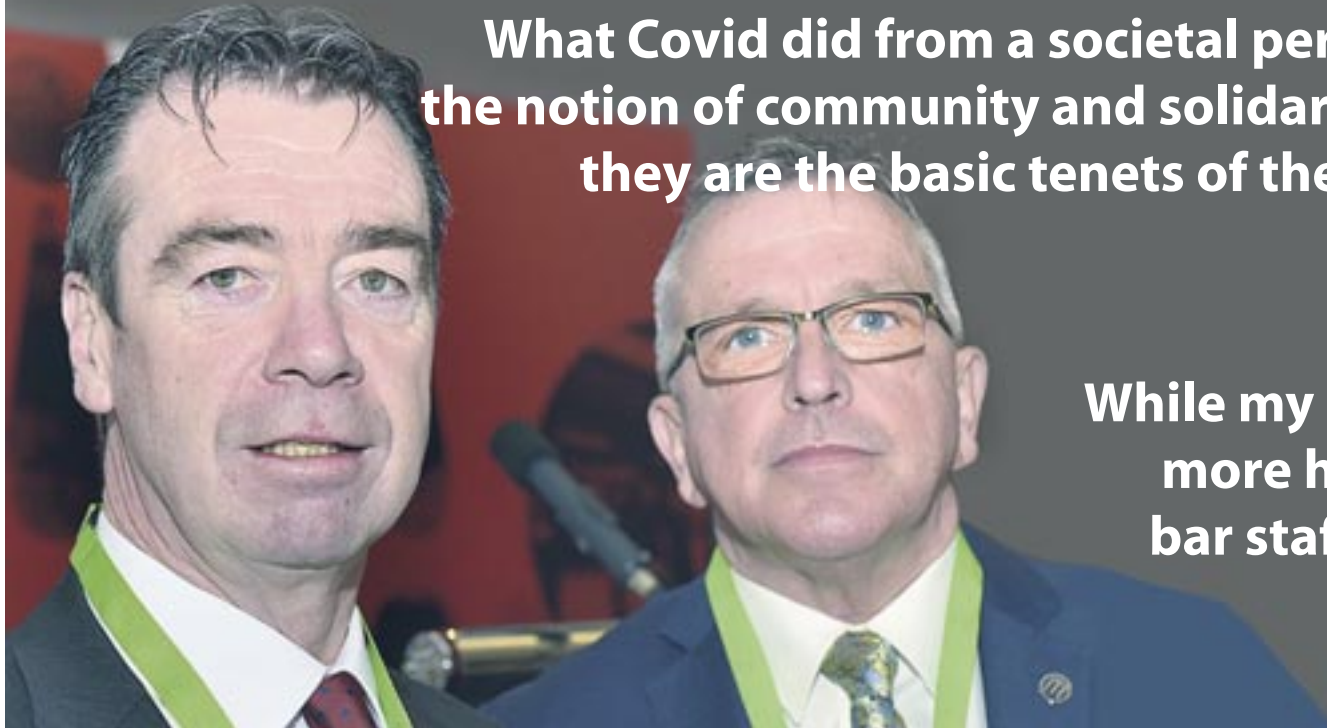


MANDATE TRADE UNION

AUGUST 2020

SHOPFLOOR



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It's time to clock out

A farewell and a thank you to every shop worker and bar worker

ON December 6th, 1979, I started as a junior official for the Bar Workers' Union (Banba Hall) 20 Parnell Square, Dublin 1. On August 21st, 2020, nearly 41 years later I will clock out as General Secretary of Mandate Trade Union, Cavendish Row, Parnell Square, Dublin 1.

To all of the union members I have known, the shop stewards and the activists who trained and assisted me, I would like to sincerely thank you for your friendship and comradeship. You taught me about life, about work, about decency and about struggle.

I have, on many occasions, been in awe of workers who stepped up to the plate at times of struggle and conflict, the immense bravery displayed by those who had little to lose but everything to lose.

My trade unionism was learned in the field with workers who believed in justice, fairness, a better society and who understood that these could only be achieved by collective struggle in a union.

While we may not always have agreed on tactics, we were always on the same side. Personally I turned up for every fixture, played

STRAIGHT TALKING John Douglas

General Secretary,
Mandate Trade Union

every game, never feigned injury and while we might not have won every game I believe we always gave our best.

Yes, I am sure mistakes were made and possibly we could have achieved more, but I can honestly look back in the mirror of life and say that we gave it our all. For those who played on the same team and displayed the same commitment and values, I truly thank you for your solidarity.

It has been a privilege to have worked for workers – something which we should never forget nor take for granted. We must never betray the trust that union members place in us as paid officials. We have but one responsibility – to be there when we are needed.

Retail and bar workers and their

Mandate Trade Union face a very uncertain and challenging future. Pressure on our sectors and on the quality of jobs is being exerted from many quarters – Covid-19; Brexit; online shopping; and, of course, unscrupulous and exploitative employers.

We on the workers' side are at a crossroads, we must choose the right route. We need to plan to protect workers, their families and their communities, and we can only achieve this through strong trade unions and collective action when necessary.

Together we are strong, so we need to organise and mobilise. Every member of Mandate has a responsibility – not only to themselves but to their fellow workers, their families and their class – to ensure that every retail and bar worker is in the union.

It is not the job of someone else to organise, it is all our responsibility and only when workers and union officials understand this concept and the power of collective organising, can we truly challenge for decency and justice at work and in society. You may be aware that

Gerry Light will take over as General Secretary and I wish Gerry all the best for the future. His background as a grocery worker and shop steward in Quinnsnorth will stand him well. He has also put in the hard miles and never missed a game. For that reason, and many more, he is best placed to lead Mandate Trade Union during these uncertain times.

While my race is run, there are many more hard races facing retail and bar staff – together you can win.

I thank you again and now clock out.

Yours fraternally

John Douglas



A SHOPFLOOR TRIBUTE JOHN DOUGLAS IN WORDS AND PICTURES PAGES 21-26

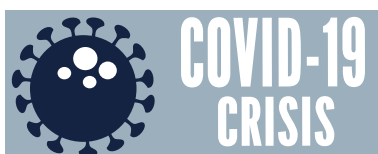
Shopfloor is published bi-monthly by Mandate Trade Union. Mandate Head Office, O'Lehane House, 9 Cavendish Row, Dublin 1 T: 01-8746321/2/3 F: 01-8729581 W: www.mandate.ie
Design & Editing: Brazier Media E: braziermedia@btinternet.com W: brazier.media Shopfloor is edited, produced and printed by trade union labour

Retail workers should not have to police the wearing of masks in shops

GENERAL Secretary John Douglas has claimed it would be "totally impractical" to expect shop workers to enforce the mandatory wearing of masks by customers in retail outlets.

Speaking on Newstalk's *Lunchtime Live* programme on August 6th, he said instead shoppers should be asked to wear face coverings at the entrances to shops and shopping centres, insisting that compliance should NOT be up to retail workers to police.

He claimed such a development would be "a recipe for conflict and a recipe for disaster".



"It certainly shouldn't be shopping assistants who do this," Douglas continued. "If a customer comes in and picks up a bottle of milk, a sliced pan loaf and their newspaper, it's a bit late when they get to the counter to tell them that they can't shop and will have to leave."

"So it has to be done at the entrances. Our members generally don't work at the entrances and it would be impractical to expect them to go around a shop following people and insisting they leave."

"Our members certainly won't be chasing around supermarkets and department stores and asking people to leave."

Pointing out that most shops already had sanitising stations, he said: "It's not beyond the realms of possibility that shopping centres, supermarkets and department stores will

have a box of cheap masks that they could ask people to use if they forget their own mask. If some people point-blank refuse, well, they won't be allowed in."

He said though some people didn't want to wear a mask when shopping, what was more important was to do the right thing.

"There are people who do not want to comply, people who feel it is their own individual right to wear a mask but ultimately it's for the common good," he said. "The medical advice is that we should wear them, wash our

hands and practise social distancing. I think people should do that at the very least."

Douglas added that wearing a mask was a "small price to pay" to protect retail staff and customers and reminded listeners that employers had a responsibility to provide a safe working environment for their staff.

"That will require them to monitor effectively those entering the shops and if the rule says you have to wear a mask, then you have to wear a mask. It's important the employers get this right."



Retiring General Secretary John Douglas and his successor in the role, AGS Gerry Light, touch elbows to signify a handover outside O'Leahane House on Friday, August 21st, John's last day as Mandate GS

BROWN THOMAS/ARNOTTS

Meetings begin over redundancies shock

MANDATE officials held a preliminary meeting on August 19th with Brown Thomas/Arnotts management to discuss the retailer's August 13th announcement that it was seeking 150 redundancies.

While describing the discussions as "constructive", union representatives did voice their concerns over how the announcement was handled.

General Secretary Designate Gerry Light told *Shopfloor* management had outlined the business rationale behind the decision, claiming there had been a drop both in sales and customer footfall.

He added: "They also spoke of changes to the structure of the company's revenue stream, flagging up a rise in online sales over traditional shop floor retailing."

Mandate is seeking further financial clarification about this and the retailer is committed to providing

that information. Importantly, management also gave a commitment that no staff member would be made redundant until the consultation process has been completed.

Light continued: "We also raised concerns about the implications these proposed redundancies would have for those staff who remain in the business. We wanted further clarification about how the business envisages operating in the future, given the reduction in staffing numbers."

Mandate also asked the company to set out any alternatives to redundancy. Light said: "Management agreed to reflect on this and revert back to us at the next scheduled meeting."

"Given the genuine concern among staff about this development, both parties have agreed to meet to continue discussions at the earliest opportunity."

Staff safety No1 priority

MANDATE has insisted that the health and safety of staff and of the general public must be the key consideration in the phased re-opening of public bars as lockdown restrictions ease.

The comments came in a June 25th message to members of the union from general secretary John Douglas.

"The number one consideration must be staff safety and the general public and we must all be guided by the medical advice of the day," he said.

Bars which serve a substantial meal (€9 or more) opened for bookings on June 29th but all the opening of other bars – so-called 'wet bars' – is still under Government review.

"These re-openings will be difficult," Douglas cautioned, "and there are many limitations and obligations on publicans, staff and the public alike." Referring to the Fáilte Ireland Guidelines for re-opening pubs June 2020 – available at the following link <https://bit.ly/3hl5ilF> – he called on members to "familiarise" themselves with

"both your obligations and those of your employer and the public".

He continued: "When you return to work please ensure that all the measures outlined in these guidelines are followed. There can be no doubt that the return will be difficult and that bar staff will be under pressure and the working environment will be very different for the foreseeable future."

Douglas also asked members to contact Mandate head office – Tel: 01-8746321 – as soon as possible if they encountered any difficulties implementing the guidelines.

He said: "The Health and Safety Authority (Lo-call 1890 289 389 or www.hsa.ie) has been given extra resources and they will be carrying out compliance inspections on premises."

"Social distancing for staff and customers and hygiene will be very important. Training in new work methods and procedures will be necessary for all concerned."

We will work tirelessly to secure just deal for Debenhams workers...

IN A SPECIAL video message to Debenhams workers, Mandate General Secretary Designate Gerry Light has given assurances that the union would work "tirelessly" to secure a better solution for members impacted by the UK-based retailer's move to close its chain of shops across the Republic.

He said shop stewards on the union's national representative group were meeting regularly to raise the public profile of the dispute and to agree on a range of actions.

Light said that a key part of "our ongoing fight for decency" was the use of industrial action already sanctioned by members but pointed out that success largely depended on "the biggest participation possible from among the members concerned".

To this end, it was essential members continued to give as much support as possible to pickets and cautioned against any view that the dispute was over and that it was time to move on.

He said: "It is vitally important we continue to support each other in common purpose until we get to the point that our collective efforts start to deliver something that is real and meaningful."

"Your union continues to fight on behalf of each and every member that was in employment on the day that Debenhams closed and we intend to deliver for them."

"There is a responsibility on everyone in this group to continue to support the ongoing collective efforts,



Gerry Light: 'Still much to play for'

particularly the pickets on the various stores," he added.

Light said that along with continuing campaign initiatives, the union was also giving assistance to members affected by the closures – from help in completing statutory claim forms to engaging with government departments on future career planning and welfare advice as well as lobbying to ensure members received full Pandemic Unemployment Payment Benefit.

In addition, the union had put a

great deal of effort into processing thousands of individual claims to the Workplace Relations Commission for potential compensation arising out of insufficient consultation before termination of employment.

Light insisted that "nobody with any sense" would argue that Debenhams employees have not been treated deplorably by their employer but pointed out that the retailer had been able to do this "because the law of this state allows them".

He claimed that because of this the state – as well as current and previous governments – was "complicit" in "this abuse of workers".

However, while welcoming new Taoiseach Micheal Martin's July 7th acknowledgment in the Dáil that Debenhams workers had been treated "very badly and very poorly", Light claimed that these would prove to be "hollow words...if he and

his colleagues do not move quickly to follow them up with the introduction of meaningful and corrective worker-friendly legislation".

In his message to Debenhams workers,

Light underlined that there was "still much to play for".

"Now is not the time to back off in our efforts to get the best result achievable for Debenhams workers. We must stay strong and united in the confidence that right will win out at the end of the day and that justice will be served."



DEBENHAMS LATEST

Efforts continue to find resolution

AS *SHOPFLOOR* goes to press in late August, General Secretary Designate Gerry Light issued a special update for members involved in the ongoing Debenhams dispute. In particular, he wanted to scotch rumours that discussions seeking a resolution to the dispute – now well into its sixth month – had come to an end.

Insisting that this was not the case, Light said: "I can assure those involved in the dispute that discussions are still ongoing."

"I can appreciate in the absence of a proposal that can be put to our members, it may look like all efforts to find a solution have ended – but significant amount of time and effort is still being deployed behind the scenes to resolve this issue. However, it is true to say that the discussions remain complex and difficult."

He added: "Let me be clear, in the event that we reach a point where we believe talks have broken down, this union will immediately inform the members of this. Equally, if a proposal emerges we will move swiftly to put it to a national ballot of all members."

The General Secretary Designate also addressed an issue that had come to light involving the miscalculation of statutory payments due to members who worked at Debenhams.

Light said: "Upon learning about this, we immediately contacted KPMG seeking an explanation and re-

ceived a written response from them. There seems to have been some human error involved in the calculations presented by the Debenhams (DRIL) HR team and the legal advice initially received by the Liquidator."

He said these miscalculations had "rightly angered members" and that union officials had subsequently "expressed our dissatisfaction and frustration directly to the Liquidator".

Debenhams workers were also told that Mandate along with ICTU had tabled a proposal to Junior Minister Damien English seeking the introduction of new legislation along the lines of recommendations contained in the 2016 Duffy-Cahill review, itself put in place following the 2015 Clerys dispute.

Light said: "The main purpose of the legislation would be to ensure in the future no other workers could be treated as deplorably as our members in Debenhams. We have also offered a strong legally-based opinion regarding the possibility of the new legislation being retroactively applied to our members currently in dispute."

And he emphasised that Mandate was continuing "intensive lobbying" behind the scenes and that any developments would be reported back to members.

More coverage on pages 4,5,6,7,8 & 9

Challenges and opportunities in a post-Covid world...

MANDATE's new General Secretary Gerry Light takes the helm of the union at a time of unprecedented turbulence in the retail sector and under the long shadow cast by the global pandemic.

"In a word, it's Covid," he said. "This time last year it was on none of our radars. None of us knew or expected its arrival but it has literally turned the world upside down and nobody has escaped it – no society, organisation or movement has the potential of escaping it."

For Gerry, it has underlined the need for Mandate to evolve and deal with changing times: "If we stand still and ignore what's going on around us, very quickly you would be rapidly managing your demise."

He made the comments in an in-depth interview with *Shopfloor* in the final week of friend and colleague John Douglas' 15-year tenure at the top of the union.

And it has been a relationship that has been forged in trade union struggle since the 1980s. "Myself and John go back over 30 years in the trade union movement," he said. "We were both heavily involved in the Irish National Union of Vintners and Grocers. You could say we've evolved together and I'd like to think it's been a learning experience for both of us."

Dedicated service

Praising his "positive legacy", Gerry said John had made a significant contribution to low paid and retail workers over 40 years of "sustained" loyal and dedicated service.

And Gerry joked that a "pattern" was now developing: "This is the third job I am about to follow John into – first there was the branch official job in INUVGATA (Irish National Union of Vintners', Grocers' and Allied Trades Assistants), and then when he vacated the assistant general secretary role I followed him into that..."

Even though both men were close, Gerry admits they did have differing views on a number of issues but strongly believes that the airing of those differences had a positive impact on the direction of the union.

"I think that's the essence of the relationship," he said. "We challenged each other without having any fear of insulting anybody or of suggesting that their way wasn't the right way. We've done that very successfully I think for the good of the union, for the members and – hopefully – for the good of the movement through the years."

The first item of business when Gerry takes up his new role is – unsurprisingly – dealing with the fallout from Covid-19 – and the implications for retail workers and the union itself.

"We've had to deal with the biggest mass redundancy so far – the Debenhams closure – and then there came the announcement of Brown Thomas and Arnotts, the Dublin Airport Authority and others. That's anything up to 2,000 members gone – a lot of them good quality retail jobs. I'd like to think that Debenhams would be



'Positive legacy': John Douglas and Gerry Light the last mass casualty – but you can't be sure."

The terrible personal cost suffered by members who have lost their jobs is not far from Gerry's mind – he was formerly National Chair of the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOU) and for a while the Co-ordinator of the Connolly Unemployed Centre in the Liberties area of Dublin – but as general secretary he also has to think of what the loss of revenue from subscriptions will mean for the union and how that "gap is to be plugged".

"We're highly labour intensive [as a union]," he points out. "We achieve

very little in the way of surpluses every year – all the money we get goes back into maintaining the staff and services that we supply to the members – and that's the way it should be.

"With the loss of those members you're also losing a significant number of activists in various workplaces so you have to start again, you have to rebuild, you have to go out there and refocus your organising efforts in the hope that the capacity of peer-based organising is sufficient and strong enough to deliver in those different locations."

He added: "If you don't do that, the problem becomes more sustained and prolonged."

Gerry thinks the Covid-19 crisis has "blown the lid off" the whole issue of low pay and precarious work and that it has highlighted the essential work carried out by retail workers "who have been on the front line since day one".

"If our members are classified as essential workers, why are they paid so little?" he asks. This is where unions can step in and say to those workers who are not unionised, "You're not going to do it alone by

knocking on the boss's door and saying 'Give me some more please.'"

"You have huge swathes of workers who are marginalised and not in trade unions. Acting as independent entities they are not going to be able to improve their lot. It's the job of trade unions that we position ourselves and make ourselves relevant across many issues – like the experience of how we led on workplace health and safety when it came to Covid, for example.

Solidarity

"And this is one of the things I'm noticing now – what Covid did from a societal perspective it re-established the whole notion of community, solidarity and collectivism. Sure they are the basic tenets of the trade union movement!"

He added: "I think it's time for the trade union movement to look at itself and make sure it's properly organised to deal with the many challenges facing it, including Covid."

Organising is key and Gerry is fully behind the emphasis ICTU General Secretary Patricia King has put on rejuvenating the Private Sector Committee within Congress. He cites in

particular the upcoming all-island *Fair Deal for Retail Workers* document, which he describes as a "significant piece of work" involving Mandate, SIPTU and Usdaw.

"When we talk about organising workers, we need to look at ourselves – are we organised sufficiently to ensure that when we talk about effective organising in the workplace, are we as a movement creating the environment where this can be done more effectively?" Of course, problems in the traditional retail sector pre-date Covid-19 and he believes that the Government faces a challenge to "re-evaluate the relationship" between traditional bricks and mortar retailers and their online counterparts.

Gerry made this clear in a recent meeting with Tanaiste Leo Varadkar, who also holds the business and enterprise brief. He said: "There's 260,000 workers involved in retail and what we've seen as a result of Covid is a mass exodus to online for obvious reasons. It was growing anyway before Covid, but now the concern for a lot of bricks and mortar retailers is to what extent it might or might not return."



And he thinks a sectoral approach is necessary to deal with the problem: “You need all of the stakeholders – the businesses, the workers’ and their representatives, and of course we need the Government around the table. We need to look at policies that facilitate the shift back to traditional bricks and mortar retail.”

Gerry firmly believes that something has to be done to “rebalance the situation” between traditional high street retailers and the “Amazons and BooHoos of this world” and noted with interest the recent suggestion mooted by the UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak of a possible tax on goods sold online.

One difficulty with the sectoral approach is that there is “too much suspicion and traditional hostility” on the part of some retailers towards Mandate. “They don’t want to get into that space with us,” Gerry admits. “I would say to them, ‘I know you’re not comfortable coming into this space but ultimately we don’t have the luxury to hang on to all our outdated views and what happened in the past, this is very much about the future. It could be very much to your detriment if you hang on to those views.’ If nothing else you owe it to your workers to make an effort.”

Part of this new sectoral approach – to be flagged up in the *Fair Deal* document – will be about what he termed “additional obligations” that will be placed on bricks and mortar retailers over how they treat workers. He said: “We need to rebalance the pitch between traditional and new. There’s also the sense of obligation that comes if you’re an employer and that is about a commitment to fair work practices – at its core that’s about ensuring workers have a right to meaningfully and fully vindicate their constitutional entitlement to be



an member of a trade union.”

The “plethora of supports” given by the Government to help businesses make it through the Covid-19 crisis is welcome, according to Gerry, as is the new public awareness recognising the valuable contributions made by retail workers on the front line. However, with these support comes obligations there should be no State money without a commitment to fair work practices.

Contributions

Gerry thinks some retail bosses are not still not valuing the contributions made by their workers and has noted that Covid-19 is actually now being used by a small minority as an excuse for lower pay awards in wage negotiations.

“Employers are not going to put their hands in their pockets to recognise that through a financial award,” Gerry said. “In pay negotiations now, you know the old saying, ‘eaten bread

In particular, he flags up the ‘voluntarist’ approach contained in the 1946 Industrial Relations Act which has bedevilled employer-union relations ever since. He also suggests that the problem has been exacerbated further following the introduction of the 1990 Industrial Relations Act.

He explained: “The voluntarist model was built on the assumption that there would be meaningful engagement if workers exercised their right to join a union, and in the event of the issues not being resolvable they then moved into the state machinery [Labour Court etc] that was provided to support it.”

However, through the years legal advisers to employers took a different view and strictly interpreted the ‘voluntarist’ model as, ‘If we don’t want to engage, we don’t have to’. This will happen, Gerry believes, as long as employers “aided and abetted by the likes of Ibec” fail to see “the bigger picture,” adding, “Effectively in such circumstances the constitutional right to association is rendered meaningless – why would it have been written [in the first place] if it was going to be interpreted in this narrow and restrictive way?”

Mandate has a long and proud history of spearheading campaigns and Gerry fully endorses that approach but doesn’t want to adopt a “scatter-gun approach” to campaigning.

Campaigns

He said: “We’re going to do two or three [campaigns] a year and we’re going to follow them – hopefully – to a successful conclusion. There are two types of campaigns – issues that’s are directly related to the workplace and then the broader social justice campaigns – around issues such as water, housing, health and education for example.

“You don’t have to stretch these broader social campaigns out too far before they become directly relevant to our members.”

Gerry is also a big fan of what he terms “astute lobbying” and claims he detects the obvious complexities in his recent interactions with the Coalition Government.

“I have told them how Mandate is going to operate under my watch as general secretary. I said to them when we set out a campaign we will come to each and every one of you – of all political views – and we will give you the opportunity to support us, then it’s up to you. We will highlight the ones that want to work with us and equally the ones that don’t.”

Gerry comes from a strong working class background and this also informs his approach to getting younger people involved in union activism. “I know where I got my trade union values,” he said. “I got them from my father and my close-knit family. I was born and reared in the North Inner City of Dublin in the standard two-up, two-down Corporation house. My family were metal workers in CIE, as it was at the time up in Inchicore in Dublin, and my father was involved and he was a shop steward. You get your values from somewhere – it comes from a combination of your community, your upbringing and from your parents and friends.”

Gerry attended Brunswick Street CBS (The Brunner) for his primary and secondary education and like many from the area where he grew up he went straight into the work-

force after school but is proud of the fact that in his thirties he returned to education and graduated with a degree in Industrial Relations and Trade Union Studies from the National College of Industrial Relations.

This journey has instilled in him a real sense in the importance of life-long education and why the union places such emphasis in the delivery of its progressive membership-focused training and development activities.

But he cautions that there is now a “generational problem” which threatens trade unions. Those links – which he dubs the “critical gap” – are gone.

“We’re now skipping generations – the young people of today who we’re trying to reach out to, their parents weren’t involved with the trade union movement. We’re likely moving into the second generation [without union links within the family] and what is the consequence of that? Fewer and fewer people in the trade union movement...”

In response, Gerry believes trade unions must look at how they present themselves and reach out to young people – by focusing on what is important to them, such as environmental and climate justice issues.

Bridging that “critical gap” is not happening in the home, at school or in the community, but he thinks the message can be delivered more effectively through the use of new technology and modern means of communication.

“I think we’re going to do this increasingly in front of the [computer/phone] screen and this reality has rapidly advanced because of Covid. I’m now using Zoom as an organising tool, holding online conferences from home at 7 o’clock in the evening citing a recent meeting with over 90 Tesco shop stewards present. This approach helps overcome growing resistance from employers to provide paid release for activists to attend union meetings.

“These represent new opportunities of engaging and organising workers and young people. This is the type of technological approach we need to maximise. I don’t think it’s necessarily about getting into the classroom anymore – it’s about putting together appropriate short, snappy video and text messages for young people and getting to the places that can assist in their distribution working with bodies such as the National Youth Council of Ireland or USI.”

Gerry concluded by re-emphasising the vitally important role organising plays in recruiting new members to the union.

“It is the life blood of everything we do – whether it’s ‘organising the organised’ – our existing members – or organising for growth purposes.

“If you do the first one well, the second one will naturally follow.”

He added: “I don’t think the act of organising falls to any particular grade or function within the union. It is all of our responsibility. Our job as staff in the union is to facilitate the activists on the ground in doing this.”

Notwithstanding the significant challenges that lie ahead Gerry is confident that working collaboratively together, the members, activists and staff of the union can maintain Mandate at the forefront of the Irish trade union movement delivering for its members on matters of importance to them and their families.

Stop the fudge: implement Duffy-Cahill now

DEBENHAMS FACTFILE:

10,000

Estimated total years of service given to Debenhams by their workforce in Irish Republic

1,239,000

Estimated number of items of stock (excluding cosmetics), worth €23m, left in 11 closed stores

MANDATE has called on the government coalition parties to “stop the fudge” and fully implement recommendations contained in the 2016 Duffy-Cahill report.

The report, a review of employee protection legislation, followed the shameful way Clerys workers were treated when the landmark department store in central Dublin went into liquidation in June 2015.

Expressing “extreme disappointment” at the lack of

movement four years on and in the light of Debenhams’ closure of its chain of stores across the Republic in April, Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes said the new administration’s programme for government failed miserably to address the issue of companies transferring assets from one business to another to avoid their responsibilities to workers.

The programme for government did promise to “review whether the

legal provisions surrounding collective redundancies and the liquidation of companies effectively protect the rights of workers.”

But as Forbes pointed out this review has already been carried out in the Duffy-Cahill report.

“The Duffy-Cahill report was conducted because of the way workers in Clerys were treated, not to mention how the La Senza, Game, HMV, Connolly Shoes and the Paris Bakery workers were treated.

“It has been sitting on a shelf for

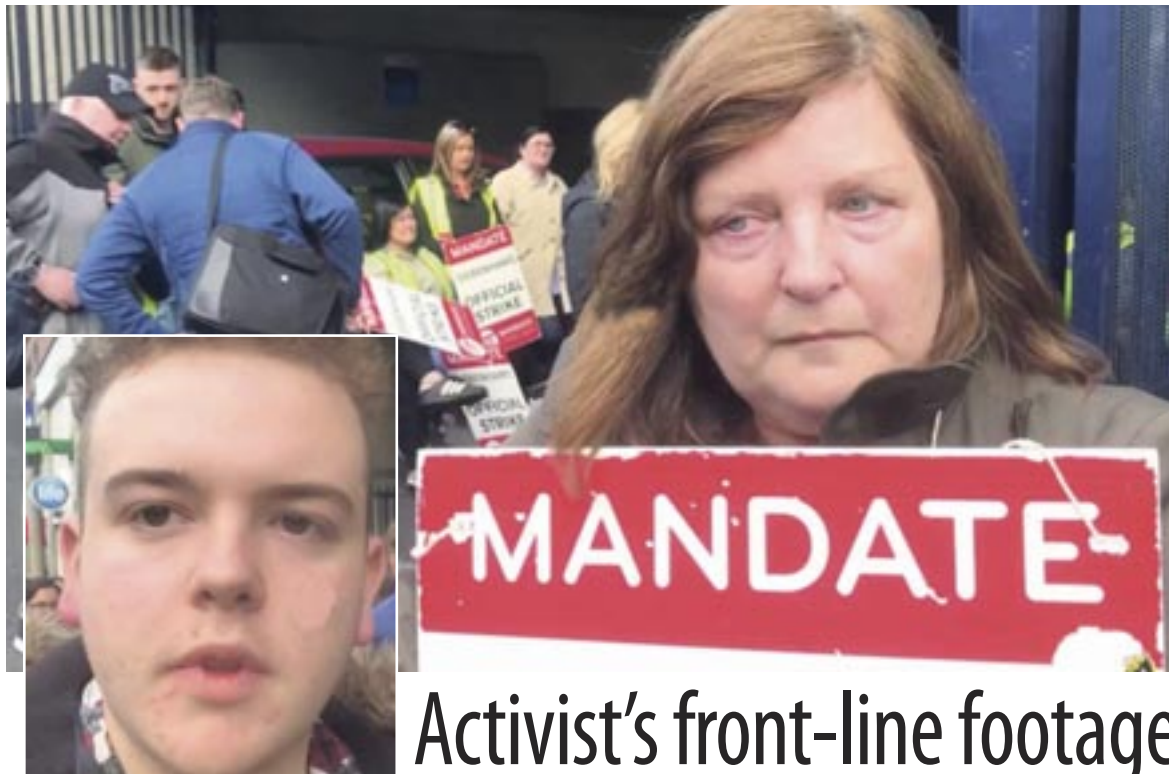
more than four years now. We’re not short of evidence on this matter, we’re short of action,” said Forbes.

“These workers and other workers who will face a similar situation in the future are being thrown under a bus so that Fine Gael, Fianna Fail and the Green Party can form an anti-worker government again.”

He added: “We’re calling on all three government coalition parties to stop the fudging and commit to implementing the findings of the Duffy-Cahill report as soon as possible.”



SOLIDARITY



Activist's front-line footage

NORTHERN Irish trade union activist Peter McGregor (above left) gave an emotive on-the-spot report from a Mandate picket line at the loading bay at Debenhams Henry Street store in Dublin on July 8th.

Posting on Unite Hospitality NI's Facebook page, Peter said Debenhams had “completely screwed the workers over and left them out in the open,” and that management had shown a “blatant disregard for the livelihood of their staff”, claiming they had taken “opportunistic layoffs to the max during the Covid crisis”.

Peter interviewed Debenhams worker Carmel (above) at the scene. Carmel told him that she and her colleagues had been standing together on the picket lines for 14 weeks and that their aim was to secure a “proper redundancy”.

Carmel insisted that business in Debenhams had been good leading up to the lockdown. “The 11 stores here in the Republic were doing brilliantly,” she said. “Actually, maybe on a Saturday, we would outdo the [Debenhams] Oxford Street [store] in London.”

MUSICAL BACKING



Terry Boyle came up from Strabane with a guitar in his hand to join the July 10th protest outside Debenhams Foyle Street store in Derry. He entertained those on the picket line and passers-by with a rendition of Labbi Siffre's *Something Inside So Strong*. Pictured in the background is another man from Strabane, Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes...



One of a number of protests staged outside Debenhams outlets across England in support of the shameful treatment meted out to the UK-based retailer's workforce in the Republic of Ireland

DERRY PICKET

‘We’re not going to let the bosses

DEBENHAMS workers from across Ireland protested outside the UK retailer's Foyle Street store in Derry on July 10th

They wanted to make northern shoppers aware of the “despicable” way the company had treated its staff south of the border.

More than 1,000 Debenhams workers in 11 stores across the Republic were notified in early April that they'd lost their jobs after the company sought to go into liquidation.

The company hadn't set aside funds to pay the workers their agreed redundancy packages, having transferred valuable assets to

the UK parent company.

Valerie Conlon, who worked at the company's Patrick Street store in Cork for 24 years, told *Shopfloor*: “We are not going to let this company just walk away and not pay. We've given decades of service and helped make huge profits for Debenhams so for them to just abandon their responsibilities is a disgrace.”

She added: “We made everyone aware of how Debenhams treats its workers. If they can do this to us and get away with it, how do we know it won't be the workers in Derry next?”

Mandate General Secretary John

Douglas said: “I have to commend these workers for standing up and fighting back against the despicable way they were treated. They've travelled to Belfast and Derry, they've stood on picket lines across the country and they're not going to back down.

“These workers have a combined service of more than 10,000 years. They deserve a satisfactory resolution to this dispute and the company knows what it needs to do. Pay the workers the redundancy they are owed. If they don't, Mandate will continue to support the workers as they campaign for justice.”

BELFAST PICKET

Protesting up North...

DEBENHAMS workers from the Republic angered by the way they have been treated by their employer took a message of defiance north of the border on June 17th.

With chants of 'No Way! You can't walk away and not pay!' the delegation staged a protest outside the retailer's flagship store on Royal Avenue in Belfast.

National Coordinator Brian Forbes, who was at the protest, described how Debenhams workers in the south had been left "high and dry" by their bosses.

"They liquidated the company and closed down 11 stores and they gave the workers absolutely nothing," he said. We have been left with very few alternatives other than to bring our battle to the recently-reopened Debenhams stores in the North. We don't want to do it, but when a company treats its workers this way, we won't be found wanting in seeking to achieve a satisfactory resolution for our members."

He added: "All Debenhams management have to do is to abide by their own collective agreement in relation to redundancies. That's all these workers are asking for."

Jane Crowe, a shop steward at the Henry Street store in Dublin, said the company had left workers with "nothing at all".

She explained: "The company siphoned off all our assets, including the leases and debenhams.ie over to the UK. The debenhams.ie is worth millions and would pay us an actual



proper redundancy. We're not asking for a phenomenal amount - just four weeks which is a statutory [payout] plus two weeks."

Doreen Keegan, also a worker at the Henry Street store, said they had made the trip north "to highlight what is going on down south".

Her colleague Laura Conroy, with Debenhams for 18 years, said: "We got notified on Holy Thursday that our jobs were OK and then a few weeks after we were told they were gone by a generic email.

"Before we finished up because of



Message of defiance: Debenhams workers Laura Conroy (left) and Jane Crowe (above). 'Honour deal': Mandate Divisional Organiser Keith Pollard (below)

“All Debenhams management have to do is to abide by their own collective agreement over redundancies. That's all these workers are asking for...”

the Covid [emergency] we had packed up all the valuable stock - the Wranglers, Levis, jewellery and cosmetics - because we were told about [fears over] looting.

"We think this was a pack of lies because they wanted us to get out all the valuable stock. We are now protesting at the loading bay and the front of the shop [in Henry Street] from early to late. We're going to keep going. We're here today because this is not the end. We're going to keep going until we get what we deserve."



Mandate Divisional Organiser Keith Pollard said the protest had been brought to the Royal Avenue store in Belfast "to let the company know that we will not be going down without a fight". He added: "There is

an agreed redundancy package in place for the 1,000 Debenhams workers in the Republic of Ireland and we're here to make sure the company honour and pay up on that commitment."

walk away & not pay'

And Douglas had a strong message for the new government in the Republic. He said: "Three years ago, on the back of the Clerys, Paris Bakery and La Senza debacle, the Protection Of Employees (Collective Redundancies) Bill 2017 was tabled by David Cullinane TD.

"It would've resolved many of the issues Debenhams workers are facing today including allowing the High Court to return assets which have been improperly transferred out of the business and giving preferential creditor status to employees - allowing workers faster access to their entitlements.

"Unfortunately that Fine Gael

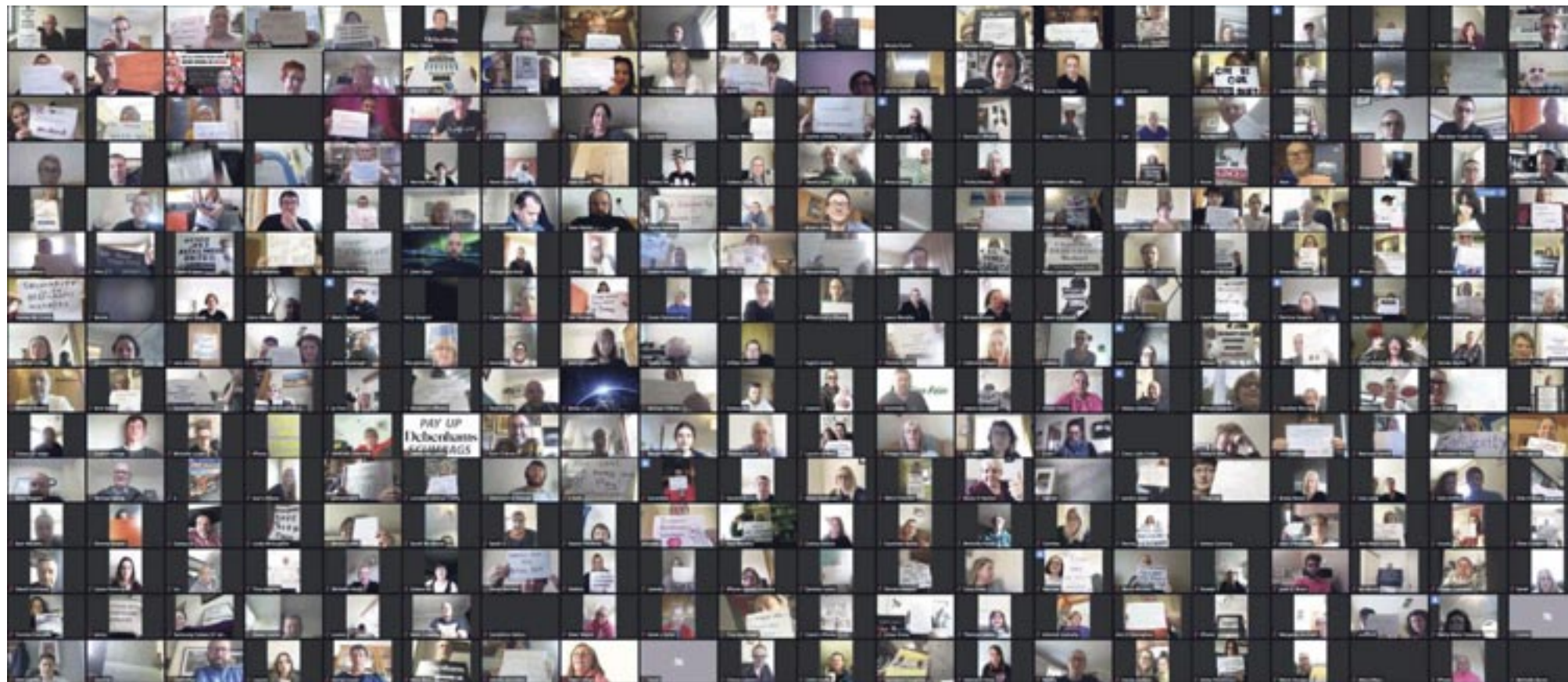
government with the support of Fianna Fáil refused to pursue that Bill, but they've now been given a second opportunity to implement the Bill after Louise O'Reilly TD tabled an updated version of the Bill."

Douglas added: "Taoiseach Micheál Martin is on record as saying that Debenhams 'should do the right thing'. Well, so should his government. No more excuses. Stop wasting time with more unnecessary reviews and legislate to ensure this never happens again.

"Otherwise when workers find themselves in this situation in the coming months and years, they'll know exactly who is to blame."



CAN YOU SPOT YOURSELF?



Lockdown won't keep us down... Ireland's first virtual protest

ALMOST 500 people took part in Ireland's first ever virtual protest – an online call for 'Justice for Debenhams workers' – on Wednesday, April 29th.

The rally, hosted by Mandate and online campaigning group Uplift, took place on Zoom and followed a series of protests outside shuttered Debenhams outlets across the Republic.

Around 1,000 Debenhams workers lost their jobs on April 9th after management informed staff in an email that 11 of their stores in the Republic of Ireland were "not expected to reopen"

while the company filed for liquidation.

The workers, some of whom had given more than 30 years service, being originally employed under the Roches Stores brand, were told they would only receive their statutory entitlements.

Mandate General Secretary John Douglas described public support for the Debenhams workers as "phenomenal" and praised in particular members of the public who logged on to join the April 29th virtual protest.

He said: "A very strong message was sent to

both the company and to politicians that this despicable treatment of workers is completely unacceptable. Debenhams workers deserve justice and no worker should have to go through this process."

Slamming the actions of the retailer, Douglas added: "We believe the company sought to enter the liquidation process during the Covid-19 crisis because it prevented the workers from being able to negotiate effectively.

"They couldn't attend meetings

nor engage in normal industrial relations activities. We even saw how gardai recently prevented some of the workers from protesting outside their store, so we have had to come up with new and innovative ways of making our voices heard."

Siobhan O'Donoghue, Director of Uplift, said: "Despite the Covid-19 lockdown we refused to stand on the sidelines and watch people who work in Debenhams be mistreated and denied their rights as workers."



Backing from anti-Apartheid strike heroes

THE Dunnes Stores anti-Apartheid strikers have backed Debenhams workers in their bid to secure improved redundancy payouts and on their campaign to change current legislation to stop something similar happening to other employees.

Speaking on 19th July – 36 years to the day after the Dunnes workers began their three-year battle for their right to refuse to handle South African goods – Karen Gearon, shop steward during the epic stoppage, said the Debenhams workers were an inspiration to all workers facing injustice in Ireland and abroad.

She said: "What has happened the Debenhams workers is atrocious. Some workers have given decades of service to the company and then, when it suits, the company just abandons them.

"But what is inspirational is the fact the workers are trying to change legislation to protect all other workers from this terrible predicament."

Gearon added: "When we started our pickets on this day in 1984, people told us we couldn't win. They said



Kate Gearon (fourth from left), shop steward at Dunnes during the three-year anti-Apartheid strike in the 1980s, at the Debenhams picket line in Tralee

ordinary retail workers didn't have the power to change legislation. Well, 10 of us stuck to our guns and we forced the Irish government to ban all South African goods.

"There were only 10 of us, there are

1,000 Debenhams workers. Imagine the changes they can force if they stick together in their trade union." Mandate has been calling for legislative change on this issue since 2013.

Brian Forbes, Mandate's National

Coordinator for Campaigns, told *Shopfloor*: "We've seen this type of thing happening again and again and the government keeps kicking cans down the road.

"We've had high-profile cases such

“What has happened the Debenhams workers is atrocious. Some workers have given decades of service to the company and then, when it suits, the company just abandons them...”

as the Paris Bakery and Clerys, but similar situations occurred in La Senza, HMV, Game and Connolly Shoes, where the company walks away with the assets and the workers are left seeking redundancy payments off the state."

He added: "The solution isn't that difficult to understand – implement the findings of the Duffy-Cahill report and ensure that workers are seen as preferential creditors and prevent companies from transferring assets out of the business.

"We would also like to see the liquidation process recognise collectively agreed redundancy agreements as part of a worker's entitlement."



Hats off to them! Debenhams workers on the picket line in Galway on August 1st marked the Galway Races – closed to the public this year due to Covid-19 concerns – by sporting a range of stylish headgear and fashionable fascinators...



SOLIDARITY

They are some fighters!

URGING people to “go down and say hello” to Debenhams workers on the picket lines, supporter Michelle Byrne posted this selfie (right) of her with the gallant “gals” doing their duty outside the Waterford store on a rainy August 5th morning.

Posting on the Stand With Debenhams Workers Facebook page, she wrote: “It’s lashing rain but the gals are still out every day, every morning and there’s no shelter at the back of the Debenhams store in Waterford.

“It’s been 118 days now I believe since they were let go and they’re still waiting on their last pay cheque, their holidays, and – of course – their redundancies!

“Go down and say hello to them or to your own nearest store, it’s been a long time for them to keep the fight going and their motivation up.

“I dropped in before work this morn for an hour. I’m on my way, but the Debenhams workers are down there in the lashing rain still. They are some fighters!”



Front-line fun: The Olive branch!

HAVE Debenhams bosses not yet ‘twigged’ on to just who they are up against? Blanchardstown Debenhams worker Olive decided to camouflage herself with a branch for ‘special ops’ duties on the picket line in Blanchardstown on July 30th, and posted this fun video, inspired by *Mission Impossible*, on the Stand With Debenhams Workers Facebook page. Olive gets our special *Shopfloor* thumbs-up for her morale-boosting efforts on the front line! Check out <https://bit.ly/3gHb5C4>



PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT

Debenhams workers ‘thrown under the bus’

MANDATE has claimed Debenhams workers were “thrown under the bus” by the government after it was revealed the new administration’s five-year plan ‘Our Shared Future’ contains little that will stop businesses transferring assets to avoid obligations to their workforce.

In early April, UK-based retailer Debenhams announced that it was closing its operations south of the border with the loss of 1,000 jobs.

Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes said: “These workers have a combined service of 10,000 years and yet the company feels it can transfer valuable assets to the UK while refusing these workers redundancy pay. Well, they won’t get away with it.”

He said that Debenhams workers – and their union, Mandate – were “extremely disappointed” in the programme for government even though it promised to “review whether the legal provisions surrounding collective redundancies and the liquidation of companies effectively protect the rights of workers.”

But Forbes pointed out that such a review has already been carried out “It’s called the Duffy-Cahill report,” he said, “and it was conducted because of the way workers



New coalition government’s ‘Our Shared Future’ and (right) Debenhams workers on the picket line at the Henry Street store in Dublin

in Clerys were treated, not to mention how the La Senza, Game, HMV, Connolly Shoes and the Paris Bakery workers were treated.

“The Duffy-Cahill report has been sitting on a shelf for more than four years now. We’re not short of evidence on this matter, we’re short of action.”

Forbes continued: “These workers and other workers who will face a similar situation in the future are being thrown under a bus so that Fine Gael, Fianna Fáil and the Green Party can form an anti-worker government again.”



He added: “We’re calling on all three parties to stop the fudging and commit to implement the findings of the Duffy-Cahill report as soon as possible.”

Meanwhile, Forbes also pointed

out that Debenhams was still trading in Ireland under its Debenhams.ie brand.

“This brand is worth millions,” he explained, “and the retailer also transferred leases to its

parent company in the UK, which are also worth millions.

“A decent employer wouldn’t do that, but a decent legislative system wouldn’t allow it to be done in the first place.”



Mandate General Secretary John Douglas speaks to strikers on Henry Street



RTE reporter interviews a Debenhams worker outside the Henry Street store on July 18th during a rally to mark 100 days of fighting for justice



Unity is strength: Workers on picket line duty in Galway on July 11th (above), and (below) striking Debenhams workers at the Square, Tallaght, on July 17th



Resolute: Workers on the July 10th picket line in Waterford (above), and (left and below) young and old alike support the Debenhams workers!



BRIEFING THE POLITICIANS...



Mandate shop steward Valerie Conlon (second right) brought two of her Debenhams colleagues – all constituents of Taoiseach Micheál Martin – to the Dáil to impress upon him the need to secure a just settlement for Debenhams workers. Both Debenhams stores in Cork closed in April



DEBENHAMS workers through their union, Mandate, have continued to press for a just and satisfactory resolution to their dispute on a range of fronts, following the closure in April of the UK-based retailer's chain of stores in the Republic.

On July 22nd, workers held a number of separate meetings with political parties to argue their case and spoke with Tanaiste Leo Varadkar (above) as well as Sinn Fein (below) and Labour Party representatives (bottom).

Describing the meetings as “positive”, a Mandate spokesperson told *Shopfloor*: “After we had set out our views about how this dispute could be resolved, all the parties we met expressed their commitment to continue to work diligently to securing that objective.”



Bank of Ireland picket protests

DEBENHAMS workers protested outside a number of branches of the Bank of Ireland on Friday, 26th June as part of their campaign to win redundancy payouts from the UK-based retailer after it ceased operations in the Republic.

The afternoon protests were held at locations across Dublin and in Waterford, Tralee, Limerick, Cork and Galway. In April, more than 1,000 Debenhams workers south of the border were notified by email that they would have no jobs to return to after the Covid-19 pandemic had passed.

The company transferred valuable assets out of the country before seeking liquidation, severely limiting the chance workers had of obtaining redundancy payments.

Mandate National Coordinator for Campaigns Brian Forbes said the Debenhams move had wreaked huge devastation and vowed the issue would not go away until the workers had achieved a satisfactory outcome.

He told *Shopfloor*: “We are publicly calling on Bank of Ireland as part of the Celine UK ownership structure to do the right thing by these workers without any further delay.”

Celine UK is a mix of banks and US hedge funds, such as Barclays, Bank of Ireland, Silver Point and Golden-Tree, and Forbes claimed it could “well afford a financial resolution to this matter”.

He continued: “Given that Bank of Ireland previously received a €4.8 billion state bailout and is currently 14% state-owned they should use their position within the ownership structure of Debenhams UK to help resolve this nightmare scenario for Irish workers seeking a fair redundancy payment.

“These loyal workers, year on year, helped to generate significant profits for the Debenhams owners and it is morally incumbent upon the Bank of Ireland to act now in a responsible and positive manner to help these workers achieve a fair and reasonable resolution to this dispute.

“If the owners of Debenhams UK believe they can treat these workers with such disrespect and walk away from it, they can think again. Bank of Ireland has a moral responsibility to ensure a just settlement for these workers who are very much prepared for a tough fight to achieve justice and so is their trade union.”



Above: June 26th Bank of Ireland protest in Limerick. Below: The Debenhams Rat joined the Bank of Ireland protest on College Green in Dublin City centre on June 26th. Mandate members on the picket line wanted to thank Colm Kinsella of Unite who kindly brought along the inflatable rodent for the day. Bottom: Debenhams workers protest outside the Tallaght branch of the Bank of Ireland



CONGRESS

Covid payments extension for non-nationals welcomed

ICTU General Secretary Patricia King has welcomed as “positive and sensible” confirmation that Covid-19 payments – enhanced illness benefit and pandemic unemployment payment – will be made available to workers in direct provision centres and other non-national workers.

She made the comments following a meeting with senior Government officials on August 9th.

“This is a positive and sensible development,” King said. “Congress has long been concerned at the plight of migrant workers. This is an important acknowledgement of the rights of those residing in direct provision centres to full access to payments.”

She added that Congress would continue to press for reform of the direct provision system and for better care of vulnerable families in the care of the State.



Bombing of Nagasaki Picture: Public Domain

Ireland ratifies UN nuke treaty

CONGRESS has welcomed Ireland’s ratification of the UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) which came as the world marked the 75th anniversary of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in early August.

Congress International Development Officer David Joyce said: “The world simply must be rid of all weapons of mass destruction, both for security today and for future generations.

“That is why support for the Non-Proliferation Treaty is so vital, and why all countries should ratify the treaty to ban all nuclear weapons.”

He added: “It is a very welcome development therefore that Ireland has ratified the TPNW, reflecting the country’s concern for the terrible consequences of nuclear weapons.”

The 2017 UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons has already been ratified by 40 countries, and will come into force when 50 countries have ratified it.

‘Upset caused’ payout for Mandate member over job termination

A MANDATE member working for security firm Secure All Security Group who had his contract terminated in October 2018 due to “company downsizing” has been awarded compensation following an adjudication at the Workplace Relations Commission.

In her recommendation, the WRC Adjudication Officer awarded the sum to Declan Nally because of “the unique circumstances of the case” as well as for the “upset caused”.

She found there was an “absence of any evidence of any procedure” and indeed of what criteria was being used in the termination of Nally’s employment.

Welcoming the decision, North and West Divisional Organiser Ciaran Campbell explained: “Declan’s case was very unfortunate in that without

any form of consultation or engagement he was informed in writing by the employer that his contract was terminated.

“The employer cited ‘company downsizing’ as the reason for the termination, but failed to demonstrate in any way why and how Declan was the only employee selected for termination of contract.”

Business case

Mandate successfully argued that in keeping with good employment practice, Secure All Security Group had failed to engage with Nally to explain the business case that lay behind his contract’s termination.

Campbell continued: “Worse, the company failed to provide material evidence that it had downsized. Really, the only thing going for the company in this

case was the fact that Declan had less than one year’s service and thus didn’t have the more robust legislative protections of the Unfair Dismissal Act.

“That said, as a Mandate member, who regularly contributes to and attends our community-linked efforts in Mayo – such as the 2018 Organise for €15 campaign in the Castlebar Celtic Football Club; the 2019 quiz night fundraiser for victims of domestic violence; and the 2020 pre-General Election ‘Sleep Out’ to raise awareness about homelessness – we owed it to Declan to give him a dig out under these circumstances.

“Using the less-robust and voluntarist Industrial Relations Act, we won Declan some compensation that, while it took nearly five months to get the employer to honour, it gives Declan some crumbs of comfort for his loyalty to the union.”

SOLIDARITY

Debenhams workers draw the support of folk legend Christy...



REDUNDANCIES



Jobs decimated: Marks & Spencer in Oxford Street, London Picture: Ewan Munroe (CC BY-SA 2.0)

7,000 M&S jobs to go in the UK

SHOPWORKERS union Usdaw has called for urgent talks with British government ministers in a bid to ‘help save the high street’.

The call came as Marks & Spencer announced plans to slash 7,000 jobs from its network of stores across the UK. It’s thought roughly 12% of the retailer’s 60,000 staff there will face redundancy.

M&S said it was acting to reflect a “material shift” in trading caused by the Covid-19 pandemic as it also revealed a steep drop in sales.

And, as *Shopfloor* goes to press, Marks & Spencer confirmed the job losses are confined to its UK operations.

Ushaw National Officer Dave Gill described the announcement as “yet another devastating blow for M&S staff” and “another bombshell for the high street”.

“The [UK] Government has a clear choice; do they want to see the high street go to the wall, or do they want to help save it?” he added.

‘Appalling way to treat staff’ as Debenhams UK announces 2,500 job losses

BRITISH shopworkers’ union Usdaw has called for urgent talks with Debenhams’ administrators as 2,500 shop and warehouse jobs across the UK are set to be axed.

The union expressed deep concern that the necessary consultation processes [that apply under UK law] did not take place and, as *Shopfloor* goes to press, are preparing a legal challenge on behalf of members affected. Usdaw National Officer David Gill said: “This is more

devastating news for staff who have been working under the threat of store closures and job losses for some time, having seen the company go into administration.

“We have been contacted by members who say they are being made redundant by conference call, with no meaningful consultation or proper notice period, as required by [UK] law. That is an appalling way to treat staff. Yet again it is appears that the tax-

payer will have to pick up the bill for what is owed to sacked staff because administrators are deliberately flouting the law. It’s absolutely disgraceful that businesses can get away with this sort of tactic in the 21st century.”

Gill also called on the administrators to engage with the union and insisted that it was “crucial” that the voices of Debenhams staff be heard and that they be treated “within the law and with the dignity they deserve”.



We won't accept crumbs from high table any more

WE ARE now over six months into a global health crisis that can accurately be described as representing the most unprecedented restriction on economic and social life ever experienced in our lifetimes.

Among the many troubling aspects of this are the dual unknowns of whether the great sacrifices we have endured through these months of lockdown will have a meaningful effect in the long run and, if they do, when are we likely to see a full return to normality.



VIEW *from the* SHOPFLOOR Gerry Light

General Secretary Designate
Mandate Trade Union

For the last number of years we have been trying to grapple with the challenges created by the rapid changes taking place in the world of retail.

A combination of new technology, online shopping and Brexit were enough to cause massive disruption but, since Covid-19, some retail operations – and particularly ‘bricks and mortar’ stores – have been decimated to the point of total shutdown, such as Debenhams, while other companies are precariously close to cutting jobs and facing the prospect of possible eventual closure.

The impact on our members' lives has been equally destructive. Thousands sat patiently at home for months unable to attend work whilst having to face the ongoing struggle of making ends meet due to a dramatic and almost instantaneous reduction in their earning power.

The so-called “lucky ones” who suffered no financial loss faced a real threat to their physical and

mental health by going to work in order to serve the public in what is now considered an “essential service”.

Heroes – including retail workers – were found a-plenty during this epic struggle to fight off the ravages of this unseen virus.

Never let us shy away from reminding everyone of the critical role played by members of this union in maintaining civil order through the simple but critical task of keeping our people fed.

The main priority of this union was to ensure that we remained ‘on the pitch’ to help our members through the pandemic's early dark days. Structurally we had to adapt the way we worked but, make no mistake about it, Mandate remained open for business throughout and continues to maintain the best service it possibly can to our members, who need us now more than ever.

Never has the notion of solidarity found a deeper and more meaningful sense of importance and purpose. Equally as important is how we

choose to make use of this new-found elevated sense of value bestowed on retail workers in our society. Too many times in the past our claims for decent wages were rebutted by employer after employer on the basis that the reward for our members' contribution, talents and skills could only be determined solely by the market.

Current circumstances are now demanding that going forward we listen to not only the market but also to society in determining the true value of the services provided by our members.

Higher value

Whether knowingly or not, through their actions and words, society – and indeed Government – have placed a higher value on retail work.

Who amongst us, and I include employers in this, would dare argue that a retail worker is not as a minimum entitled to a starting hourly rate of €12.30, which is the current recognised living wage, and the aspirational starting point on our Charter for Retail 2020 pay-scale?

Are these workers not also entitled to see their hourly rate rise on an annual basis in accordance with their service as well as being guaranteed a sufficient number of weekly hours?

Furthermore, should they not be afforded the basic human dignity which

allows them to be properly represented in the workplace by a trade union of their choice?

The sad reality is the vast majority of retail workers do not enjoy these basic entitlements because they accept what they have been told by employers – that their work is somehow less important when compared with others.

We must never forget the vast profits generated by shop workers for these retail companies. Let's see which employer – if any – is the first to step forward and say they are prepared to accept these basic conditions for their workers going forward.

You see, all of the fine words of recognition coming from retail businesses at the moment will be seen as no more than hollow platitudes if they are not translated into positive action.

Ironically, the Covid-19 crisis has allowed retail workers to come out of the shadows. No longer as a society can we allow them to be considered a second-level workforce, happy to accept crumbs from the high table.

Their time has come. They ask no more than a just reward for their labour not only during times of national crisis but also during times of normality – surely they deserve nothing less.

THINKING OUT LOUD...

VIEWPOINT

Is this a risk worth taking?

AS WE citizens march bravely, skeptically, tentatively – or if you're an Irish government minister, stumbling ineptly – into an all-too-near uncertain future under the deadly sword of Covid-19, then perhaps we should look forward to the inherent potential dangers that lie ahead for our families and our communities.

I'm pretty confident that parents across the country would happily send their children back to school when all our politicians decide themselves to fully return to their own place of work, Dáil Éireann.

When our politicians are back safely ensconced and sitting cheek by jowl in the Dáil, then I'd hazard an educated guess that it'll be more than likely safe enough for our own precious kids to return to school.

Minister Stephen Donnelly when interviewed recently on TV strangely equated Covid-19 to normal everyday sporting and driving activities.

He commented that playing sport and driving a car were calculated risks that we take each day and made a direct analogy to the deadly virus as a similar daily risk we simply need to manage.

The fact that a global health pandemic which threatens the lives of our children and their families was so casually reduced to a “risk assessment” is jaw dropping.

This arguably quite dangerous analogy comes from a Minister who told anyone who would care listen to him that he would never join Fianna Fáil just before joining the Soldiers of Destiny.



Brian Forbes

And did he do some “risk assessment” of his own before he was thrust inexplicably into an important government role from a previous position of relative obscurity?

By down-playing the dangerousness of this virus with too-casual comparisons to the likes of driving or playing hurling, he runs the risk of normalising what isn't normal – i.e. a life-threatening and deadly virus.

In saying that though, there is an argument to be made that hurling is a sport played by homicidal maniacs! It certainly doesn't kill people indiscriminately though.

Taxpayers' money

It is also interesting to note that taxpayers' money is being used to the tune of €25,000 a day to rent the Convention Centre Dublin so that our elected politicians can feel safe in their job.

Meanwhile, from their safe temporary haven of a workplace, they make calculated risk assessments which order the return of our children and their teachers to the confines of a school environment during a global health pandemic that hasn't gone away and continues to take many lives.

It's perhaps a risk to life not worth taking!

I FELT FREE TO TALK, KNOWING THEY WOULDN'T TELL ANYONE

Talk to us – if things are getting to you.

We're always here – round the clock, every single day of the year.

Be yourself – whoever you are, however you feel, whatever life's done to you.

We're a charity – it's the public's kind donations that help fund our service.

116 123 **FREE**
This number is FREE to call

jo@samaritans.org

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SAMARITANS
A registered charity

**CEO pay:
a nice little earner**
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Mandate calls Kavanagh Group offer to staff 'inequitable in the extreme'



THE Kavanagh Group has improved its recognition and reward scheme offer to staff working through the Covid-19 emergency – which Mandate claims came about as a result of “workers coming together to have their voices heard as one”.

It follows a union survey and petition signed by nearly 200 workers calling for equal and fair recognition for their efforts.

The retailer, which operates nine large SuperValu stores in Donegal, Mayo and Galway, was slammed by Mandate in early April for not properly rewarding its staff at the onset of the crisis.

While other retailers moved quickly to reward shop workers by paying them extra for each hour worked, the Kavanagh Group presented some of their staff with SuperValu gift cards worth €300 to be paid over three four-weekly instalments.

At the time, Ciaran Campbell, Mandate's North & West Divisional Organiser, hit out at the company's offer, claiming it had fallen “well short” of what workers should have been given and compared unfavourably with Covid-19 related reward packages offered by many of the Kavanagh Group's competitors in the grocery sector.

He told *Shopfloor*: “Mandate imme-



Picture: Mandate

diately sought a proper recognition and reward scheme to reflect the obvious strain and stress our members and their co-workers were experiencing and continue to experience daily going to work for this employer.

“Some of what we looked for was a premium payment for all hours worked by staff during this pandemic, and – very importantly – a specific Covid-19 sick pay scheme.”

When the union's initial representations were refused, Mandate then moved to survey both its own members as well as their Kavanagh Group co-workers on the company's position.

Campbell said: “It is fair to point out that the survey feedback was not only significant but some of the comments from staff clearly demonstrated what they thought of the company's offer.”

“In effect the company offered those staff working between 24 and 39 hours per week an extra 48 to 59

cents per hour. Any member of staff working less than 16 hours per week got absolutely no recognition despite the fact they are working through the exact same conditions albeit for less time, and are also regarded as essential workers.”

Hitting out at the Kavanagh Group's recognition and reward scheme offer, Campbell described it as “inequitable in the extreme” and pointed out that the company had “done absolutely nothing” to address Mandate's call for a Covid-19 specific sick pay scheme.

Scheme

Currently the company is operating its own sick pay scheme that has a number of qualifying criteria for employees to access. Depending on years of service an employee is subjected to a three-day or six-day wait for payment which, as Campbell emphasised, “is contrary to what the government is currently operating”.

And he warned: “This again clearly disadvantages staff and runs the po-

tential risk that staff who are Covid-19 positive might not call in sick in the first place for fear of losing wages. This obviously has a potentially dangerous contagion impact on customers and the wider public.”

Following the survey nearly 200 workers signed a petition calling on the company to improve its offer and to ensure that all staff received equal and fair recognition for their work during the pandemic.

The Kavanagh Group has since reversed its initial decision not to reward staff working under 16 hours per week and has also increased the current offer to all staff by another 33% – €400 worth of vouchers as compared to their initial offer of €300.

Campbell said: “it appears that on foot of this survey and after reflecting on how other retailers were rewarding their staff, the Kavanagh Group was moved to implement improvements on the gift card scheme.

“While the company's recognition and reward scheme falls short of what we looked for, there were nevertheless improvements won on the back of workers coming together to have their voices heard as one.”

He added: “The Shop Stewards Committee discussed at length the company's final position and agreed that Mandate's energies were now best served in building on this collective strength in advance of pay round negotiations that are due to start later this year or early 2021.”

REMOTE WORKING

Review needed to reflect new modes of work

THE Irish Congress of Trade Unions has called on the Government to commit to a review of employment legislation to ensure protections for remote working are fit for purpose in the post-Covid world of work.

Speaking ahead of the publication of a new ICTU guide on the issue, Social Policy Officer, Dr Laura Bambrick said: “Workers' hard-won rights must be preserved when working from home. Protections need to keep pace with changes in ways of working, and gaps in law closed.”

She pointed out that unlike their counterparts across the EU, in the UK and the North, workers in the Republic had no legal right to work flexibly, including home working.

Dr Bambrick said: “Under current law remote working is solely at the employer's discretion. When implemented in the right way, flexible and remote working can really improve people's working lives, making them happier and more productive.

“That is why ICTU is calling for a change in the law to give every worker the legal right to request flexible working and for employers to be obliged to give the request serious consideration.”

Acknowledging that not all jobs could be done at home, she said that a statutory right to request flexible working would mean that bosses would be required to deal with these requests in “a reasonable and considered manner”.

New ICTU guide: *When Your Home Is Your Workplace* <https://bit.ly/3kdoDHV>

RESEARCH

Survey reveals under reporting of workplace sexual harassment

By **Conor Kavanagh**
Congress Communications Officer

A RECENT Irish Congress of Trade Unions survey has found four in five workers experiencing sexual harassment at work do not report the incident to their employer.

More than 1,300 union members with experience of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the workplace took part in the survey, which was published ahead of International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on November 26, 2019.

Sexual harassment is defined in the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for the

person. It is prohibited under the Acts. ICTU General Secretary Patricia King said: “Sexual harassment can happen to anyone, anywhere, at any time. Yet all too often, it happens in the workplace.

“Of all the alarming statistics thrown up, the fact that jumps out for me is the unacceptably high levels of under-reporting and dissatisfaction with their employer's action among those who do report sexual harassment.”

Unwanted

Some 81% of respondents did not report the unwanted sexual behaviour to their employer, while only one in four of the minority who did report such incidents felt it was taken seriously and dealt with satisfactorily.

The national opinion poll of 1,347 union members with experience of sexual harassment at

work was conducted online last November. Around seven out of 10 (72%) of the responses were from women (971). The survey focuses exclusively on people's experience of sexual harassment in the workplace, rather than measuring the scale of the problem.

ICTU Social Policy Officer and lead researcher, Dr Laura Bambrick told *Shopfloor*: “We wanted a deeper understanding of workers' experience of sexual harassment at work – the types of incidents experienced, the perpetrators and location, the barriers to reporting, and the impact sexual harassment has on the lives of those affected.

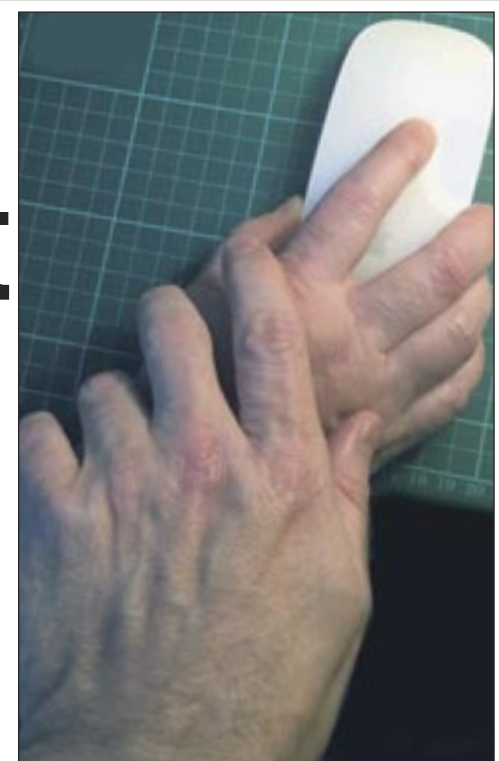
“For instance, the Christmas party has long been identified as the most common off-site location of workplace sexual harassment, and this is borne out in our survey. However, the extent of unwanted

sexual behaviour from colleagues taking place online also reported, points to a growing problem in the modern workplace,” she added.

One in five sexual harassment incidents reported had taken place at a work-related social event. One in seven had taken place on the phone, by email or online.

Negative impact

Dr Bambrick continued: “While the #MeToo movement has shed light on the hidden problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault at work and empowered women to speak out, the fear of a negative impact on their career or of not being believed or taken seriously were the most common reported reasons for not pursuing a complaint.” ICTU Equality Officer David Joyce said: “Trade unions and employers play an important



Sexual harassment can happen to anyone, anywhere and at any time... but all too often it happens in the workplace...

role in preventing violence and harassment against women at work. Congress together with trade unions across Europe are calling for the ratification by Member States of the ILO Convention 190 to address violence against women, including in the world of work.”

HOMELESSNESS CRISIS...

Mandate activists' sleep out protest



Camp Mandate's finest... highlighting the homelessness issue in Market Square, Castlebar



Gerard Halligan and Keith Leonard at CFCfm

ABOUT a month before the country went into lockdown over Covid-19, a number of Mandate members decided to do their bit to highlight the homelessness crisis in the run-up to the February 8th general election.

They did this by swapping their cosy bedroom duvets for sleeping bags under canvas in the centre of Castlebar on February 6th and 7th.

Setting up 'Camp Mandate' in Market Square in the town, local union stalwarts Keith Leonard and Gerard Halligan were joined by Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes, who travelled up from Dublin, a pair of thermals to hand, to lend his encouragement and solidarity to the effort.

Earlier in the day, Keith and Gerard explained to local community radio station CFCfm what they hoped to achieve by a night spent out under the Starry Plough.

Keith told presenter Eleanor Prendergast: "We're sickened with the homeless crisis across this country. There's a general election coming up in two days time and it's time the peo-

ple voted for change. We cannot go on seeing people on the streets. Last week, I was walking past a shop in Castlebar and I saw two people sleep-

ing in the doorway. It's not acceptable any more. We felt that, as activists, it was time to stand up and be counted and let people know what's going on."

And Gerard pointed out that homelessness was not just an urban issue.

"It's being seen as a city issue – Dublin, Cork, Galway – but we want to get across the point that it's happening in every town and it's getting worse and worse and worse in rural areas."

Gerard put the blame firmly on successive governments trying to find a private sector solution to the problem of homelessness.

He said: "There is a real disconnect from the political establishment regarding housing because it doesn't affect them. Rents are being pushed up and more and more people are being forced into moving back to their parents."

"There are adults at 30 or 40 years of age at home with their parents. You should when you're 18 or 19 with a

good job be able to move out on your own."

Speaking months before a new Dáil administration was eventually formed and without the benefit of hindsight, Keith said people were getting sick of promises being made and broken by the establishment parties.

"Every time there's an election, [they say] we're going to do this, and do that – but nothing gets done."

Gerard agreed and urged voters to break free from past party political allegiances. "We got to lose the attitude 'my grandfather voted for Fine Gael or Fianna Fail and he would turn in his grave if I voted for change'. You've got to lose that. We're living in a different world now. We're not living in the past. You have to use your head and vote for change."

Inspirational night under the Starry Plough!

By Brian Forbes
Mandate National Coordinator

SPENDING time with our Mandate activists in Castlebar and joining them on their sleep out to protest local and national homelessness was a truly inspiring time for me as a working class trade unionist.

I watched our union activists in minus temperature conditions, led commendably by Tesco shop steward and Mandate NEC member Keith Leonard, as they interacted throughout the day and night with local residents, shoppers and businesses.

They welcomed all-comers with a defining message that the current political establishment had clearly failed us all, particularly in relation to housing and homelessness, and that a vote for change was required.

On Saturday, February 8th, the Irish electorate delivered a seismic vote demanding real significant change from the old neo-liberal politics of protecting corporations, vulture funds and finance capital towards a much more egalitarian approach with citizens



put first, before banks and multinationals. Only a short few months later, this unprecedented and historic seismic vote for change was turned into more of the same when Fine Fail, Fine Gael and The Green Party formed a government coalition.

The same political parties that have overseen housing and homelessness crisis are again making neo-liberal policy decisions that will literally kill people, destroy lives and create further poverty and inequality.

However, we will continue to fight and to promote viable alternatives to those offered by Thatcherite landlord political ideologues

who perpetuate housing policies to serve their own class and damn the working class.

As a campaigning union one of our key objectives is to improve the pay and conditions of workers as well as trying to actively influence policy makers, namely the government of the day.

Lobbying is becoming a critical function of our union and Keith and his comrades in Castlebar understand totally the need for union activists to be visible and active within their own communities.

Publicly highlighting an important issue to us all in this manner demonstrates an acute awareness by these Mandate activists of the need to keep politicians at local level honest which impacts greatly at national level if they think their TD or Councillor seats are at risk.

In essence, lobbying politicians has been proven to work most recently in our groundbreaking victory of banded hour contracts legislation delivered by Mandate activists through their determined campaign of lobbying and applying pressure to local TDs.

Thanks go to...

Keith Leonard (*The brains behind the operation - Ed*) and the organisers of the Castlebar protest against homelessness would like to thank the following people and businesses: Richie Gray, Lucian Brooks, Darren Walsh, Declan Nally, Danny Coffy, David McNicholas, Shane McGreevy, Aiden Hanberry, Stauntons Barbers, Dannolas Chipper, Cuppa Joe's, Ger Halligan and Brian Forbes – and each and every person who came along through the day and night to visit Camp Mandate. Castlebar Mandate activists sincerely thank you all from the bottom of our trade union hearts.



Income inequality is one of the major global challenges facing trade unions and a recent Oxfam report revealed that 26 of the world's richest people own as many assets as the poorest 50% of the world's population.

Our Castlebar Mandate activists are actively applying the logic that "all politics is local" and in doing so are placing the union movement at the centre of the community.

Ruling courts trouble for workers

Mandate Communications Officer **Dave Gibney** drills into the recent High Court ruling striking down the construction sector SEO and looks at the implications for workers and their trade unions

THE Irish Courts have once again ruled against workers who have engaged in a collective bargaining process to improve their conditions of employment.

The High Court ruling by Justice Garrett Simons on June 23rd struck down Chapter 3 of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015, which prescribed minimum rates of pay, minimum contributions to a pension scheme, and a requirement for a sick pay scheme for all workers in the electrical contracting sector.

The ruling, though, will have serious consequences for all workers hoping to win a sectoral agreement that provides working conditions above the basic statutory entitlements.

By way of background, the 2015 Act came into place to plug the holes left by previous judgments. In the 2013 McGowan ruling, the Supreme Court struck down Registered Employment Agreements, the Joint Labour Committee system was dismantled in 2011 in the John Grace ruling, and 'collective bargaining' legislation was dealt a blow in 2007 in the famous Ryanair Supreme Court ruling.

Looking at this series of judgments, one might draw the conclusion that the system doesn't want workers in Ireland to have their internationally recognised human right to collectively bargain.

The ruling

The most recent ruling was broken into two sections: the non-constitutional elements and the constitutional ones.

On the non-constitutional side, the High Court admonished the Labour Court and the Minister for a litany of mistakes made in the establishing of the sectoral order: "The statutory report submitted to the Minister [by the Labour Court] on 23 April 2019 is deficient in two significant respects.

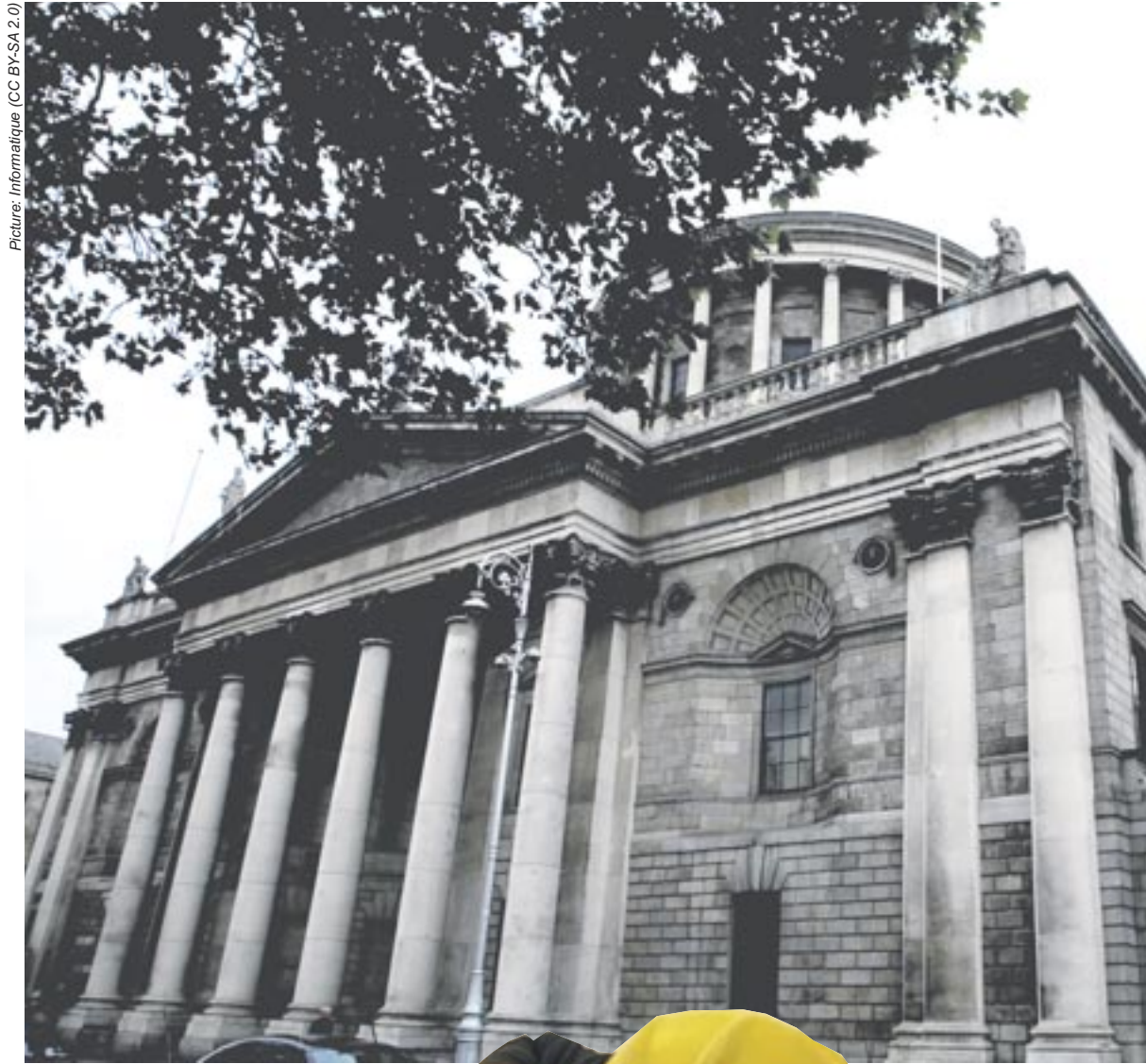
"First, the report fails to record even the conclusions of the Labour Court on crucial matters, still less does the report state a rationale for those conclusions.

"Secondly, the report fails to set out a fair and accurate summary of the submissions made by those interested parties who opposed the making of a sectoral employment order, and does not engage with the issues raised in those submissions."

The Judge goes on: "...the Minister erred in law in concluding, on the basis of the report and recommendation submitted to him, that the Labour Court had complied with these provisions..."

"On receipt of the report, the Minister should have refused to make a sectoral employment order confirming the terms of the recommendation. The Minister acted without jurisdiction in purporting to make the order."

Despite having no obligation to do so, both parties (the State and the Na-



Picture: Informatique (CC BY-SA 2.0)

tional Electrical Contractors Ireland (NECI)) requested that the legislation be tested for constitutionality.

Article 15 2 1° of Bunreacht na hÉireann states: "The sole and exclusive power of making laws for the State is hereby vested in the Oireachtas: no other legislative authority has power to make laws for the State."

Judge Simons found that establishing sectoral orders contained significant policy choices and could not be delegated to the Minister or subsequently to the Labour Court. He said: "The fixing of high rates of remuneration might well be welcomed by workers, but may limit competition, and thus adversely affect consumers."

He pointed to the conflicting policy choices of "promoting fair competition and the freedom to provide services within the European internal market," and "ensuring appropriate terms and conditions of employment for domestic workers and posted workers from other EU Member States." Simons continued by saying that the parent legislation delegates authority to the Minister and Labour Court but its guidelines are "hopelessly vague and too subjective" and thus are in breach of the constitution.

The ruling itself is significant in that it makes it difficult for workers in fragmented employment sectors to collectively bargain and that means

Picture: Chris RubberDragon (CC BY-SA 2.0)



that right now thousands of vulnerable workers are protected only by the minimum statutory entitlements such as the National Minimum Wage.

Those workers will have to go back to enterprise bargaining with their employer, a difficult task in the extremely hostile Irish industrial relations system.

Furthermore, we know that some employers with deep pockets, such as Dunnes Stores, are waiting on a case to be taken under the "collective bargaining" section of the 2015 Act so they can challenge the law based on a number of grounds including constitutionality as well as EU treaties. They are already on the record saying this, and, if recent court rulings are anything to go by, those employers may have a sympathetic ear.

Fair Work Act

It has been confirmed that the State will appeal this decision. Until then the trade union movement must assume the worst and hope for the best. With an expectation that strong collective bargaining by sector is not going to be afforded to workers any time soon, we must level the playing field.

Trade unions should immediately instigate a campaign for a Fair Work Act that would make it easier for workers to join a trade union, easier for those workers to collectively bargain, and easier for them to take action when necessary.

First and foremost, that means campaigning for trade unions to have the right to access workplaces to have discussions with workers about their terms and conditions of employment; stronger anti-victimisation clauses for unfair dismissals; forcing employers to facilitate trade union deductions at source when requested; enabling the right to representation on an individual basis; removing the restrictions on workers taking strike action; and stopping any state support for companies refusing their workers the right to trade union representation.

Ireland has among the most restrictive trade union rights in the European Union.

The country is run for multinationals and big business and our government is happy to facilitate that. Expecting any arm of the state – the legislature, the executive, or the judiciary – to side with workers after 100 years of refusing union rights would be erroneous, dangerous and quite simply a waste of time.

Instead we need to get organised both industrially and politically. Trade unions need to take a leaf out of the book of their founders and immediately formulate and commence a comprehensive political strategy around these issues.

One thing is for certain – those rights won't be won through the social partnership model.

This article was originally published in LookLeft magazine.

FROM WHERE I STAND...



Taoiseach Micheál Martin



Green Party's Eamon Ryan



Tanaiste Leo Varadkar

The time is ripe for new war of ideas



Brian Forbes

of our country. There is an historic opportunity to create a new political war of ideas between the forces of right-wing conservatism and progressive left-wing socialism.

Union leaders and the trade union movement have a crucial role to play in the politics and policies of the future and must help lead that shift in political policies from neo-liberal conservatism towards socialism.

As a left we must carefully bide our time but be battle-ready for when opportunity presents itself to breathe revolutionary feeling and democratic spirit into the hearts and minds of the working class.

This poem/song, *Bide Your Time*, penned by M.J. Barry was a revolutionary favourite of our own James Connolly and is noteworthy given the historic times we find ourselves in today.

BIDE YOUR TIME

BIDE YOUR TIME, the morn is breaking,
Bright with Freedom's blessed ray –
Millions, from their trance awaking,
Soon shall stand in firm array.
Man shall fetter man no longer,
Liberty shall march sublime;
Every moment makes you stronger,
Firm, unshrinking, BIDE YOUR TIME.

BIDE YOUR TIME – one false step taken
Perils all you yet have done;
Undismayed, erect, unshaken –
Watch and wait, and all is won.
'Tis not by a rash endeavour
Men or states to greatness climb –
Would you win your rights forever
Calm and thoughtful, BIDE YOUR TIME.

BIDE YOUR TIME – your worst transgression
Were to strike, and strike in vain;
He, whose arm would smite oppression,
Must not need to smite again!
Danger makes the brave man steady –
Rashness is the coward's crime –
Be for Freedom's battle ready,
When it comes – but, BIDE YOUR TIME.

JUNE 28th, 1922 marked the start of the Irish Civil War – and the beginnings of the 'Civil War politics' that gave rise to Fine Gael and to Fianna Fáil, its counterpart on the right.

In recalling such fateful times one could imagine our national slogan might be "all for the cause and the cause over all", but little changes and unfortunately, the very following day some 98 years later, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil joined with the Greens in squeezing themselves back into power with the formation of a coalition government.

The historic proponents of austerity, the architects of societal inequality, the slavish enablers of gangster capitalism were once again happily ensconced in the seat of power.

Masochistic Ireland lives on with yet another right-wing political coalition cobbled together by those political elites desperate for power, the trappings of wealth and a nice government pension.

However, there is one chink in the silver lining of their power-grab. This is fact that both Civil War conservative parties are now finally and inextricably linked inseparably by choice in an administration.

We on the left now have an historic once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work together towards building a collective and progressive force of opposition and resistance to the Irish neo-liberal political dogma that has plagued this country since its formation.

The political lines of demarcation between right and left have never been clearer throughout the history

TRAINING

Mandate offers innovative rep training via video conferencing

AGAINST the backdrop of the Covid-19 crisis, Mandate has responded to the training needs of members by putting in place a number of courses designed for workplace reps later in the year.

The two courses – Workplace Union Reps Introductory Training and Workplace Union Reps Advanced Training – will take place via video conference.

National Coordinator for Training Jonathan Hogan explained: "Our training has been adapted to meet the needs and facilitate the roles of our elected representatives.

"As both the Workplace Union Reps Introductory Training and Workplace

Union Reps Advanced Training courses will be taken virtually and not in a classroom setting, anyone undertaking the training will need access to a smartphone, tablet or computer."

Hogan emphasised that as each training session was limited to a maximum of eight to 10 learners, anyone wanting to take part should confirm their interest as soon as possible.

For further info and to receive the Training Plan, contact Amanda Blake at the Mandate Training Centre – email ablake@mandate.ie or phone 018369699. The closing date for applications is **Friday, August 28th, 2020.**

Hogan continued: "All our reps

have already received correspondence about our online training through the Mandate Academy App and Unionlink.

"If you have not already done so please do sign up for these online courses (see links below) which you can complete at your leisure and pace.

"Also please bring this valuable training facility to the attention of other members of the union. All Mandate members are encouraged to actively participate in all training courses."

Note: to access the courses, it is advised to use the Google Chrome browser.

Mandate Academy App: <https://mandate.hiuphub.com/purchase/bundle> Unionlink: www.unionlink.org

Workplace Union Reps Introductory Training	Sept 14th/21st/28th Oct 5th/12th	6pm-9pm (Monday x5 Wks)	Olive Media Platform (Online)
Workplace Union Reps Introductory Training	Sept 15th/22nd/29th Oct 6th/13th	6pm-9pm (Tuesday x5 Wks)	Olive Media Platform (Online)
Workplace Union Reps Advanced Training (Recruitment & Organising)	Oct 26th Nov 2nd/9th/16th	6pm-9pm (Monday x4 Wks)	Zoom Platform (OnLine)
Workplace Union Reps Advanced Training (Recruitment & Organising)	Oct 27th Nov 3rd/10th/17th	6pm-9pm (Tuesday x4 Wks)	Zoom Platform (OnLine)

FROM LUCIFER TO LAZARUS

A LIFE ON THE LEFT

MICK O'REILLY

I wanted to give them – my comrades in the Trade Union Movement, the Communist Movement and the Left – a voice, give myself a voice, and to try to explain that time in my life – the sixties and seventies and after – to myself, to my grandchildren and to those who had worked with me...

€16.00

www.lilliputpress.ie/product/from-lucifer-to-lazarus

Make grants to business conditional on how firms treat their workers

CONGRESS has called on the Government to make financial support available to businesses conditional on their treatment of workers.

The call came in response to the July stimulus package set out by the new coalition government.

ICTU General Secretary Patricia King said: "Direct government grants to businesses, worth billions of euro, must be conditional on a commitment by them to decent work and to retaining their workforce."

"We must end the scourge of low pay and precarious work and no longer tolerate bogus self-employment that pervades the sectors hardest hit. The race to the bottom must end."

She continued: "Business supports paid out of public money must be linked to full and active participation in national industrial relations machinery - vetoes and opt-outs for statutory bodies such as JLCs are not tenable."

"We must vindicate the rights of workers by ensuring their voice is heard through access to collective bargaining."

And King insisted effective oversight was needed to monitor how funds were being spent.

She also called for the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme, introduced to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on employment, to be extended and transformed into a "genuine short-time work scheme modelled on the most effective schemes in place in other European countries".

Such a scheme would protect workers' income, enhance access to training and help them maintain a continuous connection to their employer.

King continued: "The decision to pay a flat €350 to every worker laid off by the Covid-19 lockdown by the Government correctly prioritised speed and adequacy for half a million workers."

"Given the proposed roadmap for the withdrawal of the Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP), there is now more than ever an urgent need to transition all laid-off workers from the PUP on to the temporary wage subsidy scheme (TWSS) to protect their income."

"If employers are unwilling to maintain the link with their workers they equally cannot be allowed to continue to have the protection of the freeze on redundancy rights," she added.

Retailer sidesteps premium pay call and opts for voucher scheme

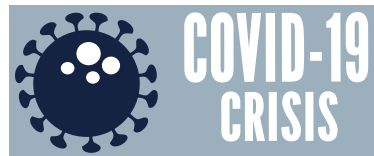
MANDATE members who work in Nolan's Supermarket in Clontarf are facing continuing resistance to their union from the employer, it has been claimed.

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, Mandate sought to secure a premium payment from the grocery retailer, but despite correspondence being sent, Nolan's forged ahead - without consultation with the union - to introduce a voucher scheme for staff linked to hours worked and length of service.

This was in stark contrast to other retailers in the area that moved quickly early on in the crisis to reward staff by paying a premium for each hour worked.

Mandate Industrial Officer John Callan, whose brief covers north Dublin, told *Shopfloor*: "Despite numerous requests from the union, the grocery retailer paid out the vouchers without responding to our correspondence."

"These workers are risking their own health and in some cases the health of their loved ones. Consequently, Mandate immediately sought a proper recognition and reward scheme to reflect the stress



and strain our members experience daily.

"Some of what we looked for was a premium payment for all hours worked by staff during this pandemic along with a specific Covid-19 sick pay scheme. When our initial representations on these were refused, we surveyed all staff on the company's position."

Feedback

"The survey feedback was emphatic. The workers clearly believe that the company not only should reward staff fairly, but also that the company is in a position to do so."

He continued: "Management's re-

fusal to reward workers adequately with a premium payment is not only inequitable in the extreme, but equally, the company has done absolutely nothing to address our request for a Covid-19 specific sick pay scheme."

Callan explained the retailer operated a sick pay scheme with a number of qualifying criteria - contrary to the scheme currently being run by the government - and claimed this clearly disadvantaged Nolan's staff and ran the risk that employees contracting Covid-19 "might not call in sick for fear of losing wages".

"Nolan's continue to disregard our procedural agreement and frustrate our members on a range of issues," he said.

"We are currently about to carry out another survey of our members and workers ahead of the expiry of our current pay deal in October and would urge all staff currently not in Mandate to join us at www.joinmandate.ie."

"A strong membership base will only strengthen this unions negotiating ability in the upcoming pay negotiations," Callan added.



Jimmy Kelly of PANA addresses crowd outside the US embassy in Ballsbridge



Embassy vigil object lesson in solidarity

AT THE start of the year, before Covid-19 reached these shores, the news focus was on the potential for widescale armed conflict between the US and Iran.

It followed the drone strike assassination of Qassem Suleimani, head of Iran's elite Quds force, on January 3rd. Days later the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA) organised a 'No War On Iran' vigil outside the US Embassy in Ballsbridge.

Mandate members joined the January 9th protest on a bitterly

cold winter's night. Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes, who attended the vigil, recalled: "That so many Mandate members turned out on that freezing January evening shows that international solidarity and union activism is alive and kicking within our union."

And Forbes described the continuing use of Shannon Airport by the US military as "an affront to Ireland's supposed neutrality and its international human rights responsibilities."



CEO pay: a not so nice little earner...

By **Conor Kavanagh**
Congress Communications Officer

JANUARY 6th is marked each year as #HighPayDay in the UK. Despite being just THREE working days into the new year, the chief executives of Britain's FTSE 100 firms had by 5pm on that day earned more than ordinary workers are paid for working for the WHOLE of the year!

This staggering fact was revealed in a report published recently by the High Pay Centre think tank and the Chartered Institute for Professional Development.

And, of course, the situation in Ireland is little different – last December ICTU published its fourth annual report on Irish chief executives' pay.

Titled *Because We're Worth It: The truth about CEO pay in Ireland*, the report examined the 2018 filed accounts of 26 companies – 20 of some of the biggest companies listed on the Irish Stock Exchange and six Irish-based companies listed on the London Stock Exchange.

The report showed that annual pay and benefits were close to or above €1 million for 22 of the 26 CEOs, and as much as €8.2 million.

CEO pay increased in 11 companies, ranging from 9% in Permanent TSB to a 99% increase in Smurfit Kappa. Meanwhile, the average full-time worker's wage was up just 2.6% on 2017. Unlike the UK figures which



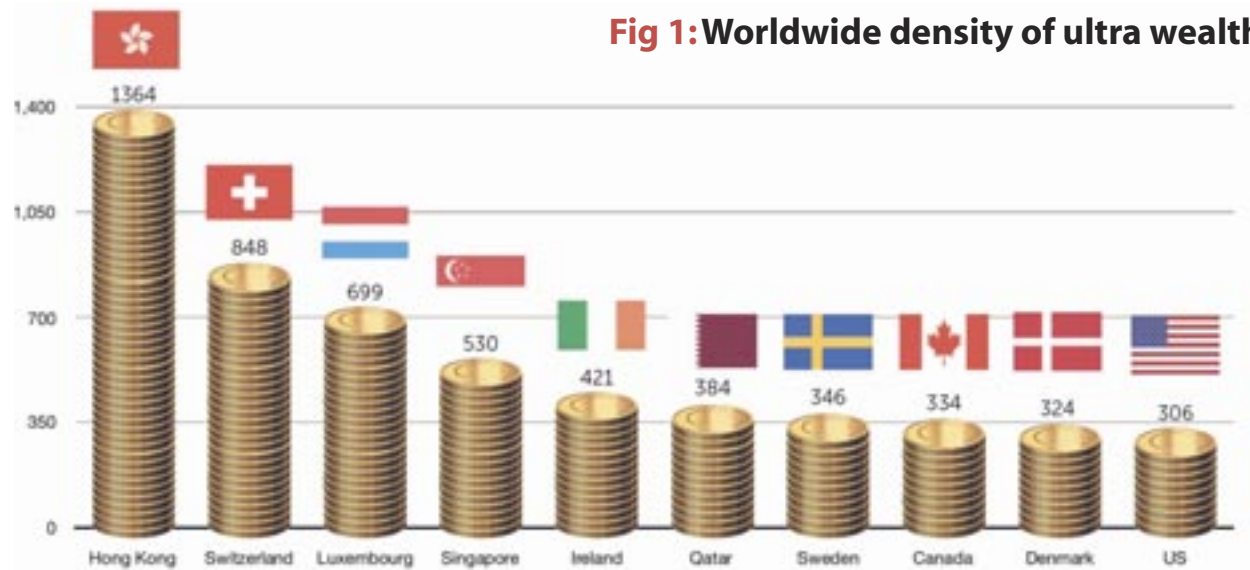
Illustration: Frits Ahlefeldt-Laurvig (CC BY-ND 2.0) hikingartist.com

Fig 2: Median CEO total compensation (\$)



Source: Harvard Law School

Fig 1: Worldwide density of ultra wealth



Source: Wealth-X

Average number of hours a UK CEO has to work to earn the average worker's annual salary
33 hours

The number of years it would take for an average Irish worker to take home what the CEO earns annually (2018)...

CRH:
212 years

Smurfit Kappa:
87 years

Paddy Power:
57 years

calculate the hours it takes top bosses to make what workers on average earnings are paid for working a whole year (33 hours), Congress calculates the number of years it takes workers to earn what bosses take home annually.

Congress has been tracking this information since 2015, and according to its research, cement giant CRH continues to have the highest CEO-to-average-worker pay ratio,

at 212-to-1. That is, it would take a typical worker 212 years to earn what the CRH boss took home in 2018.

In fact overall, it would take workers paid the average wage more than 50 years to earn what half of the bosses at top Irish listed companies take home in a single year.

Congress General Secretary Patricia King warned: "Any government that ignores the enormous economic and social consequences of excessive executive pay does so at our collective peril." She continued: "The telephone number-like-salaries and the unjusti-

fiable gap between the top and rest of the workforce needs to be urgently tackled. This is now recognised by the European Commission and the OECD – institutions not known to be natural bedfellows of trade unions."

Earlier this year, the European Commission pointed out that market income inequality (i.e. income before taxes are deducted and social welfare top-ups are added) in Ireland is the highest in the EU28.

"The new EU Shareholder Rights Directive, which was due to have become Irish law by June last year but has not yet happened, is a good first step in pay transparency and tackling wage inequality," said Congress Social Policy Officer, Dr Laura Bambrick.

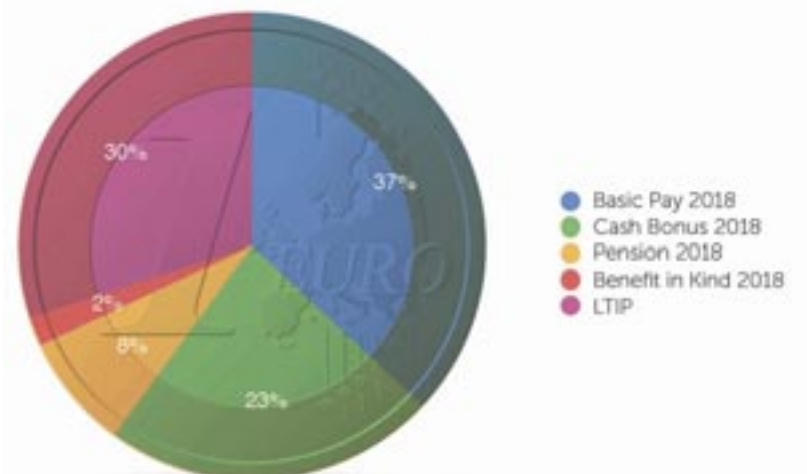
The directive, for the first time, requires listed companies to explain how the pay of their employees was taken into account when determining the salaries for company bosses.

"However, Government refuses to grasp the opportunity the directive presents to include more ambitious provisions - such as compelling listed companies to make pay ratio disclosures," said Dr Bambrick.

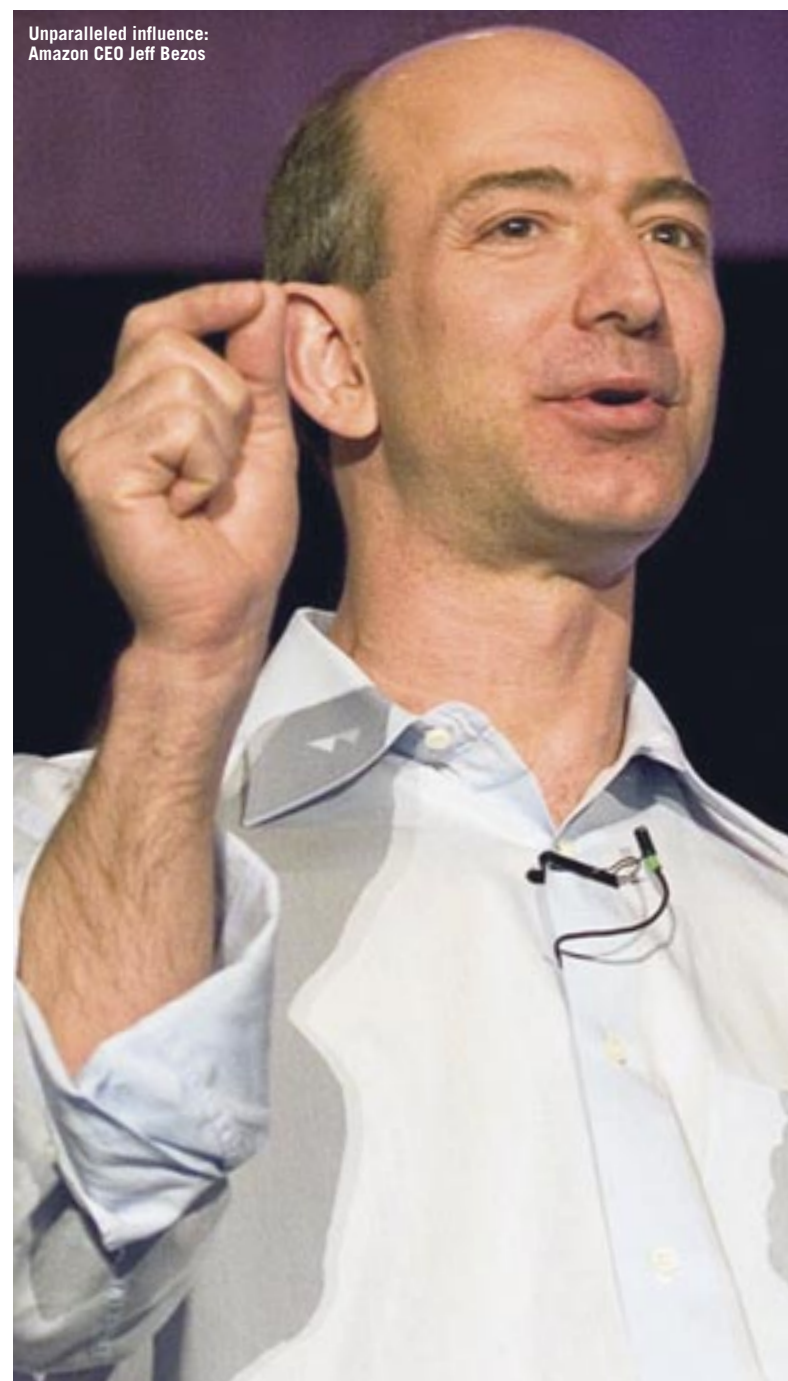
She added: "Publicly-listed companies are required by stock market rules to publish certain information, including pay of their management team. Private companies are under no such obligation and their executives' pay remains shrouded in secrecy. But, there is nothing to prevent a future government making such reporting a requirement of firms tendering for public contracts."

Because We're Worth It: The truth about CEO pay in Ireland
<https://bit.ly/206yX5V>

Fig 3: Average breakdown of CEO pay



Tables/Graphics: Congress



Unparalleled influence: Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos

Picture: James Duncan Davidson (CC BY 2.0)

A NEW report by UNI Global Union has highlighted the threat posed to the economy and to society in a post-Covid world by the continuing market expansion and corporate dominance of online retailer Amazon. Titled *Essentially Irresponsible*, the report is a response to what the union claims is the tech giant's "notoriously brutal working conditions, its monopolistic tendencies, and poor social performance" during the Covid-19 crisis.

UNI Global Union General Secretary Christy Hoffman said: "The Covid-19 crisis is radically reshaping our world, and one of its unfortunate side-effects is the acceleration of Amazon's domination of our markets and, frankly, many aspects of our lives – how we work, how we consume entertainment, how we communicate."

Pointing out that Amazon's impact now reached far beyond retail, she continued: "The tech giant is not only an e-commerce force but also a leader in cloud computing, video streaming, virtual assistance, media, physical grocery retail, pharmacy, and it has showed ambitions to develop into wireless networks, healthcare, internet service provision."

"Amazon is not just a threat to workers but to those who believe in privacy and civil liberties, and a diverse marketplace."

Hoffman added: "So far, the company has not used its power as a force of social good – it has avoided taxes, squeezed small and medium-sized businesses, dragged down labour conditions."

Essential Irresponsible also flags up efforts to rein in Amazon across Europe, the US and India. The report's authors claim this is a sign that workers, elected officials, and the community can find ways to come together to hold corporations accountable.

In March, Amazon was hit with an antitrust claim in the federal court in

Picture: I-Ta Tasa (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



Picture: UNI Global/ITUC



Christy Hoffman: 'Radically reshaping the world'



Spotlight on Amazon: New UNI Global report

Seattle over an alleged "pricing scheme that broadly and anti-competitively impacts virtually all products offered for sale in the US retail e-commerce market".

Meanwhile, India's antitrust regulator is also reported to be looking closely at Amazon's activities.

And in May, the European Commission opened a formal antitrust investigation to assess whether Amazon's use of sensitive data from indepen-

dent retailers that sell on its marketplace is in breach of EU competition rules. Also in May, French unions struck a deal with the online retailer that dealt with a range of health and safety issues allowing the reopening of warehouses amid the Covid-19 emergency.

However, Hoffman insisted that overall Amazon had "failed to listen" to workers when "they spoke up out of fear for their lives".

"In the United States, Amazon fired tech and warehouse workers who stood up for safety. In Europe, workers in Spain, Italy and France were forced to either go to the government authorities or strike to force Amazon to respect their safety."

She added: "The message is clear: Amazon will do the right thing but only if organised workers, government, and civil society force its hand. Amazon must do better."

Check out *Essentially Irresponsible* at: <https://bit.ly/2DfXKLY>

Mr Bezos, 'be a leader not a laggard' on workers' rights...

A FORMER vice president at Amazon has joined UNI Global Union General Secretary Christy Hoffman in writing a *New York Times* op-ed calling on Amazon and its Big Tech rivals to allow workers to unionise.

Tim Bray, who held a senior position at Amazon Web Services, walked away from his job in May in protest at the firing of workers

who had spoken out about conditions in the company's warehouses. In a jointly-bylined article, Bray and Hoffman wrote that Amazon should recognise that countries with more collective bargaining had a "stronger social fabric and better growth" and were "more able to weather economic ups and downs". They continued:

"For its own future and the future of the global economy, Amazon should become more responsive to the women and men who've enriched shareholders and be willing to recognise and bargain with their representatives. When it comes to the rights of its workers, it should be a leader, not a laggard." And they insisted that the need for

more unionisation was urgent across Big Tech.

"The question for Mr Bezos and the billionaires of the world is: Are they ready to rise to the occasion? Will Big Tech listen to and work with its employees to help the world overcome the worst economic and social crisis in recent history?"

Forceful, direct and passionate in defence of retail workers' rights

By Patricia King
Congress General Secretary

THE necessary restrictions on large gatherings has deprived the trade union movement of the opportunity to pay a public tribute to John Douglas as he steps down from his role as General Secretary of Mandate.

It is ironic that one of the most outgoing and affable leaders of our movement should be deprived of the kind of fun-filled occasion in which he has so often revelled.

In normal times John would have been toasted in various Dublin hostelrys and subjected to lengthy and well-deserved testimonials from colleagues and friends. These, however, are not normal times.

I suspect that while John may resent being denied at least one good party – not to mention a proper conference farewell, he will secretly be pleased to skip the tributes. He has never been one to blow his own trumpet and has never sought personal adulation, either as General Secretary or as President of Congress.

John was always ambitious – not for himself, but for Mandate and for the men and women throughout this country he served with such energy and commitment.

The ICTU is a coalition of unions with a common purpose but yet within Congress unions often have to fight their corner in order to secure attention and to further their specific agenda.

Assiduous

As a long-serving member of the Executive Council, John Douglas was assiduous in ensuring that low paid, retail workers were never marginalised and that the plight of shop workers exploited by greedy and unscrupulous owners were placed at the centre of our work. He was forceful, direct and passionate.

As General Secretary, I valued his input as a member of the General Purposes Committee, as Vice President and President and for his input into the Private Sector committee.

Because John was in touch with his members, he made what might otherwise be academic discussions on employment rights and collective bargaining real and relevant. In discussions with politicians, civil servants or employers you could always rely on John to bring discussions literally back to the shop floor.

On a personal basis, I have valued his wise counsel and his friendship. John was President when I was appointed as General Secretary and was at all times respectful and cooperative not just to me but to all staff.

Inevitably we attended countless meetings at home and abroad together, John usually enjoying the banter and the craic while I looked for an early-exit opportunity.

John was always attentive and if he was disappointed in having a General Secretary



with Cinderella-like tendencies, he never showed it. It probably helped that we both hail from the Garden County of Wicklow!

Over time I came to appreciate John's work ethos, his dedication to his union, his qualities of decency and loyalty but, above all, his sense of social solidarity.

That's what makes him a true trade unionist in the tradition of his great hero, Jim Larkin. Like Larkin, John always sees the bigger picture and he never confined himself to issues within his own industry or indeed Ireland.

Whether it was building alliances with civic society groups or extending the hand of friendship across continents, John was always generous with his time, his counsel and resources.

In wishing John well on his retirement, I know that John will continue to make a positive contribution to Irish society and to the broader labour movement. I also look forward to working with your new General Secretary Gerry Light and to continuing to support Mandate in their defence of workers' rights.

“ Over time I came to appreciate John's work ethos, his dedication to his union, his qualities of decency and loyalty but, above all, his sense of social solidarity. That's what makes him a true trade unionist in the tradition of his great hero, Jim Larkin... ”

JOHN DOUGLAS IN P

General Secretary of Mandate May 200



PICTURES

5 - August 2020



Committed to the global fight for workers' rights

By Alke Bosseinger

UNI Global Deputy General Secretary

THE fact that John is retiring still has not quite sunk in with me given his never-ending energy and enthusiasm in the global fight for the betterment of working people.

A true internationalist, John has always recognised that improving the lives of the working class is not something an individual union or even a country can do in isolation. John's criticism of the negative sides of globalisation has been fierce, demanding that all workers unite in the fight against the evil of capitalism.

John took it upon himself to ensure that the voices of Irish workers were heard loud and clearly in the global trade union movement.

From Tesco to IKEA, Lidl or Primark, John has always been fighting for respect for workers and for their rights to join a union and bargain collectively.

Inspiration

John has for many years been an inspiration for many union leaders around the world and he has also never shied away from using his own leverage and contacts with companies to assist others.

He has taken his passionate advocacy for workers' rights to all continents – from Australia and Japan to South Africa and Argentina.

I remember a particularly enduring IKEA working group meeting some years ago in Copenhagen, where John didn't even stop to rest but went from the meeting straight to the pub and back to the meeting on the following day.

But nobody must think the lost sleep could stop John from making his argument and demanding us to be ambitious – both in our work and how we pushed ourselves physically and mentally.

Over the years I have had the opportunity to attend and speak at a number of Mandate conferences. John's passion for the workers' cause was echoed and supported by every delegate and staff member, making him a true and respected leader of the union.

Those events, but also the private time we have spent together, have installed in me a deep love for Ireland and its people. John has also taught me about Irish history which has helped me to understand a little bit of Irish politics (as far as that is possible).

In 2010, Mandate trade union hosted the

“ Over the years I have had the opportunity to attend and speak at a number of Mandate conferences. John's passion for the workers' cause was echoed and supported by every delegate and staff member, making him a true and respected leader of the union ”



UNI Commerce world conference in Dublin. John and his fantastic team made it a memorable event not just because we signed the Global Agreement with Inditex, but also by being the poster child for the world-renowned Irish hospitality.

I have never before and never again seen someone drink all night and until 6am, only to then take to the stage at 9am and make one of the best (and coherent) speeches I have ever heard, ending in standing ovations and leading to the adoption of a most ambitious work programme for the improvement of workers in the commerce sector.

I was lucky enough to also meet John's wife, Trish, who has been a life-long sufferer and supporter of his passionate work.

His family, his work and fishing are John's three passions – something that I know has not always been easy to balance – and the global work he did with UNI did not help since it took him away even more.

John and Mandate have been an important part of UNI's work for many years and I know that cooperation between our organisations will continue. I cannot wait to find out what new projects John will turn to after his retirement from the position as General Secretary of Mandate.

Just one thing is sure: he won't stop being a passionate global fighter for workers – he may just go about it in a different way.

Sláinte.



John Douglas' PA Sandra Browne and Mandate NEC member Doreen Curley enjoy some uplifting reading

A straight shooter who tells it as it is

ON August 21st John Douglas steps down from his role as Mandate General Secretary. Also in August, John filed his last *Straight Talking* column – “clocking off” as he puts it – with an appeal for workers to plan, organise and mobilise.

This has been a near-constant theme of his writing throughout nearly a decade of contributing to *Shopfloor*. In fact, since the first issue of this newspaper hit the shop floors where our members work and organise, in November 2011, John has written nearly 30,000 words for his column.

Let's put that into some sort of perspective – in terms of a word count, that's equivalent to George Orwell's *Animal Farm* or John Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men*.

Ernest Hemingway was known for poring over his work, re-editing and striking out 'redundant phrases' in his search for perfect prose. (When once praised for his pared-back writing style, he quipped, “It reads easy because it was writ hard!”)

Similarly John's prose style is muscular, direct and to the point though we suspect that – unlike Hemingway – he didn't need as many revisions of his work to reach a level of perfection!

Here are a few snippets of that memorable, muscular prose:

● November 2011 – ‘**Govern for us not for the bankers:**

The trade union movement needs to smash the myth that ‘We are all in this together’ because clearly we are not all in this together, the wealthy and those with assets are not being asked to pay.

● May 2013 – ‘**1913 to 2013: the struggle continues...**’:

Today's William Martin Murphy employers are still trying to destroy workers' power and worker solidarity. They are opposed to workers securing the right to join and be represented by trade unions, they still intimidate workers and harass unions and organising drives.

● February 2016 – ‘**Tesco's day of shame:**

These workers who have given the best years of their working lives to Tesco are now seen as a problem rather than a solution. Their comparatively meagre earnings and benefits gained over the years are described as out of line and inflexible, the subtext is if only these loyal workers would go away the company would return to its former glory.

● February 2018 – ‘**Gagging on the gig economy:**

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

Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes – who along with John pioneered the development of *Shopfloor* into a ‘red top’ tabloid from its former A4 format manifestation as *Mandate News* – coined the column title *Straight Talking*.

He recalls: “I named it *Straight Talking* because of my direct experience of dealing with John on a daily basis.”

And, as Brian points out, John's contribution to the paper is always worth waiting for: “My call for copy usually goes out weeks in advance of the deadline. However, on nearly every occasion since *Shopfloor* first went to press, *Straight Talking* is the last article to be slotted in to complete an edition. The Chief always reassures me, ‘Relax, Forbes, it's always worth waiting for the cream to rise.’”

Journalism is said to be the “first rough draft of history”. How true that adage is – *Straight Talking* has charted a momentous period for Irish workers against the backdrop of austerity, political chicanery, corporate wrongdoing and the decade of centenaries.

In 2018, Mandate compiled a selection of John's *Straight Talking* columns into a booklet – history in the making – check out <https://bit.ly/3aienJH>



An articulate public voice for retail and bar workers

By Jack O'Connor
Former SIPTU General President

WE salute our friend and comrade, John Douglas as he retires after more than 40 years fighting for workers.

John grew up in Bray, in a family steeped in the Republican and trade union traditions. Both of his parents were deeply involved in the then Workers' Union of Ireland.

Although, he won a scholarship to TCD, he left it to take up a position as Secretary for the Grocery Branch in the old INUVG&ATA, (Irish National Union of Vintners', Grocers' & Allied Trades Assistants), in 1979.

He went on to become National Official with responsibility for industrial relations in Mandate, when it emerged from the merger with IDATU in 1994 and General Secretary in 2004, as well as President of Congress in 2013. Parallel with all of this he has served on the World Board of the Skills and Services Global Union UNI since 2015.

His tenure in a key leadership role has coincided with the most challenging period in the history of our movement internationally. Even before the global economic collapse of 2008, the assault on the 'right to organise', and the hard-won conditions it had gained was well under way.

Throughout it all, John has been one of those offering an articulate public voice for workers in the retail and bar trade and in the wider economy as well. In his own union and indeed in the wider movement, he has provided cogent, perceptive and courageous leadership.

He played the leading role in the Congress campaign for a ban on smoking in workplaces



resulting in the 2004 legislation, literally improving life expectancy for tens of thousands of people. He also participated in the agitation for improved Statutory Redundancy Pay in 2002 that resulted in it being more than doubled in 2003.

Similarly, he was one of the negotiators of what became the '2004 Act', undoubtedly the most important law ever enacted in the State in support of the right to organise. (Surprise, surprise, it was struck out by the Supreme

Court in 2007).

John was among those leaders who sought to roll back the tide of non-unionism and the consequent plundering of pay and conditions, through the attempt to renew our once-potent organising culture, entailing a huge shift in resources and confronting overwhelming odds among the titans of the retail trade.

Ultimately, recognising that no single union could win such battles alone, he supported the conclusions of the Commission on Trade Union Organisation, envisaging a new movement

equipping workers with the capacity to win.

Unfortunately, although the recommendations were adopted almost unanimously at Congress BDC, in 2013, they have thus far failed to command the overwhelming level of active support across the movement required to implement them.

While President of Congress from 2013 to 2015, he participated on a sub-committee with David Begg and Patricia King, working with then Labour Party Junior Minister Ged Nash, to bring about the 2015 Act providing, among other important improvements, for the concept of the 'Sectoral Employment Order'.

This radical device offered the possibility of rendering agreements on pay and conditions as legally binding on all the employers in countless sectors of the economy. (Surprise, surprise, it has now also been struck out by the Courts). Again, with Patricia King, Ethel Buckley and Gerry McCormack, John was a key leader in the campaign which re-

“ John was among those who sought to roll back the tide of non-unionism and consequent plundering of pay and conditions, through the attempt to renew our once-potent organising culture... ”

sulted in the 2018 Act proving for 'banded hours contracts', affording a measure of protection against unscrupulous exploitation for hundreds of thousands of workers.

No doubt John will remain an active trade unionist, as he still has much to contribute, but I want to acknowledge his comradeship over the years and in the toughest of times. I wish him and his wife Patricia and the family all the best for the future. I also want to wish Gerry and all of you in Mandate every success in the countless battles which lie ahead for retail workers in Ireland. In solidarity!

TRIBUTE TO JOHN DOUGLAS CONTINUES P26

WHAT HAVE OUR UNIONS EVER DONE FOR US?

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John became the face of real trade unionism on this island

By **Steve Fitzpatrick**
CWU General Secretary

I FIRST got to know John Douglas in person when both of us were elected on to the Executive Council of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in 2005. We had both recently been appointed as General Secretary of our respective unions and we faced many similar issues within our organisations.

It soon became apparent to both of us that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions was dominated by two main forces namely, the public sector unions, led by IMPACT (now Fórsa) and SIPTU.

The structures of Congress were further complicated by a considerable presence from our comrades in Northern Ireland, who obviously had to deal with different legislation in a different jurisdiction.

Independent

Very quickly myself, John and Larry Broderick formed an alliance of what we saw as the last of the independent trade unions, in that none of us were dependent on anybody else to be elected, whilst at the same time we were not big enough to influence generally, the electoral chances of other candidates.

For many years that alliance served us well and ensured an independent block on the Executive Council of Congress which normally ensured a seat on the influential General Purposes Committee of the Executive. This led to John becoming Vice-President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and culminated in his presidency of that august body.

During John's time as President of



“ One of the outstanding memories we have of John during his presidency was on the occasion when he addressed the strikers and their supporters from the Paris Bakery waving a broken baguette ”

Congress, the country was going through the so-called “austerity years”, which saw our government impose many hardships on our citizens in its attempt to make us all pay for the mistakes of the few.

Things were further complicated by the situ-

ation with several key unions being either affiliated, or heavily linked, with the Labour Party which was part of that problem government. Many citizens saw trade unions as complicit in the actions of government, which was evident in the response to the trade union leadership at public demonstrations.

During that difficult time, I believe that John became the face of real trade unionism on this island and there was not a dispute or a strike throughout the country that he did not support. He generally followed up that support by attending picket lines, fundraisers etc.

For many of us, one of the outstanding memories we have of John during his presidency was on the occasion when he addressed the strikers and their supporters from the Paris Bakery waving a broken baguette.

Famous victory

John's presidency culminated in the Ennis Conference where the Right2Water unions won a famous victory in convincing the majority of the delegates at that conference to support their worthy cause.

John and Mandate played a pivotal role in the formation of the Right2Water and Right2Change movements. Along with our own union, the CWU, UNITE and OPATSI, we managed to form a strong alliance of smaller political parties, community groups and our members, to bring about one of the biggest protest movements in the history of the State.

Many of us look back at those years with some pride, but those victories can still be overturned and I am sure John will agree with me when I say that we have started something special, but the job still has to be finished.

John was also heavily involved in UNI Global Union, our international trade union body. He served for many years on the World Executive Board of that organisation and was a key sec-

toral member in UNI Commerce both in Europe and on the broader world stage.

Through that work, he developed contacts in all the major commerce unions, particularly in the UK and the US. This was vitally important to his members as many of them work for multinational retailers and on a number of occasions those contacts were key in helping resolve Mandate industrial disputes.

It is difficult for me to accept that John is retiring. The trade union world in Ireland will, quite simply, not be the same any more without him.

I know he has a great fondness for fishing and hunting and already he has begun to oversee, with Patricia, a growing number of grandchildren. I hope and pray that he is given the time and health to enjoy his retirement with Patricia and his family – a reward he deserves after such long and sterling service to Mandate and to the greater trade union movement.

Furthermore, I do not believe he will be able to disconnect himself fully from the world events around him and today, more than ever, there is a need for citizens to become involved in trying to build a future for our children.

Sometimes it was difficult to pin John down on exactly what his politics were, and, at a rough guess, I would say he is a Socialist Republican, and we have a long way to go in this country before we can say that the country reflects those beliefs.

John regularly made the point about how important it was for ordinary people to join the dots between the ills of the world and the manner in which society is structured.

I was delighted to be given this opportunity to wish John a very long, healthy and happy retirement with Patricia and the rest of the clan. I personally wish to thank him for his friendship, advice and help over many years, and I look forward to more good times together in the future.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish Gerry Light every success in his role as the new General Secretary of Mandate. I look forward to continuing the close working relationship that has been developed between our two unions into the future.

Why was the reference to Right2Water referendum erased from the Programme for Govt?

By Dave Gibney

Mandate Communications Officer and Right2Water coordinator

SOMEONE removed the Right2Water referendum from the final Programme for Government (PfG), but why? Under the Green New Deal section for the PfG, it states: "We will implement the recommendations of the Committee on Future Funding of Domestic Water Services in relation to excess use."

What's really interesting about this line is that it conveniently ignores all of the other seven recommendations from that committee.

The first recommendation was, of course, the Right2Water referendum which would enshrine public ownership of our water system in the constitution, preventing any future government from privatising it.

Strangely, according to RTE, on Sunday 14th June, the Right2Water referendum WAS included in the PfG.

However, all of a sudden, when the full document was released a few days later, it had been deleted. Why? Who wanted it to be removed?

The legislation from Joan Collins TD calling for a water referendum passed unanimously in the Dáil in 2016. Since then, FG – with the backing of FF, have blocked any progress of this legislation through the Oireachtas. Again, why? Could it be because Fine Gael and others have every intention of allowing the future privatisation of our water?

Of course, they won't say such a thing publicly because it won't win many votes, but if it wasn't the plan – and if every party in the state supposedly supports the Right2Water referendum – why was it removed from the PfG?

The special Oireachtas committee on water was a follow-up to the government's 'expert commission' on water. That report contained nine recommendations. Number one was – again – the Right2Water referendum.

That report stated that almost 50% of our water leaks away, while



Picture: Sinn Fein (CC BY 2.0)

almost half of all companies do not pay their water bills. Added to that, bottled water companies, such as Ballygowan, can take as much water as they want for no cost.

And it was reported recently that data centres are using hundreds of millions of litres of water. Facebook alone uses more water each year than the 8,600 residents of Kildare town. And there are 55 of those data centres with another 31 in the pipeline.

Soon data centres will be using more water in Ireland than more than 800,000 people for domestic use. We have a hosepipe ban because of 'droughts' and who is it that is targeted for "excessive use" of this resource? Households, not companies.

“ Strangely, according to RTE, on Sunday 14th June, the Right2Water referendum WAS included in the PfG. However, all of a sudden, when the full document was released a few days later, it had been deleted. Why? ”

Even before any data centres opened, we know that Irish households only used 23% of water while 'industry' – companies and agriculture – used 77%.

Yet, again, for so-called "conservation" reasons, households are the target. The truth is, if they can get excessive usage charges in place, it means metering and consequently a revenue stream to sell off Irish Water in the future. Water is now the most valuable commodity on the planet, with water companies in the UK making three times the profits of oil or gas concerns.

We're about to enter into another recession... Does anyone actually believe the government won't sell off

Irish Water to the highest bidder given half a chance? Or that in the event of a bailout, the EU or IMF won't force the privatisation of our water like they did in Greece?

The parties will say there's legislation to prevent privatisation but that's not worth the paper it's printed on because any future government can change legislation.

Somebody deleted the reference to the Right2Water referendum in the PfG for a reason.

They did so despite the fact that the referendum was the number one recommendation from both the expert commission on water and the special Oireachtas committee on water.

Pro-privatisation

And despite the fact that all parties in the Oireachtas voted in favour of having the referendum. I think the reason for this is clear – this programme for government is pro-privatisation. They want you to use less water so big companies can use more.

If this were truly a Green New Deal, and they were genuinely concerned about conservation, they'd focus on where our water is actually wasted.

That's in the 50% of water leaked from the system before it gets to our taps, and through targeting industries that use more than three-quarters of our water, including data centres. Instead they'll spend hundreds of millions of euro going after households that use a fraction of that amount.

We have enough wealth and resources to tackle climate change and the fallout from the pandemic, but it's about who is made pay. If it isn't the wealthy and it isn't corporations, then who do you think it's going to be?

They made us pay for a banking crisis that was not of our making, don't let them make us pay for a climate crisis and a pandemic not of our making.

Spend your money where workers count

When you're shopping look for the "Fair Shop" mark. Support workers in Ireland by choosing shops that treat their employees fairly.

100 years on, Mandate's founder inspires us to seek a better world



Dave Gibney

FEBRUARY 23rd earlier this year marked the centenary of the death of Michael O'Lehane, aged only 47, one of the original founders of the trade union now known as Mandate.

During his life, Michael O'Lehane left an indelible mark on the Irish trade union movement as he battled low pay, precarious work, poverty, and the living-in system, while also helping to expand Irish trade unionism beyond the industrial field and into the political arena.

O'Lehane was born in Macroom, Co Cork, in 1873, but moved to Limerick to take up a role in Cannock's as a draper's assistant in 1898.

The harsh living conditions resulted in O'Lehane contracting typhoid fever from which he almost died. After a few months of recuperation, he travelled to Dublin and took up a role in Arnotts on Henry Street.

While in Dublin, O'Lehane met with fellow drapery workers and together with 17 others, founded the Irish Drapers' Assistants' Benefit and Protection Association (IDAA) in 1901. He was immediately installed as general secretary at the relatively young age of 28.

Vision

His vision, strategy and discipline revolutionised the Irish trade union movement, with many of his contemporaries – including James Connolly and Jim Larkin – learning much from O'Lehane.

In 1902, O'Lehane went on a speaking tour across Ireland. Branches were established in Galway (1902), Tuam (1903), Sligo (1904), Ballinasloe (1905), and later on he was instrumental in setting up branches in many parts of Mayo, including Ballina, Castlebar, Ballinrobe, Ballyhaunis, Claremorris and Westport. He also established branches in Derry and Belfast.

The popularity of the union across the west coast was largely down to O'Lehane's lifelong commitment as a



Visionary example: Michael O'Lehane (above) was the first Irish trade unionist to edit and publish a newspaper, *The Drapers' Assistant*

“ O'Lehane set about organising the workers as a class, breaking down the artificial barriers constructed by employers to divide workers ”

Gaelic Leaguer, and he used the Gaelic revival movement as an opportunity to expand the union in the early part of the 20th century.

Within four years, the new union had more than 3,000 members. What was so unusual about the IDAA was its acceptance of women on an equal footing. Only one other union in Ireland accepted women at the time, the Irish National Teachers' Association (INTO).

By 1914, of its 4,000 members, 1,400 were women. The encouragement and prominence the IDAA gave to women under O'Lehane led to the emergence of the suffragette Cissie Cahalan, from Arnotts, who became the union's first female president in 1921. O'Lehane became the first trade unionist in Ireland to edit and publish a newspaper. *The Drapers' Assistant*, which went into print in 1904, was published in order “to change the thinking of the shop assistant, make him alive to his rights and stimulate and, where necessary, shame him into fighting for the principles of trade unionism.”

The first edition of the newspaper laid out the priorities for the IDAA: to secure a national minimum wage, sick benefits, fixed hours and payment for overtime, the eradication of arbitrary dismissals, as well as the abolition of the living-in system.

At the time many drapery outlets forced employees to live on the premises – in effect, an early form of Direct Provision. The workers were placed under close surveillance 24 hours a day. If they kept a photograph of a loved one nearby, they were fined. If they had not returned to their bedroom on time, their wages were cut.

They weren't even allowed to marry in some cases, leading to the “thou shalt not marry” dispute between the IDAA and Switzer's, of Grafton Street, where a worker was dismissed for seeking leave to marry

a woman who worked in a small drapery outlet in Drumcondra.

As reprehensible as the disciplining system associated with living-in was, it also raised serious health and safety concerns. The small, overcrowded dormitories were a breeding ground for infection diseases, such as typhoid fever. Worse still was the danger of fire.

In 1905, Grennell's of Camden Street caught fire and five workers were burnt alive inside. When the fire broke out, the workers found themselves locked inside the building. Those who escaped did so through a small window and onto a roof coated in broken glass that ripped open their feet. This wasn't unique.

There were fires reported in Arnotts, Todd Burns in Dublin, Revington's, Tralee, and Duggan's in Kilkenny, as well as Cannock's in Limerick. O'Lehane, innovative as ever, recognised that the system would not be abolished through industrial campaigning alone and so he helped bring the trade union movement into the political sphere.

O'Lehane was a republican socialist who was close to the independence movement in Ireland. He served as president of the Dublin Trades Council from 1909–1911, was elected to Dublin Corporation for the Independent Labour Party in the Kilmainham ward, and at the trades union congress in 1911 he was elected chairperson of the ITUC Parliamentary Committee (the ruling body of Congress) when it met in Clonmel that year.

Objections

As Dermot Keogh pointed out in an article in the Irish Labour History journal, *Saothar*, in 1977: “During the proceedings, he [O'Lehane] played not an insignificant part in helping James Connolly's motion setting up an Irish Labour Party.”

When there were objections, mostly from Belfast trade unionists, to the establishment of an Irish Labour Party (the argument was generally that a British Labour Party already served the needs of workers on the island), O'Lehane responded: “Why didn't they advocate affiliation with the Labour Party in Belgium, Germany or elsewhere? Why were they so enamoured of the Labour Party of England?”

He was a nationalist, but also a true socialist, believing in equality and fairness, not only in the industrial sphere, but in society generally.

He explained to William O'Brien in June 1909 that “he was becoming a more convinced socialist every day” as a result of his trade union experience.

One of the great obstacles faced by O'Lehane in his role as a union organiser was snobbery among drapery workers who often saw themselves above the level of a shop assistant or a clerk.





Edwardian Dublin – Michael O’Lehane built up the IDAA from an initial membership of just 18 to some 7,000 by the time of his early death in 1920

O’Lehane explained in 1918: “Many of them (drapers’ assistants) did not know at the time the difference between the term trade unionist and anarchist. They were steeped in false notions of respectability, and as John Burns at the time so epigrammatically described them: ‘They have to be eternally young and infernally civil; had to dress like dukes on the wages of a dustman; and had to maintain the polish of a cabinet minister on the salary of a footman.’”

This snobbery made it difficult to recruit drapery workers because they considered trade unionism “vulgar.” It also led to resentment from shop assistants and clerks who would regularly pass pickets and become strike-breakers to antagonise the drapers.

O’Lehane set about organising the workers as a class, breaking down the artificial barriers constructed by employers to divide workers.

When he established the IDAA, he set it up not only as a trade union to negotiate pay and conditions of employment, but also as a protection and benefits society. At the time, there was no such thing as social welfare from the state. His vision was to help remedy that and members now had access to sick benefit, unemployment assistance and pensions. It also served as a decent recruitment tool.

He was known as a “cool head” but never one to shirk an ethical challenge. In 1906, Boyers teamed up with the employers’ federations across Dublin to teach the fledgling union a lesson in manners and obedience through an eight month lockout.

In response, O’Lehane organised a series of monster meetings, established an independent public defence committee and implemented a sympathetic strike at another location owned by the same employer.

He also published and distributed flyers to inform the public about the dispute and generated a great deal of support from other trade unions in Ireland. A number of rallies were held – one with estimated turnout of 20,000. Other unions even provided musical bands to keep the strikers and their supporters entertained! The workers won the dispute and all were re-instated.

O’Lehane insisted that a strike was the concern of the entire trade union movement and that there was a re-

sponsibility due to a locked-out colleague that went beyond the payment of a levy. Workers should engage in public demonstrations and actively support workers in dispute.

A pioneer and a visionary, O’Lehane was known by his contemporaries as a skilled propagandist and an engaging speaker who made full use of those skills for the benefit of his union and its members.

He formed a union in 1901, initially comprised of only 18 workers in Dublin, and forged it into a national union of more than 7,000 members by the time of his untimely death in 1920.

O’Lehane’s commitment to equality and fairness was second to none. He wasn’t bound by laws, and often risked arrest. His sharp intellect changed how unions operated, modernising them, engaging alternative strategies for winning disputes and increasing membership.

Boundaries

He shattered boundaries so that future generations could have better lives. He didn’t allow naysayers to determine how far he or his union could go in terms of improving pay and living conditions for members.

O’Lehane was a skilled writer and possessed a keen intellect. When employers argued that his aspirations were too ambitious, he wrote: “...No doubt we will be told ‘competition is keen,’ ‘we cannot afford to pay any more,’ ‘our neighbours are under-selling us,’ etc., etc.

“This is all very fine for traders who have consistently adopted the cut-throat system of competition, whose sole object is to make money for themselves at the expense and to the detriment of their employees, but we say in reply to these, and to all whom it may concern that if the public are to be granted privileges by grasping, greedy employers, this must not be done at the expense of the workers, at the cost of cheap, sweated, and in many cases unpaid labour.”

O’Lehane raised class-consciousness and raised expectations. He convinced workers that if they were organised, there were no limits to what they could achieve. Through solidarity and collective action they could build a better world. We need more like him today.

NEW ONLINE COURSE FOR MANDATE WORKPLACE REPS

Covid-19 return to work protocols

Mandate’s new online **Covid-19 back to work induction course** is designed to guide you through some aspects of the protocol document, as well as supporting the implementation and compliance of best practice within the industry collectively as a union

To complete the course, you can register on our online academy by following the relevant steps below...

For new learner members to Mandate’s online learning platform...

- STEP 1** Go to the following self-enrolment link <https://bit.ly/2X34Fpj> Add your name, surname and email address, press enrol
- STEP 2** Check your mailbox (including the spam basket) and then register your account
- STEP 3** Create a new password (password will need include 8 characters including upper, lower case, number and special character such as @ , ! , # , * , / ,) complete the registration
- STEP 4** You will be directed to your dashboard, please click on the course and then the start button

To log back into the platform please go to the following link and enter the log-in details created: <https://mandatetradeunion.hiuphub.com/login> If you have any issue or problem during this process, please use the **support** button in your right upper corner or **“I NEED HELP”** button when logged into the platform

For existing members to Mandate’s online learning platform...

- STEP 1** Existing trainees can use the following link: <https://mandate.hiuphub.com/login>
- STEP 2** If you cannot log in, please use **forgotten password** option on your log-in page or simply follow support@olivemedia.co to reset your details

Please keep your log-in details/password safe as you will require same for future online training

Should you have any issue accessing the links please contact Jonathan Hogan jhogan@mandate.ie or Amanda Blake ablake@mandate.ie at the Mandate Training Centre

Govt moves to make face coverings in shops and shopping centres mandatory



Picture: Anna Shvets

THE Government has now moved to make face coverings mandatory in all shops and shopping centres.

Taoiseach Micheál Martin announced the measures following a cabinet meeting on July 16th. It came the day after Mandate had similarly called for face coverings to be made compulsory in retail outlets to protect front-line workers from coronavirus.

Mandate General Secretary John Douglas had called on the government to

engage with the union to discuss and agree protocols over implementing the measures, which he insisted was “imperative”.

Speaking on July 15th, he said: “Decisions to protect the lives of retail workers must be taken without unnecessary delay and following direct



consultation with the workers’ representative union, Mandate.”

He pointed out that UK Health Minister Matt Hancock had recently claimed shop workers were up to 75% more likely to die from coronavirus than the general population underlining the urgent need for action on face coverings.

Douglas said: “It is imperative we act collectively to ascertain the exact high level of risk posed to shop workers in Ireland by the spread of coronavirus, as well as acting swiftly to ensure mandatory face covering measures are implemented and compliance ensured for the protection of shop workers’ health.”

And Mandate called for an agreed protocol in consultation with government for the mandatory wearing of face coverings.

“Any agreed measures,” he added, “should look at the inclusion of exemptions for health reasons, non-re-

quirement circumstances such as working behind screens and what, if any, punitive measures are to be applied to non-compliance.

“We are very clear that workers must be free from forcing public compliance on the wearing of face coverings and that employers must put in place measures to protect staff against abusive behaviour in that regard.”

Douglas said any mandatory face coverings in retail settings must be part of a suite of measures intended to protect shop workers’ lives for the foreseeable future.

He cautioned: “The wearing of face coverings is not a substitute for alcohol based hand washing and the continuing enforcement of social distancing measures.

“Rather, the wearing of face masks in shops and supermarkets will be an added protective measure taken to ensure we can keep retail workers as safe as possible.

“Wearing face coverings in shops and supermarkets should be seen as a reasonable mitigation against the unprecedented risk posed by the coronavirus to those brave front-line workers.”

TESCO

Mandate welcomes early move to award 10% bonus

MANDATE broadly welcomed the decision by Tesco Ireland early on in the Covid-19 emergency to award a 10% bonus to staff across their store and distribution networks in recognition of the remarkable job carried out by its workforce.

Speaking shortly after the bonus was announced in mid-March, Mandate General Secretary John Douglas (right) said the Covid-19 crisis had underlined the essential public service provided by front-line retail workers in keeping the shelves stocked and the country fed and clothed.

Douglas told *Shopfloor*: “The selfless and dedicated work carried out by these workers – the majority of them Mandate members – in keeping stocks replenished and by making sure supermarkets remain open deserves to be recognised and rewarded.”

He said Mandate had been “campaigning hard” for such recognition and welcomed the bonus payment by Tesco, adding that it should be seen as a “benchmarking precedent”.

Calling on other retailers to follow



suit, Douglas continued: “Initiatives such as this Tesco bonus payment of 10% may not appear overly signifi-

cant in the bigger scheme of things but it is well-deserved and long overdue recognition for a group of workers in a sector that up to now has not been given its due respect for the vitally important public service role it performs within our society.”

Douglas said the union had been in frequent communication with retailers to ensure that all HSE Covid-19 health and safety guidelines were being followed as well as focusing on maintaining and improving the income for retail workers “at this difficult time”.

But Mr Douglas insisted that “much more needed to be done” by the government “to protect jobs and businesses” in these “worrying and dangerous times”.

“The selfless and dedicated work carried out by these workers – the majority of them Mandate members – in keeping stocks replenished and by making sure supermarkets remain open deserves to be recognised and rewarded”

Usdaw backs mandatory face coverings in shops

UK RETAIL workers union Usdaw has welcomed the introduction of mandatory wearing of face coverings in shops, supermarkets and shopping centres in England, but warned it would only prove effective if used along with existing social distancing and hygiene measures.

Usdaw General Secretary Paddy Lillis said: “We are urging employers to stay with the established two-metre social distancing, using screens at tills and limiting the number of shoppers in store at any one time.

“Employers must also be aware that staff will need regular breaks when they can take their face covering off and have the opportunity to replace it. Staff on tills who are behind screens should not be required to wear a face covering,” he added.

SOLIDARITY



Liam O Briain, chairperson of Cork Health and Local Government Branch of Fórsa, was on the picket line on August 7th, to show solidarity with Debenhams workers. One of the Patrick Street strikers said they had a message for him: “Many thanks for looking after the tea, coffee and much more from the Imperial Hotel. We greatly appreciate your comradeship, brother Liam!”

IRELAND'S SUPER-RICH

<p>1. The Mistry family €13.8bn</p> <p>▲ up €2.3bn</p>	<p>2. The Westons €8.6bn</p> <p>▲ up €1.5bn</p>	<p>3. John & Patrick Collison €7.7bn</p> <p>▲ up €5.95bn</p>	<p>4. John Grayken €6.26bn</p> <p>▲ up €510m</p>	<p>5. Denis O'Brien €3.8bn</p> <p>▼ down €900m</p>	<p>6. Comer brothers €3bn</p> <p>▲ up €1.65bn</p>	<p>7. Larry Goodman €2.8bn</p> <p>▼ up €1.95bn</p>	<p>8. John Magnier €2.56bn</p> <p>▲ up €140m</p>	<p>9. John Dorrance €2.36bn</p> <p>▼ down €140m</p>	<p>10. JP McManus €2.2bn</p> <p>▲ up €30m</p>
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There are no dampers on the champers...

THE FORTUNES of Ireland's billionaire jet set have continued to go from strength to strength, according to figures compiled in this year's *Sunday Independent Rich List*.

The figures – revealed before the country went into lockdown in response to Covid-19 – show that despite the fact many households in Ireland are still barely scraping by, the combined wealth of our 10 richest families has MORE THAN DOU-

BLED to a staggering €53bn in the last decade. Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes told *Shopfloor*: “Meanwhile, 700,000 people live in poverty and our media seems to think these two stories of extortionate wealth and increasing levels of poverty aren't linked. They are.

“Despite our own broken housing market with its sofa surfers and rough sleepers, and a crumbling health system where hundreds have

to wait on trolleys for a hospital bed every day, Ireland's richest continue to enjoy the fat of the land.

“It is long past time they paid their fair share to help make life better for many who are simply just surviving within our struggling communities.

“There's a cohort of people in this country who are more concerned about the flight of capital as opposed to the flight of labour over the past 10 years. It is abundantly clear that people have voted in overwhelming numbers for change and heavily taxing the obscene wealth of corporations and individuals would be a progressive step in the right direction for this country.”

Topping the *Rich List 2020* is the Indo-Irish **Mistry family** – who own a large part of Mumbai-based Tata Sons conglomerate – with €13.8bn, followed by Ireland's premier family of retailers, **the Westons**, with a combined wealth of €8.6bn.

Limerick tech duo, **Patrick and John Collison** are, at 31 and 29, the youngest billionaires on the 2020 list with a joint wealth of €7.7bn. They founded online payments company Stripe.

In at four is Boston-born **John Grayken**, who according to Wikipedia took Irish citizenship “for tax purposes” in 1999. Grayken founded private equity firm Lone Star Funds in 1995. Vulture fund Lone Star invests in a variety of asset classes – primarily “distressed” opportunities in markets undergoing economic turmoil – which they “clean up and flip” for a profit.



Tech billionaire brothers John and Patrick Collison (above left and right); Telecoms tycoon Denis O'Brien (below left) and horse racing magnate JP McManus



Pictures: Web Summit (CC BY 2.0); J D Lasica (CC BY 2.0); ITU Pictures/J Ohle (CC BY 2.0)

John Dorrance III and his Finnish-born wife **Gundel** (€2.36bn, 9th) also left the US for tax reasons in the mid-90s swapping their Wyoming ranch for leafy Dartry. Meanwhile, Galway-based tycoons **Brian and Luke Comer** (6th) have built a combined fortune of €3bn with land and property deals in Ireland, UK, Germany and Greece.

And the old warhorses of Irish capital – **Denis O'Brien, Larry Goodman, John Magnier** and **JP McManus** – also make it into the *Sunday Indo* top 10. Telecoms tycoon O'Brien is worth €3.8bn (5th); Beef kingpin Goodman weighs in at

€2.8bn (7th); Magnier, dubbed ‘The Boss’, in at number 8, has €2.56bn; and racehorse owner and businessman JP McManus makes the finishing line in 10th place at €2.2bn.

Forbes continued: “Imagine the difference we could make towards transforming our public services with even half of that €53 billion owned by those insanely rich 10 families – we could build a fair few public houses on public land for the many hundreds of families desperately in need of a home.

“Imagine – thousands of ‘homes sweet homes’ in a fundamentally changed country of equals.”

Picture: John Jones (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Biffo



The Eye That Never Sleeps

It's green for *go*, Saoirse!

THE inevitability of the departure of environmental campaigner Saoirse McHugh from the Green Party came as no surprise to those listening to Leinster House's whispering walls.

For Biffo heard on the green grapevine that her leaving party was some craic indeed.

The bold Eamon Ryan was snoozing and snoring away loudly in the corner while everyone else sat around in silence slurping Shloer in case their chatter should wake the great leader from his slumbers.

Saoirse, in one final, grand act of defiance, brought an actual cow to the leaving party as her 'plus one'. The gassy ruminant farted loudly all night long emitting noxious fumes into the atmosphere while Achill islander

Saoirse lit a dirty, big coal fire in the middle of the room.

The resulting heat didn't help poor Eamon's drowsiness as he slipped further into oblivion – no doubt mirroring the future electoral prospects of the Green Party.

Without wonderful climate justice advocates, such as the socialist-leaning Saoirse McHugh, the party becomes merely a bunch of green capitalists pretending to ride bicycles while riding the country instead.

Biffo called Eamon for a comment on Saoirse's departure. He told Biffo: "I love her work. Those two films she starred in – *Mary Queen of Scots* and *Little Women* – were tremendous. I'd love to see her in a remake of my most favourite film, *Forrest Gump*."

A *Bon* voyage to Tralee!

FLICKING through the interweb recently I spotted this striking headline in an online edition of the Irish Times, 'Tralee town square described as the 'most dangerous' in Ireland'.

The headline evoked images of hordes of Viking-like rampaging lunatics pillaging the heart of the picturesque Co Kerry town.

My interest piqued so I read the article to find that Tralee town square was revamped in 2004 with grey bollards against a lovely cream French limestone surface. It was meant to be pleasing to the eye but concerns were soon raised about how slippery it became in the rain.

Someone who slipped on the surface referred to it as the 'most dangerous' square in Ireland and the paper of record ran with that strangely sensationalist headline.

It later transpired that the Tralee town square revamp was actually sponsored by Bon Jovi to help promote their third album, *Slippery When Wet*. Bloody evil long-haired American rocker geniuses!



SNAPPED: When a Covid Compliance Officer goes one step beyond...



"Stand up, Chuck, let 'em see ya"
Joe Biden to Missouri state Sen. Chuck Graham, who is in a wheelchair, Columbia, Missouri, September 12th, 2008



"Nobody has better respect for intelligence than Donald Trump"
Intelligent Donald Trump broadcast on CNN, August 8th, 2017

The *stupid* things they say...

BIFFO has noticed that every disaster movie starts with the government ignoring the advice of a scientist. Meanwhile, the comedic US presidential race is shaping up to be the greatest real-life disaster movie of all time.

Darth Vader wore a mask in public long before it was deemed cool and a fully masked-up Joe is simply Biden his time until a fully unmasked Trump is finally booted out of office when he gets his "you're fired" notice from the great American public at the ballot box in November. All they want is to make their country a wee bit better,

not great again, just a bit better and a little less insane...

The fact is masks don't protect the public from the 'foot in mouth' disease that riddles both candidates.

Trump has said more insanely stupid things than all previous US presidents combined. But in Biden, there is a rival claimant for the gaffe king of America crown.

As things stand, it's a straight-up choice between your old racist, sleazy grandfather and your other old sleazy, doting grandfather.

I wish Darth Vader was in the presidential race!

13 🍏🍏🍏, 🍏🍏🍏, 🍏🍏🍏

IRELAND "won" its recent court battle to defend its right to be a tax haven.

In 2016, it was alleged by the European Commission that Ireland granted illegal tax benefits to Apple. The Commission then ordered Apple to pay

€13 billion in back taxes plus interest to Ireland.

Ireland appealed the ruling with Apple following suit, thus combining the legal joint forces of a sovereign country with a corporate multinational

so that we might reject the vast sum owed to Ireland in tax by our great friends in the Apple Corporation.

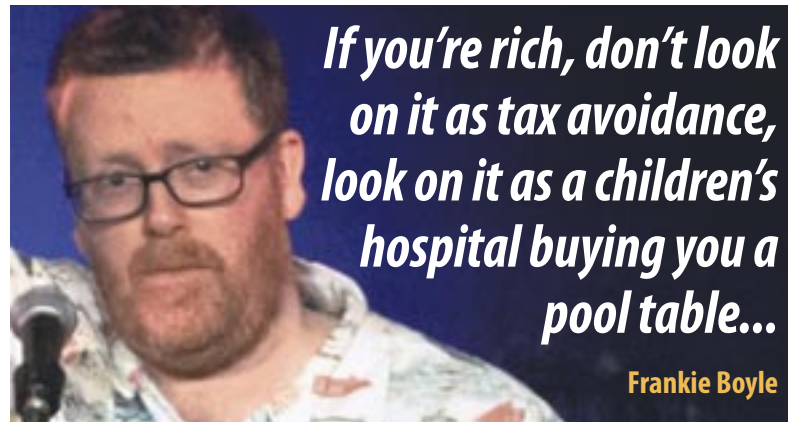
Ireland actually spent €6 million of our money in defending its right to be the biggest tax haven in the world.

In July, the European General Court struck down the EU tax decision as illegal, ruling in favour of Apple.

Don't forget that the amount owed by Apple to Ireland equates to 100,000 new homes. The narrative embedded in popular discourse is that Ireland isn't a tax haven: **WRONG!**

The old saying that 'an Apple a day keeps the doctor away' is true. In fact, you could go further: the non-payment of Apple taxes also manages to keep the nurses, the teachers and the health care workers away as well.

Socialism or barbarism was never more apt!

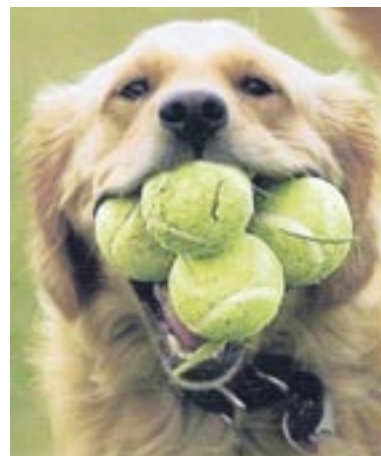


Pictures: Umberto Rotundo (CC BY 2.0); Ralph_PH (CC BY 2.0); GabboT (CC BY-SA 2.0); Gage Skidmore (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Balls to bad bosses

BIFFO totally appreciates how taking strike action, such as those working class heroes in the long-running Debenhams dispute, can be an extremely difficult decision of last resort for workers. Strikes can take a terrible toll on striking workers and their families.

However, auld Biffo gets so excited that workers are collectively prepared to fight back against bad employers and unjust employment legislation that he could put four tennis balls into my mouth at the same time – just like this lovely dog...



...I'm *losing* it!

CONSPIRACY theorists unite... I've seen birds flying recently that aren't real. David Icke got banned from Facebook for telling the truth. Coronavirus is caused by 5G. Vaccinations are a New World Order control mechanism. Bill Gates runs the world when the Rothschilds are on their holidays. Fluoridation of water is a communist plot. Paul McCartney died in a car accident in 1966 and was replaced by a look-alike Scottish orphan named William Shears Campbell. The birds I mentioned earlier, the bloody birds, are government drones watching our every move. We're doomed I tell ye, we're all doomed!!!

TRAINING



Hats what's all about! Trainers Erkan and Ben (left and above) are thanked by General Secretary John Douglas on final day of course



A focus on winning for workers

By **Brian Forbes**
National Coordinator

JUST before the country went into lockdown, we held a week of EPOC Advanced Organising training for our union leadership, officials and organisers. It was an inspiring and moti-

vatational five days of discussion and strategic organising planning. Our union is a collective. Our union is our members and we are proud to be a part of a "fighting back" trade union.

Sincere thanks to our good comrades Erkan and Ben for

their time, their sage advice and for assisting us in refocusing our energies back towards the basic fundamentals of organising as well as guiding us towards better collective strategic planning. Up the workers!



INTERNATIONAL

Israelis free BDS campaigner

MANDATE has welcomed the release of Palestinian BDS coordinator Mahmoud Nawajaa (pictured inset) by the Israeli authorities after 19 days of illegal detention without charge.

The human rights defender was freed from military custody on August 17th following a global campaign to secure his release.

Since Mahmoud's July 30th arrest, Israeli internal security organisation Shin Bet had failed to present any formal charges against him.

On gaining his freedom, Mahmoud said: "Pressure works. Sustained global pressure works even better. I am deeply grateful to all those who pressured apartheid Israel to release me. The solidarity [shown to me] gave me

strength and kept alive my hope to be reunified with my loving family and my inspiring wider BDS family."

Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes told *Shopfloor*: "Our union fully backs the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign which works to end international support for Israel's oppression of Palestinians and pressure Israel into complying with international law. This arrest was an attempt to thwart that work and silence the voice of a courageous campaigner. It didn't work with Mahmoud and it won't with anyone else."



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ATTENTION HEALTH & SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES

Health & Safety Course

In a bid to ensure that our elected Health & Safety Representatives have added supports in place to help them in their role, we are pleased to share the Health & Safety Authority's online **Health & Safety Course**, created in collaboration with ICTU and affiliates of the same.

This online course is designed as an added learning tool to support Health & Safety Reps with the implementation and compliance of best practice.

To take this course, you can register on the Health & Safety Authority's site at the following link:

<https://bit.ly/30bzbvOF>

STEP 1

Go to:
<https://bit.ly/30bzbvOF>

STEP 2

Click on log-in, Click on create new account, Complete details

STEP 3

Home screen,
Select course tab dropdown,
Select topics,
Select Safety Representatives

You are now ready to start this course. The course will take approximately 40 minutes to complete, after which you will obtain a Certificate.

Please keep your log-in details/password safe as you will require same for future online training

Should you have any issue accessing the links please contact Jonathan Hogan jhogan@mandate.ie or Amanda Blake ablake@mandate.ie at the Mandate Training Centre

SPECIAL REPORT

● Report lashes European complicity with Israeli occupation

Why Palestine is locked in poverty and servitude

FOR MORE than 52 years, Israel has subjected the people and economy of the Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt) to a violently repressive military occupation, and is responsible for a range of exploitative policies that benefit its own geopolitical and economic interest.

These claims – backed up by an array of statistics – are set out in a new report by the European Trade Union Initiative for Justice in Palestine. The ETUIJP – a network of 34 European trade unions (including Mandate) which represent six million workers – was set up in 2016 and is committed to challenging European governments' and the EU's complicity with Israel.

Israeli policies have had a devastating impact on Palestinian life, collective aspirations and economic development. According to 2017 UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report, Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory suffer from chronic unemployment "at a level rarely seen since the Great Depression".

Palestinians engage with a local economy that is structurally subordinate and dependent on Israel for its day-to-day survival and employment.

The report, titled *European Complicity with Israel's Occupation: Undermining Palestinians' Right to Decent Work*, sheds light on Israel's multifaceted system of repression and exploitation that prevents Palestinian workers from claiming their right to work and employment.

It places their struggle within the context of Israel's settler-colonial regime, while highlighting how the European Union and corporate Europe are complicit in perpetuating this reality.

Today Palestinians in Gaza and on the West Bank endure a brutal military regime and face the dire economic reality of mass unemployment.

In 2018, the Palestinian territory had the highest level of unemployment in the world at 40.8%. In the West Bank, some 17.6% of the total labour force, and 28.2% of women were unemployed.

In Gaza, the data shows an even more stark reality with almost every second worker unemployed and two-thirds of all women workers jobless.



Picture: Alan Whelan/Trocaire

Both the private and public sectors are characterised by a lack of basic workers' rights and a very low union density of 19.3%. The lack of job opportunities within the Palestinian economy forces Palestinians to seek employment in the Israeli market – both in the illegal settlements and within Israel itself.

There are more than 100,000 Palestinian workers (13% of the total Palestinian labour force) employed in the Israeli labour market – often in precarious and exploitative conditions.

This is the direct result of Israeli policies implemented to make Palestinians dependent. These policies have been cemented through the Oslo Accords of 1993, and their economic annex, the Paris Protocol (the main document regulating economic relations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority).

Oslo divided the Palestinian territory into the fragmented and isolated Areas A and B, controlled by the Palestinian Authority, and gave Israel control over the larger, continuous Area C, which is of necessity if there is to be any prospect of Palestinian economic development.

Area C contains the major aquifers as well as the most fertile agricultural land in the West Bank. Area C is effectively annexed by Israel, but the recently announced 'peace plan' by President Trump proposes that this is formalised and agreed to by the Palestinian Authority.

Area C also includes more than half of the 2,000 hectares of quarries in the occupied West Bank. Palestinians' inability to access and utilise these has cost the Palestinian economy an average of €806 million a year.

While Palestinians are denied access, Israeli-administered quarries in the West Bank produce about 12 million tons of stone, gravel and dolomite. Almost all of extracted ma-

Economic growth levels are abysmal with the Palestinian Authority chronically dependent on foreign transfers. This has a devastating and tangible impact on people's lives.

According to the last available data from 2017, some 29.2% of Palestinians in the Palestinian territory live below the poverty line, while 53% of Gazans live in poverty.

Those who are fortunate enough to have a job are mainly employed in the commerce and service sectors. The mass majority of these – more than 62.6% – are working in the private sector.

As in other parts of the world private sector employment can be very exploitative. Around 30% of those employed in the private sector receive less than the minimum wage of €359 a month, in itself way below the official Palestinian poverty line of €611 a month for a household of five people.

“ Essentially the Paris Protocol structures the economic captivity of an occupied population ”



What future lies ahead for Palestine's children? Mother walks with her daughters in Batala refugee camp in Nablus



Israeli checkpoint in Hebron

those farms and in general financially enriches a system that is premised on Palestinian dispossession and de-development.

Similarly, Israeli military companies' access to EU funding as part of research programmes (e.g. Horizon 2020), directly empowers Israel's deadly military industrial complex.

A recent UN report on Israel's attacks on peaceful demonstrators during Gaza's Great March of Return shows how the Israeli military deliberately targeted medical and media workers as they did their job.

The report makes clear that EU financing of Israeli arms companies and those active in illegal settlements involves a direct complicity with Israeli violations of Palestinian rights, including the right to life, to economic prosperity and development and to decent work.

European Trade Union Initiative for Justice in Palestine calls on the European trade union movement to:

1. Pass motions and support campaigns towards a two-way military embargo on Israel.

2. Put pressure on companies involved in Israel's violation of international and Palestinian rights by:

- Building effective campaigns to end your union's commercial agreements with complicit companies;

- Supporting workers to call on their employers to end their complicity with the occupation;

- Working with pension funds to end their investment in companies involved in Israel's violation of Palestinian rights;

3. Take action within your trade union and workplace to raise awareness of Palestinian workers' working conditions and the denial of their access to decent work, and to support unions and other organisations in Palestine and Israel, working to improve Palestinian workers' rights.

The ETUIJP calls on the EU to:

1. Suspend the EU-Israel Association Agreement until Israel meets its obligations under international law and ends violation of Palestinians' rights.

2. Exclude Israeli companies and institutions involved in Israel's military industrial complex from any EU research and funded projects.

3. End all EU contractual agreements with companies complicit with Israel's violation of Palestinians' rights and international law.

4. Ban the sale of Israeli settlement products in European markets.

5. Stop European companies from doing business with Israel's settlement enterprise.

Full report: <https://bit.ly/2Pmq9JT>



'Security wall' on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Under the Oslo Accords, Palestinian territory has been fragmented choking off any hope of economic growth

material is used for the Israeli construction industry, settlements, and Israeli infrastructure in the West Bank.

In violation of international law, European companies are also involved in this pillage – for example, the German-based multinational HeidelbergCement operates a stone quarry in the West Bank.

A similar situation takes place in the Jordan Valley, once called Jordan's food basket because it produced 60% of Jordan's fruit and vegetables. Now the Jordan Valley is almost exclusively exploited for the benefit of settler agricultural businesses, and 66% of produce is exported.

Accompanying these direct policies of exploitation and pillage, the Palestinian territory's economy is further undermined by:

1. INFRASTRUCTURE: Infrastructure, including water, electricity and telecommunication is controlled by the Israeli authorities and companies, resulting in further economic dependency on Israel.

These sectors could potentially be large employers and their inadequate supply has a negative knock-on impact on other productive and job-creating industries as well as public services and quality of life.

“ In violation of international law, European companies are also involved in this pillage... ”

2. THE PARIS PROTOCOL: This governs trade and financial relations between Israel and Palestine further undermines the Palestinian economy:

- The absence of an independent Palestinian currency means that Israel financially benefits from money destined to the oPt, including international aid, through the conversion of foreign currencies to the Israeli Shekel.

- Control over borders means that any import and export to the Palestinian territory must go through Israel. Israel collects taxes on imports and exports.

- Custom duties and clearance charges meant to be transferred to the Palestinian Authority on a monthly basis after a 3% deduc-

tion are often withheld by the Israeli authorities as a form of political pressure.

These are not small amounts. In 2018, clearance revenues amounted to 65% of the PA's total revenue or 15% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In effect, the Paris Protocol gave Israel control over a major source of income for the Palestinian Authority and thus over its very survival.

These conditions also significantly increase costs for Palestinian businesses. Shipments destined for the oPt are handled by Israeli cargo management, storage and transportation companies. Palestinian companies must also pay Israeli companies for security clearance, required by Israel for each shipment. The transfer of goods through Israel adds an additional 5% to 10% to the cost of a shipment.

The customs union significantly increases the cost of imports and exports and undermines the competitiveness of oPt goods on the international market, leaving Israel as the pre-eminent consumer.

UNCTAD calculates that between 1972-2017, Israel absorbed 79% of the oPt's total exports, while Israeli imports to the oPt amounted to 81%. Essentially the Paris Protocol structures the economic captivity of an occupied population.

The de-development and captivity of the Palestinian economy and economic dependence on Israel has contributed to high levels of unemployment and underemployment in the oPt.

As a result many Palestinian workers are forced and not drawn to seek work for Israeli employers in the illegal settlements and Israel.

The opening of the EU's market to Israeli settlement produce, facilitated through the lack of safeguards in the EU-Israel Association Agreement, for example, directly bolsters the settlement enterprise, the exploitation of Palestinian workers working on

Picture: Peter Mulligan (CC BY 2.0)

Picture: Palfest (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)



CHARTER FOR DECENT JOBS IN RETAIL 2020

PAY, ANNUAL LEAVE & PREMIUM PAYMENTS

Senior	Rate of Pay	Minimum Annual Leave
Year 1	€12.30*	21 days
Year 2	€13.30	22 days
Year 3	€14.30	23 days
Year 4	€15.30	24 days
Year 6	€16.30	25 days

* Current Living Wage

- Minimum Sunday rate of Time +1/2
- Minimum unsocial hours rate (10pm-8am) of Time +1/2
- Minimum public holiday rate of Time +1/2 (and an additional day's pay)

HOURS & ROSTERS

All retail workers should have security over their weekly hours as well as family and student friendly working arrangements. This should include:

- A minimum of four-weeks notice of rostered hours
- A minimum of one weekend off every six weeks
- Secure hour contracts (set hour contracts or banded hour contracts) that closely reflect the hours actually worked

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

- Maternity/Paternity pay - minimum top up payments on state maternity/paternity benefit of at least €50 per week
- Pension scheme - minimum company contribution of 6% of earnings
- Sick pay scheme - minimum of four weeks paid sick pay

RESPECT, SAFETY & A VOICE AT WORK

- A workplace free from all forms of bullying and harassment
- A workplace where health and safety regulations are followed and respected
- The right to collectively bargain terms and conditions through a trade union
- The right to individual representation through a trade union

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OPINION

Capitalism kills...

MANY decades of insatiable corporate greed working hand-in-glove with a skewed political system has determinedly chipped away at the social and political fabric of Ireland. Corporatism and crony capitalism has feasted for years on many societal decency thresholds we once took for granted.

The aspirations of a citizen's right to a home, unrestricted access to third level education or an apprenticeship and a decent standard of living have all crumbled under the weight of a political hierarchy hell-bent on reinventing another round of casino capitalism whilst protecting their own landlord class and slavishly following the fiscal rules intent on embedding austerity into the DNA and lives of future generations.

Covid-19 is without doubt a dangerous new killer virus which has resulted in a worldwide health pandemic the like of which is unseen in our lifetime. However, no matter how indiscriminate and virulently aggressive Covid-19 can be, it certainly did not create our country's desperate lack of public housing or the unprecedented crisis in our underfunded and depleted health care system. Capitalism did.

Covid-19 didn't invent precarious low-paid employment. It didn't smite us all with poor contracted terms and conditions which are cruelly centred on the employer class's desire for minimal guaranteed contracted hours to facilitate their creation of indentured wage slaves. Capital-

LET US ARISE! Brian Forbes

National Co-ordinator
Mandate Trade Union

ism did. The crafty wee Covid-19 virus didn't create poverty wages or attack and dismantle the legal protections afforded tens of thousands of workers employed in precarious employment sectors under the union/employer negotiated Joint Labour Committee system and the sectoral employment orders. Capitalism did.

Sadly, Covid-19 went about its most devastating work within the confines of our residential nursing homes and, more recently, within our meat processing factories and mushroom farms. These very same sectors of our economy have a preponderance of privately-owned entities who seem to operate on the minimum margins in almost everything they do.

It will be no surprise to regular readers of *Shopfloor* to learn that these two sectors, whose employees have suf-

fered most, have low trade union density levels.

These mainly non-unionised sectors suffer from a lack of decent sick pay schemes, chronic under-staffing, low pay as standard and terrible working conditions.

Many of these desperately put-upon workers continue to work, even when feeling unwell, as they need to feed and clothe themselves and their families out of poverty wages. Many of these workers live in overcrowded and substandard accommodation. Some are forced to bed share, whilst working inhumane hours for a shower of greedy bastards who deduct money from poverty wages for the privilege of living in company-owned hovels.

Covid-19 did exactly what it was engineered to do as it set about indiscriminately killing many of our most vulnerable citizens under prevailing workplace circumstances engineered by capitalism and corporate greed. Capitalism killed people.

Covid-19 did the murderous dirty deeds in those work sectors. But it was willingly and ably facilitated by capitalist ideology for wealth creation. The slavish subservient relationship Ireland has developed over decades with the system of extreme profits, at any cost, embedded into our national love of cute hoorism has contributed to killing many unfortunate victims of the virus every bit as much as Covid-19 did.

Capitalism did the heavy lifting while Covid-19 performed the coup-de-grace.



Picture: Fabrizio Pucci (CC BY 2.0)

Let's think BIG when it comes to organising...

IT IS MY considered view that dealing with important issues like the projected impact of rapid automation in the retail sector or the shape of our economy post-pandemic cannot be adequately tackled by Mandate on a piecemeal 'shop-by-shop' basis. These massive challenges must be tackled at an industrial sectoral level with union activists from a range of leading retail employments at the core of everything we do.

No-one person has all the answers. However, similar organising unions to Mandate such as Unite the Union, under Sharon Graham's organising leadership, have determined that the traditional approach of organising one workplace or one employer at a time was always a strategy doomed to failure.

In challenging the collective strength of global capitalism organising unions, such as Mandate, need to work cleverer or slowly disappear like the proverbial snow off a ditch.

Unions must adapt and mirror their approach to organising in a similar way to the collective organisation of modern global capitalism. Organising shop by shop, office by office and bar by bar is an outdated concept which eats away resources and frustrates the establishment and power of any real effective collective organised labour.

By organising across the retail sector and building a "combine" of shop stewards from the dominant companies, it is very possible to win collective victories for many workplaces rather than on a one-by-one employer basis.

One of Unite's early UK organising campaigns in meat production succeeded in securing a groundbreaking 'Minimum Standards Agreement' with the big supermarket chains and the suppliers.

This agreement ensured a living wage, parity of pay and permanency of contract for tens of thousands of workers. Might this collective organising approach developed over time by Unite be the future way forward for Mandate in organising workers who need a union more now than at any stage of our past history?

Many moons ago Mandate negotiated 'Town Agreements' which set standards across retail for individual towns. Town Agreements involved a cross-section of retail workers from different employments collectively bargaining for their locality.

Mandate's Retail Charter 2020, which outlines the aspirations of our union towards achieving a living wage and better terms and conditions, is a perfect model for achieving collective solidarity action across the entire retail sector.

A sectoral campaigning retail union led by our union activists working alongside our union leadership could become a strong collective challenge to retail capitalism and extreme profits at a time of great national need for a better and more equal socialist-based economy and society.

The only effective answer to organised greed is organised labour.



Trade union rebel with a cause

From Lucifer to Lazarus: A Life on the Left
 By Mick O'Reilly
 Published by The Lilliput Press

BOOK REVIEW by Brian Forbes
 Mandate National Coordinator

BOOK reviews are normally outside my normal range of competencies, however, *From Lucifer To Lazarus – A Life On The Left* by Mick O'Reilly is a working class memoir I'm prepared to make an exception for (albeit a number of threatening phone calls from Comrade O'Reilly urging me to write a review also helped to focus my mind).

I first came across Mick sometime in 2003 during my first meeting as a Trades Council representative on the Congress Northern Ireland Committee. The meeting was being held at the iconic ATGWU building in Belfast.

We all sat around a big opulent mahogany table in the boardroom which adjoined the office of the previously-sacked but now-reinstated ATGWU Official Mick O'Reilly.

All the great and the good union leaders of the six counties were present in the room and, more importantly, a lovely big trolley with sandwiches tea and coffee was wheeled in prior to the commencement of the meeting.

My own General Secretary Jim McCusker, NIPSA, was present and it felt a wee bit like I'd arrived at the big boys' table, in the big boys' room albeit slightly overawed but game as a pheasant and looking for change.

Shortly after the NIC-ICTU meeting commenced the adjoining office door swung open and Mick O'Reilly sauntered in saying, "Don't mind me folks I'm just in to pick up a sambo, carry on."

I knew Mick had been in the wars with the conservative ATGWU General Secretary Bill Morris which ended in Mick and his comrade Eugene McGlone prevailing with reinstatement to their former positions within the union.

Mick the fighting rebel was laying a marker down by interrupting the NIC-ICTU meeting on the pretence of picking up a ham sambo. Either that or he really loved ham sambos and couldn't take the chance they'd all be scoffed.

I prefer to believe the former, but either way, it was a wonderful piece of political choreography which I admired and celebrated with a wry smirk at the resultant steam arising from the ears of several of my esteemed union colleagues in the room. I've greatly admired Mick's balls and hutzpah from that day to this.

Mick writes as he talks, with all the honesty and passion of a Dublin working class union leader. Born in the Coombe in October 1946 and raised in the Liberties and Ballyfermot, he tells us his childhood was a happy one but this memoir isn't re-

ally about any of that.

It's an immensely readable and relatable story of struggle and perseverance over political chicanery within the trade union movement by careerists not fit to lace the boots of the rebel O'Reilly.

Mick joined the Communist Party in England for a few years before returning to Dublin to fight the good fight in 1967. His decision to return manifested itself after attending a production in Birmingham of O'Casey's *The Plough and the Stars*, saying, "I'm getting out of here. This isn't where I belong. If I'm going to make a contribution to this Marxist movement, I'd better do it in my own home place."

On his return and at the insistence of Communist leader Mick O'Riordan, the Stalinist O'Reilly was once more agitating on home turf – and he writes, "I didn't half-believe in communism, I fully believed in it".

Years of working class struggle and trade union activism ensued with Mick becoming active in car assembly plants such as Fiat in the early 1970s. It was here he honed his militant tendencies and when the National Union of Vehicle Builders merged with the ATGWU in 1972, which Mick fully supported, his working class credentials and uncompromising bolshie attitude towards achieving the best for his fellow workers would see him grow in stature within the union.

Despite strained relationships over the years with some of the paid union officials he eventually followed in the footsteps of his great friend and mentor, Mattie Merrigan, and secured a full-time union official job with the ATGWU starting in Dundalk.

His first act was to rid the branch meetings of prayers which rankled with some of the rank and file but Mick's stance was 100% in-



Veteran trade unionist Mick O'Reilly pulls no punches in his warts-and-all memoir of life on the left...

clusive. We pray to all Gods or none.

In writing his memoir Mick pulls no punches. His anecdotes about friends and foes are told with a mix of good humour and brutal honesty. His disaffection with the Communist Party began with the Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 to crush the 'Prague Spring' and the incredible ongoing ability of the left in Ireland to implode at every single opportunity.

Despite this frustration, Mick joined the Labour Party and was ac-

tive in the militant Labour Left faction trying to impose the structure of Eurocommunism on the party before the Labour Party purged this militancy in the late 1980s.

O'Reilly's astute analysis of social partnership and national wage agreements as not being in the best interest of his own class was spot on. His preference for free collective bargaining and worker participation in wage agreements is similar to my own and stands the test of time.

Free collective bargaining is about much more than wages he writes: "It would expand the control of workers and politicise the trade union movement. It requires a leadership that has the political ambition to do such things, and the Irish trade union movement don't see things like that." I shouted 'Hear, hear! Comrade' and punched the air when I read those lines.

Mick O'Reilly was a consistent voice of worker conscience within the trade union movement and officialdom must have wished they could silence him once and for all. Silence him but perhaps not in the Jimmy Hoffa-type way of silencing a union leader.

His efforts to bring the train drivers union ILDA which split from SIPTU, into the ATGWU was a particularly turbulent period which, when coupled with a few other factors, led the then London-based General Secretary of ATGWU Bill Morris to move against O'Reilly.

In 2001, both Mick O'Reilly and Eugene McGlone were suspended and dismissed from the union on trumped-up charges which were the subject of a three-year internal and external campaign successfully led by O'Reilly to his subsequent reinstatement.

A shift to the left in union leadership from Morris to Tony Woodley was also a significant contributory factor in facilitating O'Reilly's and McGlone's return to the union.

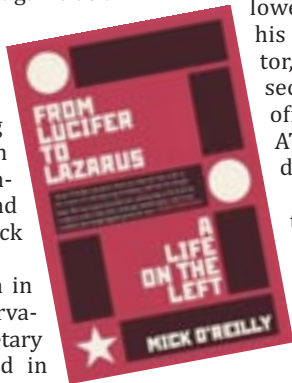
Love him or loathe him, Mick O'Reilly is the type of union leader who simply won't be ignored. However, this fine book is about much more than Mick O'Reilly the man. It's the collective conscience of a past history that many union and political leaders would prefer to forget. It's an insider's warts-and-all view of strikes, power struggles, political struggles, negotiations, victories and defeats.

It provides a voice to many of those forgotten foot soldiers in both the trade union movement and the political movement who wanted to change the world for the better and even shines a light on those who didn't.

Some comrades of those times may view things differently from O'Reilly's version of events but that's not important. What is important is that this life well lived was recorded and evermore cemented into the labour history of our country.

From Lucifer to Lazarus is a riveting, can't-put-down type of a read even though we all know the ending to his colourful life story hasn't yet arrived. Mick O'Reilly remains involved within his local Unite branch of his union and also attends regular meetings of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions.

This Dublin working class rebel with a cause still has a chapter or two to write and perhaps a fitting title for the book sequel might be *From Lazarus to Lucifer* as there's still a devilish glint in those eyes of his which are harkening for social change, justice and a better future for his beloved Irish working class.



Mick O'Reilly's disaffection with the Communist Party began with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968

Picture: Public Domain

Webinar hears Covid crisis exposed low wage economy

THE old adage that a 'happy worker is an efficient worker' has been replaced with a 'vulnerable worker is an obedient worker' and is one of the consequences of the growth of precarious employment.

Mandate activist Eoghan Fox made the comments during a special Uni Youth webinar on the issue on July 22nd.

Eoghan, who is Vice-President of UNI Europa Youth, rubbished employer claims that workers liked the flexibility it offered or that it 'suited young people' or 'made you your own boss'.

He told the webinar: "What it's really about is resetting the power dynamic between capital and labour and breaking down workers' natural sense of collectivism. It is a way to cir-

cumnavigate labour laws, to have cheaper labour costs. It is a method to alienate workers from their work and each other."

Eoghan then spoke about the various forms of precarious employment – from those engaged in the gig economy to bogus self-employment to zero-hour contracts and involuntary part-time employment.

"With the rise of the Precariat and the 'working poor', a whole generation of people are now worse off than their parents," he told webinar participants, and warned that this development would have a "major impact on mental health and general wellbeing".

And Eoghan also warned that the Covid-19 pandemic would intensify growing trends toward precarious employment. "The bosses

will never miss the opportunity of a good crisis to increase profits at the expense of workers," he said. "There are various examples of this in previous crises, wars, economic collapses, environmental and natural disasters."

He pointed out that when the Covid-19 pandemic struck, the then caretaker government in Ireland had initiated a universal payment of €350 for anyone temporarily furloughed or who had lost their job as a result of the virus.

"What this exposed almost immediately was that there are tens of thousands of workers – particularly in the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors – that became substantially better off as a result of this payment.

"It exposed the vast numbers of working

poor in the state, the vast numbers of people despite being in employment that were earning substantially less than €350 per week."

He told webinar participants that the owner of a popular fast food restaurant had gone on national radio decrying the flat-rate payment, claiming it would mean he would find it difficult to entice people back to work for him.

"Needless to say," Eoghan continued, "the rate was promptly reduced under huge pressure from bosses who pay poverty wages, employers' groups and right-wing politicians."

Pointing out that the Living Wage in Ireland is calculated at €483 a week gross, he added: "If you were earning less than €200 a week pre-Covid, the payment has now been reduced to €203."

Empowering youth and igniting change

EARLIER this year and weeks before much of the world went into lockdown over Covid-19, Mandate activist Eoghan Fox joined a UNI Europa Youth delegation to attend meetings of the UNI Youth Presidium and UNI Africa Youth steering committee.

Held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, on February 18th and 19th, the meetings allowed delegates to share their own stories of struggle, to strengthen international networks among young workers and activists, and to discuss and formulate motions from each of the four regions for the global youth conference which was to be held in Fortaleza, Brazil.

Eoghan, who is Vice-President of UNI Europa Youth, told *Shopfloor*: "In my speech at the UNI Europa Youth conference last October, I made the point that capitalism was very much globalised in today's world. The only way we, as young workers and trade union activists, can challenge this – and win the victories we need – was through organising across borders and across continents.

Message

"And this was the message I wanted to bring to the presidium meeting and I will bring the same message to all my international work."

Delegates heard reports from each region detailing work carried out over the previous two years, including information about summer schools, activists' training and the hugely-successful mentoring programme.

The mentoring programme involves the partnering of seasoned youth activists with those with less experience in order to develop skills and promote the work of the international in regions and countries where there are fewer affiliates.

The importance of the ILO Convention 190 against violence and harassment was discussed with debate centred on how trade unionists could apply pressure on individual governments to ratify it.

Delegates were told that countries that do ratify the convention in turn put pressure on countries where there are huge issues around gender-



Solidarity in action: a group huddle (above) follows two days of debate

Positive engagement: Delegates take part in a team-building exercise (left) through picking up trash in the botanical gardens in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

conference were the subject of discussions at the meeting with working groups to discuss each topic.

Eoghan said: "One striking thing that came out of these discussions and meetings was that despite the different cultures and backgrounds we all come from, the issues we're facing as young workers and youth trade union activists are the same the world over.

"The solutions we come up with are global solutions that require a strong and unified movement of young workers and activists to implement." After two days of intense dis-

ussion, the third day comprised of practical activities and team-building exercises, including a trash pick-up in the botanical gardens.

Eoghan said: "It is important, wherever we go in the international trade union movement, that we show we are the solution to the problems that exist.

"We – as young people, in particular – have the solutions. We're doing the work now, today, and we need a seat at the table in order to implement the ideas we have on a national and international level."

based violence and sexual harassment. A practical example was given that the new collective bargaining agreement with Orange in Senegal has the convention written into it.

To date, Uruguay remains the only country to have formally ratified the convention but the new left-wing government in Spain has now com-

mitted itself to ratifying it in the near future. It is important that whatever administration is in power in the Dáil, we as a trade union movement should exert pressure to have it ratified.

Four motions – on solidarity, global companies, the world of work, and climate justice – slated for the global

HISTORY

Digital festival to mark centenary of the ambush at Kilmichael

By Tommy McKearney
Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum

BY NOVEMBER 1920 Ireland was experiencing the most intense period of what we have now come to call the Black and Tan war – eighteen-year-old Kevin Barry executed in Mountjoy Prison; a devastating attack on British Intelligence in Dublin followed by reprisal killings of football spectators in Croke Park; while in Cork weeks after MacSwiney's death, Tom Barry's Flying Column delivered a shattering blow to Britain's military presence when they ambushed the Auxiliaries at Kilmichael.

The history of Ireland, however, is much too complex to be defined by the events of any one month, no matter how important those occurrences may have been.

Deep running social and economic factors have had a huge impact on the shaping of our history. By the outbreak of hostilities in 1919, a centuries-long bitter struggle for the land had created a rural population alienated from the governing authority and its servants, especially the police. Added to this was the emerging

and disenchanted urban proletariat, living in appalling poverty and recently emboldened by Larkin and Connolly's organising of the militant IT&GWU.

There was too the massive influence of international factors. The largest of these was, of course, the role of the British Empire and its occupation of Ireland. Long-viewed by London as strategically vital from a military point of view, Whitehall had by early 1920 additional concerns in relation to Ireland.

The Bolshevik revolution was invoking a sympathetic response among sections of the Irish working class, inspiring an outbreak of worker takeovers unapologetically defining themselves as soviets. Further afield, revolutionaries in other colonies such as India, Egypt and Cyprus were taking note of Ireland's fight for independence.

And niggling away in the background was the realisation in London that the USA with its large Irish population, was making little secret of its determination to displace the Grand Dame Britannia as the world's num-



Picture: Connor O'Neill (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Picture: Neale Adams (CC BY 2.0)



Memorial (above) to three republican volunteers killed in the ambush. Picture (top) of ambush scene which appeared in the British press. Trade unionist and republican Patrick Moran (above right)



workers' cause, including many trade unionists. Among those union folk was Patrick Moran, a founder of the Irish National Union of Vintners Grocers and Allied Trades Assistants, now incorporated into Mandate. Patrick was executed in Mountjoy on 14th March 1921.

These questions and others will be addressed in the series beginning on the evening of Friday, 27th November, continuing throughout Saturday, 28th November, and concluding on Sunday, 29th November.

Full details will be published closer to the time on the forum's Facebook page: Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum at <https://bit.ly/30Tww9N>.

ber one super-power.

Such was the backdrop to that critical month of November 1920. Such also were the circumstances that were influenced by actions taken at the time by Ireland's republican activists. In order to reflect on this crucial period, the Peadar O'Donnell Socialist Republican Forum is organising a series of digital events to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the Kilmichael ambush.

While celebrating the achievement of the West Cork Flying Column on that November day in 1920, the

forum's digital festival will also address other questions related to the period. Could the measure of independence gained, have been won by other means? What was the underlying class tensions among the republican forces? Could the eventual descent into civil war have been foretold at that time? Did these events influence the Belfast pogroms?

Yet another question pertinent to society today is the question of why Labour was forced to wait, especially since so many participants in that struggle were supportive of the

INTERNATIONAL

Occupied Territories Bill: Let us show 'moral vision & courage'

INDEPENDENT Senator Frances Black has expressed her shock and disappointment at Taoiseach Micheál Martin's suggestion that the Occupied Territories Bill – introduced by his own party to the Dáil and explicitly set out in the Fianna Fáil pre-election manifesto – may breach EU law.

Speaking on July 23rd, Senator Black told the Seanad: "With formal annexation of the West Bank now explicitly promised [by the Israeli government] after 50 years of occupation, my goal has been to move beyond condemnation and to offer leadership.

"I don't want to look back in 20 years and say we didn't do everything in our power on this, the most defining human rights issue of our time, and that we failed to show the moral vision and courage we showed against Apartheid in the 80s."

Pointing out that she had spoken

on various shared platforms with Fianna Fáil representatives on the issue, she continued: "Just a few months later, it's disappointing and highly inconsistent to see the Taoiseach suggest that the Bill his party tabled may breach EU law.

"So what changed? I'd like to know. EU law has not changed in the last five months... and with the annexation of the West Bank looming, we need leadership and commitment not inconsistency."

In a later Facebook post, Senator Black wrote: "The Taoiseach has said the Bill will not be a game changer. Every journey starts with the first step and I believe that this Bill could be the start of a movement against the occupation of Palestine."

She added: "If the Taoiseach has a game changing plan, I would ask him to unveil it and I have no doubt that he will get the support of the majority



'Human rights issue of our time': Senator Frances Black speaking in the Seanad

of the Irish people." And Mandate National Coordinator Brian Forbes also hit out at Fianna Fáil's "flip-flopping" on the Occupied Territories Bill, claiming it was "disappointing at best and, at its worst, treacherous behaviour".

"This important Bill, introduced by Senator Black, is rightly supported by the vast majority of Irish citizens and by a majority of TDs in the Dáil – at least it was until talks about the formation of a coalition government."

He continued: "While horse trad-

ing on policies is part and parcel of any discussions over the setting up of a coalition, the early soundings on the agreement over a programme for government suggested FF and the Greens remained steadfast in their support for the bill.

"However, in pursuit of an agreed coalition political platform the lives of Palestinians were literally sacrificed in return for a tenuous hold on political office."

Forbes pointed out that Ireland had led the way against Apartheid in the 1980s. "This was when the Dunnes strikers led a world-renowned campaign that ended in Irish legislation banning goods from South Africa," he told *Shopfloor*.

Forbes insisted there was a "clear moral, legal and political basis" for enacting the Occupied Territories Bill. "Back in the 1980s the original advice from the attorney general was

that such a ban would be contrary to the rules that existed within the European Economic Community," he explained.

"Subsequently, a change of attorney general brought with it a change in legal opinion and the ban was finally implemented and it proved to be very successful."

He continued: "Fianna Fáil will know that the Palestinian people see Ireland as a beacon of hope for an end to the Israeli apartheid regime through the enactment of the Occupied Territories Bill.

"Failure by Fianna Fáil to honour its public commitments and to deliver on the Bill will be seen by the vast majority for what it is – political shape-shifting with life-and-death consequences for the innocent men, women and children of Palestine."

"History will not forgive them for such treachery," he added.

Comharthaíocht dhátheangach in



Eoghan O'Garraile

TÁ BLIAIN chinneadh romhainn anseo in Ollscoil na Banríona ó thaobh cearta teanga de, go háirithe i leith chomharthaíocht dhátheangach. Ach ní gan dua a tharla seo. D'ainneoin gur tháinig dlús lenár bhfeachtas sa Chumann Gaelach le cúpla bliain anuas, is féidir a rá gur thosaigh sé nuair a baineadh síos an chomharthaíocht dhátheangach a bhí ann i bhfoirgneamh Aontas na Mac Léinn in 1997.

Mhaígh an Fair Employment Commission nach raibh an chomharthaíocht "oiriúnach le timpeallacht oibre neodrach" ach bhain an Ollscoil na comharthaí síos fiú sular chuir an FEC brú orthu. Chuaigh cathaoirleach an FEC ag an am, Bob Cooper, níos faide arís le rá gur chruthaigh na comharthaí Gaeilge "chill factor" do Phrotastúnaigh san Ollscoil, agus ní raibh siad úsáideach óir níor chuir siad an teanga chun cinn. Leoga, thug na haontachtaithe lántacaíocht don chinneadh.

D'fhógair an UUP gur bhagairt ab iad na comharthaí ó mhic léinn san Ollscoil a bhí báúil don Phoblach-



Aontas na Mac Léinn Ollscoil na Banríona agus agóid taobh amuigh de phríomhfoirgneamh QUB

tachas, agus chuir Peter Weir in iúl don phobal gur "eiseamláir an tseicteachais agus impiriúlachas cultúrtha" í iarpolasaí na hOllscoile ar chomharthaíocht dhátheangach. Ar ndóigh, níor thug siad fianaise ar bith leis na ráitis seo a chosaint. Ag an am, ní hiad na haontachtaithe antoisceacha amháin a bhí ag labhairt go poiblí faoi, óir thug an páirtí Alliance, Aontas Mac Léinn na hÉireann agus an Community Relations Council fáilte roimh an chinneadh.

Áfach, níor chuir muid an feachtas ar son chomharthaíocht dhátheangach

faoi lánseol go dtí deireadh na bliana 2017. D'éirigh Gaeilgeoirí na hOllscoile níos gníomhaí agus feargaí de réir mar a d'éirigh achán Gael óg sna sé chontae níos gníomhaí agus feargaí ag an am: idirdhealú na Gaeilge sa chóras oideachais agus feachtas an Dream Dearg.

Bhí slua againn go fóill ar an mheánscoil nuair a tharla an t-idirdhealú seo agus ghlac muid páirt sna hagóidí in éadan an DUP nuair a ghearr siad an scéim spáranachtaí Líofa in 2016 agus nuair a ghearr an Education Authority na seirbhísí óga



Pictiúirí: Peter Clarke (CC BY-SA 3.0); An Cumann Gaelach QUB

Gaeilge in iarthar Bhéal Feirste. Chonacthas dúinn an t-idirdhealú a bhí á dhéanamh ar an Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais, ach níos tábhachtaí arís, nuair a tugadh an t-airgead sin ar ais do na seirbhísí Gaeilge, chonacthas dúinn cumhacht na hagóide.

Mar sin de, thosaigh an coiste nua sa bhliain acadúil 2017/18 le brí úr a chur san fheachtas, le hagóid ag geataí na hOllscoile ag éileamh "Aitheantas Anois".

Scríobh siad litir chuig an Leas-Seansailéir ag an am ag iarraidh cruinniú leis faoi cheist na Gaeilge san Ollscoil, agus gur cheart do na comharthaí a bheith curtha in airde arís. Bhí éileamh nua acu, áfach, chun comharthaíocht a chur in airde chan amháin i bhfoirgneamh an Aontais arís, ach fud fad champas na hOllscoile. D'fhreagair an Leas-Seansailéir le tagairt ar pháirt 3.1 dá bpolasaí Chomhionannais 's Éagsúlachta a dhearbhaigh nach gcuirfidís comharthaí in airde a raibh "corraitheach, ionsaitheach nó bagrach".

Stoirm pholaitiúil

Bhain sé úsáid ag an téarmaíocht chéanna ar úsáid siad i 1997, ach an t-am seo bhí an Cumann Gaelach eagraithe, agus thapaigh muid agóid a eagrú i mí Feabhra 2018. Bhí i bhfad níos mó daoine ag an léirisiú seo ná an chéad agóid, agus bhí tuairiscí níos cuimsithe ag na meáin ar an eachtra.

Le linn cúpla lá den stoirm pholaitiúil a chruthaigh muid, ghabh an Leas-Seansailéir a leithscéal agus bhunaigh uasaicme na hOllscoile grúpa oibre chun ceist na Gaeilge a phlé, go háirithe i leith an pholasaí Chomhionannais 's Éagsúlachta a bhí as dáta. Bhí sé thar am gur mhothaigh reachtairí na hOllscoile

seo, atá ag saothrú na céadta mílte punt in aghaidh na bliana, na fadhbanna atá ag croílár na hOllscoile agus an Stáit seo.

Ag an am céanna, bhrúigh an Cumann Gaelach i dtreo teacitic eile chun ceist na Gaeilge a bhrú ar an Ollscoil: dlúthpháirtíocht i dtoghcháin an Aontais. Rith ball an choiste Liam Ó hEidhin do Leas-Uachtarán Chomhionannais 's Éagsúlachta, leis an sprioc chun "an pobal Gaelach a thabhairt isteach chuig croí an Aontais".

D'ainneoin gur chaill muid an toghchán, le thart faoi 100 vóta amháin, bhí an bua againn lenár sprioc. Ní pearsantacht Liam Uí hEidhin a chur muid chun tosaigh san fheachtasaíocht, ach mana simplí: cearta teanga, comharthaíocht dhátheangach, agus an Ghaeilge. Bhrúigh seo ceist na Gaeilge ar thábla an Aontais, agus gheall an cúigear buaiteoirí go dtabharfaidís lántacaíocht don Ghaeilge, feachtas an Chumainn Ghaelaigh san áireamh.

Lena chois sin, bhí feachtas eile ar siúl againn, le cuidiú ó chomhairleoirí san Aontas, chun rún le Oifigeach Páirtaimseartha na Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm den chéad uair san Ollscoil. Theip ar an rún seo an chéad uair ach arís bhí an Cumann Gaelach níos eagraithe an t-am seo, agus d'fhreastail slua ar an chruinniú agus labhair muid ar son an rúin mall i 2018.

I ndiaidh an bhua tháinig an reifreann, agus arís bhí muid ag feachtasaíocht leis an mhana simplí céanna: cearta teanga, comharthaíocht dhátheangach, agus an Ghaeilge. Bhí 76% den vóta caite ar son Oifigeach Páirtaimseartha na Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm. Nuair a rith Aodhán Ó Baoill don ról i dtoghchán an Aontais 2019, arís níor



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Ollscoil na Banríona?



chuir muid a phearsantacht chun cinn, ach an mana simplí céanna, agus níor chaith an méid sin mic léinn vóta ar son oifigeach páirtaimseartha i stair na hOllscoile.

Nuair a tháinig muid chuig deireadh na bliana acadúla 2018/2019, bhí an grúpa oibre a chuir an Ollscoil le chéile réidh réamhthaispeáint an pholasáí Chomhionannais, Éagsúlachta 's Ionchuimsitheachta nua a léiriú don phobal. D'athraigh siad páirt 3.1 den

pholasáí ó 2008, leoga, ach athrú focail amháin a bhí i gceist óir níor lu-aigh siad an Ghaeilge.

Mar sin de, le linn an phrósais chomhairliúcháin don pholasáí úr a mhair dhá sheachtain, chur muid aighneacht cuimsithe chuig an Ollscoil ag éileamh go gcuirfidís an Ghaeilge agus comharthaíocht dhátheangach isteach sa pholasáí, ní amháin le go mbeadh muid ábalta na comharthaí a chur in airde ach go mbeadh cosaint acu sa todhchaí nach

raibh ann in 1997. Bhí tuilleadh brú de dhíth, áfach, agus mar sin de, shiúil muid thart an champas arís ag feachtasaíocht, agus déan tomhas ar an mana a d'úsáid muid.

D'éirigh linn 1,000 síniú a fháil ar son ár n-aighneachta, ó idir mhic léinn agus oibrithe, ag éileamh comharthaíocht dhátheangach. Ba phrécás iomlán é an próiseas seo don Ollscoil, agus léirigh siad arís a neamhábaltaíocht chun plé le cearta, d'ainneoin tuarastal s'acu 's fiacha móra s'againne. Chuir siad síneadh ama leis an phrósais chomhairliúcháin, le torthaí an phrósais geallta roimh dheireadh na bliana.

Is fianaise í ár bhfeachtas go raibh an Ghaeilge ann ar an oileán seo i dtólamh, agus léirítear seo nuair a chrítear an talamh le mana simplí ar nós 'cearta teanga', go bhfuil agus go mbeidh tacaíocht ann don Ghaeilge go deo. Ba phrósais fada é athshlánú na Gaeilge agus síleann institiúidí ar nós Ollscoil na Banríona gurbh fhéidir leo ruaig a chur ar na glúnta is gníomhaí agus is feargaí den Ollscoil le síneadh ama.

Ach an rud nach dtuigeann Ollscoil na Banríona ná de réir mar a leantar ar aghaidh leis an idirdhealú ar an Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais, más rud é gurb an DUP, EA nó Ollscoil eile in Éirinn, éiríonn na Gaeil óga ní ba chomhfhiósraí ar an idirdhealú ina n-éadan, agus nuair a dhéanann cuid acu an cinneadh freastal ar Ollscoil na Banríona, beidh glúin níos gníomhaí agus níos feargaí ann ná mar a bhí muidne.

INTERNATIONAL COLOMBIA

Massacre exposes state failure to advance peace process - JFC

RIGHT-WING paramilitaries shot dead eight people, including a prominent local community leader, on July 18th in the Catatumbo region of north-eastern Colombia.

Community leader Ernesto Aguilar Barrera, a member of the peasant organisation ASCAMCAT, and seven others were murdered by a group known as los Rastrojos.

According to pressure group Justice for Colombia (JFC), the killings "once again laid bare the social and human cost of the Colombian state's failure to advance the peace process sufficiently and address the total collapse in security" across many regions in the country.

And JFC urged international supporters of the peace process to intensify efforts to support the full implementation of the agreement, calling it "the best route to resolve the

human rights crisis which has intensified to horrifying levels this year".

The JFC claim paramilitary and paramilitary successor groups with historic links to Colombian state institutions have used the cover of the coronavirus pandemic to extend control over certain areas with a return to levels of violence not seen in many years.

A spokesperson said: "Particular emphasis must be placed on the Colombian state's immediate obligation to participate more fully in the National Commission of Security Guarantees and develop concrete measures to dismantle paramilitary or paramilitary successor groups.

"As repeatedly recommended by the United Nations Verification Mission, the National Commission must be convened regularly to fulfil its function."



President Raúl Castro looks on as Colombian President Santos, left, and FARC-EP leader Timoleón Jiménez shake hands after signing the ceasefire agreement in Havana in June 2016

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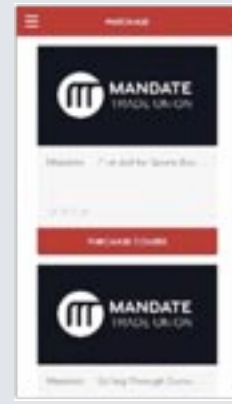
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The right to log off

TECHNOLOGICAL innovations and advances have been gradually transforming the world of work over many decades. Work as we know it today will fundamentally change over the next few years. The onset of the Covid-19 global health pandemic has merely intensified the need for more innovative and safer ways of working and has increased the speed and need for change. Workers need a positive agenda to shape the transformation that is under way.

We are possibly on the cusp of a new industrial revolution. The first industrial revolution conjures up images of steam engines, spinning machines, and other mechanical instruments. This time the means are different, but no less revolutionary. Simply put, phones, tablets and home-working desks are transforming work as we know it.

The first industrial revolution described led to a great shift in where work took place as big industrialised cities grew. The new industrial revolution is actually leading to a shift from big workplaces to homes. Up to 25% of companies now offer people



Paul Dillon

“ The introduction of the right to disconnect would be one step towards helping workers deal with one of the downside of tech, which is the ‘always on’ culture ”

the chance to work from home and that percentage is exponentially increasing since the latest health pandemic began.

In retail also, work is being transformed from what it was. Almost more than any other sector, there is

huge scope for displacement of work over time, as AI and technology re-shape how work is done.

In general terms, there is a need for unions to grasp the mettle and begin to address the challenges posed by technology.

What is clear is that there is the potential for a positive, proactive agenda based on demands to make work better through technology, and to ensure that workers benefit from increases in productivity. There is also potential to use technology to create good paying jobs in every sector – to paraphrase, technology and well-paying work for the many not the few.

A recent University of Limerick report, commissioned by the Financial Services Union, came up with four broad recommendations. The report authors found that employers need to pay more attention to the upskilling and reskilling of workers.

Titled Technology, Work and Skills: The Impact of Technology on Employees, the report concluded that employers need to ensure measures are put in place to prevent the over-



Illustration: Xoan Baltar (CC BY 2.0)

ers have access to, and organise, a trade union in their workplace if they are to address the challenges identified.”

These independent findings echo other recent reports, which argue for a tilting of the balance back in favour of workers. For example, a recent OECD report recommended a return of collective bargaining internationally. This research comes on the back of decades of decline in collective bargaining coverage. One element of the report which has attracted significant attention has been the call for an introduction of a “right to disconnect”.

The FSU will be continuing this campaign throughout the year. You can support the introduction of legislation on the right to disconnect at <https://bit.ly/36iNjgg>

The introduction of the right to disconnect would be one step towards helping workers deal with one of the downside of tech, which is the ‘always on’ culture. More will be required to ensure that the voice of workers is heard as the new, technology-driven industrial revolution gathers steam.

One thing is for sure: we should attempt to use technology to improve work, not to downgrade terms and conditions – and we should shape technology to create well paid, secure work.

Paul Dillon is Growth and Communications Manager with FSU



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"The great only appear great because we are on our knees: let us rise."

Shop Assistants and Trade Unionism

By James Connolly, *The Workers' Republic*, November 26th, 1899

WE ARE glad to see that an effort is being made in Dublin to organise the shop assistants into a trade union for their own protection and uplifting. So far the men most concerned – the assistants themselves – have responded heartily to the call for organisation, and if they develop as much staying power as they have enthusiasm there is little doubt that their union will ere long be able to win for the members substantial and much needed reforms.

And in, perhaps, no sphere of employment in Ireland is reform more needed. The conditions under which the average shop assistant is forced to serve, the irksome and degrading restrictions on his personal freedom, the humiliating dependence on the whim of an employer, not only for employment but also for a semblance of home, incidental to the living-in system, must be infinitely more galling to a self-respecting assistant than the mere manual toil of unskilled labour is to the outside labourer.

But great as the evil is, and universally condemned though it may be, we would despair of any attempt to remedy it which adheres too closely to the stereotyped and outworn methods of old trade unionism – that peculiarly English brand of trade unionism which regarded the strike as its only weapon, and looked with horror upon any proposal to call for legislative assistance for the cause of labour.

When we remember the failure of the effort to introduce early closing in the Dublin boot trade – an effort having the sympathy of a majority of the trade, employers and employed; when we call to mind the practical breakdown of the Painters' Unions in face of a lock-out by the employers, and the systematic victimisation of trade unionists which has followed that lock-out; when we think of the failure of the Typographical Society to hold its own in Dublin in the partial dispute in which it has lately been involved; and when, finally we recall the utter discomfiture of the Amalgamated Engineers in their last and greatest struggle, we feel justified in reserving our approbation or endorsement of any trade unionist activity

which does not bear on the face of it strong proof that its organisers and promoters do not intend to allow their efforts to be dominated by traditional methods of struggle, but are, on the contrary, ready to adapt themselves to the changed, and changing, conditions of the day.

Therefore it is with pleasure we observe that the organisers of the Shop Assistants' Union wisely place a demand for remedial legislation in the forefront of their programme. This is as it should be. Parliament has long been the battle ground for contending factions of the capitalist class; it is time the strong voice of the working class made itself heard there, and such demands as our shop assistant friends make will help to clear the way.

Meanwhile we would point out that the best way to obtain all such minor reforms is for the working class to install its own delegates in every place of political power – parliamentary or local.

When Labour organises to capture political power from the master class, and as a preliminary discards the belief in the necessity for a master class – a belief that was born of the enforced ignorance and barbarism of the past – the reforms withheld today by our rules will be eagerly pressed upon the workers as a foil to blunt the keen edge of their revolutionary activity.

Our friends will observe that the shop-keeping business of Dublin, as exemplified by its most perfect types in the huge drapery estab-

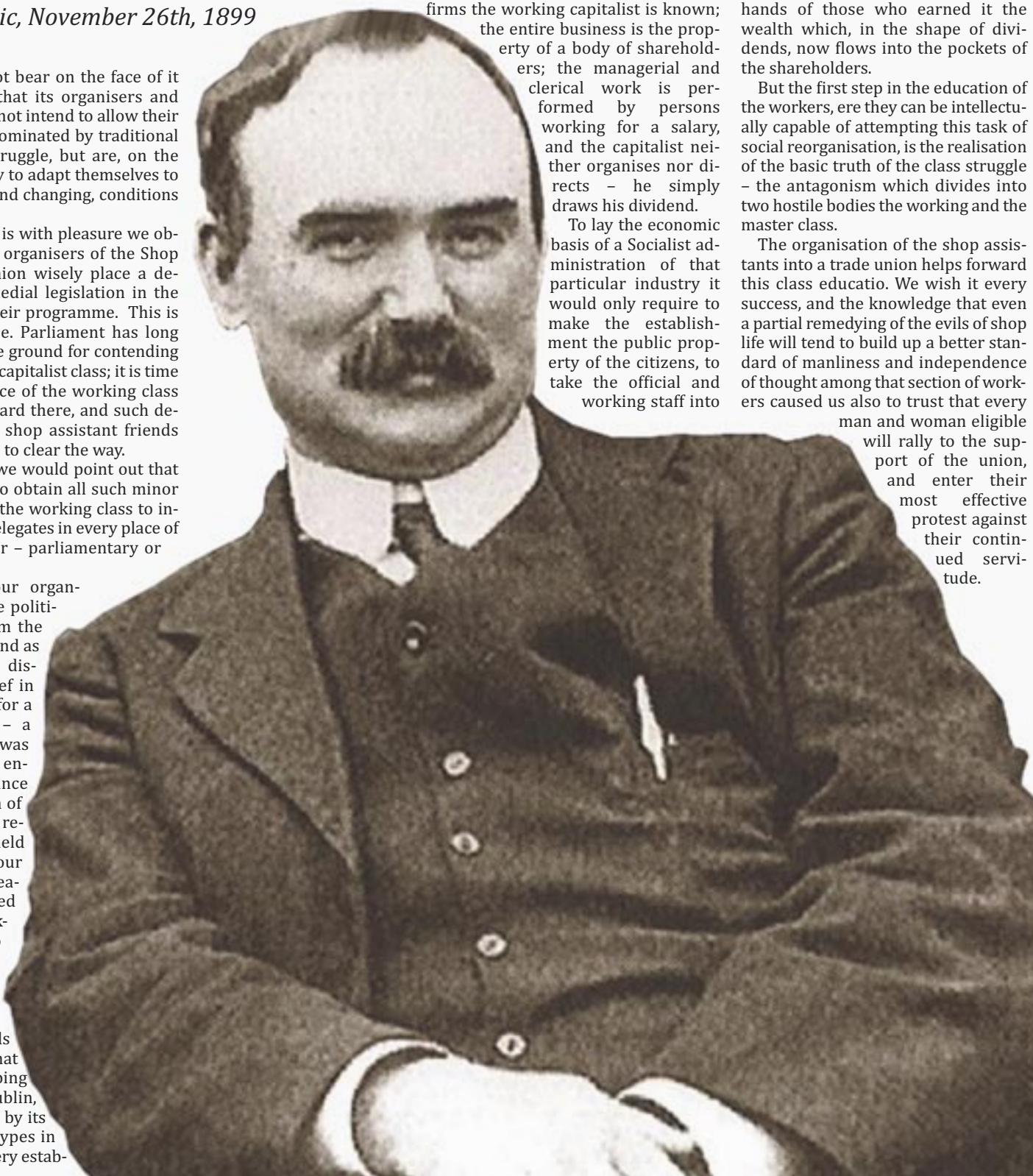
lishments, have themselves demonstrated how easily the private capitalist may be dispensed with. In all those firms the working capitalist is known; the entire business is the property of a body of shareholders; the managerial and clerical work is performed by persons working for a salary, and the capitalist neither organises nor directs – he simply draws his dividend.

To lay the economic basis of a Socialist administration of that particular industry it would only require to make the establishment the public property of the citizens, to take the official and working staff into

the public service of the community and make all positions of trust elective from the ranks; and to transfer to the hands of those who earned it the wealth which, in the shape of dividends, now flows into the pockets of the shareholders.

But the first step in the education of the workers, ere they can be intellectually capable of attempting this task of social reorganisation, is the realisation of the basic truth of the class struggle – the antagonism which divides into two hostile bodies the working and the master class.

The organisation of the shop assistants into a trade union helps forward this class education. We wish it every success, and the knowledge that even a partial remedying of the evils of shop life will tend to build up a better standard of manliness and independence of thought among that section of workers caused us also to trust that every man and woman eligible will rally to the support of the union, and enter their most effective protest against their continued servitude.





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