

THE DELEGATE

Newsletter of the Bray & District Council of Trade Unions

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COUNCIL CALLS FOR TEMPORARY REDUCTION IN VAT ON ENERGY COSTS

The crippling impact of inflation needs to be urgently addressed and a temporary reduction in VAT on energy costs should be implemented by the Government to help to alleviate the situation for workers and their families - was the message from the recent Council AGM which unanimously adopted an executive committee motion on the issue.

Proposing the motion, Council Secretary, Kieron Connolly, pointed out that Ireland is one of the most expensive countries in Europe for consumer goods and services, with multiple taxes, levies and charges blamed for the high costs. Figures from the European statistics agency Eurostat show that prices here for consumer goods and services are among the highest in the EU. Overall prices here are 40pc higher than the average across the union. Only Denmark and Luxembourg have higher prices. Food is 20pc more in Ireland than the average for 27 EU countries. Housing and energy costs here are an extraordinary 84pc higher than the EU average.

This month the Government doubled the soon-to-be introduced electricity credit to €200 and reduced public transport fees by 20pc. They also promised a one-off €125 payment for people who claim the fuel allowance. The drug payment scheme threshold was reduced and Budget changes to the working family payment were brought forward. Recently the Consumers Association warned that householders are set to be hit for €2,000 in costs this year due to rising prices.

"Clearly more has to be done to support people in this emergency situation and we are calling on the Government to reduce the VAT rate on energy costs from 13.5pc to 9pc on a temporary basis to alleviate the hardship on families. Cutting the VAT rate on heating oil, gas and electricity would have the immediate effect of putting money back in consumers pockets. Money that can be used on other essentials such as food, stated Mr. Connolly.

"We acknowledge that this would need a derogation from the European Commission but it can be done. The Government reduced the top VAT from 23pc to 31pc for six months during the worst of the pandemic. Additionally, the VAT rate for the Hospitality sector was recently reduced to 9pc, so why can't it be done to support other workers and their families during this period?

"It is estimated that a VAT rate could be implemented from April for three months, saving consumers up to €400m on their energy bills. It is within the power of the Government to introduce this temporary measure and we need to push for this measure to be implemented", he added.

The motion adopted by the AGM was as follows; *"That this Council, recognising that prices in Ireland are among the highest in the EU and the urgent need to ease the current cost-of-living pressures on households, calls on the Government to temporarily reduce the VAT rate on energy costs from 13.5% to 9%. This temporary measure would help households to cope with the crippling impact of inflation, and would be similar to the reduction to 9% recently given to the hospitality sector."*

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CALL FOR SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

The AGM also adopted the following motion submitted by the executive committee;

"That this Council notes a call by the National Parents Council Primary and St. Patrick's Mental Health Services for the establishment of school-based mental health supports for primary school children. The Council acknowledges that schools are considered appropriate and valuable settings for delivery of such supports. Over the past two years it has been well documented how the mental health needs of children have seriously intensified during the pandemic.

The importance of early intervention and prevention cannot be overstated. It is well recognised that if the social-emotional, behavioural and mental health needs of children are not met in a timely and appropriate manner that this has far-reaching consequences not only for their school engagement and academic progress but also for children's future well-being.

Teachers and school communities have been trying to draw attention for years to the lack of support and resources and in particular the lack of clinical support, available to primary school age children with social, emotional and behavioural needs. They also point to the lack of training and continuous professional development available to equip them in supporting pupils whose mental health needs can be complex and sometimes extremely challenging.

Therefore, this Council calls for

- a radical overhaul of the liaison structures between children's community mental health services and schools*
- the putting in place of clear and definite pathways where supports are readily accessible to schools seeking advice and referral in relation to children with significant social, behavioural and emotional needs*
- adequate staffing of all agencies working in the area of community mental health for children*
- a recognition of the urgent need to put in place a school-based clinical support system which is adequately staffed and properly resourced*
- appropriate training and CPD to be made available immediately for school staff."*

Proposing the motion, Council Secretary, Kieron Connolly also stated; "While incoming Governments have over the years committed to improving integration of services for vulnerable children and adolescents with mental health difficulties there is little evidence that this has been seen as a real priority by governments during their terms of office."

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MARY DISKIN RE-ELECTED AS PRESIDENT FOR SECOND TERM

The INTO's Mary Diskin was unanimously elected as President for a second term. Mary was initially appointed as a delegate to the Council in 1983. A native of Donegal but moved to Mayo when she was 7, she first came to Bray in 1980 when she joined the teaching staff of St. Fergal's SNS on the Boghall Road. She taught in St. Fergal's until her retirement in 2014. She was Chair of the Ballywaltrim School Completion Programme for 12 years and has been Chair of the Board of Management of Bray School Project NS since 2018.



(Mary Diskin)

Mick Ryan of the electrical trade union Connect was unanimously re-elected Vice-President and Kieron Connolly (SIPTU) was returned as Secretary. The other members of the incoming executive committee are Emmet Connolly (Connect) and Barry Nevin (SIPTU). Margaret Coughlan (Fórsa) and Margaret Moynihan (Unite) continue as trustees.

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THEY ARE 'CIVILISED' AND 'LOOK LIKE US': THE RACIST COVERAGE OF UKRAINE (by Moustafa Bayoumi)

While on air, CBS News senior foreign correspondent Charlie D'Agata stated last week that Ukraine "isn't a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades. This is a relatively civilized, relatively European - I have to choose those words carefully too - city, one where you wouldn't expect that, or hope that it's going to happen".

If this is D'Agata choosing his words carefully, I shudder to think about his impromptu utterances. After all, by describing Ukraine as "civilized", isn't he really telling us that Ukrainians, unlike Afghans and Iraqis, are more deserving of our sympathy than Iraqis or Afghans?

Righteous outrage immediately mounted online, as it should have in this case, and the veteran correspondent quickly apologized, but since Russia began its large-scale invasion on 24 February, D'Agata has hardly been the only journalists to see the plight of Ukrainians in decidedly chauvinistic terms.

The BBC interviewed a former deputy prosecutor general of Ukraine who told the network: "it's very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blond hair ... being killed every day." Rather than question or challenge the BBC host flatly replied, "I understand and respect the emotion." On France's BFM TV, journalist Phillipe Corbé stated this about Ukraine: "We're not talking here about Syrians fleeing the bombing of the Syrian regime backed by Putin. We're talking about Europeans leaving in cars that look like ours to save their lives."

In other words, not only do Ukrainians look like "us"; even their cars look like "our" cars. And that trite observation is seriously being trotted out as a reason for why we should care about Ukrainians.

There's more, unfortunately. An ITV journalist reporting from Poland said: "Now the unthinkable has happened to them. And this is not a developing, third world nation. This is Europe!" As if war is always and forever an ordinary routine limited to developing, third world nations. (By the way, there's also

been a hot war in Ukraine since 2014. Also, the first world war and second world war.) Referring to refugee seekers, an Al Jazeera anchor chimed in with this: "Looking at them, the way they are dressed, these are prosperous ... I'm loath to use the expression ... middle-class people. These are not obviously refugees looking to get away from areas in the Middle East that are still in a big state of war. These are not people from areas in North Africa. They look like any." Apparently looking "middle class" equals "the European family living next door".

And writing in the Telegraph, Daniel Hannan explained: "They seem so like us. That is what makes it so shocking. Ukraine is a European country. Its people watch Netflix and have Instagram accounts, vote in free elections and read uncensored papers. War is no longer something visited upon impoverished and remote populations."

What all these petty, superficial differences - from owning cars and clothes to having Netflix and Instagram accounts - add up to is not real human solidarity for an oppressed people. In fact, it's the opposite. It's tribalism. These comments point to a pernicious racism that permeates today's war coverage and seeps into its fabric like a stain that won't go away. The implication is clear: war is a natural state for people of colour, while white people naturally gravitate towards peace.

It's not just me who found these clips disturbing. The US-based Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association was also deeply troubled by the coverage, recently issuing a statement on the matter: "AMEJA condemns and categorically rejects orientalist and racist implications that any population or country is 'uncivilized' or bears economic factors that make it worthy of conflict," reads the statement. "This type of commentary reflects the pervasive mentality in western journalism of normalizing tragedy in parts of the world such as the Middle East, Africa, south Asia, and Latin America." Such coverage, the report correctly noted, "dehumanizes and renders their experience of war as somehow normal and expected".

More troubling still is that this kind of slanted and racist media coverage extends beyond our screens and newspapers and easily bleeds and blends into our politics. Consider how Ukraine's neighbours are now opening their doors to refugee flows, after demonizing and abusing refugees, especially Muslim and African refugees, for years. "Anyone fleeing from bombs, from Russian rifles, can count on the support of the Polish state," the Polish interior minister, Mariusz Kaminski, recently stated. Meanwhile, however, Nigeria has complained that African students are being obstructed within Ukraine from reaching Polish border crossings; some have also encountered problems on the Polish side of the frontier.

In Austria, Chancellor Karl Nehammer stated that "of course we will take in refugees, if necessary". Meanwhile, just last fall and in his then-role as interior minister, Nehammer was known as a hardliner against resettling Afghan refugees in Austria and as a politician who insisted on Austria's right to forcibly deport rejected Afghan asylum seekers, even if that meant returning them to the Taliban. "It's different in Ukraine than in countries like Afghanistan," he told Austrian TV. "We're talking about neighbourhood help."

Yes, that makes sense, you might say. Neighbour helping neighbour. But what these journalists and politicians all seem to want to miss is that the very concept of providing refuge is not and should not be based on factors such as physical proximity or skin colour, and for for a very good reason. If our sympathy is activated only for welcoming people who look like us or pray like us, then we are doomed to replicate the very sort of narrow, ignorant nationalism that war promotes in the first place.

The idea of granting asylum, of providing someone with a life free from political persecution, must never be founded on anything but helping innocent people who need protection. That's where the core principle of asylum is located. Today, Ukrainians are living under a credible threat of violence and death coming directly from Russia's criminal invasion, and we absolutely should be providing Ukrainians with life-saving security wherever and whenever we can. (Though let's also recognize that it's always easier to provide asylum to people who are victims of another's aggression rather than of your own policies.)

But if we decide to help Ukrainians in their desperate time of need because they happen to look like "us" or dress like "us" or pray like "us" or if we reserve our help exclusively for them while denying the same help to others, then we have not only chosen the wrong reasons to support another human being. We have also, and I'm choosing these words carefully, shown ourselves as giving up on civilization and opting for barbarism instead.

(Moustafa Bayoumi is the author of the award winning books 'How Does It Feel To Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America' and 'This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror'. He is professor of English at Brooklyn College, City University of New York. Source: The Guardian - 2nd March)

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"THE RELENTLESS ASSAULT OF THE POWERFUL"

Statement to an Emergency Session of the UN Security Council on the Situation in Ukraine by Martin Kimani, Kenyan ambassador to the UN, delivered 22nd February 2022.

We meet tonight on the brink of a major conflict in Ukraine. The diplomacy we urged on the 17th of February is failing. The territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine stands breached. The Charter of the United Nations continues to wilt under the relentless assault of the powerful. In one moment, it is revoked with reverence by the very same countries who then turn their backs on it in pursuit of objectives diametrically opposed to international peace and security.

In the last two meetings on the situation in Ukraine, and the build up of forces by the Russian Federation, Kenya urged that diplomacy be given a chance. Our cry was not heeded and, more importantly, the Charter's demand for states to settle their international disputes by peaceful means in such a manner that international peace and security and justice are not endangered has been profoundly undermined.

Today, the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity and political independence of Ukraine has been effected. Kenya is gravely concerned by the announcement made by the Russian Federation to recognize Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine as independent states. In our considered view, this action and announcement breaches the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

We do not deny that there may be serious security concerns in these regions. But they cannot justify today's recognition of these regions as independent states - not when there are multiple diplomatic tracks available and underway that have the ability to offer peaceful solutions.

Mr. President, This situation echoes our history. Kenya and almost every African country was birthed by the ending of empire. Our borders were not of our own drawing. They were drawn in the distant colonial metropolises of London, Paris, and Lisbon, with no regard for the ancient nations that they cleaved apart.

Today, across the border of every single African country, live our countrymen with whom we share deep historical, cultural, and linguistic bonds. At independence, had we chosen to pursue states on the basis of ethnic, racial or religious homogeneity, we would still be waging bloody wars these many decades later.

Instead, we agreed that we would settle for the borders that we inherited, but we would still pursue continental political, economic, and legal integration. Rather than form nations that looked ever backwards into history with a dangerous nostalgia, we chose to look forward to a greatness none of our nations and peoples had ever known. We chose to follow the rules of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations Charter, not because our borders satisfied us, but because we wanted something greater, forged in peace.

We believe that all states formed from empires that have collapsed or retreated have many people in them yearning for integration with peoples in neighbouring states. This is normal and understandable. After all, who does not want to be joined to their brethren and to make common purpose with them? However, Kenya rejects such a yearning from being pursued by force. We must complete our recovery from the embers of dead empires in a way that does not plunge us back into new forms of domination and oppression.

We rejected irredentism and expansionism on any basis, including racial, ethnic, religious, or cultural factors. We reject it again today. Kenya registers its strong concern and opposition to the recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent states. We further strongly condemn the trend in the last few decades of powerful states, including members of the Security Council, breaching international law with little regard.

Multilateralism lies on its deathbed tonight. It has been assaulted today as it has been by other powerful states in the recent past. We call on all members to rally behind the Secretary-General in asking him to rally us all to the standard that defends multilateralism. We also call on him to bring his good offices to bear to help the concerned parties resolve this situation by peaceful means.

Let me conclude, Mr. President, by reaffirming Kenya's respect for the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognized borders. Thank you.

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BRAY TO RATHDRUM 'HUNGER MARCH' - JANUARY 1937 THOSE WHO MARCHED

Following on the account of the “Unemployed ‘Hunger March’ to Rathdrum - 85 Years ago” featured in the last issue of *The Delegate* (10/21 - December 2021); trades council delegates, trade unionists, and their descendants may be interested in knowing who the marchers were

The march, which started from the Bray Trades Hall just after midnight on Sunday 3rd January 1937, was organized by the Bray Unemployed Workers’ Association. Its leading activists included Luke O’Connor (Chair), Sean Dunne (Secretary), and committee members Thomas Murphy, William Kearney, Patrick Flanagan, Andrew Mooney, James Jones, and George Reilly.

The marchers carried two banners, one read ‘Bray Hunger Marchers’, and the other ‘Irish Unemployed Workers’ Association. Work or Full Maintenance. Stop Eviction of the Unemployed’. Just before they set off, Luke O’Connor stated that although they numbered 300, they were represented by the sixty marchers, the number marching being ‘limited due to lack of provisions’. A crowd of 600 assembled to cheer them on their way.

Besides the committee mentioned above, the names of fifty-nine others, seemingly all men although not identified as such, were reported in the Wicklow People of 9 January 1937. Those listed were: F. Berry, M. Berry, P. Berry, J. Boyle, J. Brien, W. Brien, J. Brierton, T. Brierton, J. Byrne, P. Byrne, J. Carroll, T. Carroll, J. Carton, C. Devlin, T. Devlin, W. Devlin, C. Dundon, M. Garvey, J. Hyland, M. Jones, J. Kenna, W. Kenna, F. Kilduff, P. Lyons, T. M’Cann, A. M’Evoy, P. Manley, J. Matthews, B. Mooney, J. Mooney, Jas. Moorehouse, M. Moorehouse, R. Moorehouse, T. Mulvey, P. Murphy, J. Murra (sic), M. Murray, M. O’Connor, L. O’Neill, P. O’Neill, J. Reilly, P. Reilly, P. Ryan, F. Savage, C. Smith, J. Smith, W. Stratham, P. Sutton, L. Toole, M. Toole, P. Toole, T. Toole, W. Toole, J. Treacy, A. Vickers, J. Vickers, P. Vickers, J. Whiston, and W. Younge. It is possible that the names of a few marchers were omitted as it seems from various reports that there were between sixty-seven and seventy.



(The Bray Unemployed 'Hunger March' at Deansgrange, March 1937)

Photo: *Irish Independent*

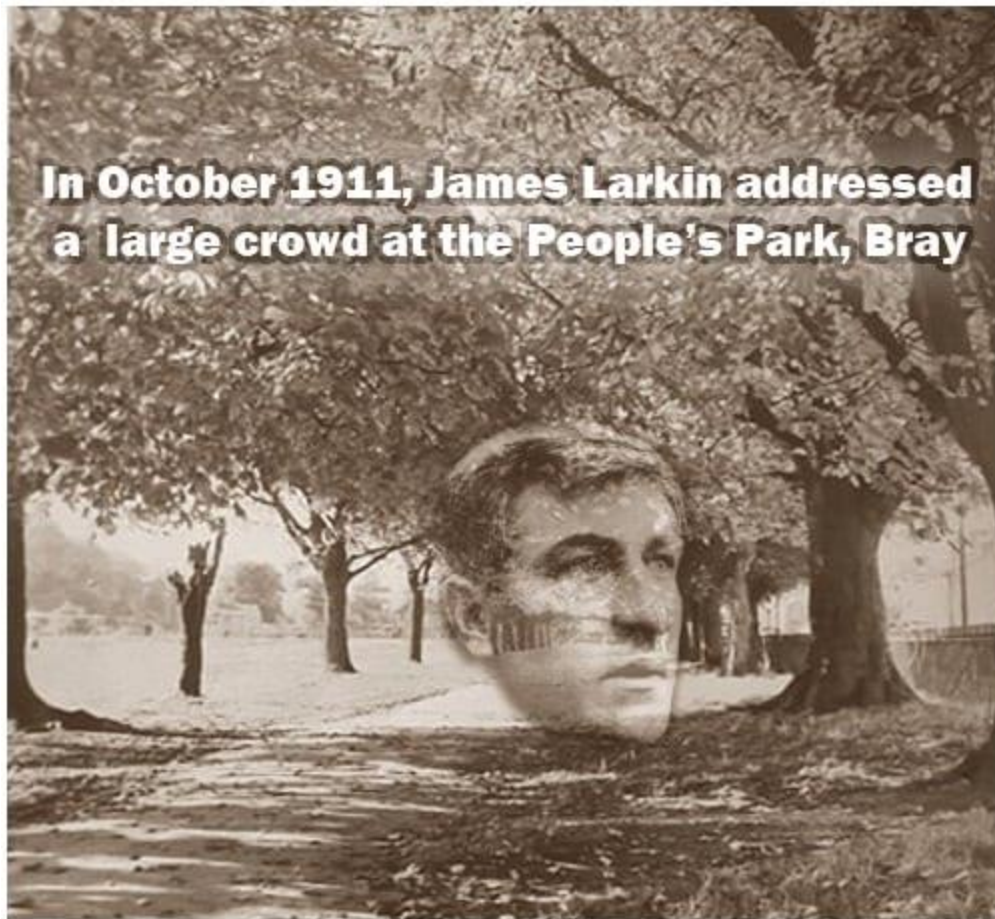
Ten weeks later, on Monday 8 March 1937, under the banner 'Bray Unemployed We Demand Work', fifty marched the twelve miles from Bray to Dublin. Much of the march was through what the *Irish Independent* called a 'snow storm', the first of several heavy snow-falls that week. A further notable feature of that march was that among them were four women, although their names, nor those of the men, were reported.

(Charles Callan,

Labour & Trade Union Historian)

NB: If you know any of the above mentioned marchers (or anyone else who marched) and/or have any photos or other relevant information on both marches, we would appreciate it if you could advise the Council Secretary, Kieron Connolly at 087 234 1555 / kierjon55@gmail.com

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Mr James Larkin addressed a largely attended meeting at the People's Park Bray on Sunday evening, 29th of October 1911 under the auspices of the Irish Transport Workers Union. He was accompanied by two fife and drum bands, and a contingent of about 100. They arrived on the 3.30pm train and marched to the place of the meeting. There was a football match in progress when they arrived, and many of the crowd viewing the game left and followed Larkin's group to the lower portion of the ground where the meeting was held.

The purpose of the meeting in Bray was to strengthen this branch of the union, and they wanted everyone attending to become members. During the course of a long speech, Mr Larkin made a bitter attack on William Martin Murphy and his newspaper publications and other topics relating to workers' wages and conditions.

At the end of the meeting, Mr Larkin appealed to the crowd to join the Transport Union and asked those who were in favour of it to hold up their hands, and the majority raised their hands. He then asked all who disagreed with the union to hold up their hands, but none were raised. Mr Larkin said "*Not even the Police are against us*" (Laughter). The meeting then ended.

Ref: Wicklow People, 4 Nov 1911. Bray Cualann Historical Society (M Murphy).

(We reproduce the above article by M. Murphy of the Bray Cualann Historical Society)