

# THE DELEGATE

## Newsletter of the Bray & District Council of Trade Unions

May 2021

Issue 3/21

---

### CALL FOR GOVERNMENT ACTION ON YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH COSTS

**The Government has been accused of abrogating responsibility for youth mental health by continuing to impose the age limit whereby people at age 16 cease to get free medicines and prescriptions for their mental illness under the Long Term Illness Scheme.**

Proposing a motion on behalf of SIPTU, Derek Casserly, pointed out that mental illness is the only condition covered under the scheme that only applies to people under age 16. "The last time the scheme was amended was in 1975, that is 46 years ago and were different times. If you had mental illness then you could be committed to a sanatorium!", he stated. "Research has found that by the age of 13, one in three young people in Ireland are likely to have experienced some type of mental health difficulty. By the age of 24, that rate had increased to over one in two. We should also be concerned that the suicide rate for young people aged 15 to 19 years is one of the highest in the EU, he added

"Whilst the Minister will tell us that there are other arrangements in place which help offset excessive medical costs these generally apply to those in financial hardship and the bottom line is that parents, even on reasonable wages, end up having to pay. It's time that this Government do more than pay lip service to this serious problem and demonstrate this in a tangible way by removing this illogical and unfair age limit", he concluded.

Among the medical conditions covered by the Long Term Illness Scheme are; Diabetes insipidus, Diabetes mellitus, Haemophilia, Cerebral palsy, Epilepsy, Cystic fibrosis, Multiple sclerosis, Parkinsonism and Acute leukaemia. Mental illness is the only one that is covered only up to age 16.

The Council unanimously adopted the motion and agreed to campaign on the issue nationally and to seek the support of the wider trade union movement.

\* \* \* \* \*

### SUPPORT FOR NEW MATERNITY HOSPITAL TO BE STATE OWNED

The Campaign Against Church Control of Women's Healthcare is actively involved in trying to stop the proposed new National Maternity Hospital being handed over to the Religious Sisters of Charity. Following a recent briefing by the Campaign a cross-party Oireachtas working group has been established, which includes representatives from the government parties, to fight this, although it is understood that the deal is about to be closed.

A motion from this Council on the issue was adopted by the ICTU Women's Conference in 2020. The resolution noted, among a number of points, that despite being publicly funded, the new hospital is to be owned and managed by a private Catholic healthcare company currently owned by the Religious Sisters of Charity. The resolution also included a demand that, to exclude the possibility of canon law governance of the new hospital, that the facility be built on State-owned land, and, to guarantee the provision of a secular maternity service, the new hospital be placed in public ownership. The Council supports the Campaign and has asked people to raise this with their local TDs and senators as a matter of urgency.

### **TRADE UNIONISTS FOR A NEW AND UNITED IRELAND**

The May meeting of the Council received a presentation from Ruairi Creaney for the group Trade Unionists for a New and United Ireland (TUNUI) which was set up in 2019 with the aim of calling on the labour movement to advocate for a united Ireland and a new all-Ireland constitution with workers' rights at the heart of it.

In a wide ranging address Mr. Creaney pointed out that the TUNUI was composed of trade unionists from across the whole island and were seeking to encourage the labour movement to engage in the debate for Irish unity. The debate about future arrangements had already begun within politics and the media and it is critically important that the trade union movement is involved to ensure that the interests of workers and their families are at the heart of this. If there is to be a united Ireland then it must be a New Ireland that puts workers rights, economic rights, gender rights, as well as universal human rights at the front and centre in a new all-Ireland constitution.

They consider that workers have been divided along sectarian lines, and the interests of workers were subordinated to the interests of big business and ruling classes. The group believe that a date should be set within the next ten years for a referendum on a united Ireland, within the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, and that this is the only way we can manage sectarianism, as we will never eradicate it fully.

The TUNUI are calling for a number of all-Ireland initiatives; a national health service to be available to all regardless of means; Trade Union rights including collective bargaining and a basic living wage; a constitutional right to housing, with proper rent control and investment in public housing; a climate action programme; and a fair tax system that also tackles corporate tax avoidance.

A frank and lively Q&A session followed with contributions from many of the delegates present (which would cover a wide political spectrum) and which touched on many important aspects of the whole debate around all-Ireland unity. In particular, Council President, Mary Diskin, referred to the fact that there was nothing about education in the TUNUI document and she considered that this reflects one of the main difficulties in the whole debate - as education is crucial within the communities. Mr. Creaney accepted that this was a shortcoming and will need to be looked at along with several other issues and pointed out that the document was not a firm position at this point and would be considered in the context of a wider debate.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **KEEP GREYSTONES HOME HELP SERVICE IN PUBLIC OWNERSHIP**

The Council has called for Greystones Home Help Services to remain as a not-for-profit community provider and the operation not to be transferred to a private provider. There was also concerns that initially management had not engaged fully with SIPTU, who represent workers there, however, this would appear to have been resolved and discussions have now taken place between the parties.

We are concerned that the decision to privatise the operation has been taken by the board of management without all other options being properly explored. We understand that there has been no engagement with either Bray or Wicklow Town home help services community providers to explore the option of either of them taking over the Greystones operation, which is the proper solution to this for both workers and the clients. It is simply unacceptable to us that it was intended that this not-for-profit community service is being handed over to a private

provider. This is contrary to commitments given to the unions at a national level.

Whilst SIPTU's health division are now engaged in discussions in relation to the implications for the members' concerned, the Council has requested a meeting with our local Ministers, Stephen Donnelly and Simon Harris, to express our concerns and objections to the proposed privatisation of this most important community service.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **ECONOMISTS SUPPORT FOR STRONG EU DIRECTIVE ON ADEQUATE MINIMUM WAGES**

Two of Europe's leading economists are supporting calls for a strong EU directive on adequate minimum wages as a crucial part of the recovery from the Covid crisis.

In a significant intervention which coincides with the EU social summit in Porto, an open letter signed by professors Mariana Mazzucato and Thomas Piketty says the directive represents a "paradigm shift" in European Commission policy compared to its response to the financial crisis.

Welcoming the directive, the economists argue that backing minimum wages with legislation would genuinely ensure people in work would no longer live below the poverty line. The letter, which is also signed by other renowned economists from across Europe, concludes:

*guarantee the respect of the right to collective bargaining for unions to negotiate better pay and conditions for workers and raise statutory minimum wages to a level which ensures at least a decent standard of living. Adequate minimum wages and strong collective bargaining are not only good for the people, they are clearly also good for the economy."*

Currently, statutory minimum wages in 20 EU member states are set so low that the changes trade unions ask for would entail much-needed wage increases for more than 24 million workers. Working poverty is also rising in Europe as the result of at least 3 million people losing the benefits of collectively bargained wages and working conditions since 2000. The evidence shows that countries with low levels of workers covered by collective bargaining have the lowest wages.

The co-rapporteurs from the European Parliament, supported by trade unions and now top economists, have tabled amendments to strengthen the directive which include: a 'threshold of decency' which would ensure the statutory minimum wages cannot be less than 60% of the median wage and 50% of the average wage in member states, ensuring that the award of public contracts is only to companies that respect the right of workers to join a union and collectively bargain, and giving unions the right to access workplaces and protection against union-busting by employers.

The European Trade Union Confederation also received a message of support from Prof. James K. Galbraith, who said: "*As an economist and student of comparative systems, I can say categorically that countries and regions with high minimum wages, strong unions and labor standards have better economic performance, including lower unemployment, than those lacking in these regards. For this reason, I have always strongly supported movements to raise minimum wage and strengthen labor rights in the United States.*"

ETUC Deputy General Secretary, Esther Lynch stated, "*Many of Europe's most respected economists are saying loud and clear that increasing minimum wages is good for the economy. It is an important message for the EU and member states at this time when the Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages is being discussed in the European Parliament and when the EU is holding its first Social Summit for many years.*"

(Source: ICTU)

\* \* \* \* \*

## FAIRNESS

The disease offered us a chance to reassess how we relate to each other in any number of ways, a chance to restore the fairness lost in the aftermath of 2008 [financial crisis]. By entering into lockdown and volunteering to risk the effects of massive economic damage, we essentially said we were prepared to sacrifice enormously in order to protect those most vulnerable.

That the world made this choice suggests that our sense of fairness trumps (ahem) our yearning for financial gain. Perhaps future historians will see it as a sign of softness and decadence. How long we remember this remains to be seen; the taste of the most delicious meal can be hard to remember when the size of the restaurant bill adds to one's overdraft.

Yet there is a much more significant reminder inherent in the coronavirus. We are a very dim species, for all our cleverness. Every so often, we think we have transcended the physical, chemical and biological reality of where and what we are. Nonetheless, by harnessing co-operation and competition, the twin cogs of our lives oiled by the lubricant of fairness, we have achieved things that our ancestors were incapable of imagining.

Without a specific purpose for our cleverness, we produce inventions like social media and we have begun to think that only we count. In the past, religion was a reminder that there was something bigger than us: it is nature that makes dwarfs of us, although, humans being humans, we created myths of nature and called them gods. In our latest era, because we now believe we understand nature through the laws (that we still often have to amend) of physics, chemistry and biology, we don't think nature applies to us.

---

Coronavirus is a reminder that there is something bigger than us, even if it is much smaller. It is also a reminder that the reason we have developed an aversion to unfairness and a reward system for acting fairly is that these instincts are our best allies in the only fight for survival that counts, which is the need to compete as we cooperate with the rest of existence. And just as the need to remember and recognise our true enemies has not gone away, we need to remember and recognise our allies as well.

**(Excerpts from Brian Fenton - 'To be Fair: The Ultimate Guide to Fairness in the 21st Century')**

\* \* \* \* \*

### A WONDERFUL WORLD?

1. Yet another boat over-filled with migrants sank off the coast of Tunisia. On the 17th May 57 people drowned and 33 rescued. Most of the dead were thought to be from Bangladesh, a nation more than 4,500 miles from where their boat sank. Nobody knows their names, or the circumstances which compelled each of them to set out on the journey. All we know is that they contributed to 2021's running total of the hopeful drowned: 685.

2. Lithuania will give 200,000 doses of Covid-19 vaccines to other Eastern European countries. Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landbergis announced plans to give surplus vaccine doses to Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova. "We are not safe until our neighbours are also safe," he said.

\* \* \* \* \*

**CHARLES CALLAN (LABOUR HISTORIAN) LOOKS AT THE LIFE OF JAMES MCGARRY,  
THE FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL FROM THE INTO**

***James McGarry (1884 – 1967)***

James McGarry was born at the family home, at Abbeyview, Dublin Road, Bray, on 9 July 1884. His parents, James, a mason, and Mary Sherman, had married on 31 August 1881 at the 'Roman Catholic Chapel at Little Bray'. Both were from Little Bray, James' father, also James, was a Steward, whilst Mary's father John (deceased) had been a vintner.



In 1901, their Census Return recorded the family living at 73 Oldconnaught (sic). By then the parents, both aged 'forty' (born 1861), were living with their four children; James (sixteen), and John, both 'scholars', and Mary a dressmaker and Charlotte, a scholar. All were born in County Dublin. They were unusual in that all the family were recorded as being able to speak Irish and English. The family were the sole occupants of their three-room home.

In 1911 they were living at 7 Oldconnaught. James and Mary had aged nineteen and eighteen years over the decade (born 1852 and 1853 respectively). Such was a common phenomenon in the records of the time. Accelerated aging may have been induced by the introduction of old age pensions, payable from age seventy, in January 1909. By then James was recording himself as a Bricklayer.

By 1911 James, then twenty-six, was recorded as a 'National School Teacher', his brother John, was a gardener, and Charlotte, had no recorded occupation. The parents recorded that they were then married twenty-nine years and of the five children they had, four were alive in 1911. Their accommodation had improved considerably as they had a five-room dwelling of which they were sole occupants.

When and where James McGarry underwent his training as a teacher, or where he was employed in his early years, has yet to be ascertained. He may have trained 'on the job' as a 'Monitor' (as 'senior pupils' who functioned as 'teachers assistants' were then known), a method of teacher training and development that had been commonplace but was dying-out by then. Equally, and more probably, he may have attended a formal course in one of the residential teacher training colleges. On retirement in 1949 he had forty-six years service as a teacher (from 1903, aged nineteen) and thirty-two years (from 1917, aged thirty-three) as Principal of St Peter's Boys National School, Little Bray.

James McGarry married Christina Teresa O'Grady at the Church of the Holy Family, Aughrim Street, Dublin, on 20 September 1922. His address was 'Dublin Road, Bray'; the bride's 14 Findlater Street, Dublin. James was recorded as 'National Teacher, and that of his father 'bricklayer', and Christina's father Thomas (deceased), had been a farmer.

James and Christina (known as 'Therese') McGarry, it seems, did not have a family. Where they lived immediately after marriage remains to be ascertained, but in March 1926 when his mother died, her address was still at 'Oldconnaught'. In December 1937 when his father died the *Irish Press* noted

that 'James McGarry, Florence Road, Bray, Principal, St Peter's National School, prominent Labour activist in Wicklow and Dublin' had been 'bereaved by the death of his father' of 'Dublin Road' on Christmas Eve. It stated that James Senior was 100 years old. The *Irish Independent* too published a short note on the death.

James McGarry was an active member of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) and was Secretary of the South County Dublin Branch over the forty years from 1909 until 1949. As the county boundary was then the Dargle River, it was the INTO in South County Dublin in which he was active. He was also a delegate from the union on the Bray Trades and Labour Council.

Although neither McGarry nor the INTO were specifically named, when the INTO affiliated to the Trades Council in January 1918, they were welcomed by the founding President Ben Lindop, who observed that although 'new to the council they were not new to the trade union movement'.

Over the decades his name appeared occasionally in brief newspaper reports in connection with his trade union, trades council and political activities. As such reports are intermittent, they only give some indication as to his involvement in various issues. In outline, he served as Chair of the Trades Council in 1925, and for 1925-1926 he was President. He served as Vice-President from November 1930 to January 1932, a significant year as it was then that the ILPTUC divided by unanimous and mutual consent into the ITUC and Labour Party as two discrete organisations.

When the first Labour Party Branch was established in Bray on 3 September 1926, James McGarry was elected President, and by November the secretary, Councillor Joseph Metcalfe, reported that membership was 'in three figures in the age range 18 to 78'.

In his time as an active participant the Trades Council and Labour Party concerned itself with a wide range of issues. Moreover, it was active in campaigns, deputations, and a range of events and issues. These included, school over-crowding (school attendance became compulsory in January 1927 and Bray population had increased by 2,000), school meals and their quality, the feeding of the poor through the 'Penny Dinners' service they supported, aiding children's parties, limiting shop opening hours and ensuring the use of trade union labour, the need for a hospital in Bray, the alleviation of unemployment through public works, housing at affordable rents, and other issues. They also organised lecture, debates, whist drives, and fetes which raised funds that supported their work.

McGarry led delegations to all drapery shops in June 1925 regarding restricting opening hours (some shop keepers wanted to extend hours from 8.00 to 9.00 pm on Saturday) and the use of non-union labour. In 1930 he was nominated by the Trades Council on to the new 'Technical School Building Fund'. He led delegations to the Commissioner that ran the towns affairs between 1928 and 1934 (the Urban District Council had been abolished by the Minister for Local Government in June 1928) regarding the need for housing, and especially housing finance that would allow affordable rents (he observed that thirty year loans were required so that rents could be within the means of workers, but that the banks were insisting on fifteen year terms), demanding work for the unemployed especially immediately before Christmas. There can be little doubt that McGarry's status as a senior member of the teaching profession in the town added weight to these representations. In many instances it seems they may have been 'pushing an open door', at least by the standards of the time.

In October 1926 a convention of Labour Party and trades union branches 'from Bray to Balbriggan' was held to select Labour candidates for the next general election (which was in June 1927). The

candidates chosen were the out-going Party Leader Thomas Johnson (ILPTUC), out-going Deputy William Norton (Post Office Workers' Union), and County Councillor Patrick J. Curran (ITGWU Branch Secretary, Balbriggan). The unsuccessful candidates were Blackrock Councillor Timothy J. McKenna (Railway Clerks' Association official), and James McGarry (INTO South County Dublin Branch).<sup>i</sup> It seems that such was the only time McGarry sought selection as an election candidate.

He was active into the late 1930s and was present at a lecture at the Bray Labour Party Branch (he was on its committee) when a lecture on the 'Labour Movement in America' was given by what was described as an 'Irish-American' who was originally from Bray.

In July 1938 he was again President Bray Trades and Labour Council. His fellow officers were David Sayers (POWU) Vice President, James Dunne (ITGWU) Hon. Secretary, Joseph Metcalfe, Treasurer. and Executive members, Mrs K. Byrne, James Murphy UDC, Michael Doyle, P. Greer, P. Grant and R.J. Connolly.

In September 1940 he was part of a Bray Trades & Labour Council deputation that met the Wicklow Board of Health regarding the sick poor that were being sent to St Colmcille's Hospital. His fellow delegates were George Doyle, John Dunne, and R.J. Connolly.

He was active too in non trade union or political affairs as in 1940 he was a member of the Bray Parish Council (presumably the Roman Catholic parish) and was one of its few non clerical members. In 1950 when the then well-known writer on Roman Catholic affairs, Mary Purcell, gave a lecture in Bray entitled 'The Modern Challenge to Catholic Women' and the need for a 'Catholic Women's Association', another speaker was Rev. W. Breen CC, James McGarry presided at the event.

James McGarry retired, aged sixty-five, in November 1949. His wife, Therese, died at home at 8 Florence Road, Bray, in June 1965. In 1937 at the time of his fathers death, 'Florence Road' was reported as James McGarry's address. Following removal from the Church of the Holy Redeemer, Bray, Theresa McGarry buried in St Peter's Cemetery.

James McGarry, whose address was then recorded as 'Old Connaught Corner Dublin Road Bray' (sic), a widower, retired teacher, aged eighty-two, died in St Mary's Hospital, Phoenix Park, Dublin,

on 24 September 1967. Death Notices appeared in the main papers on 24 and 25 September, but otherwise it seems that his death went unnoticed by the national newspapers.

---