage."

And he insisted that denying minimum wage workers an increase in the face of Brexit and an expected 4% increase in household spending that would impact on those on the lowest income the most was reprehensible.

"To add insult to injury, the Government expects the same workers to pay an increase in carbon tax, without access to fuel allowances, which could lead to a 5%-6% increase in living costs," he added.

The number of workers living below the poverty line increased from 91,407 in 2009 to 109,000 in 2017 – and, according to Mandate, this decision will increase the num-

ber of "working poor" further. Mr Douglas continued: "Low paid workers paid a disproportionate penalty for a banking crisis not of their making, and it seems the Government will ensure the same workers pay for a climate crisis not of their making."

"All this budget did was increase the number of working poor. Low paid workers' families will once again have to go without because government refuses to recognise the struggles of everyday workers."

"It will mean more families struggling to pay their rent; more struggling to put a roof over their head; more people experiencing deprivation; and will increase the number of children experiencing poverty."

And Mr Douglas explained why the decision was totally unnecessary: "Employers already have an 'inability to pay clause' attached to the National Minimum Wage, so any increase was not likely to put any employer out of business. There really is no excuse for this mean-spirited decision."

He added: "Any worker struggling to make ends meet should join their relevant trade union and campaign for improved working conditions."

"This decision by government shows that workers cannot rely on their employer or the government to improve their lives and that the only way workers can win satisfactory pay increases is through well-organised workplaces and collectively bargaining with employers through their trade union."



## TUC hosts Women's Council of the Isles

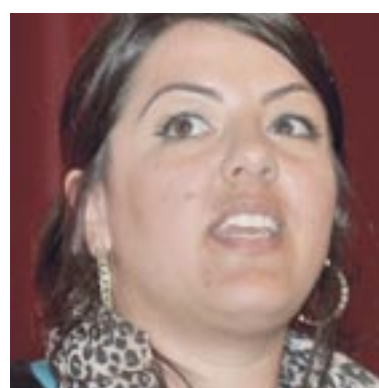
THE annual Women's Council of the Isles was held this year over two days in November at the TUC offices in London.

Each year, the event brings together the women's committees of the TUC, STUC, Welsh TUC, as well as ICTU North and South, to discuss matters of mutual interest.

Mandate delegate Joan Gaffney told *Shopfloor*: "Last year, Dublin hosted the occasion. This year it was England's turn and they gave us all a very warm welcome."

"Not surprisingly, the issues up for discussion at the Council of the Isles centre around women's rights. And on the agenda this year were some of the old faithfuls, including a report on gender equality."

"The rights of Palestinian women



Lessons from Colombia: Mariela Kohon

were also discussed and we heard from one speaker about what it was like to be a Palestinian woman against the backdrop of the ongoing conflict there.

"And there was another interest-

ing discussion on the theme of a woman's place in her union."

Combatting the rise of the far right was featured as part of the discussions, with speakers, including Colombian activist Mariela Kohon, reporting the lessons they had learned.

This year the Irish delegation presented a report, titled 'Enough is Enough', on sexual harassment at work.

Joan said: "A total of seven delegates were involved with the presentation which was headed up by Melissa from Fórsa."

"Other delegates – including myself – gave the voice to the sufferings of women in the workplace based their own experiences."



Picture: Jevgenijs Slihto (CC BY 2.0)

## Workplace Union Representative Intro Training

This three-day **Workplace Representative Intro Training** course is for new shop stewards/union representatives. The course aims to provide info, skills and knowledge to our shop stewards/union representatives to assist them in their workplace roles.

### Course Content:

- The role of the Workplace Representative
- Terms and Conditions of Employment
- Employment Law
- Dealing with workplace issues
- Workplace Organisation & Communications
- Recruiting members and building a strong union in the workplace
- Organising and chairing meetings
- Political and Social Studies
- Supporting union campaigns
- Agreeing actions to build a stronger union in the workplace

### Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate Certificate. Members may then carry on their training and personal development

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.

## Bar Workers UNION TRAINING

Mandate Trade Union is designing and developing this **Bar Workers Union Training** due to workers having identified training that they need and the need to raise awareness in their workplaces.

### Course Content:

- Health and Safety in the workplace
- Health and Safety for the individual
- Personnel safety as a bar worker
- Legal entitlements for bar workers
- Know your employment rights
- Identification of further training requirements for bar workers

### Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate Certificate.

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.

# Why taxing the rich is



**Michael Taft**

THERE are many necessary and progressive projects that could be implemented if there was enough money – public services, in-work supports, anti-poverty programmes, social and economic investment. How would these be paid for?

There is a tendency to underplay the question, or imply that funding would come from simply ensuring the wealthy and corporate sectors pay their fair share. Unfortunately, taxing the rich (whether households or corporations) will not be enough.

Let's first look at how far we are behind other comparable small open economies in the EU. Among high-income countries, the Department of Finance suggests we should compare ourselves to Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and The Netherlands. [See Table 1]

We find that Ireland lags well behind the other countries. In primary revenue (total revenue excluding interest payments), Ireland would have to increase public spending by €19.2 billion to reach the average of our peer group.

However, we don't need to raise all that money as we need to spend less on pensions given our low elderly demographic. Nevertheless, when we exclude spending on public pensions, Ireland would still have to raise taxation by €11.5 billion. However, this is probably an under-estimate as we have a much higher youth demographic requiring

additional spending on education and family supports.

Would simply taxing wealth, high-incomes and the corporate sector raise €11.5 billion? No.

## Taxing wealth

The arguments for a net assets tax, commonly known as a 'wealth' tax, are considerable. How much we would get from that source is debatable. The ESRI and NERI's Dr Tom McDonnell have done excellent work on the design of a net assets tax, different models and the resulting revenue.

The ESRI estimates that, in its most expansive form, a net assets tax would raise €3.8 billion. However, they rightly call this "highly unrealistic":

"... the highly unrealistic scenario of taxing all positive wealth at 1%, this would raise

an estimated €3,781 million and affect 86% of all households. To achieve this yield, however, would require taxing lots of people who have very little net wealth and possibly low incomes. In addition, applying a wealth tax to all households would present a very large administrative burden."

More realistic scenarios suggest yields of between €300 million and €600 million (where only 6% of households would be affected). One could drive revenue up to €2 billion,

but that would involve taxing one-third of all households.

We need a net assets tax, but we also need to be realistic about the revenue it can raise within the parameters of social equity and economic efficiency. One bright spot: there is a tendency to underestimate wealth and, thus, the potential tax revenue. But that still won't get us to the levels of other comparable EU countries.

## The corporate sector

The scandalous stories of corporate tax avoidance suggest we should be capable of raising more revenue from this source. But given Ireland's position in the global tax avoidance chain, we need to tread carefully given the potential of perverse outcomes.

Ireland is already a significant beneficiary of corporate tax revenue, the highest in the EU – and with the lowest corporate tax rate. [See Table 2]

Irish corporate tax revenue makes up 6% of national income with a very low corporate tax rate. How does this happen? This is one of the few benefits of being a tax haven (or 'tax haven conduit' or a 'vital link in the global corporate tax avoidance chain' – whatever). Money flows in and through Ireland and the state can wet its beak – taxing profits generated in other countries.

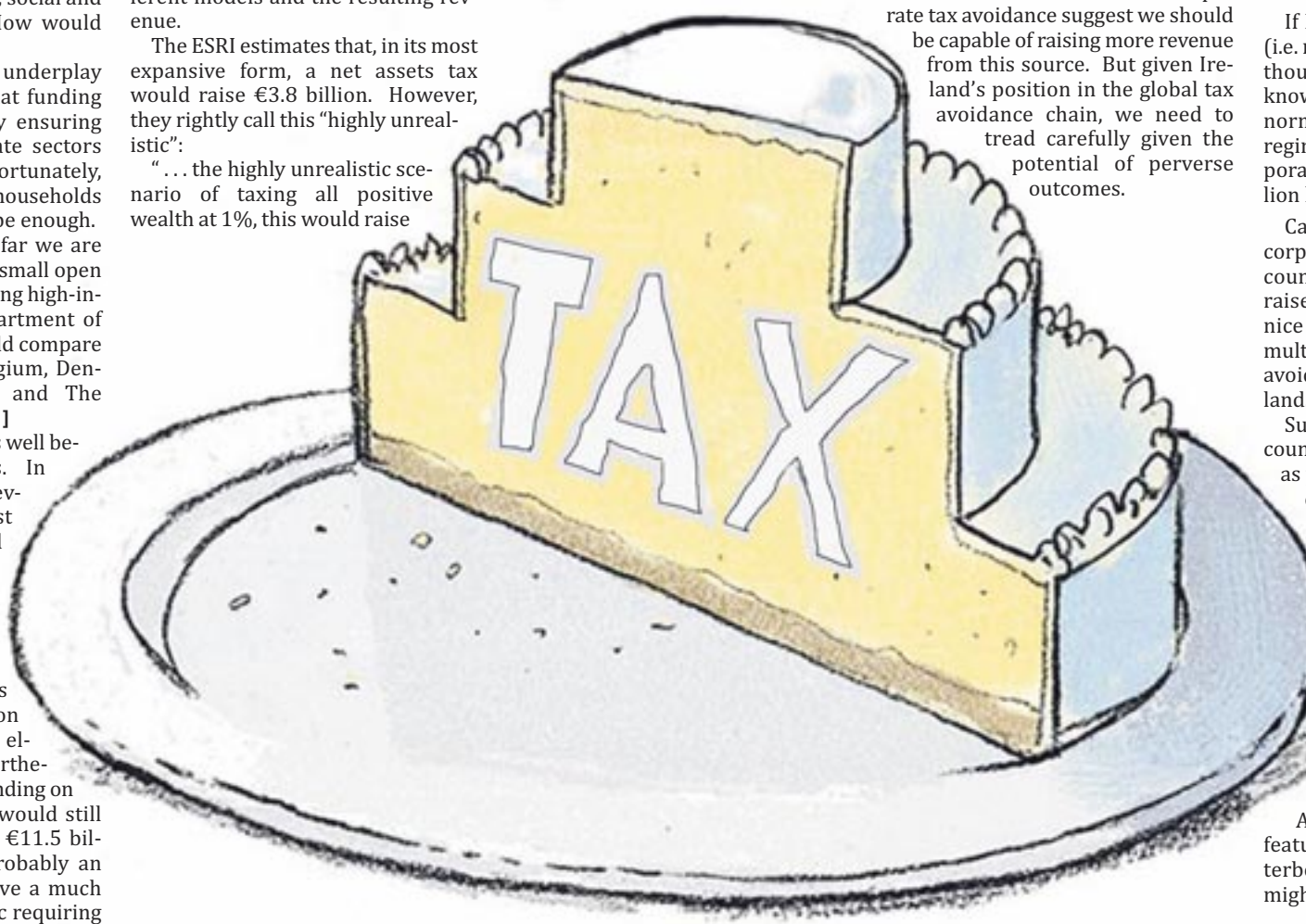
If Ireland was a normal economy (i.e. non-tax haven type jurisdiction – though The Netherlands has been known to play fast and loose) with a normal corporate tax base and tax regime, it would take in far less corporate tax revenue – about €3.6 billion less.

Calls for increasing taxation on the corporate sector need to take into account that the revenue we already raise is labelled 'unsustainable' – a nice way of saying that tax-avoiding multi-nationals could move their tax-avoiding profit flows away from Ireland.

Such calls also need to take into account the fact that flows into Ireland as part of a tax avoidance chain can easily be diverted elsewhere.

Calls need to take into account the impact that potential changes in international taxation (e.g. the OECD base-erosion proposals and the EU's digital tax) will have on Irish taxation without any domestic policy change. The fact is that international tax justice will likely lead to lower corporate tax revenue for Ireland.

And while Ireland has tax haven features, it is not by-and-large a letterbox tax haven (though someone might want to knock on a few doors



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# not enough...

TABLE 1

Primary Government Revenue as a % of Net National Income: 2017			
Primary Government Revenue *		Primary Government Revenue (excluding public pensions)	
Finland	63.9	Denmark	50.4
Denmark	60.0	Belgium	48.2
Belgium	59.4	Sweden	47.1
Sweden	59.2	Finland	47.1
Average	57.0	Average	45.7
Austria	56.9	Netherlands	43.1
Netherlands	50.9	Austria	41.7
Ireland	44.8	Ireland	38.4

\* Primary Revenue: Government revenue available after interest payments

TABLE 2

Corporate Tax Revenue and Tax Rate: 2018			
Corporate Tax Revenue as a % of Net National Income: 2018		Main Corporate Tax Rate: 2018 (%)	
Ireland	6.0	Ireland	12.5
Belgium	5.4	Belgium	29
Netherlands	3.9	Netherlands	25
Average	3.9	Average	23.7
Sweden	3.5	Sweden	21.4
Finland	3.4	Finland	20
Denmark	3.4	Denmark	22
Austria	3.2	Austria	25

TABLE 3

Marginal and Average Tax Rate on Single Person with 1.67 of Average Income *			
Marginal Tax Rate (%)		Average Tax Rate (%)	
Sweden	60.1	Belgium	47.9
Belgium	59.1	Netherlands	42.3
Denmark	55.9	Denmark	41.5
Netherlands	52.3	Average	40.7
Average	52.3	Austria	38.0
Ireland	52.0	Finland	37.6
Finland	49.4	Sweden	36.7
Austria	36.9	Ireland	35.1

\* in Ireland, this amounts to approximately €75,000

in the IFSC to see if anyone answers). Most multi-nationals here have substantial presence – in terms of employment, wages and economic activity.

What would the combination of changing international tax rules and any domestic policy changes have on future foreign direct investment? We have a tax-based FDI policy which is long past its sell-by date. Do we have a new one ready to go? A progressive one that doesn't rely on a lax regime with low tax rates?

Social Justice Ireland estimates that a minimum corporate tax rate would raise a substantial €1 billion. Even if that had no blow-back or downsides, this would still leave us far from the tax revenue raised in other countries.

## High income individuals

What about increasing taxes on high income individuals? [See Table 3] While Irish marginal tax rates (the percentage of tax you pay on each additional euro earned) are average, average tax rates under-perform – but not by significant amounts. So we could do a little better.

“ We need a net assets tax, but we also need to be realistic about the revenue it can raise within parameters of social equity & economic efficiency ”

What about our friends in the top 1%? According to the Revenue Commissioners, the top 1% income earners – earning more than €200,000 – pay an effective tax rate of 35%. If we were to increase that to 50% it would raise an additional €1.4 billion. To do the same thing for the top 2% would yield an additional €2.3 billion. However, this would require steep increases in tax rates and could incentivise tax avoidance activities.

Sinn Fein proposed a more modest tax on higher incomes – essentially a new 45% tax rate on incomes above

€140,000. This would raise €345 million. While this money would be welcome, it would not get us a whole lot closer to our peer group's overall tax levels.

This also suggests that to raise the €2.3 billion on the top 2% would require an income tax rate of 70% for those on €150,000 and above; or a marginal tax rate of 81%. That is not terribly realistic. This is not an argument against increasing taxes on those who can well afford it. Taxes on wealth – financial and real property – should be a no-brainer. They are ef-

ficient and progressive. Nor is it an argument against domestic reforms of our corporate tax regime, even as we support international reforms.

The operations of a number of corporate tax expenditures (i.e. tax reliefs) are worthy of examination and reform: the knowledge box, entrepreneurial relief, bringing forward losses, enterprise incentive schemes, R&D tax credits. These could yield considerable resources that could be put toward better purposes.

And as for high-income individuals, it's not the rate that counts but the base. We could lower marginal rates – especially on average income earners – while increasing yield by broadening the tax base.

A stronger Universal Social Charge could achieve this for the simple reason that all income is subjected to the tax. However, even these changes will

not be sufficient to raise our revenue to the levels enjoyed in other countries. What will? I hope to take up this issue in a future article. But here's a teaser: it's not just about raising taxes.

It is about progressing the economy – especially the indigenous sector – into higher value-added activities while ensuring a more equitable share-out between labour and capital.

This is the hard work of transforming the productive base of the economy while privileging the producers (aka the workers). Increasing tax revenue doesn't always have to mean raising taxes.

Michael Taft is a SIPTU researcher. This article first appeared on Michael's Notes On The Front blog.



# Retail workers set to lose flat rate expenses so millionaires can enjoy more tax benefits

By David Gibney  
Mandate communications officer

ALMOST 80,000 retail, bar and pharmacy workers are set to lose their flat rate expenses on January 1st 2020 so the Government can hand a bonanza to highly-paid millionaire executives.

Retail, pharmacy and bar workers are currently entitled to claim between €93-€400 in a flat rate tax relief for costs incurred during their employment.

For instance, the purchase, maintenance and cleaning of uniforms, as well as the purchase of tools of the trade, stationery and other essential work items.

Revenue has decided that low paid workers should lose these flat rate expenses while the Government appears happy to stand idly by as Mandate members lose a valuable benefit they have enjoyed since the 1970s.

For a retail worker, they benefit by a measly €40 per year which barely covers the cost of cleaning their uniforms.

Revenue argue that workers can still make the claim, but that they must have receipts for any expenses. If they'd only be kind enough to suggest how you get a receipt for the electricity used when washing your clothes, or how to quantify the amount of washing powder needed per uniform?

The overall flat rate expenses system was used by 600,000 workers in 2017 costing the exchequer €48m in total – or an average cost to the state of €80 per worker. We would argue this is hardly worth taking off low paid workers.

But then, perhaps Revenue has decided others are more deserving?

## SARP

In the 2020 Budget, the Government announced the extension of the Special Assignee Relief Programme (SARP) scheme which gives tax relief of 30% on income over €75,000 to executives from foreign-owned companies who are re-located to Ireland.

Revenue figures showed 18 people earning between €1 million and €10 million a year had benefitted from the scheme in 2016, with four of those people on salaries in excess of €3 million.



Just doesn't wash: How do you get a receipt for electricity used in cleaning uniforms?

A detailed breakdown of costs involved showed how a person on €3 million a year would pay €351,000 less in tax under the scheme while someone on €9 million would get a €1.07 million write-off.

Part of the scheme also allows for tax relief on private school fees of up to €5,000 per child.

According to records, €600,000 worth of private tuition had been claimed for in 2016, the last year for which figures are available.

Meanwhile, the salaries of the teachers in those private schools are paid by you, the taxpayers.

SARP will be extended for another two years with it costing the exchequer €28.1m in tax foregone in 2017 and benefitting only 1,084 employees.

*Think about that:*

- the SARP scheme cost an average €26,000 for the 1,084 workers who availed of it; while

- the Flat Rate Expense system cost an average of €80 for the 600,000 workers who availed of it.

Can you see who the State prioritises?

## KEEP

Then there's the Key Employee Engagement Programme (KEEP).

KEEP is an incentive brought in by the Government in 2017 that allows companies to pay executives up to €300,000 in shares which they do not have to pay income taxes on (PAYE, USC or PRSI).

The employee makes savings by only paying tax at the lower Capital

## SPOT THE DIFFERENCE...

SARP v flat rate expenses – cost per employee



Gains Tax rate of 33% when disposing of those shares, instead of the marginal income tax rate of 52% (PAYE, USC and PRSI combined). It was estimated in the last two Budgets that this would cost €10m per year.

So, join the dots. Highly-paid executives are being awarded tax reliefs worth €40m per year while Revenue is cutting flat rate expenses from low paid workers, saving €48m.

We have four by-elections coming up in Cork, Wexford and two in Dublin. It would do no harm to let politicians know what you think of these policies.

## What are flat rate expenses?

Approximately 50 years ago trade unions negotiated for workers to be able to write off expenses accrued due to their employment for taxation purposes. This relief is for the purchase and maintenance of uniforms,

tools and stationery, for instance. However, the flat rate means all workers in an employment category collect the same amount irrespective of how much expense they accrue.

## How does it work?

The tax relief must be claimed by the worker because it is not automatically applied by Revenue. However, after you make your first claim, Revenue should have applied it every year thereafter.

The way it operates is quite simple. The relief allocated to your specific employment reduces your taxable income. For instance, if you are a retail worker and you earn €20,000 per year, your taxable income is reduced by €121 bringing it to €19,879.

## What are the allowances?

The allowances vary based on the role you are employed in. A full list of

the 53 employment categories with 134 individual flat rate expenses is available on [www.revenue.ie](http://www.revenue.ie)

However, the industries appropriate to Mandate membership include:

- Pharmacists – €400
- Pharmaceutical assistants (formerly known as Assistant Pharmacists) – €200
- Shop assistants (including supermarket staff, general shop workers, drapery and footwear assistants) – €121
- Bar trade: employees – €93

## How do I claim my allowance?

Under Revenue rules you are entitled to claim for the previous four years (2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018). The quickest and easiest way to claim flat rate expenses is through PAYEAnytime, which is available online via Revenue's MyAccount facility.

# ‘Not a perfect deal’... the O’Devaney Gardens sell-off and the blight of gombeen politics...



Brian Forbes

WHEN it comes to giving away public land to private developers, it would seem the Green Party is simply Fine Gael on bicycles, and Labour Councillor Joe Costello something of a political shape-shifter.

Meanwhile, Social Democrats Councillor Gary Gannon’s previous principled stand on retaining public land for housing seems to have disappeared quicker than Trump’s colouring book when the White House press corps arrive for a briefing.

The sell-off of public land at the so-called O’Devaney Gardens land initiative to a private developer through a voting pact – known as the “Dublin Agreement Group” – in Dublin City Council seems to me to be a sad reflection on a lack of political conviction and principle by some of our public representatives.

This was demonstrated when councillor members of the Dublin Agreement Group voted the initiative through at a meeting of Dublin City Council on Monday, 4th November.

This is a date that should be seared in the memory of working class people in each and every constituency when considering to whom to give their votes to at the next election.

And dates matter, don’t they? Let’s examine recent pronouncements from some Dublin Agreement Group members... In a 17th September statement, Cllr Gannon asked: “The O’Devaney Gardens site is one of the largest tracts of public land currently in the possession of the State. If we are not going to provide affordable housing at this State-owned land, then where else is left?”

And back on 5th June, Cllr Costello called for a moratorium to be “placed on the sale of public lands in the ownership of Dublin City Council while the housing crisis remains”.

In their statement on creating another private development on public land, the Dublin Agreement Group admitted it had not been “a perfect deal”. The old adage of ‘no shit, Sherlock’ springs to mind...

This alliance is comprised of councillors from various parties – Fianna Fail, the Green Party, Labour and the Social Democrats – who have hijacked local democracy by constructing a 34-strong voting bloc out of a total of 63 councillors thereby securing a perpetual majority over the lifetime of this council (which runs from 2019 to 2023).

They have set up a voting bloc that, in effect, neuters any opposition to any plans these councillors decide to implement – schemes such as the shameful O’Devaney Gardens debacle. When this alliance formed they had the gall to declare a policy of se-



Above: The O’Devaney Gardens complex as it was in 2016 before the last tenants moved out

curing public land for public housing as their own initiative when various left-wing independents and parties had been promoting such a policy for years. However, it didn’t take them long to dismantle this policy and, with it, whatever semblance of working class support they felt they had.

The basic tenet of this sell-out deal by the Dublin Agreement Group is to transfer public land – that we, the people, own – over into the hands of a private property developer for a profit to be made.

In effect, in the midst of a housing and homelessness emergency, I believe the Dublin Agreement Group has meekly acquiesced to the ideolog-

Left: Votes cast for and against the private sector bid to redevelop the O’Devaney Gardens site as it appeared on the Council Tracker website



Below: one section of the old blocks of flats is torn down...



Monday, 4th November is a date that should be seared in the memory of working class people in each and every constituency when considering to whom to give their votes to at the next election...

ical housing policy of Fine Gael, based on the private housing and rental market model.

After voting this through, how can councillors within the Dublin Agreement Group then go on to condemn the spiralling homelessness emergency (which has topped 10,000 plus for the sixth month in a row) and criticise public housing waiting lists (which currently stands at 24,000 in the Dublin City area alone)?

In my view, these very same councillors have effectively worked with public officials in selling off the land needed to construct publicly-owned housing on publicly-owned land.

It has been proven that public land prioritised for the immediate construction of tens of thousands of quality public homes, which are built with unionised labour and owned by the state, is much cheaper in the long run than the current right-wing Fine Gael Thatcherite approach of ‘developers first, people second’.

Judging by the reaction on social media to the vote, it’s obvious many people are as sick and tired of these shenanigans as I am.

In Facebook posts, Karl Ivers slammed the councillors for “handing over our loaf of bread so we can beg for the crumbs.” Gavin Mendel-Gleason hit out at “building housing for rich solicitors and doctors” in Stoneybatter while they pocketed a “discount with taxes from the working class who can’t afford the housing.”

It’s clear what we can do... vote these gombeens and their political parties out at the very next opportunity we get.

## O’DEVANEY GARDENS LATEST

### Deal scuppered over funding & legal concerns

AS SHOPFLOOR was going to press an important development broke on the O’Devaney housing saga... Housing Minister Eoghan Murphy – (or the Minister for No Public Housing! – Ed) warned that the “agreement” on the proposed development, claimed to have been reached by the Dublin Agreement Group of Dublin City Council, cannot now be implemented due to funding and legal concerns. In essence, this so-called grouping secured majority support for the transfer of a multi-million euro housing development

to a private developer on the basis of a claim that it seems was completely false. Murphy questioning why the O’Devaney Gardens deal was approved by city councillors, citing that there is no legal basis for this agreement, is a game changer.

What looks like an utter shambles is surely not as important as the simple fact that the Dublin City Council agreement with Bartra was BAD for the local area and would have set a DISASTROUS precedent for the entire city.

# The case for flat rate increases... A REAL BREAK

**By David Gibney**  
Mandate communications officer

RENTS have gone through the roof. House prices are unaffordable for the vast majority of the working population. Insurance premiums are increasing year on year. Yet for low paid workers, pay increases are meagre and do not keep up with the real cost of living.

Over the last decade the number of adults living in poverty who have a job has grown at a steady pace.

In 2009, there were 91,407 workers living in poverty and by 2013 this had increased to 100,133.

By 2016, when the Government declared a “recovery” there were 104,011 workers living in poverty. The following year we saw an extra 5,000 added to the working poor at 109,000.

Overall we’ve seen an increase of 20% in the working poor between 2009-2017 – or 17,593 more workers living in poverty today than in 2009.

Many of those workers have vulnerable dependents which is why 230,000 children are now in poverty. Worse still, the number of lone parents in poverty doubled between 2012-2017. And the gap between the rich and poor is growing every single year and one reason for this, I would argue, is the use of percentile pay increases.

Some people point to the Gini coefficient as evidence that inequality is falling, but that measurement – instituted by such a trustworthy body as the World Bank – is drastically flawed.

For instance, a worker on €20,000 receiving a 2% pay increase will receive €400 per year. A worker on €1 million per year will receive €20,000 for the same 2% pay increase. That’s hardly fair.

That’s why trade unions need to discuss a new system of pay increases that compensate all workers for cost-of-living increases, while ensuring the economic inequality gap reduces and poverty is eradicated. One such method is flat rate pay increases.

### History of pay increases

Since the introduction of the decimal system into Ireland in 1973, most trade unions have used a percentile pay increase system. A union will negotiate a pay increase worth 2% or 3% and all workers receive the negotiated sum. This means drastically different outcomes for different incomes of workers. For instance, a 2% pay increase for different incomes is listed in **Table 1**.

This wasn’t always the way. Before the decimal system was introduced, many trade unions – including Mandate’s predecessor union, IUDWC – would publish new pay scales on an annual basis which afforded different grades a flat rate pay increase. They would effectively institute a new

TABLE 1

Current pay	2%
€ 20,000	€ 400
€ 30,000	€ 600
€ 40,000	€ 800
€ 50,000	€ 1,000
€ 60,000	€ 1,200
€ 70,000	€ 1,400
€ 80,000	€ 1,600
€ 90,000	€ 1,800
€ 100,000	€ 2,000
€ 200,000	€ 4,000
€ 300,000	€ 6,000
€ 500,000	€ 10,000
€ 1,000,000	€ 20,000

payscale every year with an appropriate increase for all workers. [as shown in ‘Our Own Union’ image setting out a 1960’s pay settlement]

While some workers are afforded higher pay increases than others, all workers have access to the highest point on the pay scale meaning they will achieve the full wage once they have obtain sufficient service.

### Cost of living pay increases

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is often used as the method for calculating the pay increase necessary to compensate workers for increased costs of living. The problem with this is that, say, a 3% increase in the cost of any product affects high earners and low earners very differently.

For instance, the price of a pint does not go up by a percentage of your income. It goes up by a set amount. The average price of a pint of stout in 2012 was €3.96. Today the price of a pint is €4.65 – a hike of €0.69c.

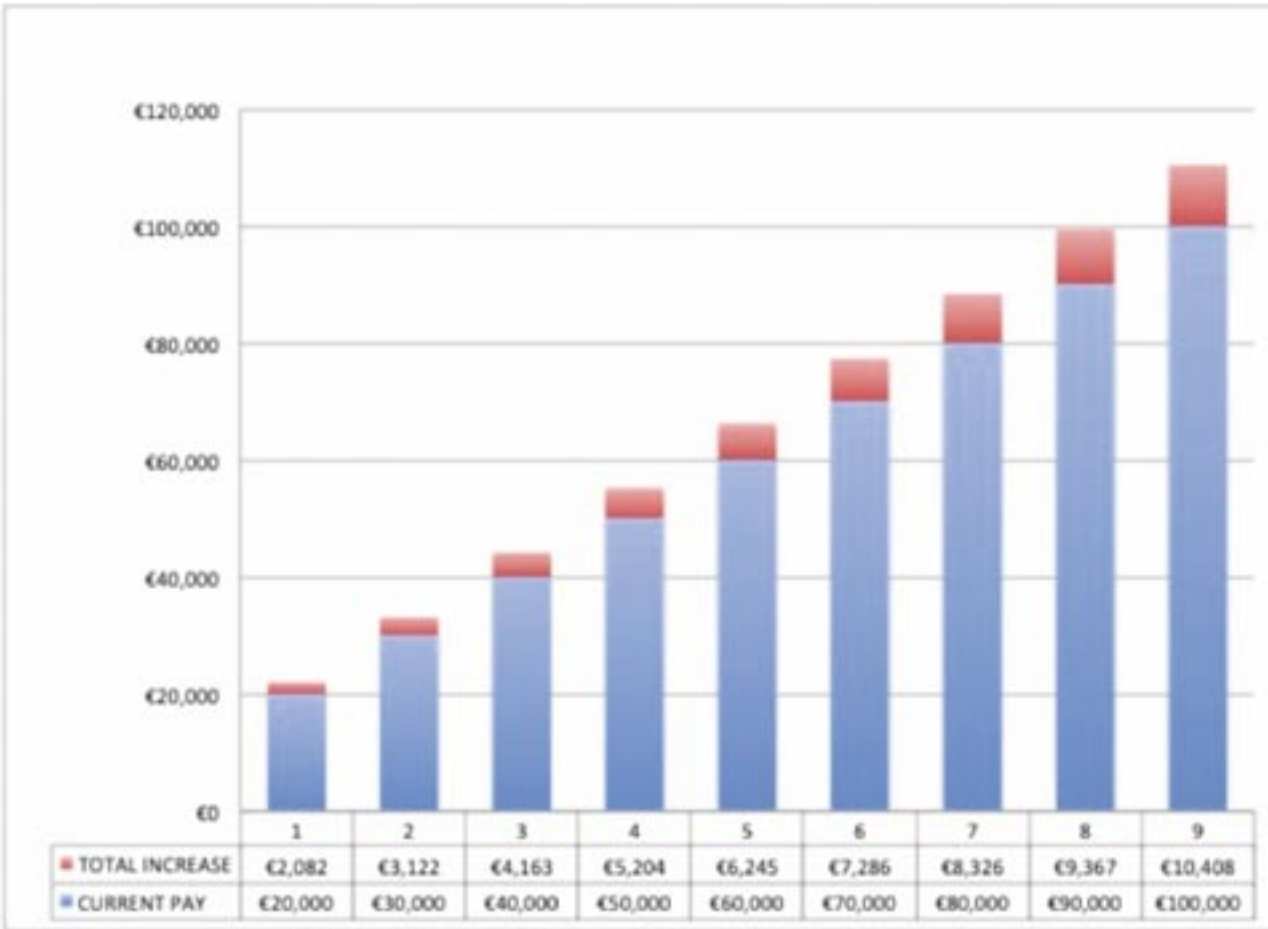
So whether you are rich or poor, your cost for a night out has gone up by the same amount, but a different percentage of your disposable income. So why does the worker who is already earning a higher wage deserve an even larger pay increase?

Maybe a ham sandwich is a more appropriate example. Between 2012 and 2019 the price of a loaf of bread, a tub of butter and a kilo of cooked ham increased from €20.37 to €22.70 – or 11.5%.

So for rich people and for poor people the cost is now €2.33 more than it was almost a decade ago. For a worker earning €20,000 per year, that’s 0.6% of their income, whereas



TABLE 3 Total benefit based on 2% pay increase for 5 years...



for a worker earning €100,000 it’s 0.12%. [See Table 2]

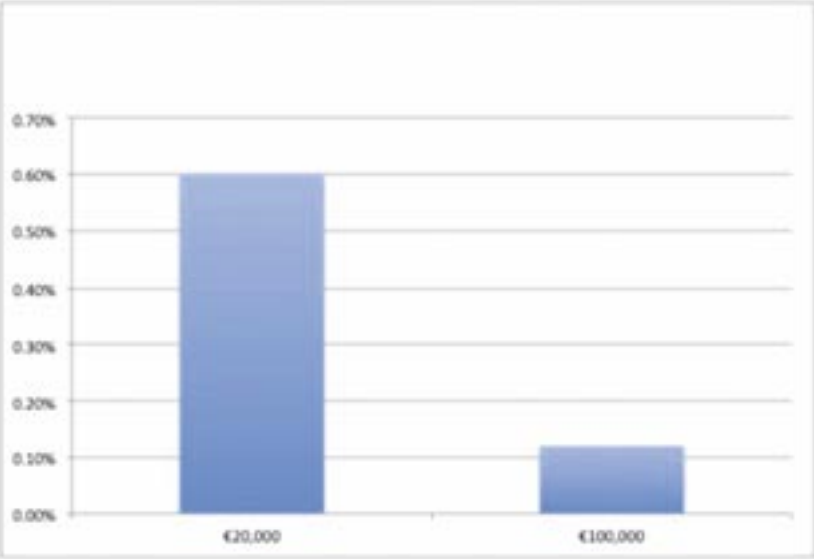
What sense does it make to give all workers a 2% pay increase to compensate for such a cost-of-living increase, meaning a worker on €100,000 per year receives an extra €2,000 and a worker on €20,000 per

year €400? It’s not like richer people eat more ham sandwiches or deserve to drink more pints than the rest of us? As illustrated by **Table 3**, percentile pay increases mean a significantly higher proportion of any pay increase goes to the higher earners (income gain in red).

“What sense does it make to give all workers a 2% pay rise ... meaning a worker on €100,000 a year gets an extra €2,000 while a worker on €20k a year €400?”

# D AND BUTTER ISSUE

TABLE 2  
Increase cost of ham sandwich as pay percentage



### The Consumer Price Index (CPI)

The CPI is not a measurement of cost-of-living increases, according to the CSO. The Vincentian Partnership for Social Justice argues that instead of using the CPI as the measurement for cost-of-living increases, we should be using the Minimum Essential Living Standards (MESL) index.

This system “places an emphasis on ‘needs, not wants’, and produces comprehensive, transparent, itemised lists (of more than 2,000 items, goods and services) detailing what is required to meet minimum needs and enable an acceptable minimum standard of living.”

The CPI, by contrast, measures the price of 53,000 goods and services. If the cost of a BMW goes up or down, it can skew the results, but it doesn’t necessarily reflect the real world for working people.

The CPI increased by approximately 7% between 2010 and 2019. The MESL (including housing and childcare) increased by almost 16% during the same period of time.

If we use this as a benchmark, it means low paid workers need to achieve significantly higher percentile wage increases in order to keep up with real inflation. One way to do that is through flat rate pay increases.

### Flat rate pay increases

Let’s say the cost of living for essential goods has increased by €1,000 per year. A retail company has 50 staff members. There are 35 shop assistants earning €20,000, 10 supervisors earning €40,000, four managers earning €60,000 and a CEO earning €100,000.

If all workers receive a 3.4% pay increase (as recommended by NERI) it will cost the company €51,000 extra in salary costs. Under the percentile system, the 35 shop assistants will re-

### No small beer...

Average price of a pint of stout in 2012 was €3.96. Today it’s €4.65 – a hike of €0.69c... and costs the same whether you earn €20K or €200k a year

TABLE 4

	Pay Increase Value	Pay increase based on %	Flat Rate Pay Increase Value	% Pay increase based on Flat Rate system
Shop Assistants €20,000	€680	3.4%	€1,020	5.1%
Supervisors €40,000	€1,360	3.4%	€1,020	2.6%
Managers €60,000	€2,550	3.4%	€1,020	1.7%
Chief Executive €100,000	€3,400	3.4%	€1,020	1.0%

TABLE 5

	Budget 2015	Budget 2016	Budget 2017	Budget 2018	Budget 2019	Total Benefit
Minimum Wage €18,272	€174	€116	€91	€32	€0	€413
Median Wage €30,000	€174	€302	€153	€78	€39	€707
Ave ind wage €40,000	€446	€452	€203	€253	€214	€1,354
Salary €70,000	€746	€902	€353	€328	€289	€2,329
Salary €100,000	€747	€902	€353	€328	€290	€2,330

ceive €680 each and will be €320 worse off when they factor in cost-of-living increases (€1,000 per year), but the CEO will receive €3,400 and be €2,400 better off after cost-of living increases are applied.

With a flat rate system all workers receive €1,020 and everyone is €20

Picture: Clayton Doherty (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



# OUR OWN UNION

Details of some recent wage settlements made on behalf of members throughout the country.

## DROGHEDA

### Drapery and Footwear Trades—Minimum Wage Scale

#### MALE

Year	Old Rate	Increase on 1st Pay Day May '68	New Rate	Increase on 1st Pay Day March '69	New Rate
	£ s. d.		£ s. d.		£ s. d.
1.	3 8 0	8/9	3 16 9	8/9	4 5 6
2.	3 18 0	8/9	4 6 9	8/9	4 15 6
3.	4 15 0	10/6	5 5 6	10/6	5 16 0
4.	6 0 0	10/6	6 10 6	10/6	7 1 0
5.	6 15 6	18/-	7 13 0	18/-	8 11 0
6.	8 0 6	18/-	8 18 6	18/-	9 16 6
7.	8 13 0	18/-	9 11 0	18/-	10 9 0
8.	10 18 6	18/-	11 16 6	18/-	12 14 6
Chargehand:	11 9 6	18/-	12 7 6	18/-	13 5 6

#### FEMALE

1.	3 1 0	7/3	3 8 3	7/3	3 15 6
2.	3 12 6	7/3	3 19 9	7/3	4 7 0
3.	4 1 9	8/9	4 10 6	8/9	4 19 3
4.	4 16 6	8/9	5 5 3	8/9	5 14 0
5.	5 9 0	14/-	6 3 0	14/-	6 17 0
6.	6 2 6	14/-	6 16 6	14/-	7 10 6
7.	6 18 9	14/-	7 12 9	14/-	8 6 9
8.	8 13 0	14/-	9 7 0	14/-	10 1 0
Chargehand:	9 7 0	14/-	10 1 0	14/-	10 15 0

The above increases to be paid on existing wages.

(2) **Extended Holidays:** 3 extra days on completion of 3 years experience.  
1 extra week on completion of 7 years experience.

The additional holidays to be taken in the "off season" at the discretion of employer and employee. Management to arrange with their staff that the extra holidays will not coincide with their day off in the 5-day week arrangement.

(3) **Wages:** In the context of a two year Agreement expiring on the 30th April, 1970, during the currency of which no labour cost increasing claims will be made.

### Inequality

Ireland has among the highest levels of market inequality in the OECD. Only Greece has higher levels of inequality in the EU. And the Institute for Public Health in Ireland estimates there are 5,400 preventable deaths on the island every year due to economic inequality.

On the flip side, evidence shows that more equal countries tend to do better in terms of all of the key social criteria.

More equal countries have lower crime rates, lower murder rates, improved mental health and lower mental illness levels, lower obesity rates, reduced incarceration rates and levels of trust are higher. Equality is better for all.

Trade unions are the key institutions for driving the battle against economic inequality, but it has to be two-pronged.

We need:

1. More progressive and less regressive taxation; and
2. We need to update our pay and benefits strategies.

For its part, Mandate has already commenced pay equalisation claims which include flat-rate pay increases in Tesco Ireland and Dunnes Stores.

To achieve this, we need to use our two strong arms: our industrial arm and our political arm.

Continuing with the same failed policies that have contributed to record levels of poverty, homelessness and inequality is doomed to not only failure, but also societal unrest, including increases in racism and violence.

We need to develop a new pay strategy now.

TABLE 6

Total income increase including tax and 2% annual increase over 5 years

€20,000	+€2,495
€30,000	+€3,829
€40,000	+€5,517
€70,000	+€9,615
€100,000	+€12,738

the last five Budgets have disproportionately benefited high earners. [See Table 5]

The combined effect of tax cuts that benefit higher income earners and annual 2% pay increases can be seen in Table 6.

### Tax cuts

One other reason the gap between rich and poor has been increasing in real terms is because tax cuts over

# Labour as a force of nature

## Globalisation, training and environmental activism...

THE world of globalisation is changing and with that change, a compulsion to adapt, manoeuvre and enable the trade union movement to meet those challenges on behalf of its members is also altering.

Given these developments, emerging ideas about building union capacity are also evolving – with Mandate having been to the fore on this issue for a number of years now.

As restructuring processes for work and employment practices change, our members within the commercial services sector will also compete with these changes – many of them driven by technology – as I set out in my *Skillszone* column in the last edition of *Shopfloor* (August 2019).

Engagement in training and Mandate's investment in life-long learning – which in some cases are used as springboards for further education – are factors that constantly seek to level the balance of power in the workplace.

### Showcase skills

A crucial element of Mandate's continued investment in training was driven by a vision many years ago to protect workers' interests, promote their development and to develop jobs as decent jobs, giving our members platforms to showcase their new skills.

According C. Levesque and G. Murray, authors of *How do Unions Renew? Paths to Union Renewal* (Labor Studies Journal, 31(3), 1–13): “...at the most basic level, access to training and qualifications is important for the development of worker employability profiles.”

Despite the role of the employer – even at the most basic socially and morally-sound level – to ensure that workers are given such opportunities, it is now the case that unions (such as Mandate) have moved to fill this void.

Personal development programmes are now viewed as a fraternal benefit to our members, particularly in a climate of significant change with the introduction of radical automated processes.

The retail industry is vulnerable to such restructuring, where the accreditation of skills to enhance employability for our members will be a future benefit of being member of Mandate.



Members of one of the socialist-inspired Clarion cycling clubs take a breather during an outing in rural Derbyshire in 1914



The transformation of labour markets and social systems is now par for the course. One key evolving area of research is the relationship between corporate social responsibility, environmentalism and the trade union labour movement.

The Paris Agreement of December 2015 committed signatory countries to introduce measures that will keep

global warming below 2°C – with a target to reduce the level below 1.5 degrees. This historic agreement was signed by 195 countries – including Ireland. These areas of global social responsibility for the natural environment should not be viewed as secondary to traditional bargaining agendas. In fact, labour environmentalism may form the basis for reshaping

the future of the traditional labour bargaining agenda – as it has done in the past.

Academics Dimitris Stevis, David Uzzell and Nora Räthzel made such a point in their 2018 article *The Labour–Nature Relationship: Varieties of Labour Environmentalism, Globalizations*: “There has been a long history of the labour movement and trade unions valuing and protecting nature as spaces of recreation and restoration, as well as a common resource vital for human flourishing and survival.

“For example, the International Friends of Nature were founded in 1895 in Vienna by a group of socialists, coming together through an advertisement in the *Arbeiter Zeitung*.

“In the UK, rambling clubs in North East Lancashire were firmly established by the 19th century, aimed at the working classes and organised by

the non-conformist churches and Co-operative Holidays Association that was part of an ‘anti-industrial, and to a large degree anti-urban, cultural trend’.

“In the UK, workers and ‘environmentalists’ joined together on 24th April 1932 for an act of mass trespass when they walked across the grouse moors of Kinder Scout (owned by the landed gentry and wealthy industrialists) to protest at the lack of access to green spaces around the industrial cities of the north of England.

“The ‘right to roam’ was initiated by the British Workers’ Sports Federation, largely made up of members and supporters of the Communist Party, and enjoyed significant working-class support. Similar examples can be found in the USA during the 19th and early 20th centuries.”

As we can see from the above examples the world of environmental labour activism torrents through many connected themes.

### Force of nature

Stevis, Uzzell and Räthzel also cite Karl Marx's often-quoted phrase in his 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Programme*: “Labour is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much the source of use values (and it is surely of such that material wealth consists!) as labour, which itself is only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labour power.”

Marx made the connection between the natural world and its impact on labour over a century ago and, as such, these dynamics have never changed, but have now travelled through time, and have been propelled to a hierarchical status because of social and political change.

I believe the natural world is a basis for future collective solidarity, demanding that all streams of corporate social responsibility are met in tandem with sustainable and environmental protection initiatives.

And all of these must be aligned with decent work practices and an equal opportunity for all to advance through the world of work, through equal access to education and supported by a political and social care system that provides for people when they are most vulnerable. A society that moves people beyond achieving the most basic physiological and security needs to a place of contentment and self-fulfilment.



## Spend your money where workers count

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Brian Fogarty signals his approval of Mandate Training Centre teaching methods after attending his first course



## FEEDBACK

# The reasons why Mandate training gets my thumbs up

By Brian Fogarty

SuperValu Bray & National Executive Council Member

I RECENTLY had the pleasure of attending Mandate's three-day Shop Stewards Introductory course in Mandate's state-of-the-art training centre and the experience was so good, I feel obliged to tell the members about it.

Most people think of training as compulsory and delivered by their employer in boring classroom environments which has no benefit outside of the workplace. However, Mandate's training methods are nothing like that and participants acquire very beneficial life skills.

The first thing I noticed was there was a nice balance of youth and experience in the room with members drawn from a range of different employments – all willing to learn in order to grow the union and make it stronger. This was great to see.

The tutor was very good at putting course participants at their ease and within a few minutes those involved were speaking passionately and making contributions on issues they had encountered. If I didn't know I was in a room with strong trade union activists before, I certainly did now!

The course had a nice flow to it and began by outlining a brief history of Mandate before focusing on the role of the shop steward and their importance to the union.

Regardless of where you work, the role of shop steward is always the same. This 'face' of the union is a vital cog in workings of the union.

Disciplinary and grievance procedures were also covered. This is a vital piece of training for new activists and should give them more confidence and knowledge to bring back to their em-

ployments. On day two, we had the pleasure of welcoming Mandate's lead organiser, Bill Abom, who offered us a keen insight into what a decent contract of employment looks like as well as providing pointers on how workers can fight for better terms and conditions.

He also gave advice on how to better recruit and organise members so that they could participate more actively in union campaigns as well as giving tips for better communication.

## Stronger

The participants were then asked to set yearly targets in order to make their workplaces stronger. I am confident they all will be very thankful for Bill's input on the course.

On day three, Mandate Communications Officer, David Gibney, delivered a fantastic presentation about Mandate's political and social campaigns. His presentation received brilliant feedback from the group. I could listen to this guy all day - he could read the phone book out and make it sound interesting.

A lot of eyes were opened after this presenta-

tion about the way we are manipulated by the press and how the country is run by this Government – about the imbalance between the hard working retail worker and the rich who just keep getting richer.

The role of the shop steward is not just in the workplace, it's at the rallies and picket lines fighting for what's right! There is no point gaining a pay increase in one hand and it being taken away in the other through water charges, rising house prices, excessive rents and tax increases. To say it triggered me and instilled fire in the belly would be an understatement!

It was a pleasure to attend this course and to meet so many new activists who I have no doubt will be trade union activists for years to come. The tutor and Mandate staff were all very helpful, always offering opportunities to speak and giving advice drawn from their own experience on the shop floor.

If activists keep attending courses like this, I know the future of our union is in good hands.

## APPOINTMENTS

# Breandán joins Mandate team

Breandán Ó Conchúir has taken up the role of industrial officer in the Southern Division, where he is working in the Cork office with Lorraine O'Brien.

Before working for Mandate, Breandán spent three years working for Dublin MEP Lynn Boylan in the European Parliament where he covered a wide range of policy issues, including employment and social affairs. Prior to this Breandán was employed in call centres and in Dunnes Stores.

Breandán's first introduction to Mandate and the trade union movement was as a teenager when he made use of Mandate scholarships to attend Irish college in the Gaeltacht.

He was also active in his students' union and took part in various campaigns on a range of issues including, among others, housing, youth unemployment, precarious work, and Right2Water.



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# Between two worlds: reflecting on the legacy of the Troubles...

By Seán Byers  
Trademark

IT IS now 50 years since the north of Ireland erupted into armed and bloody conflict, ushering in the 30-year period known euphemistically as 'the Troubles'.

There is a lack of agreement over where and at what precise moment the Troubles began. The messy pre-history to 1969 includes the reformation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and its killing of two Catholic men and a Protestant pensioner in 1966; the rise to prominence of Protestant firebrand Ian Paisley and his incitement of working-class Unionist fears; the 'tricolour riots' in 1964; and the preceding decades of inequality, repression, and inter-communal strife which had marked the character of Northern Ireland from its foundation.

But in retrospect we can now see that tensions had been rising from the emergence of the civil rights campaign as a mass movement in 1968, which generated a deep crisis of the Unionist state and produced a violent reaction among the authorities and hard-line loyalists.

This pivotal year is remembered above all for the fateful civil rights march at Duke Street, Derry, on 5th October, where the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) baton-charged 400 demonstrators in full view of TV cameras from across the world.

Rather than spelling an end to the campaign, the impact of the RUC's actions was to internationalise the demands of the civil rights movement, bring thousands more people onto the streets, and ultimately split the governing Unionist Party.

The next year began as the previous one had ended, with an attack on a civil rights march organised by the People's Democracy, a left-wing student grouping that counted Bernadette Devlin and Eamonn McCann among its early members.

Their intended route from Belfast to Derry was based on the Selma to Montgomery protests organised by Martin Luther King Jr, but the march was derailed by an ambush by loyalists and B Specials, the notorious and almost exclusively Protestant paramilitary police force, on 4th January as it passed Burntollet Bridge in County Derry.

This led to a spiral of increasingly bitter clashes between civil rights protesters and sections of the nationalist population, on the one hand, and the RUC on the other. Derry in particular was radicalised by months of rioting and the death of Samuel Devenney, a 42-year-old taxi driver, as a result of internal injuries sustained from a police beating he had received in his own home.

At the same time, opposition to Terence O'Neill's modest reforms intensified in the shape of fierce criti-



Young nationalists on top of Rossville flats in Derry – a cache of petrol bombs to hand – prepare to defend the area during the Battle of the Bogside

cism from hard-line Unionists and UVF bombs, eventually resulting in his resignation as Northern Ireland prime minister.

## From civil unrest to armed conflict...

The events of August 1969 can be viewed as the point at which Northern Ireland slid irreversibly from civil unrest into armed conflict. Given the climate, it was widely predicted that there would be trouble if the loyal order of Apprentice Boys proceeded with their annual 12th August parade along Derry's city walls and past the Bogside, a working-class nationalist area with a population of around 25,000.

These fears were realised when rioting broke out and swiftly developed into the 'Battle of the Bogside' as the police, followed by a crowd of local loyalists, launched a series of baton charges and attempted to advance into the area.

Over the course of the next 48 hours the RUC, newly equipped with CS gas and more than willing to use it, was successfully repelled by a mass resistance of barricades, bricks, and petrol bombs hurled by youths strategically positioned on top of a block of high-rise flats.

Children tore up paving stones and brought them to the front line for ammunition, women made petrol bombs from the 43,000 milk bottles that had been appropriated from local dairies.

With the community now at war

with the state, first aid stations were established to treat casualties and newsletters circulated to report on the ongoing battle as well as to inform citizens of effective tactics for confronting 'the enemy'.

TV footage broadcast after two days of confrontation showed buildings ablaze and dishevelled policemen huddled in alleys and doorways, giving the appearance of a violent struggle that had been lost by the authorities. By this time, 'Free Derry' had effectively seceded.

Meanwhile, activists from the civil rights and republican movements launched protests across the north, most notably in Belfast where sectarian tensions had been building during

the month of July. On 13th August, in the west of the city, 1,000 people marched to local police stations, where rioting ensued and the RUC opened fire on young republicans, wounding two.

What began as a confrontation between nationalists and the RUC soon developed into sectarian rioting along the streets that linked the Falls and Shankill Roads. Events took a lethal turn on the night of 14th/15th August as the RUC and B Specials pushed down the Falls, followed by loyalist mobs who petrol-bombed Catholic houses as they proceeded.

A similar pattern emerged in the Ardoyne district of north Belfast, where street fighting had occurred



Nationalist youth battle it out with B Specials and RUC riot police on the streets of Derry

since April and brought back powerful memories of the 1920–22 pogroms for an older generation.

As in Derry, citizens' defence committees emerged and barricades were erected to defend the threatened areas, leading to the creation of several autonomous 'no-go' zones and a pirate radio station named Radio Free Belfast.

The IRA was poorly armed, ill-prepared, and had little control over events. The Belfast leadership of Billy McMillen and Jim Sullivan did respond, however, by ordering all members on to defensive duties.

One small unit of former and current volunteers took up position on the roof of St Comgall's school, located at the epicentre of the violence, while others exchanged fire with the more heavily-armed B Specials and RUC on the ground in an attempt to prevent further incursions.

The IRA was unable to prevent a large-scale loyalist assault on the small enclave of Clonard near the Shankill Road, during which a young member of the Fianna (the IRA's youth wing), 15-year-old Gerard McAuley, was shot dead and the whole of Bombay Street — 36 houses in all — was razed to the ground.

Recent scholarship by the historian Brian Hanley has determined that these events contributed to the disenchantment of new and returning IRA members over what they "perceived to be a failure caused by a concentration on 'politics'".

Incidents such as the burning of Bombay Street would become part of the foundational myth of the Provisional IRA, in which it was argued that the old leadership now residing in the Marxist-leaning Official IRA had shown no interest in defending.

By the morning of 16th August the violence in Belfast had left seven dead and more than 400 injured, the fatalities including loyalist Herbert Roy, shot by the IRA unit at St Comgall's, and 9-year-old Catholic boy Patrick Rooney, who was killed by an RUC tracer bullet as he slept in his bedroom at Divis flats.

Judge Scarman's investigation into the disturbances found that nearly 2,000 people had been forced out of their homes, the majority of them Catholics. These events helped to set in train the cycle of forced and violent displacement of almost 60,000 people in Belfast alone — primarily Catholic or Protestant minorities living in mixed housing estates — between 1969 and 1974.

British troops were sent to the streets of Belfast and Derry for the first time since 1935, deployed by the Labour government at the request of Stormont. The army presence was widely welcomed as it provided some respite from the violence, facilitating the disarmament of the B Specials and RUC's withdrawal from the af-



Belfast mural commemorating the July 1970 Falls Curfew

Picture: Marcella (CC BY-NC-SA)

fected areas. British officers in charge sometimes acted as advocates of reform and worked closely with the citizens' defence committees — in many cases, the local command of the IRA — to secure the negotiated removal of barricades.

The existing community barricades would, however, be replaced by a new type of security infrastructure. Today we know these as the 'peace walls', more than 80 of which still separate working-class Catholic and Protestant communities.

General Ian Freeland, the man in charge of operations in the North, had warned during an early press conference that "the honeymoon period between the troops and local people is likely to be short-lived".

This honeymoon was gradually eroded as the army became embedded in policing and controlling the community at a time when nationalist opinion was radicalising and there seemed no prospect of a political resolution. Increasingly, the army became involved in heavy-handed operations instigated by the RUC and was drawn into gunfights with both factions of the IRA.

The perception that the newly-elected Heath government was pro-Unionist appeared to be confirmed by the introduction of the Falls Road curfew on 3rd–5th July 1970, during which the army sealed off the whole of the Lower Falls in order to raid houses and round up republicans.

A deterioration in relations followed, and was mirrored on the Unionist side as the government sought to introduce the so-called Hunt reforms of policing. Local vigilante groups such as the Shankill Defence Association and 'tartan' gangs were beginning to assert themselves in Protestant areas, and by 1971 had merged into the Ulster Defence Association (UDA).

### Whither organised labour?

The role of labour and class in this period has been confined to a footnote in general histories of the Troubles. However, the worst sectarian violence since the 1930s did prompt a response among sections of the trade union movement.

At the Harland & Wolff shipyard, for instance, trade unionists led by senior shop steward Sandy Scott convened a mass meeting of the 8,000 strong workforce on 15th August 1969, amid reports that Catholic workers had not showed up to work for fear they would be the target of sectarian attacks.

The meeting unanimously passed a resolution for an end to the violence, appealing "to all responsible people to join with us in giving a lead to break the cycle of mutual recrimination arising from day to day incidents".

Stewart was then joined by Jimmy McFall, shop steward with the Boilermakers' Union, as he crossed the barricades on the Falls and other parts of Belfast to assure Catholic shipwrights of their safety should they return to work.

This "quiet conciliation work of the shop stewards who have their hearts in the right place", as it was described by Billy Blease, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions' Northern Ireland Officer, was repeated in workplaces and communities across the North.

Trade unionists and political representatives from the labour tradition were also central to the formation of peace committees in the four corners of Belfast, which acted as mediators in local conflicts and organised vigilante patrols to protect minority populations under threat.

For its part, the Belfast Trades Council launched a distress fund for working-class families affected by the violence. The appeal raised a total of

£6,737 in donations, mainly from British-based unions, and was distributed in the form of grants and hampers.

But, as Matt Collins has noted recently, "these efforts were never generalised across the trade union movement as a whole". For many on the left of the movement, the ICTU's response failed to match the severity of the situation.

In August 1969, the ICTU distributed 30,000 copies of its Programme for Peace and Progress, a short document that endorsed the principle of consent and argued for the restoration of order through gradual reforms and economic development.

This practice of publishing manifestos would become a key feature of ICTU's cautious approach in the early phase of the Troubles — an approach designed to leave politics at the factory gates, discourage loyalist trade unionism and prevent the type of division on ethnic or religious grounds that was typical in many other European countries.

Only in later years, after a number of hard-learned lessons, would this escalate to campaigns and mass mobilisation.

When Scarman delivered his final report, he praised the work of trade unionists in averting a repeat of the 1920–22 workplace expulsions and the efforts of peace committees to

prevent an escalation of tit-for-tat pogroms.

However, the actions of individual trade unionists may have misled observers into believing that they had more of a moderating influence over their members and wider communities than was the case.

By the close of 1971 the situation had been transformed by a Provisional IRA offensive, the Ballymurphy massacre of 10 civilians by the Parachute Regiment, and the introduction of internment without trial, a decision that came about partly as a result of 6,000 shipyard workers marching through Belfast to demand that such a policy be implemented.

Far from curbing republican violence, internment led to a mass round-up of Catholic civilians and acted as a recruiting sergeant for the IRA.

The year that followed, 1972, was one of atrocities: Bloody Sunday, Bloody Friday, and 496 fatalities. As the death toll mounted the communist trade unionist Andy Barr, who had been one of many to lose friends over his efforts to maintain working-class cooperation in August '69, told delegates at an ICTU conference that the north had now descended into "sectarian war".

And although the British government had prorogued Stormont and instituted direct rule from London, by then the British presence in the North



Belfast peaceline... still in place 20 years after republican and loyalist ceasefires

had become as much an object of hostility as the Unionist government had before.

Over the next 30 years the Troubles would cost approximately 3,700 lives, with many more injured or suffering the trauma of having lost loved ones. The impact of the violence fell heaviest on working-class communities in terms of stunted economic development, widening divisions, and most significantly, human costs.

Working-class districts were the main Troubles battlegrounds, the sites of some of the worst atrocities and the areas where armed groups were most active.

One study determined that 90% of those charged with politically-motivated offences were unemployed or engaged in semi-skilled or unskilled labour. For many the 1969 People's Democracy poster, 'The Falls Road burns, Malone Road fiddles', a reference to Belfast's working-class and affluent districts, still holds as a descriptor of the immediate and long-term effects of the conflict.

### Troubles legacy...

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) of 1998 succeeded in curtailing the Troubles by removing the main non-state armed actors from the theatre of war and instituting a widely endorsed system of devolution and political power-sharing.

Yet the wounds of the conflict remain raw and to a large degree the sectarian divisions that prefigured the GFA continue to be reflected in the segregation of communities and polarisation of political life.

There is an absence of substantive political agreement on how to address the legacy of the past, while issues of identity and cultural expression have given rise to political instability and discontent at a community level.

The class question also continues to haunt Northern Ireland. There is little evidence that the people living in socially-deprived, segregated areas that bore the brunt of the Troubles have gained substantially from the peace process.

Rather the impact of neoliberal peace building and austerity have combined with the legacy of the conflict to produce a toxic environment of low educational attainment, unemployment, child and adult poverty, drug and alcohol abuse, high levels of crime, and acute mental health problems caused in part by the transmission of trans-generational trauma.

The police are struggling to maintain legitimacy in these areas and 'dissident' paramilitaries are moving into the vacuum to recruit among the marginalised youth, pledging an escalation of violence if the national question is not resolved in their favour.

These are the rocky foundations upon which the GFA was established and, more than 20 years on, is struggling to deliver a transformed conflict and positive peace. Although Brexit has contributed to the crisis, its roots run far deeper.

The ancien régime of the Orange state is gone, making a return to the violence of 1969 unlikely, but it has yet to be replaced with a transformative economic and political system. We are in between worlds.

Seán Byers works for Trademark Belfast, a trade union-based organisation focused on research, political education and post-conflict transformation.

# Plenty of green and not ashamed to show it! Here's my Swift reply



ACCORDING to Aidan Corkery, writing in a recent edition of the *Sunday Business Post*\*, Siobhán Masterson, Head of Corporate Affairs at IBEC, has spoken of Ireland's reluctance to admit its spectacular wealth and economic growth in recent decades.

Ms Masterson made the comments during her address to the Public Relations Institute of Ireland's annual conference, at which she referred to the large number of Irish fans who had traveled to the Rugby World Cup in Japan.

She highlighted the sheer extravagance of that travelling support and pointing out that only wealthy nations could afford that kind of luxury.

Ms Masterson continued by mentioning the number of passengers now passing through Dublin airport.

"When you look at the profile of those passengers, it's not business travel," she joked, "It's leisure – and they are Irish people taking third, fourth and fifth holidays every year."

Unfortunately, the *Sunday Business Post* did not carry a verbatim account of the IBEC woman's address and left us readers without the inevitable punchline.

However, the thought did occur to me that she was possibly drawing inspiration from the great Irish satirist Jonathan Swift...

Like Dean Swift, Siobhán has an interest in economics although probably not going so far as to endorse his famous call for a boycott on buying English coal ("Burn everything that comes from England except their people and their coal").

Nevertheless, anybody with even a passing acquaintance with the Irish economy would be aware of the vast discrepancy in relation to wealth in Ireland – something the good Dean alluded to in his brilliant and biting *A Modest Proposal*.

Who could fail to be aware of the 10,000 homeless and thousands more struggling with exorbitant rents or tormented by outrageously expensive mortgages? Who could fail to be saddened by the image of a small child sitting on a cold pavement eating supper from a cardboard carton? There is then the grave injustices arising from a two-tiered health service that literally gives life-saving advantage to those with enough money.



An unequal Ireland: Dean Jonathan Swift (left); Ireland fans enjoying the post game craic in Japan (top); and frequent flyers at Dublin Airport (above)



You've got to admit it. It was a stroke of genius, using satire to highlight the absurdity of missing the gross inequality that exists within our society while the ruling class bleats on about not having Ireland numbered alongside such questionable regimes as Brunei and Qatar.

Unfortunately, no matter how brilliant satire is, it cannot overcome the difficulties faced by working people. Nor, it is obvious, is the current system of governance best suited for this purpose. The inequalities, poverty and destitution outlined above are not natural occurrences – nor are they accidental.

These social evils come about as a result of decisions deliberately taken by a system that gives priority to free-

market neoliberalism.

Any government presiding over a state with Ireland's resources could easily legislate for a large emergency house-building programme to end homelessness and rent poverty. Any humanely managed state would surely make provision for a universal health service and provide a welfare safety net to end the scandal of the poor begging for food.

And it's not being the least facetious to say that it can all be done with the push of a button.

In theory, it is possible for the electorate to appoint a government willing to make the necessary changes. We know, though, that this is more difficult in practice because the system of government in place in Ireland facilitates the maintenance of the free-market status quo. Several factors help make this possible.

In the first place, money talks and

big business makes huge contributions to maintain pro-establishment political machines. There is then the fact that we have a powerful conservative media in both print and broadcast in this country making it difficult to challenge the received wisdom or promote an alternative economic model to that currently in place.

Moreover, there is a solid right-wing cohort that invariably wins between 25% and 30% of Dáil seats. Consequently, uncritical opportunists can rarely resist the temptation to accept grace and favour in return for making up a governing majority.

## Grassroots

Generally speaking, this situation of status quo favouring inertia has only ever been effectively challenged by grassroots activity culminating in a mass movement. Remember too that trade unions have always played a key role in these initiatives.

Our most recent experience of this was of course the dramatic campaign against the imposition of water charges. The clear message here and it is that a widespread grassroots organisation is effective in providing the necessary countervailing power.

While the trade union movement is essential for this to develop, it requires the help of wider sections of working class and progressive society.

Over the last number of years, left-leaning people in Britain organised the People's Movement which has had a positive impact. It played an important part in rolling back the malign Blairist influence while simultaneously promoting a more radical agenda. A somewhat similar movement is currently gathering momentum in the United States where an organisation called People's Action is

organising People's forums, one of which recently attracted input from Bernie Sanders.

Surely it is time to give serious consideration to a similar departure in Ireland. At the beginning of this year, Mandate General Secretary John Douglas addressed a successful event in Liberty Hall celebrating the centenary of the First Dáil.

A secondary theme of the event was a call for the setting up of local assemblies or People's Dálaí. Such gatherings would not be in competition with organised labour's structures but would help coordinate the movement's broader aim of securing economic democracy and justice for working people.

The value of having such structures at a local level would be to afford working people an opportunity to meet regularly and discuss their needs, organise events and provide support to progressive campaigns locally and nationally.

This, in turn, allows us to overcome the inevitable loss of momentum at the end of a single-issue campaign – no matter how successful it may have been.

Overall, by having such structures, working people are empowered. No longer are we quite so dependent on a relatively small number of elected representatives. The question should not be so much why do this as why not?

A final thought. Wouldn't these assemblies provide a perfect arena for the IBEC satirists to come and explain to us just how Ireland's incredible wealth is benefitting the trade union membership and our less well-off neighbours?

\*Spectacular wealth so hordes of Irish rugby fans jet out to Japan...  
The Sunday Business Post, 27th October 2019

## PLATFORM

### INSURANCE CONTRACTS BILL

# Time to end the insurance rip-off



**Pearse Doherty**

RIP-OFF insurance costs are squeezing incomes and closing down businesses. People are wondering how their premiums can go up every year even though they haven't even made a claim.

For the past three years, the Government has done nothing to reduce insurance costs. At the same time, companies are making massive profits while we are being charged rip-off premiums.

Companies tell us they are going up because of fraud and personal injury awards. But there were 55,000 fewer motor claims in 2017 than in 2014. At the same time, the average motor premium has shot up by more than 45%.

We now know that companies are targeting vulnerable and renewing customers with sky-high premiums because they are less likely to shop around.

Their premiums aren't being set by how likely they are to make a claim or cause an accident, but how likely they are to renew. Instead of giving customers the best price, they are giving us the worst price possible. This is called dual pricing.

It's illegal in 17 American states and in Britain they are looking to ban

it. We deserve no less. In September, I wrote to the Central Bank asking that it be investigated and banned, and I am pleased that they have agreed to look into the issue. We will hold them to account and make sure that unfair pricing is put to an end.

Sinn Féin has introduced an Insurance Contracts Bill (which as *Shopfloor* goes to print passed its final stage at the Dáil on 14th November and is set to go before the Seanad). If it becomes law, every customer would be notified of the last three years of premiums they have paid and any claims they have made.

It will make it harder for companies to wriggle out of paying valid claims and makes sure that customers are told about any claims made against their policy, allowed to provide evidence and given the cost of any claim settled.

Any company that cancels your policy will have to pay you back what it owes for the premium you paid, and it will allow you to seek damages if your insurer refuses to pay you for a valid claim.

In short, it would increase transparency and tip the balance in favour of us, the customers.

This legislation would be a big win for all of us, and we are urging all parties to support it becoming law.

Sinn Féin want to take on the insurance industry and end the rip-off, by stamping out fraud, protecting consumers, banning dual pricing and bringing down premiums.

*Pearse Doherty is Sinn Féin TD in Donegal*

## APPOINTMENTS

### Muireann Steps Up into new role

SHOPFLOOR is delighted to report that Mandate activist Muireann Dalton has recently secured a six-month training and development position with Mandate as a Step Up Member Organiser.

Regular readers of *Shopfloor* will recognise Muireann as one of our leading union activists on the 'Decency for Dunnes Campaign'.

Muireann also played an influential role in our 'Secure Hours = Better Future' campaign by helping to organise and participate in the lobbying of TDs in her local constituency area.

These coordinated lobbying actions by our members resulted in workers winning the The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 which came into effect in March of this year.

This activist-led victory has rightly been hailed as one of the most significant pieces of employment legislation in a generation. Welcome sister and best wishes from all at *Shopfloor* on your continuing organising journey via the Step Up programme.



# Employment Law

This one day Progression Course in **Employment Law** is for Trade Union Activists who have a desire to improve their knowledge and understanding of employment law. Participants will gain an understanding of the legislative environment within which the employment relationship operates.

#### Course Content:

##### 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, H&S 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
- Terms of employment and Information Act
- Organisation of Working Time
- Payment of Wages/Remuneration
- Equality and Discrimination
- Unfair Dismissal and Redundancy
- Redress for breaches of Employment Law

It is time to end the Insurance Bill would m better deal – Pearse Doherty

#### Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate Certificate.

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.



# Negotiation Skills

This one day Progression Course in **Negotiation Skills** is for trade union activists 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:

- Intermediate
- Building Skills & Knowledge
- Negotiations in Practice

#### Course Content:

- The Psychology of the Negotiating Environment
- Strategic Approach to Negotiations
- Collective Decision Making
- Identifying Goals to be Achieved
- Prioritising Issues
- Develop Tactical Plans.
- Tactics in Negotiations – Both Sides – \*Key Learning
- Stone Walling
- Cooling off Periods
- 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

#### Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate Certificate.

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.

# A stalwart activist who put others first

MANDATE would like to extend the sincere condolences of all in the union to the family and friends of Margaret Graham who passed away on Saturday, 28th September, following an illness.

Margaret was a stalwart of Mandate and a member of the House Committee in Boots Jervis Street Shopping Centre where she was actively involved in representing members on an individual and collective basis.

All of those who attended Margaret's funeral couldn't but be struck by her dedication to her family, her friends, her local community and her work colleagues.

This was reflected in the attendance of so many people who Margaret had touched in her short life.

Margaret had a deep commitment to lifelong learning, and in addition to her third-level law studies had completed many Mandate representative courses at the Organising and Training Centre in Distillery Road.

Jonathan Hogan, National Co-ordinator for Training, told *Shopfloor*: "I met Margaret some time ago now as an industrial officer assigned to Boots Jervis Street. Margaret was passionate and principled – always putting others first."

"Her involvement within the union was progressive and she was a great supporter and advocate for social justice and workers' rights."



Margaret Graham: passionate & principled

"Margaret was an activist who always had your confidence, measured in her ability to exercise her views, while having the capacity to hear all sides of a debate and a willingness to understand others."

He added: "She was and will always be remembered as a truly great person."

Mandate would like to thank Margaret for her dedication and commitment over many years and again we extend our sincere condolences to her family, friends and colleagues in Boots Jervis Street. Rest in Peace.



Principled: Des carried the teachings of Connolly in his heart



His politics were coloured red but Des' sporting allegiance was distinctly sky blue – Des (above) never missed a Dublin game and pictured (below) with the Sam Maguire cup.



# True Dublin socialist and a defender of working class people

VETERAN trade unionist and defender of the working class Des Bonass departed this mortal coil on 26th September 2019.

Des was a great friend and a true comrade of Mandate Trade Union and of the working class people he represented with great strength and determination through all his working life.

Des joined the ATGWU in 1958 and was involved in a range of industrial and political campaigns, including the campaign against the Eighth Amendment in 1983.

He was also the long-time Secretary of Unite the Union's 102 Branch and a past president of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

Des was a true Dublin working class socialist who not only carried the teachings of James Connolly in his heart but also demonstrably through his own actions in defence of his class.

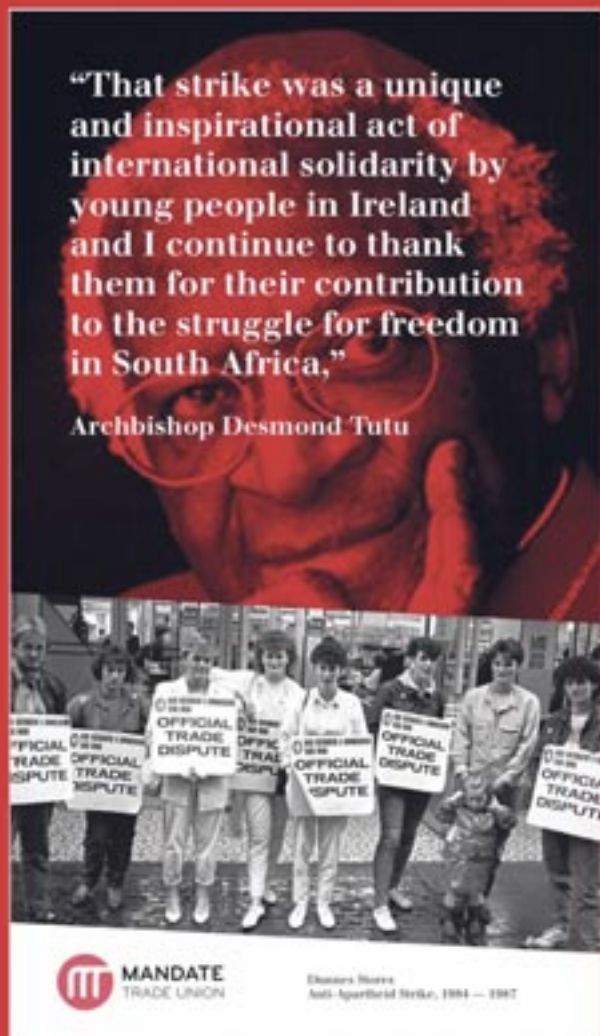
Dublin winning a fifth all-ireland in a row this year meant a lot to Des who never missed a Dublin game alongside his good friend and comrade Colm Kinsella of Unite.

Colm told *Shopfloor*: "Des was passionate on a wide range of international issues. He was particularly vocal on the need for Cuban solidarity, ongoing protection of the 1959 Cuban revolution and he also fought determinedly for the release of the Cuban Five."

Des will be sorely missed by his grieving family and by all his many friends, comrades and brothers and sisters in the trade union movement not just in Ireland but across the world. Rest in Power, Des Bonass.



Des with Arthur Scargill on a Mandate picket line



## Shifting the power dynamic between labour and capital

A MANDATE delegate has been elected one of three vice-presidents at the biennial conference of UNI Europa Youth, held in Zadar, Croatia, on October 30th and 31st.

Eoghan Fox, who will be in post for a two-year period, received nearly a million votes – 999,428 – to secure the position.

He told *Shopfloor*: “As each delegate’s vote is weighted to the membership numbers in their respective unions, this victory would not have been possible without the support of a number of unions right across the continent.”

And Eoghan’s election is testament to the hard work carried out by Mandate activists internationally through UNI and reflects the growing reputation among workers and activists the union has built up over the years.

Following the vote it is hoped that Eoghan can bring his experience and activism right to the heart of UNI Europa Youth.

The conference turned out to be a lively affair, with a series of debates on the future world of work as well as looking at specific solutions to face down the challenges brought about by advances in technology, climate chaos, precarious work and the so-called gig economy.

Eoghan said: “There was good engagement from all delegates, and – with 54% female participation – the youth are showing the rest of the movement how it’s done!”

“While there was a diversity of opinions in the room as to the solutions to the immediate challenges, there was consensus on the need for young people in particular to first of all join their union, and become active as the only real way to challenge an ever globalising capitalist system. The bosses act globally, so should we!”

There was a general consensus that unions working together across borders can put serious pressure on a system that is heavily reliant on the precariat and unorganised young workers to continue to exist as it is.

Eoghan continued: “As was pointed out during the discussion panel on the first day of conference, young people are not joining unions because most of them have never even been asked.

“If unions are not providing an avenue to challenge the new reality of precariousness, young people will find another way to challenge what they see as a direct attack on their capacity to provide for themselves and their families.”

He warned: “If we – the left, the labour movement of the world – do not provide that space for young people to fight back, the far-right will. They will blame it all on the migrant worker, the ‘foreigner’ that lives down the street...”

“We have seen it happen already, where young left activists from trade unions are forced to challenge the right on the streets instead of concentrating on organising to challenge the bosses and their ever-increasing profit

“... while social media platforms are tools to make use of in our work, nothing can beat the face-to-face contact with a potential member and activist...”

margins, attained on the backs of these often-precarious, often-mobile, often-young workers.”

During the conference a number of workshops focused on social media and in particular making use of the various platforms to boost recruitment to trade unions and getting their message across to a wider audience.

Eoghan pointed out that it was clear there was a “wide diversity in approach” and “differing skill levels” in content production and editing evident in the feedback given by the working groups.

He said: “The important point was made that while social media platforms are tools to make use of in our work, nothing can beat the face-to-face contact with a potential member and activist.

### Uphill battle

“It is essential that we use all the tools available to us in the uphill battle for a better life, but we were born as activists on the streets and on the shop floor and this is still where we need to be – on the ground, speaking and working with young people on the issues that are affecting them.”

Eoghan claimed the old trope that ‘youth are the future’ was “roundly rejected” by conference participants.

He said: “The fact is it is the youth that are here and now – working these bad jobs, bad contracts and unpaid internships.

“We’re struggling to find somewhere to live that’s affordable. This is despite being the most educated generation we’ve ever seen with qualifications falling out of our pockets as we roam from one gig to the next.”

One of key takeaways from the conference was that participants were being affected by the same issues no matter where they lived.

“It became more and more obvious that the issues that affect us in one country – such as zero hour contracts, precarious work, lack of affordable



Mandate’s Eoghan Fox (third from left) with fellow vice presidents Becca Hufton (CWU UK) Camilla Martinsen (HK - Norway) and President Trond Saele (Nogtia - Norway). Below: panel discussion during the conference.



housing, anti-union employers, sexual harassment and access to healthcare – are issues that affect all of us regardless of country and culture,” said Eoghan.

“And this was the case even in those countries that are often held up to us in Ireland as examples and comparisons of where we as a ‘small open economy’ should be heading for. The

same issues exist. Without strong vibrant unions, stuffed with young passionate activists, working together globally, it matters little what country you live and work in, the power dynamic between labour and capital remains the same.

“For the current generation and those that come after us to have any say in their lives and the direction of the planet, this reality needs to shift radically.”

Eoghan added: “UNI Global Union – and Mandate’s activity within it – are part of this fight back. Together we are stronger! Workers of the World Unite!”



# SHOP STEWARDS/ACTIVISTS TRAINING PROGRAMME 2020

Course Title	Course Dates	Duration	Location	Closing date
<b>1st Quarter</b> Employment Law Course 3 Day	Feb 10th - 12th	3 days	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Workplace Union Representative Intro Training	Feb 24th - 26th	3 days	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Negotiation Skills 1 Day Workshop	Feb 24th	1 day	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Computer Applications Level 4	Feb 25th	14 Wks	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Communications & Personal Development Level 5	Feb 25th	14 Wks	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Word Processing Level 5	Feb 26th	14 Wks	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Workplace Union Representative Advanced Training	March 2nd - 4th	3 days	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Political Economics and Influencing Social Change Workshop	March 9th	1 day	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Bullying and Harrassment - Knowing the Law Workshop	March 23rd	1 day	Dublin OTC	Friday 17th Jan
Workplace Union Representative Advanced Training	March 30th - April 1st	3 days	Cork	Friday 14th Feb
Employment Law Course 3 Day	March 30th - April 1st	3 days	Sligo	Friday 14th Feb
<b>2nd Quarter</b> Workplace Union Representative Intro Training	April 6th - 8th	3 days	Galway	Friday 21st Feb
Bullying and Harrassment - Knowing the Law Workshop	April 6th	1 day	Waterford	Friday 21st Feb
Employment Law Course 3 Day	May 11th - 13th	3 days	Dublin OTC	Friday 27th Mar
Workplace Union Representative Intro Training	May 11th - 13th	3 days	Cork	Friday 27th Mar
Workplace Union Reps Introductory Training for non-paid release members	May 18th	Day 1 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday 27th Mar
	May 25th	Day 2 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday 27th Mar
	June 8th	Day 3 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday 27th Mar
Workplace Union Reps Advanced Training for non-paid release members	May 18th	Day 1 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday 27th Mar`
	May 25th	Day 2 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday 27th Mar
	June 8th	Day 3 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday 27th Mar
Presentation & Public Speaking Skills - Part 1	May 20th	Part 1 of 2	Dublin OTC	Friday 1st May
Presentation & Public Speaking Skills - Part 2	May 27th	Part 2 of 2	Dublin OTC	Friday 1st May
Communications 3 Day	June 8th - 10th	3 days	Dublin OTC	Friday 1st May
Workplace Union Representative Advanced Training	June 15th -17th	3 days	Galway	Friday 1st May
Negotiation Skills 1 Day Workshop	June 15th	1 day	Dublin OTC	Friday 1st May
Political Economics and Influencing Social Change Workshop	June 15th	1 day	Sligo	Friday 1st May
Bullying and Harrassment - Knowing the Law Workshop	June 16th	1 day	Cork	Friday 1st May
<b>3rd Quarter</b> Word Processing Level 5	Sept 1st	14 Wks	Dublin OTC	Friday 24th Jul
Computer Applications ADVANCED Level 6	Sept 2nd	14 Wks	Dublin OTC	Friday 24th Jul
Workplace Union Representative Intro Training	Sept 7th -9th	3 days	Dublin OTC	Friday 24th Jul
Negotiation Skills 1 Day Workshop	Sept 14th	1 day	Waterford	Friday 24th Jul
Bullying and Harrassment - Knowing the Law Workshop	Sept 28th	1 day	Waterford	Friday 24th Jul

# SHOP STEWARDS/ACTIVISTS TRAINING PROGRAMME 2020

Course Title	Course Dates	Duration	Location	Closing date
<b>4th Quarter</b> Employment Law Course 3 Day	Oct 5th -7th	3 days	Cork	Friday Aug 21st
Workplace Union Rep Intro Training for non-paid release members	Oct 5th	Day 1 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday Aug 21st
	Oct 12th	Day 2 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday Aug 21st
	Oct 19th	Day 3 of 3	Dublin OTC	Friday Aug 21st
Training & Development - Part 1	Oct 5th/6th/7th	Part 1 of 2	Dublin OTC	Friday Aug 21st
Training & Development - Part 2	Nov 2nd/3rd/4th	Part 2 of 2	Galway	Friday Aug 21st

● 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

If you are interested in attending any of these courses, please contact your Mandate Union Official or book your place by contacting Amanda Blake, Mandate Training Centre, by email [ablake@mandate.ie](mailto:ablake@mandate.ie) or telephone **01-8369699**

**NOTE:** Any of the courses listed above or on the facing page can be tailored to our members' needs. To schedule courses, we normally require **at least 8 members** on a course. If you have an idea for a course programme that's not listed and you have enough members interested, please give us a call in the OTC and we'll make every effort to design something for you and the members.

## FEEDBACK National Activists School...

Full report p6/7



"In the days spent on the Mandate Activists School, I learned that we, the workers, are the union. Over the three days we talked about the orientation of the trade union, to take the fight from the shop floor all the way to the highest points of power. "The discussion allowed us, as the workers, to exercise our control over our union, to create the room needed to open up new fronts of the struggle we face and to decide collectively on the direction our movement will take. "In short, without this event, we as the

activists on the ground would not have the courage to do bigger and better things. "Encouraged by all the organisers in this, the first of many historic events, we on the shop floor are prepared to get our union ready for a new phase against all the odds. We have been armed with the knowledge to continue this fight. Let us Rise! Up the Workers!"

*James Rabbitte, Moate, Mandate activist, Western Division*



"The Lusty Beg Mandate Activists School was a brilliant experience. It opened my eyes as to how the trade union movement has and should continue to influence and hopefully change the face of politics. From our issues on the shop floor to the housing crisis and climate change, it's all interlinked and our actions and campaigns will influence political party policies."

*Muireann Dalton, Step Up*

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## Training & Development (QQI Level 6)

The **Training & Development** course is designed to enable learners attain skills, knowledge and confidence to organise and deliver training and development in a range of organisational contexts.

### Learning Outcomes:

- Learners should be able to recognise best practice in adult learning and development.
- Appraise different learning styles
- Conduct training needs analysis
- Design training to meet identified needs
- Prepare training programmes
- Develop lesson plans
- Identify learning outcomes and put in place relevant methods to access learning
- Develop and use a range of teaching materials
- Evaluate training and development interventions.

*This course will be delivered in two parts.  
Each part is of three days duration.*

### Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this course will obtain a QQI Level 6 Award.

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.



## Political and Social Studies

This one day **Political and Social Studies** course is for trade union activists who have a keen interest in the Political & Social Economy and who have questions regarding the wider social

### Course Content

- The politics of economics
- Understanding the Irish economy
- The Global Financial Crash and what it means
- The Great Recession and permanent austerity
- Democratizing economics
- The power of trade unions
- Connecting with communities
- Reflecting community diversity

### Certification and Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate Certificate.

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.

## TALKING POINT...



Picture: Brendan Rankin (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

# Brexit and the borderlands

As *Shopfloor* goes to print, the UK is in full polls mode for what will be the biggest general election in a generation as British PM Boris Johnson goes in search of that elusive majority. **Tommy McKearney**, a lifelong socialist republican activist, and Trademark's **Mel Corry** offer a considered view of Brexit and the Irish question especially as it relates to border communities...

AS AN organisation dedicated to moving this place beyond conflict Trademark has for the last number of years been working in a supporting role with marginalised communities in the border region.

These groups have otherwise been described as 'dissidents' due to their divergence from Sinn Féin political orthodoxy. This characterisation is often misplaced and a lazy stereotype, evoking images of armed masked men primed to bring about a resumption of Troubles-era violence at the earliest opportunity.

The reality is much more nuanced. Among the republican constituencies that are active in political and community life along the border there are myriad different views on Brexit, hard borders, soft borders or no borders and everything in between, but the likelihood of a violent upsurge is remote.

### Turmoil

A recent article in the *Irish Times* reported retired Irish diplomat Sean Ó hUiginn quoting Edmund Burke's remark that the English have only one ambition in relation to Ireland, which is to hear no more about it. Undoubtedly, with the Brexit backstop causing turmoil in the House of Commons, senior members of the Conservative Party would very likely secretly share that view.

Many in Ireland might well suggest that had the English acted on Edmund Burke's observation and left Ireland way back then, they might be experiencing fewer problems at the moment.

However, we can't change the past and the Irish question has returned to torment Westminster.

Whatever about history, the Brexit debate does not follow the same line of argument in Northern Ireland, as it does in Britain. Local protagonists make different, although paradoxically



Local anger: border residents break down a faked-up 'border wall' during a protest earlier this year

“Marginalised republican constituencies along the border... have for the most part responded, not with a threat of violence, but by engaging in positive discussions and debates around the economy, workers' rights, housing, health and education, and the peaceful transition to a new Ireland”

cally related, calculations when deciding their position on this issue.

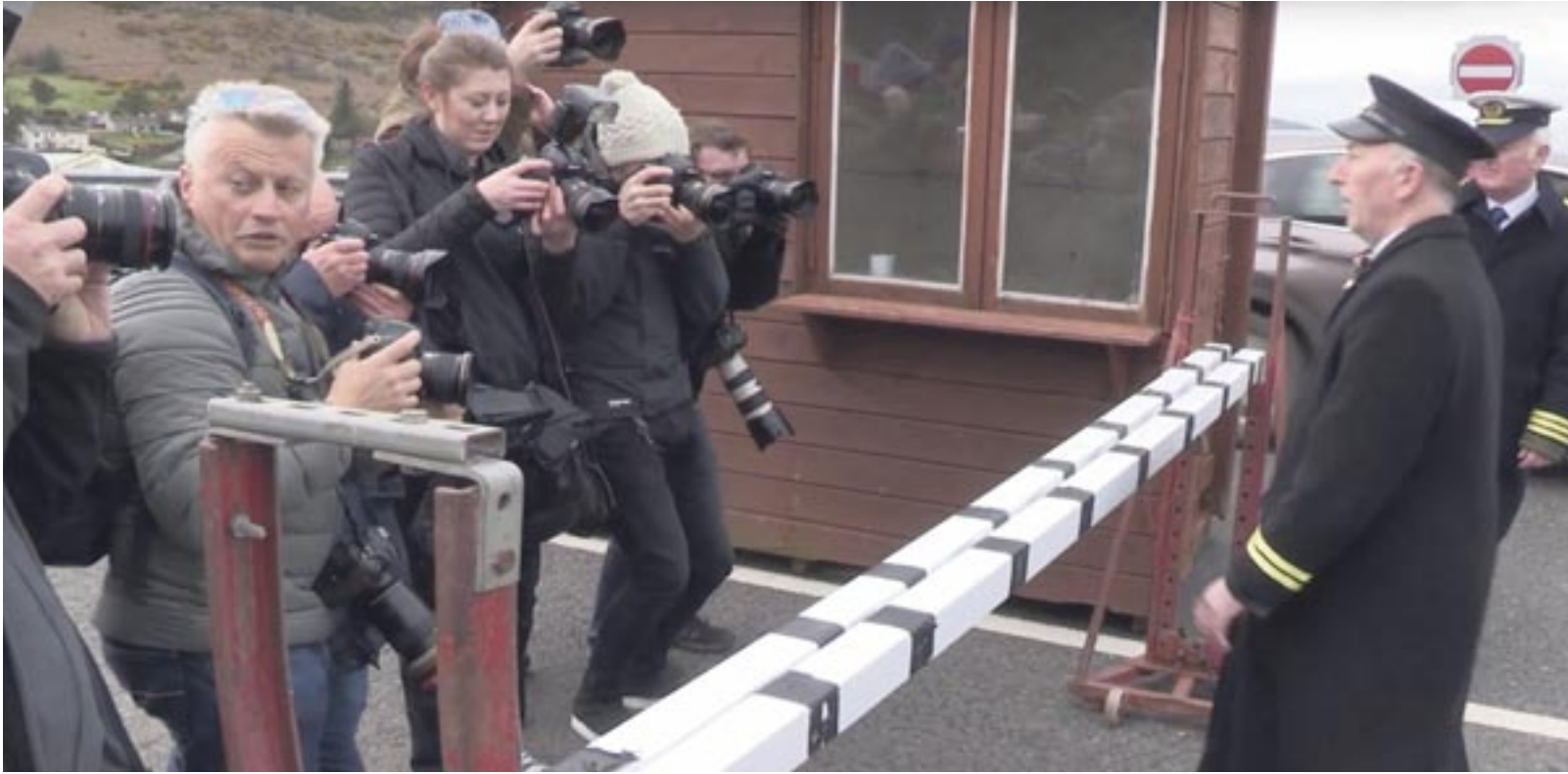
Moreover, London and Dublin are also playing the Ulster card, yet more often than not they both conceal the entirety of their reasoning for doing so.

Underlying every political issue in Northern Ireland is the constitutional question of whether the area should continue to be governed from London or have sovereignty transferred to Dublin. Magnifying the importance of this now are two crucial facts. In the

first instance there is the perennial fixation on changing demographics, which are indicating the inevitability within the coming decades of a majority in favour of ending the Union.

This is compounded by the obvious failure of the Six Counties (of Northern Ireland) to function as a normal political entity.

It is not that people in Northern Ireland are unaware or indifferent to Brexit. It is, however, the case, that for the most part, they see it as secondary.



Photographers scramble to get shots of pretend 'Customs officers' at Carrickcarnon on the South Armagh/North Louth in March. No Hard Border' protest (below) on the Derry-Donagall border in October



Picture: Sinn Féin (CC BY 2.0)

A contributory factor to this outlook is the attitude of the British and Irish governments with the former speaking of the need to preserve the precious union and the latter raising alarm over a hard border. Unsurprisingly therefore, the two major local political parties, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin have focussed on the constitutional impact of Brexit.

The DUP favours the hardest of withdrawal options in the hope that it will result in creating maximum divergence between north and south and thereby reinforce the partition of Ireland. While this position wins favour in Unionist heartlands (and among the European Research Group), it has caused concern among some middle-class Unionist support-



PM Boris Johnson: from hero to zero for the DUP

Picture: Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken (CC BY-SA 2.0)

ers who fear economic disruption.

Nevertheless, the party's greatest fear is losing its niche as the principal defender of 'Protestant Ulster' and therefore feels obliged to persist with its policy. Having been thrown under the bus they now find themselves at odds with Boris Johnson, the man they once hailed as the only one capable of delivering Brexit.

Disappointingly for supporters of a left-wing exit, Sinn Féin has changed its long-time opposition to the EU. Instead of highlighting the neo-liberal threat from Brussels it now takes the flawed 'Remain and Reform' position.

With a 55% majority in the Six Counties in favour of remaining, Sinn Féin is making the obvious case that London disregards the will of the Northern Irish. The party has also led

a campaign that focuses on the possible – albeit greatly exaggerated – difficulties posed by a hard border.

Meanwhile the British and Irish governments are spinning their own self-serving tales around Brexit.

British Prime Minister Johnson rejected the backstop option claiming this was because of his deep and abiding affection for the union between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In reality, this love affair was based firmly on Commons arithmetic.

Things have moved on considerably and we now face a general election, with the prospect of a border down the Irish Sea, which in the north is shaping up to be a re-run of the referendum with parties moving into loose pacts to maximise the leave or remain position.

### Threat

The Irish government is not completely frank either with its statements about the impact of Britain leaving the European Union. Dublin has focused greatly on the threat that this poses to the Good Friday Agreement in general and to the maintenance of peace in particular.

Alarmist claims about a return to the pre-1994 'Troubles' are overdone. In spite of the recent death of journalist Lyra McKee, there is little evidence of any real appetite for a return to the widespread conflict of previous decades. If anything, the tragedy illustrated the depth of opposition to armed groups in working-class republican communities.

Moreover, it should also be borne in mind that Britain leaving the European Union will not, in itself, alter the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the UK whether there is a withdrawal deal or not.

Hundreds of loyalists, including the leaders of various rival paramilitary groups, recently gathered at the Con Club in East Belfast to discuss the implications of Boris Johnson's 'Betrayal Act' and their potential response to it.

Buoyed by their fruitful relationship with the DUP, talk of loyalist 're-

sistance' and the possibility of violence abounded. Others within the community, however, condemned such rhetoric as 'irresponsible rabble rousing' and unrepresentative of the wider views of working-class Unionists – not least those who directly experienced the Northern Ireland conflict.

Thus while the capacity of armed loyalist factions to draw marginalised young people into orchestrated acts of violence remains, it is doubtful that these actions would attract mass support.

In a nutshell, the Brexit debate in Ireland, north and south, has largely missed the essential elements of the argument. Northern Ireland is one of the poorest regions of the United Kingdom. Average income is 8.5% less than in Britain and average disposable income is less than 40% of that in London.

The economy is in ongoing decline as evidenced by the difficulties faced by the once-iconic Harland & Wolff shipyard, Wright Bus and the continued decline of the north's manufacturing sector.

The economic situation in the Republic appears to be infinitely better. However, this disguises an increasingly unequal society with tens of thousands of people homeless, a two-tier health service leaving the less well-off at a major disadvantage and increasing number of workers in either low-paid or precarious employment.

The answer to these challenges, from a socialist republican perspective, this lies in breaking with free-market capitalist economies, whether controlled by neo-liberals sitting in London or in charge of the European Union. This in essence is the left-wing case in relation to Brexit and applies to Ireland as much as it does to Britain.

Instead of working people discussing the necessity of having democratic socialist control of the economy, the powers that be have diverted attention towards a highly unlikely resumption of armed conflict, export delays and possible traffic jams at border crossings.

Marginalised republican constituencies along the border naturally have many concerns about the arrangements that may be put in place post-Brexit and the level of disruption they may cause for communities that were once divided but have gradually become reintegrated.

However, they have for the most part responded, not with a threat of violence, but by engaging in positive discussions and debates around the economy, workers' rights, housing, health and education, and the peaceful transition to a new Ireland.

Led by groups such as the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum, these types of discussions are gaining momentum and proving to be infinitely more attractive to border communities than the prospect of a return to violence, and we will continue working to ensure that this remains the case.

*This article was originally published on the Brexit, Europe and the Left blog at <https://www.brexitblog-rosalux.eu>*



Sniper at work... but no sign of return to conflict

## Meet honky-tonk player Pat Reedy: Colorado born, moulded in the Big Easy, based in East Nashville, touring the world...

FORGET about your Nathan Carters, Pat Reedy makes honest honky-tonk music for the modern world, mixing twang, blue-collar songwriting, working-class pride and an unconventional back-story into albums such as 2018's *That's All There Is*.

Nashville-based Reedy cut his teeth on the street corners of New Orleans, quickly becoming one of the city's busiest street buskers, strum-

ming songs for locals on Lower Decatur and tourists on Bourbon Street.

Leaving New Orleans in his rear-view mirror, he's made Nashville his home, graduating to bigger gigs, proper venues and international tours.

Pat returns to Ireland in January 2020 fronting a five-piece band, The One Night Stands, featuring Patsy Gallagher (Goats Don't Shave) on lead guitar/pedal steel and Roddy Lynch on

piano/keyboards while Kenny Devenny and Nigel Simpson drive the engine room on bass and drums respectively. Reedy & The One Night Stands deliver a true Nashville sound of pedal steel, guitar riffs and booming melodies inspired by classic country music.

Reedy is the real deal, more influenced by the artists who filled the airwaves during his childhood years — including Dwight Yoakam, Mark

Chesnutt, and George Jones — than anything in today's mainstream as he sinks his teeth into his own country roots, performing traditional-minded songs about heartache, travel and long work days.

*Shopfloor's* **Brian Forbes** got the unique opportunity to talk to the enigmatic Reedy about his touring lifestyle prior to his third visit to these shores early in the New Year...

### So what's it like to be Pat Reedy?

I've spent a good bit of my life either wandering or working various construction and other labour jobs. I've crossed the country and Mexico as a hobo, a busker down in New Orleans, been a carpenter, done roofing, stonework, tile, worked in the oilfield and in mine sites, I've been a heavy equipment operator, a lion tamer, and done forestry in Oregon, and any labour I could get in between. Mostly I play music now, not much looking back. I also made up that part about being a lion tamer.

### Your busking days in New Orleans must have been an interesting experience...

They were. That's where I really learned how to play music at all, and how to sing and entertain. I learned a lot from a lot of people, most of them gone now – old buskers who had been doing that for a long time, like Washboard Lisa and Troy.

New Orleans is a rough place, has been for 300 years. A lot people go through it, but it goes through a lot of people. I honestly don't know how to begin to describe New Orleans to y'all. There's no other place in the USA remotely like it, to the extent that sometimes my friends and I would only half-jokingly refer to leaving town as "going back to the USA".

### Has relocating to East Nashville worked out for you musically?

Nashville has been very good to me. I'm glad I moved there. As much as I love New Orleans, it just doesn't offer the same opportunities to country musicians. It's smaller, for one. Nashville is easily, more than any other city on earth, the heart of it right now. Tremendous players who are welcoming to new people in town and don't give a damn where you're from as long as you work hard and do your job like everyone else is.

I went up to Nashville in 2015 to record *Highway Bound* with my New Orleans band. They all went home afterward. I stayed. I had \$20 and a semi-functioning van and was more or less homeless. Two years later I was being asked to tour Europe.

### You've been touring Europe extensively over the past few years?

Yes sir, I believe this will be my sixth time touring overseas. I love being on the road and I especially love being in Ireland.

### You've visited Ireland before on a solo acoustic tour with the "English Willie Nelson", Ags Connolly. How's that been?

Ags is a great singer, songwriter, and friend. I hope to work with him in the future more. He's real as hell –



maybe the least pretentious person I've met in this business.

### This time around, in Ireland, you'll be gigging with a band of local musicians calling themselves The One Night Stands. What can we expect to hear at your gigs?

Honky Tonk country music played by a bunch of gifted Irish lads and one American singer!

### You've a big circle of music friends in Nashville and across the world so are there any plans for releasing new music in the pipeline soon?

I've just released *Make It Back Home* as a single. Funny thing is I wrote it in Ireland – in Galway by the old lighthouse. I was sitting on a rock, drinking Paddy and looking west at



the ocean. I have a new full album being released in the spring, the album is also titled *Make It Back Home*. I'll be touring on that soon, making my rounds.

### You married the lovely Sara in Nashville recently. Both of you surrounded by lots of friends and family...

I did. Somehow I ended up married to a Polish scientist. You couldn't make this shit up. She's wonderful to me, and smart in all the ways in which I am stupid.

### How's life treating an auld weary road dawg troubadour like Pat Reedy?

Well, Forbes, I've been on the road, other than a few days at a time in Nashville since 23rd July. I played Philadelphia, New York,

and Laurel Run in central Pennsylvania with my friends Rylan & Brooks. Then I did a 62-day run of mainland Europe with a band. The tour manager pointed out towards the end that the odometer read 30,000 km. That's three-quarters the circumference of the Earth. Little bit proud of that.

Then I flew back to Chicago, then Nashville, then a North Carolina run. After that I joined my friend Gus Clark (from Seattle) on a tour down to Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

After that I did a Missouri run and now as I write this I'm touring up the west coast from Los Angeles to Seattle, a few shows in Bozeman, Montana, then Chicago and flying to London! I like being on the road, I kind of don't know what to do with myself staying home. This is what I'm best at.



**Your fellow country music singer/songwriter Luke Bell explained about a moment hanging out in his home state of Wyoming where he realised there was an entirely different world of music out there he'd never been exposed to. He said: 'I saw my buddy Pat Reedy perform at the Buckhorn Bar. It was an inspiring show. He pulled through in an '85 Datsun diesel pickup truck with a homeless painter and a half wolf dog. It was just a picture of a different part of the earth.' So what sage advice would you give a young Pat Reedy starting out on the ol' dusty country music trail today?**

Don't. Just kidding – do! I'd say to focus on the music part. Pick a spot that you feel at home and where you're set up good and build out of that. When you've outgrown it, move

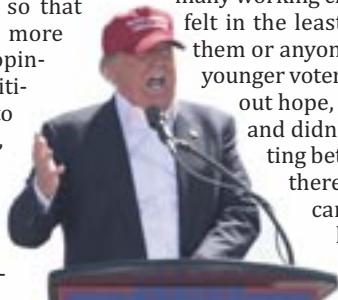
on. But sometimes people's hometowns can hold them back in various ways. Everyone should try to get out into the world, if there's something nagging them about it.

**So, Pat, Trump – what in the hell is that all about?**

I'm glad you asked me about Trump. I'm just a musician, with no degrees or formal higher education of any sort. However, he has zero experience in politics so that makes me equally or more qualified to voice my opinion as he is to hold political office. I find him to be, among other things, one of the least convincing liars I've ever seen speak in my life – a clear Archie Bunker-style racist and misog-

nistic doddering idiot who could do the world a favour by finding a place to go sit down out of the way of everything. Don't get me wrong, he didn't come from nowhere. The Democrats have been so infiltrated by conservatives – like the Clintons – that the idea of joining the 21st century post-developed world can be successfully branded as 'far left'.

With stagnant wages, disappearing jobs, and ever higher costs of living, many working class people no longer felt in the least bit represented by them or anyone anymore. And the younger voters seemed to be without hope, so they stayed home and didn't vote at all. It's getting better, there's hope and there's a growing American left, but there's a large mess to clean up...



# Computer Training Course QQI Level 3

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

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

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

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

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

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

Email: **mandateotc@mandate.ie**

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

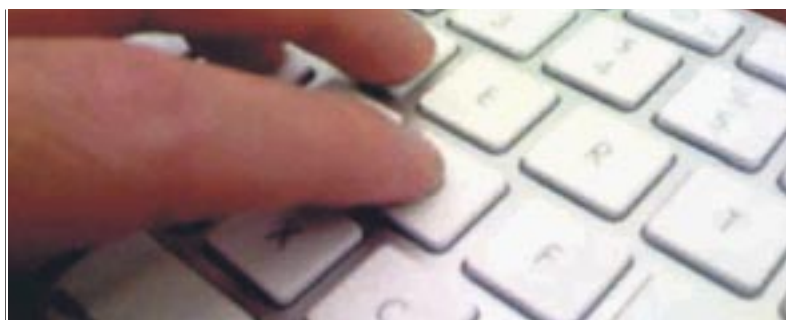
# THERE'S A NEW WAY TO JOIN OR PAY YOUR DUES

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



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## Word Processing 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](mailto: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)**

## FORUM REPORT



Breandán Ó Conchúir gives forum rundown on banded hours

# Combating the scourge of precarious work

By Breandán Ó Conchúir  
Industrial Officer, Southern Division

ON 9th November trade union activists from across Cork attended the One Cork winter activist forum.

Its purpose is to bring together activists from the different unions so that they can work together collectively in our workplaces and communities to improve living and working conditions for all.

The focus of this year's forum was on precarious work that has spread across all sections of the economy – and it's a problem Mandate members are all too aware of.

As a union that has been active in fighting against precarious work and in winning more secure terms of employment for retail workers, Mandate activists have a valuable contribution to make in the fight against the scourge of precarious work in all its forms.

Officials from Mandate and SIPTU spoke about legal efforts to combat it, with a focus on the vital role played by Dunnes workers and other Mandate members in the introduction of the legislation.

This was followed by a detailed presentation about the legislation from Kevin Duffy, a former chair of the Labour Court.

Mandate has actively campaigned for banded hours for many years – at first through collective agreements with various employers and since the 2015 Dunnes workers' strike through the introduction of legislation to ensure rogue employers who refuse to engage with their employees' unions are also required to provide contracts with guaranteed hours.

The introduction of banded hours legislation represents a significant



Former Labour Court chair Kevin Duffy

victory for organised workers in Ireland and this was the key message behind Mandate's contribution to the activist forum.

While the banded hours' legislation is an important victory it does not end all precarious work.

The second half of the activist forum involved group discussions

that examined how One Cork and the wider union movement could continue to win improvements for workers.

'Organise!' was the resounding answer to this question from participants at the discussions. It is clear mobilising through active and strong trade unions is only way workers can win improvements in their terms and conditions.

Arising out of these discussions, a series of priorities for One Cork to focus on over the issue of low pay and precarious work for 2020 will be identified and further events and campaigns organised.

It is clear that precarious work is increasingly widespread and needs to be recognised as a priority by all trade unions. Mandate members have shown that workers can successfully win significant improvements in precarious sectors such as retail. Mandate's example must now be followed by workers in all sectors of the economy.



Discussion groups debate what the priorities should be for One Cork in 2020

# Partnership ideology weakened us, here's why...

COMING from an occupied six counties working class council estate and growing up in an area of historically acute unemployment and really high levels of social deprivation, I always find it a privilege – indeed an honour – to get the opportunity, through my role in Mandate, to raise issues related to much-needed improvements to our inadequate workers' rights legislation with those TDs elected by the people to govern from Leinster House.

Those very same elected representatives, of every party and none, must be constantly "encouraged" to deliver workplace improvements on behalf of working class people the length and breadth of our unequal and failed Republic.

Let no one tell you trade unions shouldn't be political. The Irish union movement's long-held love affair with social partnership has had a devastating impact on political union activities and has dampened the development of class consciousness in the workplace – and, with it, the development of working-class power – in both the public and private sector Irish unions.

This "partnership ideology" has created a labour movement that, when the knives came out, was too weak and apathetic to stop the concerted and coordinated attack on workers' rights led by the cheerleaders for the capitalist class.

Ireland has the most restrictive trade union rights in the European Union: no mandatory collective bargaining; no right of entry to workplaces for trade union officials; highest prevalence of low paid jobs in the EU; growing numbers of "working poor"; legislation that constrains workers from taking industrial action and all of this while being touted as the most

## LET US ARISE!

Brian Forbes

National Co-ordinator  
Mandate Trade Union

productive workforce in the world and among the most profitable countries in the EU15 for retail and bar employers.

**There is a devastating class war being waged, not just here in Ireland but globally, and it sure as hell isn't unions and the working class who are winning.**

Unions in Ireland need a radical worker-led campaign to force through the Dáil progressive political and legislative change that will enable unions to build in a more effective manner and to allow workers to collectively bargain with their employers.

Unions need to have two strong arms in the fight against inequality – an industrial arm and a political arm. Ireland needs a worker-led campaign to establish a "Fair Work Act" that will help tip the balance of power away



Picture: Informalique (CC BY-SA 2.0)

from the few in favour of the many.

An extremely positive development occurred at a recent meeting of our Mandate National Executive Committee when a sub-committee was set up to develop ideas around becoming much more politically active and influential in the Dáil, Seanad and perhaps other representative institutions.

This proposal to actively politicise is about building the union movement, empowering members and building an alternative socialist Ireland to the current neo-liberal country many of our citizens barely survive in on a day-to-day basis.

All union members on the island of

Ireland should be collectively declaring and demanding, loud and proud, that all Irish unions must be inherently political both in defence of and in advancement of the working class of our country.

In order to not only survive but grow strength, unions must politicise workers to demand collective bargaining in every workplace and on every shop floor in order to raise class consciousness and class power.

**Our movement is famous for knowing the right thing to do five minutes after it's too late to do it, so let's not prevaricate any longer – Let us arise!**

## FEEDBACK National Activists School...

Full report p6/7



**"I have only just joined Mandate and this was my first venture into the organisation. I was very happy with the Lusty Beg event in how it was organised, and all the information that was presented. I got an insight into the union's history, background and how this motivates the union activities now and into the future. I found the course motivational and cannot wait to get more involved in union activity in the very near future having out my name forward for upcoming in-store rep elections. A great course, well done to those involved."**

Liam Kelly - Penneys Letterkenny, North & West Division

## Strengthening the culture of the union

By Mel Corry  
Trademark

THE best way to create and empower activists is to give them a role in forming the direction, priorities and activity of the union going forward.

The recent national activist school held by Mandate in Co Fermanagh was a classic example of best practice in this regard. Each session opened up by an experienced person setting the scene for the activists and allowing them in small group work, feeding back to the core a considered approach to each issue. The most

important aspect of this approach is that it allows the activists to take ownership of the action. An action based plan that is created from the expertise of those that work at the coal face is hard to counteract.

It strengthens the culture of the union and through building solidarity as a core value of the union binds shop stewards to a Mandate identity. Activists create new activists and new members.



**"I've been on quite a number of Mandate courses and I have to say any that involve Trademark should be a must for every Mandate activist. This was the same. Great course at a great venue. Plenty of information presented in a very simple manner, and in a way that ensured good strong activist participation right across all those that attended. Everyone was encourage to have their say and contribute their ideas. Well done again, Mandate."**

Tony Meehan - Tesco Carrick-on-Shannon, North & West Division



## NEW! Communication Skills

This one day Progression Course in **Communication Skills** is for trade union activists who have a desire and need to improve their knowledge and understanding in effective communication

### Course Content:

- Communications skills: Public Speaking Skills, Better Writing Skills
- Finding the right information that will steer you in the right direction.
- Further understanding of the environment in which we live and work.
- The social, political and economic landscape of trade unions.
- Media ownership – who is telling you what and why?
- Social Media – What it is all about.
- How to write a good CV or application form.

### Course Objective:

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

### Certification & Progression:

Members who successfully complete this training course will obtain a Mandate certificate.

Places are limited. As there is a high demand for this course please ensure you contact your Mandate Union Official or the Mandate Training Centre on **01-8369699** or email **mandateotc@mandate.ie** to secure your place.

# Caithféar meas a bheith ar éagsúlacht



Naoise Mac Cathmhaoil

AONTÁIM go huile agus go hiomlán leis an ráiteas atá luaite thuas. Is é mo bharúil féin gurb iad tuiscint agus iúl ar chultúr éagsúla an dóigh is fear leis an achran eatarthu a leá agus chun iad a tharraingt le chéile gan ghráin, gan fuath, mar ba chóir don chine daonna a bheith. Is ceist ollmhór í seo in san am i láthair go háirithe le hathbheochan na heite deise.

Tá borradh ciníochais, seicteachais, agus frithimirce ann ar fud na hEorpa agus is léir do dhaoine dala domhain é go bhfuil an faisisteachas ag treisiú arís ar fud na cruinne.

Is é mo thuairim féin go n-eascaíonn fadhbanna mar chiníochas agus a mhacasamhail, as eagla agus faitíos. Nuair nach thuigtear cultúr éagsúla bíonn an t-amhras. Tá dearthaí leithchealacha le fáil anois in achan sraith den sochaí, agus tá tearc tíortha ann san domhan mór anois, ina bhfuil easpa iomlán den teannas seo le fáil, agus is mór an mhaire é go bhfuil sé seo ag sleamhnú anuas ar ár n-oileán féin chomh maith.



Picture: prusakolep (CC BY 2.0)

Baineadh stangadh iontach uaim nuair a chuala mé na droch rudaí a bhí le rá ag fear a sheas d'uachtaránacht na hÉireann i 2012, agus é á dhéanamh stocaireacht roimh toghachán na huachtaránachta. Dúirt an fear gnó "Peter Casey" nar ghrúpa eitneach iad na taistealaí, agus nach raibh said ag íoc go leor as a gcánacha. Ina measc na tuairiscí seo dúirt sé rudaí eile a bhí conspóideacha fosta, agus maidir le seo tharraing sé aird ar féin agus thóg sé raic ar fud na tíre. Shíl mé féin nach

mbeadh seans dá laghad aige sa toghachán, mar go mbeadh na daoine i bhfad ródhonnachtúil agus nach gcuirfeadh Casey dallnamullóg orthu. Ach, nach orm a bhí an dul amú!

Cé go raibh Casey ina shuí ar aon faoin chéad den vótáil phoiblí roimh an toghachán, agus nár bhain se an toghachán, thug se leis níos mó na fiche trí faoin chéad den vótá sa deireadh thiar thall, mar gheall ar a thuairimí idirdhealaitheacha. Léiríonn seo cé go nimhiúil is atá dearcadh ag sciar mhaith den daonra

in éadan taistealaí. Ach mar atá scríofa agam, roimh réidh, is iad easpa tuiscine agus eolais ar an chultúr eile an príomh rud atá ag tabhairt tacaíochta do na smaointe seo.

D'aithin rialtas na hÉireann gur mionlach eitneach iad na taistealaí i Mí Mhárta Dhá Mhíle agus a Seacht Déag agus bhí sé seo ina chéim mhaith ar aghaidh ar son cearta daonna na dtaistealaithe in Éirinn. Léirigh seo cé chomh mór is a dathraigh dearcadh na nÉireannach le gairid.

Chomh maith le seo, ghlac an rialtas le straitéis úr darbh ainm "The National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021", agus d'fhás neart torthaí dearfacha aisti. Bhí sé le feiceáil san phobal gur thit an t-idirdhealú in éadan na taistealaí maidir le seo agus maidir leis an Acht Oideachais 2018 a rinne stair agus cultúr na dtaistealaithe éigeantacha in achan bhunscoil agus meánscoil in Éirinn.

De réir go raibh páistí scoile agus tuismitheoirí s'acu ag foghlaim fan chultúr difriúil seo, thosaigh meath ar an mhéid taistealaí a bhí ag fulaingt le drochíde ó na seadaitheoirí. Ach, mar a chonaic muid le Peter Casey agus a chuid imchainteanna, ní ghlacann sé mórán chun seo uilig a scriosadh, mar gurb ábhar iontach sobhriste é seo.

Ag bogadh ar aghaidh ó Éirinn, tá

mé ag iarraidh sampla eile a thabhairt de tír inar phléasc achran idir phobal agus ina bhfuil easaontas le fáil ann go fóill. Sna blianta idir 1992 agus 1995 réab spairn cíocrach i ndiaidh na fola amach san Bhoisnia agus an Heirseagaivéin inar maraíodh níos mó ná céad míle duine. Thárla eachtraí uafásacha; ár eitneacha agus éiginní mná ina measc.

Coimhlínt a bhí ann idir trí ghrúpa eitneacha éagsúla; na Boisniaigh, na Seirbiaigh agus na Crótaigh. Ach anois agus an cúige seo in "ainm síochána", tar éis an sos lámhaigh agus an Comhaontú Dayton a thárla i 1995, rinneadh iarracht na grúpaí seo a scaradh maidir le cúrsaí oideachais chun an tír a chur faoi bhannaí síochána. I mo thuairim féin is droch cinneadh é seo amach is amach.

Cé go dtéann na daltaí scoile go dtí an t-aon scoil amháin ní mheascann siad lena chéile sna ranganna nó ag am lóin agus bíonn curaclam iomlán difriúil acu ina bhfuil an béime ar gnéithe agus cúspóirí staire s'acu féin.

Níl iontas ar bith é go bhfuil na scoilteanna seo le feiceáil i mBosnia go fóill. Muna dtagann na trí ghrúpaí seo lena chéile arís, ach, go háirithe san oideachas, agus tuiscint a gcultúr s'acu a bhunú arís, sílim féin go bhfeicfidh muid an foréigean ceannan céanna ag sleachtadh fríd cheartlár na mBalcán gan mhoill.



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- **Rights and duties of employees pertaining to bullying & harassment**
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AMAZON

# Conference hears some workers left with 'sore & bloodied feet' after shifts...

By Sandra Stapleton  
Mandate Organiser

THE Communications Workers Union (CWU) HQ in Dublin was the venue for the latest Uni-Global Amazon Alliance Network meeting attended by representatives from more than 20 unions that have members working at online colossus Amazon.

The theme of the meeting was 'Co-determination and Labour Standards in Transnational Corporations – Aspirations and Reality at Amazon'.

As well as reports from each union, there was a number of several guest speakers who outlined the harsh realities of working for one of the world's largest companies. Plans were made for a meeting that will be held in Brussels in December with MEPs as well as to lay down objectives for 2020.

Guests included Amazon workers who formed a new group, Amazon Employees for Climate Justice, who for their own protection did not want to be photographed or named in re-



ports. Walking out of their offices on September 20th in a show of defiance, members of the new group wanted to ensure that the business model followed by Amazon did not contribute to the ongoing climate crisis.

And they have called on Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos to ensure the online retailer adopts a zero emissions policy, drops any contracts with fossil fuel companies and stops donating to climate change-denying politicians.

Amazon made contributions to 68 members of US Congress who voted against climate change legislation in 2018. The group also wanted to express their solidarity with Amazon warehouse workers and enlighten the

public about the gruelling work culture such workers have to endure each day.

Bezos has announced that Amazon would reduce its carbon footprint. However, these climate activists within Amazon claim the CEO's efforts have not gone far enough, and are determined to be part of the fight for "liveable future". To do this, they have vowed not to stop such actions until they work for a zero-carbon company.

Mick Rix, of the GMB, presented a report on health and safety, highlighting the treatment of Amazon warehouse workers. He informed the delegates of the horrific injuries suffered by these workers as a direct re-

sult of working "like robots" for the company and being pushed to their limits.

The conference was told some workers are left with sore and bloodied feet at the end of their shifts. Workers suffered both mental and physical illness as a result of working for Amazon.

The BBC *Panorama* team has produced a documentary using footage covertly filmed from a site in Swansea. It details horrendous conditions Amazon workers have to endure and claims some have to walk up to 11 miles per shift.

The GMB has also produced a 'body mapping' survey for workers to fill out and send back to their union in

order to ascertain if there is a connection between similar types of injuries being reported in Amazon warehouses across the UK.

Uni-Amazon Network delegates were so impressed with this exercise that they requested copies so that they can carry out similar surveys in their own countries.

One source told *Shopfloor*: "It's hard to believe that governments across the globe allow this company to treat workers in such a brutal way.

"Should the workers become too ill to work – they will be replaced with not a thought for their wellbeing. It clear Amazon much prefers to use robots who won't fight back!"

**Have you a *Mandate-related story or picture* you'd like to share with us? Email [news@mandate.ie](mailto:news@mandate.ie)**

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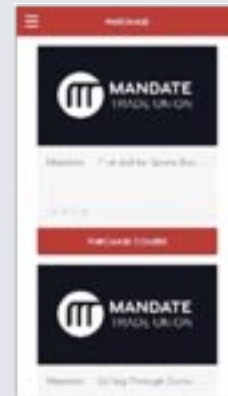
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West Bank olive harvest volunteer **Tom O'Connor** (pictured right) witnessed himself the 'awfulness of the daily cruelty and slow-drip ethnic cleansing' suffered by Palestinians in the Occupied Territories...

# Where even the olive branch is used as a weapon of war



"IGNORING the Zionist philosophy while criticising Israel for the brutal mistreatment of Palestinians, is like criticising the police in Apartheid South Africa for attacking school children in Soweto, but saying nothing about the racist Apartheid philosophy," so said one of the people we met on a recent olive harvest/study tour in Palestine.

It is 35 years since 12 young Dunnes Stores trade unionists went on strike against handling products from racist South Africa and eventually forced the Irish Government to ban imports from the Apartheid state. Could something similar come to the support of Palestinians?

"How come 'any Jew in the world has the right to return to Israel' yet Palestinians who lived, or whose parents/grandparents lived in the original Palestine, have no right to return?"

We were meeting peace and human rights activists, both Israelis and Palestinians, and being challenged by many awkward questions, to which we had no answers.

We were a group on a Quaker Voluntary Action visit to the West Bank. This tour, of two weeks, is always held between mid-October and mid-November, the short four weeks when Palestinians harvest their olives – but are frequently afraid to do so.

Afraid of attacks from Israeli settlers who know that in this barren, mountainous land, olives are the one crop the Palestinians can harvest. So, they attack the Palestinians and their lovely trees.

'Internationals' like us are not only useful for helping with the harvest but more particularly to discourage attacks as the settlers carry on their low-intensity war with the native population, but don't want the world to be aware of the attacks.

And these trees are lovely. Many hundreds even thousands of years old. We climbed into the trees, used ladders or long handled forks to pull down the ripe fruits from their sup-



Gathering in the olive crop (left) with tools of the trade (centre) and a welcome break from the work in the sun as a mid-day meal is handed out (right)



Settlers' neighbourhoods have decent housing, are well-lit and boast good roads (left) while (right) at the site of a demolished Palestinian house



ple branches. Warm sun, no insects and happy company.

We met some courageous Israelis. None more so than the representatives of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. They stand in front of bulldozers. Rachel Corrie died trying to stop a demolition.

Like all of us, Palestinians need living space but Israeli municipalities, such as in East Jerusalem, keep refusing permission to build. Having ap-

plied for permission for their growing families – often of several generations and being refused for years, they go ahead and build and risk the demolition.

It is ironic that Palestinians pay taxes to these municipalities and yet are refused the right to vote or have representatives on the councils. Another question: why does Israel get away with claims to be "the only democracy in the Middle East"?

We met a representative from the Coalition of Women for Peace in Tel Aviv who frequently hold night-time vigils with lit-up signs saying 'Free Gaza' – an unpopular act for which they are frequently attacked.

In the West Bank we met people in Al-Haq who monitor Israeli state and settler violence and mistreatment of Palestinians. They share material with Israel NGOs such as the Human Rights centre, B'Tselem, especially

when paying witness to the Israeli Army destroying the homes of Bedouin Arabs – who live in conditions of near poverty – just because settlers have extended their tentacle grips nearby in the West Bank.

We worked on a remarkable farm, called 'Tent of Nations', run by a Christian family, who have been battling off the Israeli courts and settlers for nearly 30 years because they are located on a hilltop – the preferred locations of the settlers. They do so with the help of many Internationals who volunteer on their mountain top throughout the year.

We visited the Holocaust Museum in West Jerusalem (Yad Vashem) and the Arafat Museum in Ramallah. We met a rabbi from the Reform Synagogue. But he had no qualms about serving in the army. I got great encouragement meeting an 80-year-old socialist who grew up on a Kibbutz and is still defending the Bedouin.

A Quaker peace maker talked to us about her book, 'Occupied with Non-Violence'. Ecumenical Accompaniers spoke to us about their programme of three-month volunteering on the interface between Palestinians and the Israeli Army or settlers.

We met many ordinary and extraordinary Palestinians who greeted us with happy calls of "welcome to Palestine". They feel forgotten by the world. But I came away depressed at the awfulness of the daily cruelty and slow-drip ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians, who want something simple, to live on their land. But it is land the Zionists argue is 'their' land.

How to resolve this? Only one person we met supported the 'two-state solution'. Others said that only a single state will work – one land, one state, one democracy where all, Jews, Muslims and Christians and others have equal rights.

There will be many olive harvests before we reach this stable outcome.

**“Young workers who refused to handle the fruits of apartheid 21 years ago in Dublin provided inspiration to millions of South Africans that ordinary people far away from the crucible of apartheid cared for our freedom”**

**Nelson Mandela**



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