

THE DELEGATE

Newsletter of the Bray & District Council of Trade Unions

September 2021

Issue 7/21

ICTU SAYS WORKER SAFETY MUST BE A 'TOP PRIORITY'

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has stated that ensuring workers can "return to the workplace safely must be a top priority" for Government plans on the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions and reopening the wider economy.

Speaking in response to the publication of the official plan, Congress General Secretary Patricia King said: "Our top priority is ensuring that workers are enabled to return to their workplace safely. In that respect, it is imperative that employers adhere to the updated provisions set out by the Health and Safety Authority and which are included in the National *Return to Work Safely Protocol*.

"To help prevent the spread of Covid-19 these measures include adequate ventilation systems, including access to fresh air, to reduce the risk of aerosol transmission indoors in situations where workers may be in close contact for long periods of time and working in poorly ventilated areas."

Ms King said that good ventilation is an "essential component of a hierarchy of risk controls that also includes other prevention measures, such as vaccinations, physical distancing, cleaning, mask wearing, good hand and respiratory hygiene.

"In addition, the use of flexible and staggered work arrangements - including 'Blended Work' models - will be critical in ensuring compliance with these health and safety measures to keep workers safe. The measures will also assist in safeguarding those workers who avail of public transport and will help to reduce overcrowding on such services at peak times.

"However, these suite of measures will only prove effective if employers are required to implement them." Ms King said. She noted that Congress will continue its advocacy on these key issues with government officials, over the coming days.

(Source: Congress, 31st Aug 2021)

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SLÁINTECARE NEEDS "URGENT RECOMMITMENT" SAYS HEALTH UNIONS

Ireland's major health unions today (Sept 9) called for an "urgent recommitment" to the Sláintecare health reform programme, following the resignation of two senior officials associated with the project.

Professor Tom Keane (Chairperson) and Dr. Laura Magahy (Executive Director) both stepped down from their positions with the programme. In his resignation letter, Prof. Keane said that the requirements for implementing Sláintecare were "seriously lacking."

Members of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions Health Sector Group, including the INMO, SIPTU and Fórsa, who represent workers across the health sector, have now jointly called for:

- The Oireachtas Health Committee to be reconvened to look into the resignations.
- The Minister for Health to clearly renew his commitment to the Sláintecare project.
- A commitment to transition funding for Sláintecare in the upcoming budget.

- A return to the original principles of the Sláintecare plan, including basing the project office in the Department of the Taoiseach and the creation of regional authorities.

Congress Health Sector Group co-ordinator, Macdara Doyle said: *"The resignations of Sláintecare's most senior officials are deeply worrying. COVID has further exposed the weakness of a two-tier health service. Now is the time to redouble our efforts on healthcare reform, not fall back.*

"The resignations should serve as a wake-up call for the political system. Sláintecare has cross-party support - it is well beyond time that it becomes a reality. The Oireachtas Health Committee needs to meet on this matter urgently. The Minister for Health needs to make a clear commitment to the plan and this has to be backed up by firm commitments from his colleagues in government."

(Source: Congress, 9th Sept 2021)

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MAJOR VICTORY FOR SCHOOL SECRETARIES AND CARETAKERS

A national one-day strike by school secretaries and caretakers, scheduled for the 15th September, was deferred after the Department of Education made significant concessions during negotiations at the Workplace Relations Commission.

Their union Fórsa says that the Department finally conceded that all school secretaries should be placed on the public service clerical officer scale, bringing an end to a four-decade old two-tier pay system. The offer will also do away with the requirements for most secretaries to 'sign on' during school breaks, as they will be able to retain existing work patterns while having their salaries paid over 52 weeks on a pro-rata basis.

The assimilation arrangements for transferring staff to new scales are to be finalised through discussions over the next two weeks. The improvements, which will come into effect from 1st September 2021, will also see equalisation of annual leave arrangements on the basis of public service clerical officer provisions. The Department also agreed to improve sick pay arrangements, though Fórsa says it is still pursuing full equalisation with Education & Training Board- employed secretaries.

Fórsa said work remained to be done on the details of a similar package for caretakers but said the Department had agreed that the same principles would apply to them. Whilst no agreement was reached on the provision of pensions, the parties will try and seek a resolution of this outstanding issue in the final phase of talks on this long-standing dispute.

Fórsa's head of education Andy Pike said; "The determination and resolve of school secretaries and caretakers has finally put the end of the two-tier pay system within our grasp. No secretary or caretaker wanted to be on strike, but their willingness to take that step in a just cause was crucial to this victory. On their behalf, I want to thank the thousands of parents, SNAs, teachers, principals, elected representatives and others who have shown growing support and solidarity for secretaries and caretakers, who are at the heart of the school community."

(Source: Fórsa)

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UNIONS DEMAND TAOISEACH INTERVENE TO SAVE LOCAL EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

SIPTU and Fórsa members, working in Local Employment Services (LES) and Job Clubs delivered a letter to the Taoiseach, Michaél Martin, calling on him to immediately intervene and save the vital services they provide.

The letter was delivered on the 6th September by a delegation of more than 200 union members. This was followed by a rally which was attended by several Fianna Fáil, Sinn Féin, Labour and People Before Profit elected representatives.

SIPTU Public Administration and Community Division Organiser, Adrian Kane, said: "Our action has highlighted the decision by the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, to change the tendering process for the provision of essential local employment services. She has introduced a process which seeks to move the provision of these services from not for profit community sector providers to for-profit private companies.

"The reality is that these workers and local development companies have very successfully provided this essential public service for over 25 years. In the face of an attempt to privatise the sector, they have been left with no other option but to take to the streets to fight for their jobs and the vital services they provide."

Fórsa official, Lynn Coffey, said: "Jobs have been lost already and more are on the line if this privatisation proceeds as planned. Vital community employment services will also be damaged at a time when over 300,000 people are unemployed or on PUP payments."

LES manager in county Mayo, Orlagh Dennehy, said: "Privatising these essential services would be a travesty. Privatisation does not work in community services. It will result in chronic long-term unemployment and subsequent social problems for individuals who have many barriers to unemployment. Pulling the service now from safe hands, at a time when Covid-19 presents an employment crisis like never before, just beggars belief."

Calls from SIPTU and Fórsa representatives for an urgent meeting with the Minister have consistently been met with silence. "We are now calling on the Taoiseach to step in and establish a genuine stakeholder forum to agree a fair way forward for the sector. If this does not happen, this dispute will escalate further and will undoubtedly have an impact on these essential community services." concluded Adrian Kane of SIPTU.

(Source: SIPTU / Fórsa)

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LOOKING BACK:

CENTENARY OF MASSIVE TRADES COUNCIL PROTEST DEMONSTRATION IN BRAY

'TALK OF WORKERS' REPUBLIC' and 'ACTION AGAINST "PROFITEERS" ' were the headlines to *The Irish Times* report of Monday 19th September 1921, with the subheading reading; 'The Red Flag was carried at a big Labour meeting which was held in Bray yesterday to protest against "profiteering" and the reduction of wages.'

The Wicklow People of the 24th September 1921 opened its report under the headline 'LABOUR'S PROTEST AT BRAY' with the following;

"A monster labour demonstration was held in Bray last Sunday to protest against the profiteering and against the proposed reductions in wages. The display, which was organised by the Bray and Dun Laoghaire Trades Council, was a most striking one, and was remarkable for the large numbers of organised workers participating. Every grade of trades unionist was represented, and the demonstration showed the earnestness of the workers and their leaders in regard to the vital questions at issue."

The Red Flag was displayed over the Town Hall, at the Esplanade, and at the procession which was formed at the Trades Hall on the Main Street at 4 p.m. St. Kevin's Brass Band, St. Kevin's Pipers Band, Dun Laoghaire Fife and Drum Band, Dean's Grange Band and Delgany Band were present, and joined in the procession from the Trades Hall to the Esplanade.

The various branches of trades and labour unions affiliated to the trades council also marched in the

procession, and there was a profuse display of flags, bannerettes and placards. One carried by Dean's Grange Branch of the Transport Workers' Union ran - "Food profiteers - Organised Labour itself must solve the food problem", and another which attracted a good deal of attention bore the words - "Food Profiteers - Next for shaving."

Edward Byrne, U.D.C., President of the Trades Council (grandfather of John), presided at the public meeting held at the band stand on the Esplanade. He said that the meeting was held to consider two very important subjects. First, the high cost of living, and the next was the more serious one for the workers, namely the proposed reduction of wages. Their answer was shown there that day by the workers of Bray and district, that they were determined that profiteering will have to be put down, and that not until it is put down were they prepared to consider any reduction in wages whatsoever, he stated to loud applause.

Mr. Thomas Johnson, Secretary of the Irish Labour Party, was then introduced to huge applause. Mr. Johnson opened by stating that he did not propose to incite them to riotous or violent action. The three subjects with which they were concerned were unemployment, the threatened wages reduction, and the problem of the high cost of living. It was not possible to deal very exhaustively there with even one of these subjects, but as each of these subjects was closely related to the other, what he had to say would apply to each of the three. Most of them were members of the working classes. The problem of unemployment he was quite certain affected one-tenth or one-sixteenth or one-twentieth of that audience. The problem of the high cost of living affected every single member of that audience, and the threatened wage reduction had affected a good many already, and threatened to affect a very much larger number and would probably affect them all before many months were out.

"They of the Labour Party took their stand upon this principle - That the men and the women - the people of Ireland - who are willing to work and to give service in exchange for a livelihood are entitled to that livelihood whether it is profitable to employ them or not, he stated to loud applause. "They said that Ireland has resources capable of feeding and clothing and housing comfortably every single individual in the country. They said that inasmuch as the people are willing to give their labour for a living, the powers that be must make it imperative that the people shall be given in return all that is requisite to make living decent and comfortable. They said, therefore, that it was a crime against the nation, a crime against this people, so long as one per cent, of the people who are willing to work, are deprived of the opportunity to work and the opportunity of getting a decent livelihood.

They had heard and read in recent weeks a good deal in the newspapers about certain negotiations between that nation and another nation. They had seen, and to his delight, that the President of the Irish Republic had laid it down that any negotiations must be based upon certain principles. The President of the Irish Republic had said that once they got away from the bedrock of principle they were subject to winds, tides and currents and were liable to lose their ground.

They, too, were basing their claims upon the bedrock of principle, and he wanted to say that the principle enunciated by the Republican authority in that country was quite sufficient to satisfy him, and he proposed to quote that principle for their information and education. In January, 1919, the first meeting of Dail Eireann was held in the Mansion House and it was there a solemn declaration of independence was ratified and voted unanimously by the members of that assembly. That declaration had been adhered to and was supported and fought for and contended for in diplomatic negotiations. But another declaration was made at that assembly, and he was there to contend that that other declaration was equally binding upon the Irish Republican Government as the declaration of independence. The declaration read -

"We declare that the nation's sovereignty extends not only to all the men and women of the nation, but to all the material possessions of the nation: the nation's soil and all its resources: all the wealth and wealth-producing processes within the nation: and we affirm that all right to private property must be subordinated to the public right and welfare of the nation. We affirm the duty of every man and

women to give allegiance and service to the commonwealth, and declare it as the duty of the nation to ensure that every citizen shall have opportunity to spend his or her strength and faculties in the service of the people. In return for willing service we declare the right of every citizen to an adequate share of the produce of the nation's labour."

It was the duty of the National Assembly and the army of that National Assembly and the citizens of the Republic to fight for that ideal as it was their duty to fight for independence. They had been troubled in this country for the last six months with a figure of no fewer than 100,000 men and women, who should be employed, walking the streets unemployed. The number had been as high as 150,000, and they were depending on such doles as they get from the insurance funds and their trade unions. The declaration made it the duty of the National Assembly to bring these unemployed workers and wealth into contact.

The Irish Labour Party six months ago issued a manifesto making certain detailed proposals of how to deal with that problem of unemployment, which they foresaw would grow and grow until that winter would bring the most intense misery and suffering to hundreds of thousands of the people. They made certain proposals of a detailed kind. They believed them to be practicable, and they submitted that it was necessary, if the country was to be saved, that the people of all classes in Ireland should devote all their energies to save the country from that calamity. Very little had been done in that six months to carry out either that programme, or any alternative programme. They did not say that the National Assembly must, without question, adopt their programme, but they did say that it was the duty of that assembly to adopt some alternative programme which would carry out the responsibilities which they had assumed under the declaration.

He meant to say that unless the National Assembly, Dail Eireann and the Ministry responsible to it, assumed responsibility for dealing with these problems of unemployment and the high cost of living, their demand for the allegiance of this people would not have the effect that it had had. He did not believe that the assembly was unconscious or careless of the needs of its people. He knew, as a matter of fact, that certain members were very anxious, and felt gravely the responsibility that the problems called upon them to accept and find a remedy for.

He was there to say, and he was sure he was voicing the opinion of the whole of the organised labour movement of Ireland, when he said that the assembly should look upon that duty, equally important, equally urgent, as the duty of defending the independence of Ireland. Independence would be comparatively useless in Ireland unless these other problems had been dealt with beforehand. He contended that the Labour Party as a whole supported him in the contention that a free Ireland politically was bound just as tightly as ever it was to British Imperialism and the British capitalism to maintain its sway in Ireland.

They were not asking Dail Eireann, as the national authority, to accept their programme, but they were demanding that they should put forward an alternative programme if they did not accept theirs. It lay with the national authority to find the means of solving the problem of unemployment and the problem of the high cost of living. Dealing with the subject of profiteering, he said, that he had noticed that for offences of a less horrible nature people were chained to church railings, and he was sure that for a warning, at any rate, if profiteers were chained to railings it would have a good effect.

The working classes in Ireland must have a higher standard of living secured to them than which prevailed before the war. They said that there must be an advance of thirty per cent upon the standard of living which they received pre-war, at at present day prices. If the employer comes along and says, "we can't pay these" "we can't pay say dividend if wages." If the railway companies say we pay these wages. These tax Labour Party replies, "That is none of our business. You, the masters, have assumed the responsibility of carrying on the industries of this country in the interests of the people of this country. If you cannot carry on those industries in such a way as will provide the people with a standard of living such as we have laid down, then get out. You are not fit for your

responsibilities - make way for somebody else" he said to loud applause. That was the case of the Labour Party and they challenged any organisation or any newspaper to deny that it was a fair proposition.

As regards the profiteers they would find their own ways and means to deal with them. He was glad to hear that in Dun Laoghaire they had started a co-operative society. It was one of the ways of solving the problem of profiteering, but in the meantime they had other ways and they had to make themselves known: make their organisation felt, and make the profiteers aware that the workers were determined, he concluded to huge appause.

Mr. C. Harrison, U.D.C. Killiney, said the British Government started and encouraged profiteering when they imposed the excess profits tax. They told the employers to tax the people, and then hand over 50 per cent to the Government: and when the British Government conscripted flesh and blood to fight for the Empire they told the capitalists to grow more food and they would make the people pay the capitalists for it, and pay them very well too. If they wanted more food grown they should have conscripted the land and put men on the land who would grow the food. There was as much land in Co. Dublin under golf links and play grounds for the idle rich that would keep up a milk supply for all Dublin.

Mr. Thomas Ferran, of the executive of the Irish Labour Party, said that some people imagined that if they had an Irish Republic next week that they would be free from unemployment, and that a Republic was millenium. They had a Republic in America, and they have millions unemployed. They had a Republic in France and they knew what the workers got. When the railway workers in France went on strike to improve their conditions, M Briand the present Prime Minister, who was Minister of Railways at the time, called them to the colours as conscripts, and sent them back to scab the railways. That was a Republic (hear, hear). They, in the Labour movement, gave their allegiance to the Republican Government, but they know the Republic they wanted. They wanted the Republic that James Connolly worked, lived and died for. They wanted the establishment of a Workers' Republic in Ireland. The Labour Party were going to do something to end profiteering. He would not tell them what it was, but if the people were prepared to act when the call was given they would do something for them, he concluded to loud applause.

Tom Johnson's wife Alice also addressed the meeting, and was warmly cheered, as she showed the audience a baby which she said was the grandson of James Connolly, the Irish Labour Leader who was executed following Easter Week 1916.

It is likely that this demonstration was the last time the workers of Bray and surrounding areas turned out in such a mass response, to a protest event organised by the Council, prior to the turn-out for the tax reform demonstration held in Bray on the 12th February 1980. Then businesses closed everywhere and many marched from their workplace to the starting point at the Town Hall. Four to five thousand marched and the head of the procession reached the Dargle Bridge while the tail was still leaving the Town Hall. On a somewhat poignant note, the St. Kevin's Pipe Band led the march followed by the Trades Council banner carried by the Council Secretary, Kieron Connolly, a young 25 year old activist. The Pipe Band was lead by it's youngest piper, a mere 15 years old, Derek Casserly.

(K.Connolly)

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DEPARTED COMRADES

IN TRIBUTE TO OUR COMRADES AND FRIENDS GEORGE SHEEHAN (WHO PASSED AWAY IN AUGUST) AND DEREK CASSERLY (WHO PASSED AWAY IN JULY) WE ARE REPRODUCING TWO ADDRESSES GIVEN BY THEM.

GEORGE SHEEHAN:

This is the main part of an address given by George, as Council President, on the 10th March 2018 at Bray Rail Station at the official unveiling of a plaque which was part of the Council's centenary celebrations.

On behalf of the Council I welcome you here today to the unveiling of this commemorative plaque. The plaque is dedicated to railway workers to commemorate the leading role played by rail unions in the founding of the 'Bray and Kingstown Trades and Labour Council' in April 1917.

Following the Great War the economic conditions were having a huge impact on workers and their families. While wages had risen, prices had soared. Hunger, disease and slum housing were still the lot of the poor. Against this background a group of men in the town of Bray decided that a united Council of the trades was needed to organise their forces to challenge these conditions. Predominant amongst these were the railwaymen because Bray was an important Rail centre, as also was 'Kingstown' (as Dun Laoghaire was then known). Hundreds of men were employed by the Dublin, Wicklow and Wexford Railway Company and the town owed its growth and prosperity to the enterprise of the great Engineer William Dargan, who had died fifty years before, in pushing the line southwards in 1854. It was in fact a "Railway Town".

There was growing discontent amongst these rail workers with their situation in the months preceding the establishment of the Trades Union Council. At a public meeting of railwaymen held in Bray in February 1917 at which Mr. J.M. Magee, J.P., chairman of Bray Urban Council presided, the following motion proposed by Ben Lindop (Chairman of the Bray Branch of the National Union of Railwaymen) was carried;

"That this meeting of railwaymen employed on the D. and S. E. Railway, whilst appreciating the decision of the Government in taking control of Irish railways, desire to place on record our dissatisfaction with the grant of 7 shillings war bonus which is 3 shillings below the rate granted to railwaymen in Great Britain; we appreciate the gratifying increase in branches and membership of the National Union of Railwaymen, but we still realise, however, that there are men employed who are outside the union, and call upon them to join up and assist in putting an end to the inequality and enable us to be in a position to claim participation in any further increase granted as a result of the movement on foot in Great Britain."

It is worth noting that at the Bray Branch of the NUR held on the 9th March 1917 the Chairman, P. Byrne is reported in 'The Wicklow People' as follows;

"He was very proud to see the workers taking such an interest in the trade union movement. Now is the time when we consider that the advance in wages or bonus fails to overtake the increased cost of living. Some means will have to be found to resolve this problem. That means will be found in a closer combination among the unions. In the past we were content to take action as single unions. But the time has come when the unions will have to apply themselves collectively to the problem of bringing about some more effective means, and I think that means will be found in the trades council that is about to be established in Bray. And by that means we will be able to collect all the forces of trades, labour, and federations, and have them together as a means of obtaining more fruit of their industry. And I am pleased to announce that a meeting will be held soon to form a Trades Council, and with the assistance of the Executive Committee of the Dublin Trades Council and other trade bodies, nothing will be left undone to make it a success."

It is no surprise, therefore, that we can see the very active role played by the railway unions, particularly the National Union of Railwaymen, in the first half of the Council's history. The first President of the Council was Ben Lindop from the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) a native of Crewe, Cheshire. The first Treasurer was Edward Byrne, another railwayman (whose grandson John

Byrne is a former President and now an honorary Life Member). Edward was a pillar of the Labour Movement in Bray and Co. Wicklow for decades. A Bray native, he was a stalwart not only of his own union branch, the NUR, but of the Trades Council and of the Labour Party; as a Bray UDC and Wicklow Co. Councillor up to 1945.

Other NUR railwaymen that were active in the early years were James Murphy (Secretary in 1919/1920 and President in 1924/25 and again in 1927/28), William Moore (President in 1926/27), David Greer (President in 1932) and George Doyle (President in 1940).

Another rail union active on the Council in the early years was ASLEF and Thomas Nolan was Council President from 1947 to 1952. Joseph Everard, grandfather of the current Station Manager here in Bray also Joe, was active with ASLEF and was Secretary of the Council in 1951.

It is clear from this summary that the rail unions played an active and integral part in the Council not only in the early years but throughout the 100 years of the Council. Indeed, it is with some sadness, that we learned of the death this week of Matt Farrell, another railwayman who was active with NATE and a delegate to the Council.

Even today, we have people who have an association with the railway. Our Secretary, Kieron Connolly's late father, Bernard, a Life Member of the Council, worked on the permanent way before becoming an official with the old ITGWU. Emmet Connolly, a delegate from the TEEU and a son of the late Pearse, works with Irish Rail in Inchicore Engineering Works.

I am also aware that former President, Maura Donnelly of the INTO, who is here today has a family steeped in the railway. Her father, grandfather, greatgrandfather, and many uncles worked on the railway in her native Sligo. I should also mention that I myself worked on the railway in Dublin prior to becoming a trade union official. So, the link with railway workers continues on and on today.

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DEREK CASSERLY:

This is the presentation given by Derek on Seamus Costello at the joint Council/Irish Labour History Society seminar held in the Town Hall, Bray, on Saturday 4th November 2017 as part of the Council's centenary celebrations.

Seamus Costello was a delegate to the Trades Council from 1967 to his untimely death in 1977. He was also a member of Bray Urban District Council and Wicklow County Council, initially representing Sinn Féin but after he was suspended from that organisation he stood as an independent Sinn Féin candidate where he topped the poll in Wicklow.

I will be concentrating mainly on his trade union activities both as a delegate to the Bray Trade Union Council and his involvement in local politics where he was a fierce advocate of ordinary working men and women. However, it would be remiss of me to leave out the role he played in national politics, a role he was perhaps more widely known for on a national level.

Many articles and books have been written about his involvement with both the Official IRA and his fallout with them, and the founding of the Irish Republican Socialist Party and the INLA, and whilst I will be giving a brief history of that, the main purpose of this presentation is to outline his role as a trade union activist.

Seamus was born in 1939 at Roseville on the Dublin Road in Bray, the eldest of nine children. His family would have been considered as middle class, however, as far as Seamus was concerned he was working class, of the working class, for the working class. His interest in politics began in his early teens. At the age of 16 he joined Sinn Féin and the Irish Republican Army. Within a year he was commanding an active service unit of the IRA in South Derry, where his leadership skills earned him the nickname of 'The Boy General'. His unit carried out many operations, including the destruction of bridges and the burning of a British courthouse. He was arrested in Glenree, County Wicklow, in 1957 and sentenced to six months in Mountjoy Prison. On his release he was immediately interned in the Curragh prison camp

for two years. He spent his time in prison studying, becoming particularly inspired by his studies of the Vietnamese struggle. He became a member of the escape committee which engineered the successful escapes of Ruari O'Bradaigh and Daithi O'Connell among others. Costello would later refer to this time as his "University days".

After his release from the Curragh, Costello worked to rebuild the Republican Movement, beginning by building a local base of support in County Wicklow as Sinn Féin's local organiser. He helped form a strong Tenants Association in Bray, and also became involved with the Credit Union movement, farmers' organisations, and trade unions. He stood for election to the Bray Urban District Council and the Wicklow County Council in 1967 and successfully won election to both seats.

During the split of the Republican Movement into Official and Provisional factions in 1969, Costello remained with the Officials, serving as Official Sinn Féin's Vice-President and the Official IRA's Director of Operations. As the Official's began their slide into reformist politics, Costello's principled opposition led to his being dismissed from the Official IRA and suspended from Official Sinn Féin. His dismissal from Official Sinn Féin came in 1974 as the leadership blocked his supporters from attending the party convention.

At a meeting in the Lucan Spa, a hotel near Dublin, on the 8th December 1974, the Irish Republican Socialist Party was formed by republicans, socialists, and trade unionists with Costello as the Chairperson. At a secret meeting later the same day, the Irish National Liberation Army was formed with Costello as the Chief of Staff.

Within days of its founding, the fledgling Irish Republican Socialist Movement was to begin a baptism of fire at the hands of the Official IRA. Members of the Irish Republican Socialist Movement would be attacked and even killed. Before a truce was reached, three members of the movement were dead. Despite the truce, Costello was shot and killed by a member of the Official IRA on the North Strand in Dublin on the 5th October 1977. At his funeral, Nora Connolly O'Brien (daughter of James Connolly) said Costello was the only one who truly understood what James Connolly meant when he spoke of his vision of the freedom of the Irish people.

But it's the years from 1967 to 1977 that I wish to concentrate on. He was a member of the I.T. & G.W.U. from 1962 and appointed a delegate to the Trades Council five years later. It would be fair to say he was a controversial figure on Council from the outset. Never one to hold back from debate or to constantly push his agenda as a socialist republican he was widely regarded by his fellow delegates as a tireless activist who constantly tried to improve the lot of the working class in Bray and Wicklow, even if they did not always agree with his political leanings.

He was equally committed to his role as a member of the Urban Council, having being elected on to it the year previously as the Sinn Féin candidate. In October 1967 he introduced a motion directing the Urban Council to employ only local qualified tradesmen on housing maintenance and repairs. The practice of the Urban Council employing handymen for this work had been notorious for years. The motion was passed.

In 1969 he was to the fore in protesting at the planned tour of Ireland by the South African Springboks rugby team. At the November meeting of the Trades Council it was proposed to mount pickets of protest at Lansdowne Road and Bray train station. Seamus called for the revival of the ban on goods imported from South Africa. Another delegate, Thomas Dunbar from the A.S.W., argued this would only hit black workers who produced them, until Seamus pointed out that the black workers own organisation in South Africa had urged such a boycott. It was decided to resume the boycott. I am sure had he been alive in 1984 he would have proudly stood shoulder to shoulder with the Dunnes Stores workers who went on strike in protest at the apartheid regime and the sale of South African goods in Dunnes.

In March 1973 the Trades Council proposed a motion '*That the Council calls on the ICTU to initiate street protests in opposition to the amended Offences Against the State Act.*' Supporting the motion,

Costello pointed out that under the section dealing with picketing people could be fined £1,000 in certain circumstances. Picketing was a safety valve, he argued, and had been used by farmers, tenants, and civil organisations. It wasn't directed just at illegal organisations and ordinary people could suffer this type of penalty. Massive action on the part of working class people was the only way of defeating the Act. He also stated that *"Our attitude should be, as Trade Unionists or anybody else, to oppose the Act: the Government would use the Act to attack the most politically weakest groups in the community."* The motion was passed.

Again, these are just a flavour of some of the campaigns both Costello and the Trades Council were involved in. In another edition of the Trades Council's newsletter *'The Delegate'* it was reported that a proposal by Costello that the Urban Council prepare a report on bringing the privately-owned amusement enterprises of Bray under Municipal control. Answering a charge by Cllr. McAlevey, Cllr. Costello said; *"Cllr. McAlevey spoke about the thin edge of the wedge of Socialism. I have not made any secret of my political views. I have never claimed to be anything but a Socialist Republican. I do believe that any asset of this town should be under the control of the people and used for the benefit of the people of the town. The profits should be devoted to the good of the people."* The motion was passed by six votes to four.

Things didn't always go his way on the Trades Council. He referred to the Boghall housing scheme and complaints received by the Bray Unemployed Association about non-local labour being employed. Bernard Connolly [ITGWU] said the site had been visited by officials of the INUW [Irish National Union of Woodworkers] and the ITGWU to have a card check in December. It was most unfortunate, but the fact was Bray men had not got a good work record on the site. Several who had been taken on had only worked for one day and even a shop steward had only stayed a few days. He could not even get a Bray man to be a shop steward. Brian McMahan, WUI, said he regretted that he had to agree with brother Connolly's report.

Humour was rare at Trades Council meetings but not altogether absent. At the October 1972 meeting it was decided to ask the Education Committee to draw up a programme of lectures suitable for schools in consultation with Congress. Costello said this was very necessary as unfortunately there were some teachers around who thought manual labour was the name of a Spaniard and God only knows what they were telling children about trade unionism.

Seamus was unanimously elected President of the Trades Council in 1976. I will finish up with the obituary on behalf of the Council at the time of his death. It was penned by Ross Connolly;

"My first memory of Seamus Costello was just ten years ago when, as a young man, he carried the banner of the Starry Plough for the Bray and District Trades Union Council in the Industrial Parade which was one of the highlights of our Golden Jubilee celebrations. This was his first public identification with the Trade Union Movement and undoubtedly marked a significant development in his career. From then on there was a maturing of his social and political outlook. Shortly afterwards he graduated from the rank and file of the union and became a delegate from the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union to the Trades Union Council. From the start his contribution to the Council was controversial. His outspoken republicanism and his socialist ideals often gave rise to heated and lively meetings. His early views on the role and function of the trade union movement may at times have been naïve, but there could be no gainsaying his sincerity or his genuine concern for the working class. It was not simply a concern to serve them as a messenger – "to get things done for them" – rather it was to make them realise that they had rights which were not dependent on the patronage of any politician or political party; that they should get off their knees and assert their dignity.

In latter years the abrasiveness of the young man had mellowed, although his idealism burned with as fierce a fire. He won his way to the Executive Committee and in 1976 he became President of the Trades Union Council. His chairmanship was marked by fairness and a warm, if sardonic, good humour,

although he never neglected a chance to drive home his philosophy. He used his office, and indeed his status as an elected Councillor, to continually emphasise the importance of the Trades Union Council as the representative body of the area's unionists. In spite of the many demands of his political life, both local and national, he gave generously of his time to the Trades Union Council, so exemplifying his view of the national unity of political, social and economic forces.

As Bernadette Mc Aliskey said in her graveside address, it is too soon and our grief is too great, for a proper assessment of Seamus' role in the history of our Island. Suffice to say for now that he was a man of great physical and moral courage, and the Starry Plough which he carried so proudly that day ten years ago, must surely have lain proudly over him on his journey to his last resting place."

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The Council has arranged a Special Meeting for Thursday 14th October 2021 to be held in the Martello Hotel, Bray, at 7 pm. The meeting will remember and pay tribute to Derek and George.

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