

# Liberty

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# Budget fails on housing crisis

by Frank Connolly

**SIPTU President, Jack O'Connor, has described the recent budget as morally indefensible. He said that it failed to confront the deep housing and health crises while benefitting already wealthy people with tax breaks and other financial transfers.**

"In the midst of a housing and homeless crisis the government has chosen to deploy €335 million on token tax cuts, €461 million on continuing the VAT give away to bad employers in the hospitality sector and €1.5 billion on a totally unnecessary 'pet project' rainy day fund.

"In total, this amounts to €2.29 billion which would otherwise build 12,000 local authority houses and which would actually make a difference. On top of that, developers are to be gifted €750 million or 60% of the cost of constructing 6000 houses.

"It is the first time since the great collapse of 2008 that we had a chance to transform our grossly unequal society. Instead, Fine Gael and Fianna Fáil, backed by a coterie of right wing independents, have chosen to take us back to the old value system that precipitated the economic and financial crash in the first place. The budget may have been a slick piece of presentation but it is morally indefensible."

Speaking at the biennial conference of SIPTU in Cork earlier this month, Jack O'Connor called for a new alliance of genuinely progressive forces to achieve a number of key objectives, including a decent housing and health service as well as full collective bargaining rights for all

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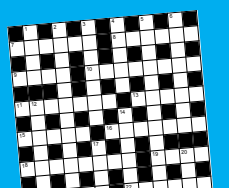
*A fisherman observing the impact of storm Ophelia at Glen Pier, Ballinskelligs, county Kerry, on Monday 16th October. Pic: Stephen Kelleghan*

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# WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE

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## Vote for strike action at Inishowen Oil

SIPTU members at Inishowen Oil, in Carndonagh, county Donegal have voted unanimously for strike action following the refusal of management at the company to negotiate with them on their claim

for a pay increase. The company has also refused to respond to invitations by the Workplace Relations Commission to attend conciliation talks on the pay claim. SIPTU members distribute gas and

home heating oil by truck to domestic customers across Donegal and have not had a pay increase for over 10 years.

## Irish Equity will support members in confronting sexual assault and harassment

**Irish Equity will support members in confronting sexual assault and harassment**

Irish Equity has assured members that the union will support them should they have any concerns regarding their treatment in the workplace, following the recent media coverage of sexual assault and harassment in the film industry.

Irish Equity Organiser, Karan O Loughlin, said: "Bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment, is just not acceptable. Workers in the creative industries deserve to be treated with dignity

and respect. Irish Equity will continue to challenge those in the industry who abuse their position.

"From information collected in a survey conducted by Irish Equity in 2016 we know that the vast majority of members experiencing or witnessing this kind of behaviour do not report it because they fear losing work. This culture of not reporting is a long standing problem in the industry that created the original precarious workers. Sexual harassment, bullying or any kind of harassment is unacceptable. It must stop now and the perpetrators of such behavior should be

outed and challenged."

Irish Equity President, Padraig Murray, said: "Members should be reassured that they can talk to the union in complete confidence. We are experienced in dealing directly with these issues and will act, without fear or favour on behalf of members who have experienced inappropriate behavior at work. I would encourage any member who has a concern about these issues, to please contact us by phone at 01 858 6403 or email equity@siptu.ie."

## Dublin Fire Brigade forced to use undermanned appliances

**SIPTU members in Dublin Fire Brigade (DFB) have raised serious concerns about staffing levels in the service following the confirmation that several fire appliances were sent into operation on 6th October while undermanned.**

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Brendan O'Brien, said: "DFB is seriously understaffed with the result that its ability to maintain services to the public is being compromised. DFB management has sought to mitigate these shortages by the inordinate use of overtime, which cannot be sustained, along with the can-



celling of critical safety training courses. This is resulting in the safety of the public and of our

members in DFB being compromised."

*Continued from page 1 — Budget fails on housing crisis*

workers by the centenary of the foundation of the State in 2022.

He said government finances, if properly managed and excluding any tax cutting agenda, "could attain decent housing for all our people, the rebuilding of our public health service, the re-development of one of the best education systems in the world, the establishment of the long awaited mandatory 2nd pillar pension system and full collective bargaining rights for all workers."

"However, this egalitarian vision will not be achieved on the basis of

the current trajectory. For it seems we are back to "business as usual" in this country. We are again playing by the rules of the self-interested value system that precipitated the crisis in the first place. It's back to looking the other way, while exponentially growing inequality reasserts itself in our domestic and social affairs. It is absolutely unforgivable that thousands of our children are homeless, in the aftermath of the collapse of a credit fuelled property bubble.

"It is absolutely obscene that the

two main political parties are again promoting a tax cutting agenda while children are homeless in one of the wealthiest countries in the world. He said that an alternative society based on true equality is possible if progressive forces in the country worked together.

"It will be necessary to forge a new alliance of all the genuinely progressive forces on the island of Ireland who are committed to the primacy of the common good to realise this great aspiration," Jack O'Connor said.



# Ophelia puts SIPTU members to the test



SIPTU fire service members clearing fallen trees in Cork  
Photo: Denis Minihaue courtesy the Irish Examiner

**Across the country, SIPTU members in the local authorities, fire and emergency services and the Office of Public Works (OPW) were to the fore in protecting their communities from the effects of storm Ophelia, which hit Ireland on 16th October.**

Over 3,000 local authority workers were involved in assisting the public in preparing for the storm, which resulted in a red level alert across the country, and the subse-

quent repairs. The damage from Ophelia included 300,000 homes being left without electricity and nearly 100,000 without water.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Brendan O'Brien, said: "Our members worked tirelessly to assist the public in their preparations to protect themselves from this unprecedented event. Their efforts undoubtedly prevented far greater damage and injuries being caused by this extremely powerful storm."

Among the worst effected areas was the south west of the country,

with substantial damage reported in counties Cork and Kerry. SIPTU member and County Cork Council worker, Leslie McNamara, said: "The level of damage has been considerable but as is always the case in such situations our members have been out there ensuring services are returned for the public as swiftly as possible whether its repairing water systems, clearing roads or mending damaged buildings."

On 16th October the Government ordered all schools and third

level institutions to close in order to safeguard children. Many businesses followed suit with the public strongly advised to stay indoors during the period of the storm.

Such action undoubtedly reduced the loss of life, although unfortunately three people did die during the storm; Michael Pyke in Tipperary, Clare O'Neill in Waterford and Fintan Goss in Louth.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Jane Boushell, said: "Scientists predict that such extreme weather conditions are likely to become more

frequent in the coming years not least as a result of climate change. In light of these warnings we are repeating our call for the Government to ensure that front line services provided by the local authorities, the fire and rescue services and the OPW are given the resources needed to maintain the State's readiness to respond to such events."

She added: "There must also be investment in remedial work to mitigate the adverse effects from similar events in the future."

## Government hypocrisy on contributory state pension

**Since 2012, changes to the system of entitlement for the contributory state pension have meant that mainly women workers with less than full service were unfairly penalised when they came of pension age.**

At the time SIPTU campaigned for these grossly unfair changes that discriminated in the main against women who left the workplace to raise their families and other caring duties. Seasonal workers and those employed for a share of the year such as those directly employed by schools were also badly affected by the move.

Following the budget, finance

minister, Paschal Donohoe, called this system "bonkers" but despite the fact that it would cost only €70 million to restore the pre-2012 system of entitlement, he said it would be too costly to change. Compared with what the State foregoes each year due to the reduced VAT rate for certain sectors, this claim rings very hollow. The State loses €461 million in Vat revenues each year though the 9% special VAT rate for the hospitality sector which was reduced from 13.5% some years ago.

SIPTU has reissued its long stated demand to social protection minister, Regina Doherty,

and Donohoe for this system of contributions to the State pension to be overhauled. Until 2012, workers with an average of 48 or more yearly contributions received the maximum contributory state pension. Those contributing between 20 and 47 credits yearly received €4.50 less per week. Now those with an average of 20 to 29 contributions yearly receive €34.70 less and those with contributions averaging 30-39 get €23.60 less, per week.

The urgent call to reform the State's pension scheme touches on a wider problem of insufficient pension coverage for the



majority of women. Private sector employments with a large share of female workers and poor occupational pension coverage combined with breaks in paid employment has meant that women are much less well off in

retirement compared with men. Much attention is currently being given to the gender pay gap across countries. However, the gap in pension income between men and women is much worse. The European Commission estimated the gap to be 35.5% in 2013 in favour of men.

"This is an issue that can be tackled without too much difficulty or cost, particularly when you have the obscene VAT concession to some of the most exploitative employers in the country running profitable hotels and paying minimum wages to staff," said incoming SIPTU general secretary, Ethel Buckley.



# Crucial role of qualified educators in Early Years

**SIPTU members have pointed to evidence that qualified educators play a crucial role in delivering high quality early years education and that this leads to better outcomes for children.**

SIPTU Organiser, Darragh O'Connor told *Liberty*: "This is why SIPTU members absolutely rejected a proposal from a new private providers' association, Seas Suas, that would allow up to 25% of staff in Early Years facilities to

work without any qualifications.

"Children deserve quality early years education, parents deserve affordability and workers deserve a professional wage.

"We would not accept the de-professionalisation of teachers in primary or secondary schools – why then would we demand anything different for children under the age of four?"

Flagging up the recruitment and retention crisis in the sector, O'Connor claimed it was not due

to a lack of qualified staff.

He said: "Underinvestment by the state is keeping wages so low that educators and providers cannot afford to stay in a job they love. We need to address the recruitment crisis by increasing pay, conditions and investment, not by cutting standards in qualifications.

"For years the sector has worked to raise quality and establish minimum qualifications. It is not the time to take a backwards step now," he warned.



## European Court of Justice victory for Ryanair workers

**A ruling by the European Court of Justice (ECJ), on 14th September, was a significant victory for Ryanair workers.**

SIPTU TEAC Division Organiser, Greg Ennis, said: "This ECJ ruling is a significant milestone in the journey to achieving better terms and conditions for all Ryanair employees across Europe. The ruling establishes the rights of mobile aviation workers to have their grievances heard under the laws of

the country from which they work. It determines that an employee can address their work related issues in the jurisdiction which they regard as closest to them.

"This is a vital step for those who need, in particular, to seek redress in matters relating to individual contracts of employment. It does away with what has been the attempt by the management of Ryanair to use a flag of convenience approach to workers' rights."

The same day as the ECJ announced its decision Ryanair was plunged into crisis due to a claimed rostering issue which has resulted in the cancellation of hundreds of flights. In recent months, many pilots have joined other airlines offering better pay and conditions. Pilots at the airline have also made public their unease at the conditions under which they have been forced to work.

## Talks between RTE unions and management continue

**Talks between unions and management concerning the restructuring of RTE are ongoing with a further meeting scheduled to take place on Friday, 20th October.**

The core issue in the negotiations concerns the redundancy packages offered to workers by management in order to secure over 250 voluntary departures from the State broadcaster.

SIPTU Organiser, Graham Macken, said: "There are three sep-

arate redundancy packages on offer for workers under 55 years of age, for those over 55 who are due to retire at 60 and those over 55 who are due to retire at 65. The package on offer to those under 55 is reasonably attractive. However, the packages for those over 55 do not seem to be getting the take-up which management intended. (In particular those staff who would be due to retire at 60)"

He added: "It may require management to enhance what it is offering because the unions in RTE

are united in our position that there will be no compulsory redundancies. We have also informed management that it must halt local meetings with staff which are separate from the agreed negotiation structure involving the company and RTE unions. These meetings are inappropriate and are only leading to confusion and misinformation on the proposed restructuring. If these do not cease we cannot guarantee there will continued cooperation or industrial harmony going forward."

## St Cronan's cleaners secure justice due to overwhelming community support



Caption: Mayor of Fingal, Mary McCamley, speaking with school cleaners Lorraine Reilly, Ann Daly and Pauline Smyth outside St. Cronan's Senior National School, Brackenstown, Swords, County Dublin.

**After two weeks of protests outside St Cronan's Senior National School, Brackenstown, in Swords, County Dublin, three SIPTU members, who had worked as the school's cleaners before losing their jobs without agreement, secured a fair settlement. This dispute was resolved following talks between the school board and patron with SIPTU representatives.**

The cleaners protested every morning and lunchtime outside the school from 31st August to 13th September in order to highlight a management decision to engage a contract cleaning company which refused to maintain their employment. The protests received widespread support from the local community, elected representatives and trade unionists.

Cleaner, Lorraine Reilly, who had worked at St Cronan's Senior National School for 18 years, said: "We protested because after many years of loyal service to the school our jobs were given to a cleaning company which refused to take us on.

"Due to the super support we received from our fellow SIPTU members, the community and local elected representatives the management of the school was forced to come to its senses and

meet with our union representatives to agree a fair deal for us."

She added: "Our victory would not have been possible if we had not been organised in SIPTU. The message is clear to all cleaners. You need to join your union, you need to join SIPTU."

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Diane Jackson, said: "A cleaning contractor, AFM Ireland Ltd, engaged by the management of the school to provide cleaning services in the new school year refused to employ our members. The company and the management of the school also refused to honour our members' redundancy entitlements. This was a completely unacceptable situation which was eventually resolved with the assistance of the Archbishop of Dublin who is the school's patron."

Among the local elected representatives who attended protests at the school was the Mayor of Fingal, Mary McCamley, Sinn Féin TD, Louise O'Reilly and Independent TD Clare Daly. A motion proposed by Labour Councillor, Duncan Smith, at the Swords local area committee calling for justice for the cleaners received unanimous support, while local Sinn Féin councillors also supported the protest.

## DUBLIN WORKERS FILM FESTIVAL

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[www.facebook.com/workerfilmfest](http://www.facebook.com/workerfilmfest)



# SIPTU launches pay campaign for Section 39 Workers



By  
Paddy Cole

**SIPTU has launched a "Pay Justice for Section 39 Workers" campaign and sent a "very clear signal" to the Government that they must act on the issue.**

It follows the passing of an unanimously backed motion at the union's Biennial Delegate Conference which called on the Government and Health Service Executive (HSE) to ensure Section 39 organisations adopt transparent governance systems including conforming with HSE norms in the area of employee contracts and employment rights.

Addressing the conference in Cork City Hall, SIPTU Health Division Committee member, Peter Behan, said: "We must send a very clear message that our members will not continue to provide first class service delivery on third class pay and conditions."

"There are literally thousands of care workers of all grades employed in Section 39 organisations providing both health and community services. Health Division members work in Section 39 organisations which are household names due to the services they provide to our most vulnerable citizens. They receive millions of taxpayers' euros to provide these services mainly in the care of citizens with intellectual disability."

He added: "Section 39 Health Service providers are not exempt from criticism with scandal after scandal concerning excessive payments made to senior managers

and executives well outside public sector pay norms.

"For our members and the public, questions remain despite investigations by the press and the Public Accounts Committee. The HSE and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform have simply failed to take any action to correct this situation which has damaged public confidence in the whole Section 39 and Voluntary Sector."

SIPTU representatives are currently consulting with staff in 10 Section 39 organisations over balloting for strike action in the weeks ahead.

The organisations include RehabCare and the Cheshire Foundation, which are national operations, Western Care in Mayo, St Joseph's Foundation in Cork, SOS Kilkenny, the Cork Association for Autism, Ability West, and St Aidan's Hospital in Wexford.

## Only fair our sacrifice is recognised

**JACQUELINE KIRBY is a social care leader and SIPTU member in St Joseph's Foundation, a Section 39 disability service provider in Cork, where she has worked since 2005.**

Jacqueline told *Liberty* that she has experienced two pay cuts, one of about 6% in 2010 and 2% in May 2014. She said increments were frozen for six months for some staff. When the process of pay restoration began in the public service last year, she was told it did not apply in

her organisation.

She said: "We were simply told that Section 39 staff were not being given their money back as the organisation's not in a position to give it."

"We all signed up to the cuts when times were bad, so we should get pay restoration as the economy recovers. It's that simple. I do not think it is fair for the Government to pass the buck and say we only send the money to Section 39 organisations – it's up to them to pay and it's not our fault they are not passing it on."

"Like all public service workers, we put our shoulders to the wheel to help the country, to help the economy, so it's only fair that we are recognised and rewarded by government for our sacrifice."

## Doing same work but for less pay...

**LIZ CLOHERTY is Vice Chair of the Intellectual Disability (ID) Sector Committee and currently works in RehabCare and previously worked for another Section 39 body, Autism West, but was made redundant.**

Liz told *Liberty* that after moving to RehabCare she was placed on the pay scale at a level which was about five points below where she would have been if she had joined a Section 38 body given her level of experience.

"I took a pay cut of five increments lower, plus two cuts imposed by the Government."

She warned that the Section 39 organisations would lose staff if pay justice was not achieved.

"We are doing the same work in Section 39 for less pay and that has a knock-on effect on every service user. Section 39 users suffer as the organisations are not getting enough funding to keep their staff that can provide the continuity of care that people in ID services rely upon."



SIPTU members Jaqueline Kirby, Liz Cloherty and Helen Power launching the union's pay campaign for workers in Section 39 organisations PICTURE: Jimmy Weldon

# Delivering affordable quality CPD options is essential

By Paddy Cole

**THE health and social care landscape is changing in Ireland, as in other countries, and with it the priorities for the delivery of healthcare services.**

Health policy decisions and the significant fiscal challenges we face mean that resources spent on the provision of healthcare must be used effectively and in a manner that is justifiable in terms of improved patient outcomes. In this context, the provision of affordable and cost-effective Continuous Professional Development (CPD) options for health service

workers is absolutely essential.

In late September, the SIPTU College for Continuous Professional Development, a collaborative partnership with the Royal College of Surgeons (RCSI), was launched by the Minister for Health, Simon Harris and SIPTU General Secretary Designate, Joe Cunningham.

The SIPTU College of Continuous Professional Development has been tasked to integrate the technological, psychological and sociological aspects of health care and facilitate the practice and development of healthcare professionals

**For healthcare professionals, CPD consolidates their existing knowledge, skills and attitudes while accommodating the rapid technological change in the workplace**

in an evidence-based environment.

As the largest trade union in the country, our union has a responsibility to lead on the training and

education of our workforce. This big step to collaborate with the RCSI shows our union's commitment towards ensuring members get the best of education and training that provides patients with the best possible healthcare and outcomes.

Speaking to *Liberty*, SIPTU Sector Organiser, Kevin Figgis said: "For healthcare professionals, Continuous Professional Development consolidates their existing knowledge, skills and attitudes while accommodating the rapid technological change in the workplace. It becomes an ongoing, life-

long activity for the healthcare professional and the fact now that SIPTU can walk this journey with their member step by step can only provide better health care for patients and better jobs for workers."

SIPTU College for Continuous Professional Development will provide SIPTU Health Division members with access to world-class education programmes provided through direct and remote teaching methods.

The programmes will be accredited by the RCSI and will be provided to SIPTU Health members at a very competitive cost.



# Around the union

Debenhams workers in Dublin send their support to the Debenhams workers in Belfast campaigning for union recognition on Wednesday 4th October  
Photo: Myles Worth



Dublin Airport Fire and Rescue Service members (L to R) Cian Delaney, Eric Flanagan, Mick Bracken and Mick Gurley took part in the World Police and Fire Games in Los Angeles during August. In total the team won seven medals including a gold for Cian. Photo: Brian Plunkett



Ethel Buckley, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary designate (left front) and hotel workers in Ireland stand with workers across the world for rights & safe work as part of a week of global action. Photo: Dan O'Neill

This month saw the election of the new Irish Ambulance Representative Council (IARC) committee in Liberty Hall, Dublin. Pictured is the new Secretary of IARC, Coleen Whelan and new Chairman, Hillary Collins. Picture: Paddy Cole



SIPTU members with ISSU comrades ready to join the USI march on Wednesday 4th October in Dublin.



SIPTU CPD College open for business: (Left to right) Padraig Heverin (SIPTU Divisional Committee Chair), Paul Boyle (SIPTU Nursing Sector Committee member), Rebecca Donohoe (SIPTU Nursing Sector Chair), Paul Bell (SIPTU Health Divisional Organiser), Kevin Figgis (SIPTU Nursing Sector Organiser) (Pic: Jimmy Weldon)



Protest at March for Choice in Dublin on 30th September. Photo: Derek Speirs



# Conference backs repeal of 8th Amendment



Suzanna Griffin: 'the hypocrisy is shameful'



SIPTU Health Division delegates voting at conference

**On Thursday, 5th October, SIPTU delegates voted overwhelmingly in support of a motion for their union to "support the call for a referendum to repeal the 8th Amendment".**

Proposing the motion on behalf of the union's Equality Committee, SIPTU National Executive

Committee member, Suzanna Griffin, said: "Women comprise more than half of the trade union membership in Ireland and it is unacceptable that they live in a country where the law puts their health and lives at risk, criminalises them and forces them to travel abroad to avail of safe and legal abortion services.

"Some women have to undergo tortuous situations, for example

when a woman is pregnant with a foetus with a fatal foetal abnormality, or pregnant as the result of rape. So what happens? Women travel abroad for terminations. The hypocrisy of this situation is shameful."

She added: "But this motion is not asking any delegate here to make a moral or personal decision on the provision of abortion in Ireland. It is merely asking you to

support the call for a referendum so that the people of Ireland can make a democratic decision as they did in 1983.

"The women of Ireland deserve our support on this and people in Ireland deserve an opportunity to vote on the 8th Amendment given that no person of child-bearing age has had the opportunity to make this decision themselves."

## Workshops hammer out precarious work

On the afternoon of Wednesday, 4th October, conference delegates attended workshops held by each division to discuss the issue of precarious work.

At these workshops delegates highlighted difficulties associated with precarious work such as zero hour contracts, low and reduced hour contracts, seasonal working and new employees being issued with diminished contracts which do not conform to existing collective agreements. Several said there needed to be a clear pathway to a permanent full-time job if a worker so wished.

Other concerns were raised about the inability of workers to obtain mortgages and loans, as their contracted hours were not reflected in the hours they were actually working. It was accepted that precarious working brought lower wages, poor terms and conditions and in some cases pitched worker against worker.

At the Health Division workshop the spread of precarious work practices in the Community Care sector and the fact that the government had turned a "blind eye" to the resulting erosion of workers' rights was a particular concern.

University of Limerick lecturer and the co-author of a government report on precarious work, Dr. Michelle O'Sullivan, was among those who addressed the Services Division workshop. She said research showed that precarious work impacted on the mental health of workers and their health in general. Delegates at this workshop provided personal testimony of the pressure they and their colleagues, particularly in the retail sector, endured due to precarious work practices.

At the TEAC Division workshop delegates agreed that the union needs a clear policy on combating the spread of precarious work. This must include connecting with young people to ensure there is trade union induction for new entrants in the workplace as well as educating union committees about the dangers of precarious contracts.

## Our union, stronger and prepared for the future

**Having weathered the challenges of the economic downturn that followed the crash of 2008, SIPTU has been leading the fight back for workers and now plans to further strengthen.**

At conference delegates supported a proposal to increase the top of union contributions by 30 cent.

Presenting a SIPTU National Executive Council motion to increase union funding, National Trustee, Eugene Murphy, said: "In seeking an increase of 30 cents on the top rate we are also proposing that weekly dispute benefit for the top rate be increased by €20, an rise of 10%. There is no contribution rate increase proposed for any of the other contribution classes. The last increase in contributions was approved by conference in 2007."

He added: "As a Trustee elected by the members, I am satisfied that the increase being proposed is necessary to ensure the continued financial strength of the union. I ask you, delegates, to approve the Motion in order to place our union in the best position possible to fulfill its role of protecting and advancing our collective interests."

The increase in funding will allow the union to implement the ambitious development plan agreed earlier this year at a special delegate conference of the union. This will involve an expansion in services for members which are contained in the recommendations that emerged from an extensive membership consultation initiative. The plan will include the extension of the Workers Rights Centre (WRC), an initiative of the SIPTU Legal Rights Unit. Since its establishment in 2010 the WRC has dealt with over 25,000 individual cases and secured for many members improved conditions as well as for others awards and over the past five years has achieved settlements to the total value of over €30 million.

Increased financial resources will also help to realise the aim of bringing the union directly back into more communities and workplaces on the island. Since 2016, SIPTU has opened five Welcome Centres in locations across the country including in Liberty Hall, Dublin, Connolly Hall Cork, Navan, Tralee and Sligo. Further centres will be opening in Galway,



Kilkenny, Carlow, Letterkenny, Limerick and Waterford in the coming months.

In order to safeguard and improve the future for our members and their families it has always been the SIPTU philosophy that it is necessary for as many workers as possible, across all industries, from all backgrounds and of all ages to be organised in the union. To advance this aim the development plan includes proposals to significantly improve support and

services for all members intensify SIPTU organising campaigns for young people, migrant workers and to deepen the unions roots in communities across the country.

Among the many other services and facilities to be up-graded in the coming months is the SIPTU Communications Department, with a revamp of its website, and SIPTU College, with a major expansion of its courses to be offered across all areas of the union.





Conference delegates in Cork. Photo: Jimmy Weldon

## We must oppose extreme right and push for a reformed EU

**SIPTU members must strongly oppose the forces of the extreme right and seek radical reform of the EU in a manner which places the interests of citizens at its heart, incoming Deputy General Secretary, Gerry McCormack, told delegates.**

He said: "We need to call out those on the extreme right who wish to destroy Europe. Let us expose them for what they really are. The new terms used to describe the extreme right such as the 'Alt Right', or the populist right are merely new names for the same reactionary and xenophobic forces

that destroyed most of Europe in the middle of the last century."

He added: "As trade unionists we can never allow ourselves to be dictated to by the forces of the extreme right.

"Rather, we must fight for a new and reformed EU where the social pillar, workers' rights and ordinary citizens' interests are placed at the heart of its policy decisions."

On the issue of Brexit, McCormack said: "The outcome of the Brexit negotiations should include the retention of free movement for workers and the common travel area, no return to a border with Northern Ireland, state-aid for vulnerable industries and enterprises

as well as the retention and improvement of workers' rights across Ireland."

Turning to pay, he noted some employers were using Brexit as an "excuse" to "dampen wage expectations, implement cuts to working conditions and to try and limit pay awards at third party hearings".

"While we fully accept that there are some companies that have issues with Brexit, particularly relating to exchange rate fluctuations and market place uncertainty, we will not tolerate it being used as an excuse to attack workers."

## Government must ensure recovery extends to Community Sector

**ADDRESSING the conference, incoming SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, John King, called on the Government to increase funding to community and not for profit organisations to ensure workers in these sectors benefit from the wider recovery in the economy.**

"Workers in the community and not-for-profit sectors do not enjoy the protections of the public service agreements. However, although not having the same benefits these workers have, they have had to accept the imposition of pay cuts by Government and other measures similar to those endured by their



colleagues in the public service. Community and not-for-profit sector workers have been left out of the recovery agenda by the Government. Some have faced redundancy and others have seen their

services privatised to the for profit sector.

"Most, if not all, have received no pay increases or pay restoration and have endured funding cuts for their organisations. SIPTU is calling on the Minister for Finance, Public Expenditure and Reform, Paschal Donohoe, to immediately address this unacceptable situation."

He added: "Our members in these sectors will no longer tolerate the situation in which they have been placed. SIPTU will support them in their battles and campaigns to achieve justice including, where required, taking industrial and strike action."



## Conference backs end to mandatory retirement at 65

**DELEGATES unanimously backed a motion calling on the Government and Health Service Executive (HSE) to give all health workers the option of remaining at work beyond the age of 65.**

SIPTU National Executive Council member, Broc Delaney, told conference: "It is unacceptable that a situation is being allowed to develop which is leading to low

paid health workers on poor or modest occupational pensions being placed into a poverty trap. This is resulting from them being forced to retire at 65 years of age, in line with their contracts, although they are not paid the State pension until they are 66.

"Another injustice is the practice of employers granting health workers an extension of service beyond the age of 65 but also immediately scrapping their existing contract of employment and its associated terms and conditions. This is a situation which is occurring in State hospitals and health care providers."

Delaney added: "SIPTU members are not simply seeking a change in the retirement age. It must be clear that increasing the retirement age cannot be made mandatory. Any changes need to be fair to the employee, taking into account the nature of their work, pay and conditions."

Also at the conference, delegates supported a motion calling for a sustained organising campaign to promote SIPTU as the "Go to Union" for all Health Care Assistants working in both the public and private sector.

It is unacceptable that a situation is being allowed to develop which is leading to low paid health workers on poor or modest occupational pensions being placed into a poverty trap

## US trade unionists attend SIPTU conference



Left to right - Joe Haydon (Transport Workers Union) Jim Gannon (Transport Workers Union, Head of Communications) Jack O'Connor (SIPTU General President), John Samuelsen (Transport Workers Union International President) Joe O'Flynn (SIPTU General Secretary) Shannon Poland (Transport Workers Union) Photo: Paddy Cole





Greg Ennis  
'enough is enough'

## Iarnród Éireann 'new frontline'

**SIPTU TEAC Division Organiser, Greg Ennis, has said "enough is enough" and described Iarnród Éireann as the "new frontline" in the battle for adequate funding of public transport.**

He told conference: "Iarnród Éireann is now the new front-line for our public transport service. Employees, who after almost 10 years of a pay freeze, can no longer be expected to subsidise this public transport service.

"Enough is enough – and like the recent disputes in the LUAS, Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann, SIPTU will not be found wanting in fully supporting our 1,900 members in Iarnród Éireann in their pursuit of a long overdue pay increase."

He added that SIPTU members would "vehemently campaign to oppose" the deliberate underfunding of public transport "which is simply designed to manufacture a false environment to justify privatisation, be it in aviation or transport."

Ennis also criticised a proposal to remove "financial sustainability" from the issues that can be considered in determinations by the Commission for Aviation Regulation.

Following the address by Ennis, conference delegates voted unanimously to back a motion reaffirming "the union's commitment to prevent and/or limit the extent to which public transport becomes privatised".

# United voice inspired this first-time delegate

By Susan Gaynor McGowan

**ON October 2nd, I was one of 357 delegates from across all SIPTU divisions who descended on Cork for the Biennial National Delegate Conference – four days of discussions on the future of our union, and our world.**

From the time we arrived in Cork, we could see SIPTU banners on City Hall and Connolly Hall welcoming us to, what some consider, the real capital of Ireland (controversial!).

In an engaging and inspiring speech that evening, in his final Biennial Delegate Conference speech as general president, Jack O'Connor focused on some core issues that we are all facing as trade unionists and as workers.

On Brexit, he stated: "We will certainly not be accepting it as an excuse for cutting pay or curtailing pay claims or attacking workers again,

He also commented on the housing crisis, demanding no further tax cuts. A deafening silence could be heard throughout the hall when, with one simple question, he moved the entire room: "Are we for housing homeless children or are we for tax cutting? Which are we for? Because we can't have both."

In his final words the outgoing president remarked on his confidence in the new leadership team of SIPTU before receiving a well-deserved standing ovation from

Susan Gaynor McGowan felt energised by 'uplifting and inspiring' stories at BDC



This was my first BDC... I came away with a positive attitude and feeling that one person can really make a difference

the floor.

Over the days that followed there was a huge number of motions debated on topics such as zero-hour and 'if and when' contracts, the casualisation of employment, health and safety and

wellbeing at work, pensions, insolvency, organising, funding public transport, mental health, housing and homeless, trade union rights in Turkey, and repeal of the 8th Amendment, just to name a few.

This was my first Biennial Delegate Conference and I was unsure what to expect. What I found was a sea of like-minded trade unionists of all ages with a thirst for knowledge and a keen interest and passion about shaping the future of our union and our country for the common good.

What struck me the most about the entire conference was that the issues we each face in our own workplace, no matter what sector

we are in, are the same challenges facing workers in an otherwise unrelated sector.

We might think that issues like zero-hour contracts, 'if and when' contracts, precarious work, casualisation and low-hour contracts mainly affect the lower paid jobs in retail, contract cleaning, and hospitality, but in actual fact they are rampant throughout all sectors.

As a union we need to band together on this issue and, as Jack O'Connor put it, "continue to row against the tide in the battle for equality".

Over the few days at conference I heard some uplifting and inspiring stories on battles fought and won within our union and battles still left to fight, but there will always be another battle, another campaign, another reason to get out on the picket line and fight for workers' and human rights.

I came away with a positive attitude and a feeling that one person can really make a difference. I came away thinking that one speech can motivate you to keep fighting and how meeting that one person at conference who you inspired to become an activist makes it all worthwhile.

I came away with the feeling you have in your heart that the one phrase we share with all our might and passion is a key to our trade union belief: "The workers united will never be defeated."

## Image of union transformed by women footballers' victory

**The image of SIPTU has been transformed for many young women by the success of its members in the Women's National Football Team in securing better conditions, Ethel Buckley, told delegates on Thursday (5th October).**

Addressing the last day of the conference, the incoming deputy general secretary, Ethel Buckley, said: "We must take heart from recent victories won by our members. In the Clerys workers struggle for justice, to the rising up of the community of Westport to support the Hastings Garage workers, to the courage of the young women of the Irish National Football Team in saying they wanted respect for wearing our country's jersey.

"The stance taken by international captain Emma Byrne and her

colleagues has brought the message of the victories that can be won through collectivisation, and very importantly collectivisation with the support of our union, to a new audience of young people, women in particular.

"This victory changed what SIPTU means to them. It has also provided a new iconic image of Liberty Hall, that of a group of young, determined women standing boldly outside the home of Irish trade unionism in green t-shirts – with one simple, clear demand – to be respected as athletes and workers."

Ethel Buckley also welcomed the vote by conference delegates to support overwhelmingly a motion for their union to support the call for a referendum to repeal the 8th Amendment.



Defiant: Republic of Ireland women's team make a stand for equal treatment  
Picture: Paddy Cole

She added: "Uniting the fights for workplace and gender equality, is just one example of how we must combine struggles in a man-

ner which will strengthen our union and encourage many more to organise alongside us."





Outgoing SIPTU President Jack O'Connor and Vice President Gene Mealy (left) receive presentation of a limited edition print of Jim Larkin by Robert Ballagh from the incoming Honorary President Padraig Peyton and Vice President Bernie Casey on Thursday 5th October.

## Trade unions must shape the future

**The union movement is as vital for workers and the achievement of social justice today as it has ever been, according to SIPTU Vice-President, Gene Mealy, whose address to conference provided a positive assessment of the union's current position.**

In a wide-ranging address, Mealy, outlined the many achievements of members over the last two years in terms of pay rises and restoration, as well as highlighting the challenges facing all of the union's five divisions.

On wages, he said that pay rises were now the norm for members in the Manufacturing Division, with deals varying from 2.5% to 3.5% per annum across 280 firms from the start of 2015 to September of this year. Mealy added that the Manufacturing Division had also successfully utilised the Industrial Relations Amendment Act, 2015, to achieve collective bargaining rights for members in one company.

In the Services Division agreements averaged around 2.5% in 157 enterprises. Mealy said Employment Regulation Orders negotiated for the contract cleaning and security sectors likewise included substantial pay increases.

The continued pay restoration for members in the public sector, as well as pay rises for low paid workers were also highlighted. He clearly outlined the positive aspects of the Public Service Stability agreement while highlighting the many challenges ahead.

Progress in the TEAC Division



included the growing numbers of construction workers joining the union as the economy improved. While the strike weapon was usefully employed in the transport sector with pay rises secured in Luas and Dublin Bus while "protection against unilateral cuts" was achieved at Bus Éireann.

However, he delivered a stark reminder of the possible damage Brexit could inflict on our economy, warning that it could "cost 40,000 jobs in Ireland over the 10 years following the UK departure from the EU". Other challenges included the need to tackle the issues of low pay, precarious employment and outsourcing.

Mealy called for greater investment in young people in order to promote a more equal society. He said, "Overcoming social challenges requires investment in our social infrastructure and such investment must be prioritised before more tax cuts."

He emphasised that it was only through the development of the trade union movement that progressive social change could be achieved. "Trade unions are a collective", Mealy continued, "There

**"There is a culture which goes with collectivism, a strength that comes from membership, from what is shared as a value system beyond the self."**

is a culture which goes with collectivism, a strength that comes from membership, from what is shared as a value system beyond the self."

Although unions build their power through workplace organisation, Mealy reminded delegates that "unions are not just about the workplace. They are about life and the right of the working class to have a voice in society. That is why trade unionism is so important."

Currently, he said that it was crucial that unions prioritise the need to "address the housing crisis facing so many people in Ireland" and warned that the free market would not solve the problem of homelessness.

## Newly elected SIPTU Honorary President and Vice President

### Padraig Peyton

#### SIPTU Honorary President

Born in Swinford, county Mayo, Padraig began working in the Sligo Mental Health Services in 1979, where he immediately became active in the union. He served as Honorary Assistant Secretary of the Sligo Health Services Branch for a number of years before being elected as Honorary Branch Secretary in 2001.

In recent years, he has served as an Honorary Organiser representing health service workers of various grades in counties Sligo, Leitrim, Roscommon and Donegal. In this role he has gained extensive experience in industrial relations. He has been actively involved in both organising and participating in industrial action including local and national strikes.

In 2010, Padraig was elected onto the Health Divisional Committee and then as Health Division President, a position in which he has served for the last six years during which time he has chaired three Divisional Conferences as well as other one-day conferences. His Presidency coincided with a very challenging time for workers in Ireland

particularly in the health service. Padraig contributed, in any and every way possible, as Divisional President to protect and improve the conditions of health workers.

Padraig was selected by the Health Division to be a member of the Steering Committee that directed the membership consultative initiative and its subsequent report which was adopted by the Special Delegate Conference on 25th May. From participation in this process, Padraig stated that he gained, "an increased insight into the needs of the membership".

He was elected to serve on the National Executive Council in December 2016.



### Bernie Casey

#### SIPTU Honorary Vice President

Bernie's working life has been spent in the services sector in Dublin. In 1979 she was involved in a high profile and successful 13 week strike for union recognition while a worker in a McDonalds fast food restaurant. Since then she has continually served as a shop steward and union activist.

She spent 22 years in the hotel industry. For the last five years, Bernie has worked in catering, first for the multinational firm Sodexo and now for BaxterStorey. In 2010 she was elected to serve on the Hotels, Catering, Leisure, Print and Media Sector Committee and following that the Contract Services Sector.

She served on the National Executive Council (NEC) from 2011 to 2016, and also many sub-committees, including Finance and Administration, Policy, Industrial, Union Mergers and the IDEAS Institute. Bernie currently sits on the Rules Revision Committee.

On the NEC, Bernie was a voice for low paid workers and has been actively involved in many campaigns over the years, including, the "Fair Hotels" and the "Fight for Fifteen".

Bernie participated in the successful Davenport Hotel strike in 2011. She also campaigned for the reinstatement of the minimum wage and the Joint Labour Committee. She was a member

of a delegation that met with the Minister of State to discuss the difficulties facing hotel and catering workers, particularly low pay, poor working conditions, and precarious work.

Bernie said: "We are only just emerging from the recession that led to wholesale attacks on workers' pay and conditions which affected our working and private lives. Public and private sector members fight the same battles. We must continue to build our union and use our collective strength to campaign for an aggressive agenda, with both employers and government."

She added: "We have much work to do in the coming years and I am committed to supporting all our members. Over the years I have demonstrated my abilities as an organiser, a negotiator, a public speaker and a loyal but independent-minded activist. In my role as Honorary Vice-President I will work with our members in all Divisions and across all forms of employment."





## Conference ratified the election of a General Secretary Designate and three deputy General Secretaries

### Joe Cunningham General Secretary Designate

**"A strong and well organised SIPTU is essential for the proper shaping of the debate around what decent work means in terms of proper wages and conditions. This will not only benefit those organised in our union but all workers and society in general."**

Joe became involved in the trade union movement over 30 years ago while employed by Lydon House, a catering and events company in Galway. After a period as a senior shop steward he was elected to the Western Area Branch Committee of the Federated Workers' Union of Ireland (FWUI).

His expertise soon saw him appointed as a full-time official with re-



sponsibility for FWUI members in the Western Area. At the merger of the FWUI and the ITGWU to form SIPTU in 1990, Joe was appointed an official in the Midlands Region.

Joe has fulfilled a wide array of prominent roles within SIPTU, representing and organising public, private and community sector workers in both jurisdictions on the island. His extensive experience included central involvement in such negotiation

processes as the restructuring of Shannon Airport, securing decent redundancy terms for former members at the Asahi plant in Mayo and major rationalisations in Atlantic Mills and Dairygold.

A member of the SIPTU Strategic Management Team for 20 years, Joe is a respected figure in the Irish and international trade union movement. In recent years, he has been elected and appointed to a number of important roles in several international trade union federations, as well as a representative of SIPTU on the ICTU Executive Council and as a member of the Governing Body of the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology.

As chair of the Technical Group which supported the Steering Committee that oversaw the membership consultative initiative, he has played a central role in formulating the strategic plan for the future of our union.

In recent years, Joe has worked between Liberty Hall and the union's western headquarters in his native Galway. He is a fluent Irish speaker.

### Gerry McCormack Deputy General Secretary for the Private Sector

**"It's impossible to truly have democracy, equal rights or equality without strong independent trade unions that fight for workers in the workplace and in society generally."**

Gerry was brought into union activity as a teenager at the beginning of his 15 years working as a hard-rock miner in Navan Mines. During this period he served as a senior shop steward leading union members through several disputes and major restructuring of the company. His union work at the mine saw him elected to the Meath Branch of the ITGWU and – after its merger with the FWUI – of SIPTU.

Gerry became a full-time SIPTU official in 1995 and after several years was



appointed in 2005 as SIPTU National Industrial Secretary for the Private Sector. He had responsibility for members in all large workplaces including Tesco, Dunnes Stores and Aer Lingus.

With the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, Gerry took a leading role in fighting to protect workers' terms and conditions in some of the worst-hit sectors of the economy, including retail and distribution.

During the major restructuring of the union, Gerry was appointed as Manufacturing Division Organiser. In this role he has been proactive in major campaigns and policy initiatives which have been used as blueprints for union-wide schemes.

Since the start of the economic recovery, Gerry has successfully co-ordinated a pay campaign throughout firms in his Division that has seen workers secure average annual increases of 2.5% to 3.5%. Under his stewardship the Division has also led the way in utilising the Industrial Relations Amendment Act (2015) to win union recognition for workers, including in the US multinational sector.

In recent months, his focus has been on best preparing members and workplaces in the manufacturing sector for the impact of Brexit.

Born in Kilskyre, County Meath, Gerry lives in County Cavan with his family. He is a very active supporter of the Meath GAA teams.

### Ethel Buckley

**Deputy General Secretary for Organising, Campaigning, Communications, Policy Research, Education and Training, Equality and the District Councils**

**"In an era when workers' rights remain under sustained attack it is crucial we work together to build a union that can lead an effective fightback in every workplace and community throughout the country."**

Active from a young age in women's rights, anti-racist and political campaigns in her native Cork, Ethel continued her social activism when working and studying in San Francisco.

She became involved in SIPTU when working towards a PhD in Political Geography at UCC. Deciding that her future lay in organising, she left a career in education to become a full-time official in Liberty Hall. After cutting her teeth in some of the most intense industrial battles of the 2000s, including the 2001 National Toll Bridges strike, the Independent Newspapers dispute in 2004 and the Irish Ferries dispute of 2005, she was promoted to Branch Secretary.

Shortly after its establishment she sought a transfer to the Strategic Organising Department. As a Sector



Organiser she led the Fair Hotels and Fair Deal for Cleaners initiatives and was centrally involved in the campaign to restore the Joint Labour Committees.

She joined the union's Strategic Management Team in 2011 as National Campaigns and Equality Organiser, leading campaigns to mobilise young, migrant and LGBT workers. As Services Division Organiser since 2015 she has been central to the Justice for Clergy Workers campaign, organising the National Women's Football Squad and securing legislation to restore collective bargaining rights to certain categories of freelance workers. She has also worked on ending involuntary low working hours and zero hours contracts.

She is a serving member of the Executive Council of the ICTU having first been elected in 2013. She had the honour of being appointed the inaugural Trade Union Organiser in Residence at Ruskin College, Oxford. She lives in Dublin with her husband and their three children.

### John King

**Deputy General Secretary for the Public Service**

**"Our union must retain the capacity to influence the conditions under which members work and live. In order to achieve this we must build density and work with our allies in the trade union movement and wider society."**

In 1993, John was appointed a full-time SIPTU official, having begun his work with the union five years earlier. He has extensive experience representing members across the Private, Public and Community Sectors in both the Republic and Northern Ireland.

Initially representing members in Co Tipperary, he later worked with the Women Workers' Branch before taking responsibility for the North East Region including the Newry Branch. He gained a crucial insight into the issues affecting SIPTU members in both jurisdictions and across numerous types of employments.

As part of the major restructuring of the union in 2010, John was appointed to the role of Services Division Organiser. This saw him take a lead in defending the interests of tens of thousands of members, many low paid, in industries that were among the worst affected by the economic crisis.

In response to the onslaught against workers, John helped formulate and lead



the SIPTU campaign for the restoration of the Joint Labour Committee system. He was also a leading member of the Coalition to Protect the Lower Paid that successfully campaigned for the reversal of the cut imposed on the National Minimum Wage.

In 2015, he became Public Administration and Community Division Organiser and was among the team that negotiated the Lansdowne Road Agreement and its extension. John is currently Chair of the ICTU Community Sector Committee and plays the lead role in advocating for the rights of Community Sector Workers at the Government High Level Forum for the Sector established in 2015.

Throughout his union career, John has worked to motivate shop stewards and activists and ensure the vital role they play in developing the union is fully recognised.

Born in Dublin, John lives with his family in Drogheda.



# We're going back into the heart of each community

**"IT IS critically important that members seize this opportunity to reinvigorate our link with local communities while continuing to play an active part in designing and shaping our union into the future," SIPTU General Secretary Designate, Joe Cunningham, has told the union's Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) in Cork.**

He made the comments in a rousing speech to 400 delegates gathered in the City Hall.

Speaking about the progress the union has made setting up local structures aimed at putting SIPTU back in the heart of each community across the island of Ireland, Cunningham pointed to the impressive level of members' participation after the previous BDC had decided to initiate a full review of the union's structures in October 2015.

"The most important thing to say about the development plan is that it is our members' development plan. We went through a long and considered process of consultation going around the country, listening to members, encouraging members to fill in sur-

veys and to write submissions about how we can reinvigorate our union together. As a result, our development plan is now in place having been ratified by members at a special delegate conference this year. The plan is a clear indication of when members tell us what they want for our union and our future, that we listen, and we act."

Cunningham's address to delegates confirmed that the overarching feedback from members was the real need to restore a solid connection between the union and the local community.

"Of all the things members spoke about during the consultation process, organising at local level was emphasised time and time again. It was summarised brilliantly at a meeting in the Midlands by a former member of the Offaly branch, Jackie Clarke, who is now a member in the Manufacturing Division.

"She said she found the Divisions and Sectors to be very efficient but she felt there was still a piece missing as there was no interaction with the union at local level." The newly-elected General Secretary Designate gave an in-



General Secretary Designate, Joe Cunningham tells BDC new structures are 'exactly what members want'

sightful analysis about the significance of making the union relevant to young workers, the success the union is having organising child care workers, the establishment of a migrant worker support network, and the value of investing in training, educating and upskilling members to win.

Mr Cunningham, who previously served as Head of Organising, spoke at length and in great detail about how the union plans to address this deficit while building intergenerational and community solidarity through localised district committees and stronger district

councils. We are setting up local district committees for both the public and private sector to address the deficit identified by members at local level. These committees are designed to give members a better opportunity to interact in the community and to get a greater appreciation of what is going on in other areas of the union. The committees then feed into the District Council who can organise campaigns for the local community to get involved in."

In his closing remarks, Mr Cunningham reflected upon the exciting journey of change that the

union is undertaking.

He said, "What this is all about is making our union a much better organised trade union that can deal with the growing exploitation culture and shaping a society that works for SIPTU members, our communities and our world.

"It will take a lot of hard work, resources and dedication but I am encouraged that this plan is exactly what the members want, it's what the members asked for, and we are going to do everything we can to deliver on our members development plan for our union and our future."

## SIPTU Migrant and International Workers Support Network

By Barnaba Dorda

**W związkach zawodowych SIPTU zrzeszonych jest prawie 20 tysięcy obcokrajowców, a połowa z nich to Polacy. Znakomita większość przyłączyła się do związków po 2004 roku, kiedy to otworzono granice dla pracowników państw które przyjęło do Unii Europejskiej.**

Od początku migranci byli bardzo aktywni w związkach, ale też potrzebowali wsparcia z naszej strony. Migranci byli wybierani na lokalnych przedstawicieli związków, organizowaliśmy dla nich szkolenia, zatrudniliśmy w SIPTU pracowników,

którzy mogli z nimi komunikować się w ich języku, żeby lepiej dotrzeć z informacją jak działają związki i jak wspólnie można zmienić warunki pracy na lepsze.

Bazując na doświadczeniach zebranych przez te wszystkie lata, w 2015 roku utworzyliśmy SIPTU Migrant and International Workers Support Network. To grupa aktywistów i migrantów, którzy razem ze związkami zawodowymi SIPTU wierzą, że można wspierać migrantów społeczności w uzyskiwaniu przysługujących im praw pracowniczych w każdym miejscu pracy. Dlaczego to robimy? Bo wierzymy, że łącząc się, komunikując

się ze sobą i koordynując działania możemy zdziałać więcej. Co więcej, każdego dnia spędzamy ponad 1/3 doby w pracy. Każdy powinien czuć się tam respektowany i traktowany z szacunkiem. Miejsce pracy, podobnie jak nasze lokalne społeczności jest bardzo zdywersyfikowane, wielokulturowe i żeby zmienić sytuację na lepsze powinniśmy zacząć wspólnie działać. Wykorzystać siłę wspólnych potrzeb bo przecież tak w wielu przypadkach zabiegamy o te same cele. Ale network ma za zadanie nie tylko pomóc koordynować działania pracowników z różnych stron świata, ale przede wszystkim także

wspierać ich w tych działaniach.

Określiłmy 4 podstawowe zadania naszego Networku:

Wspieranie migrantów by budowali silne organizacje związkowe  
Edukacja wszystkich pracowników bez względu na pochodzenie w zakresie prawa pracy i mechanizmów negocjacji zbiorowych. Organizujemy seminaria „Jakie są moje prawa pracownicze” i „Co to jest SIPTU” na terenie całego kraju.

Stworzenie mechanizmów wspierania migrantów w ich lokalnych społecznościach i miejscach pracy poprzez danie im narzędzi które sami mogą zacząć wykorzystywać

Współpraca z innymi organizacjami, grupami, które podobnie zajmują się problemami migrantów i dążą do poprawy ich sytuacji w Irlandii

Bardzo zachęcamy do włączenia się w Network, tych zainteresowanych prosimy kontaktować się z Joanną Ozdarską na adres emailowy [jozdarska@siptu.ie](mailto:jozdarska@siptu.ie), żeby uzyskać więcej informacji. Koniecznie też polubcie nas na facebooku: [SIPTUInternationalandMigrantSupportNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/SIPTUInternationalandMigrantSupportNetwork).





# Exposed: shallowness at heart of this Government



By Marie Sherlock

**FOR ALL the talk about providing for future generations and prudence in the face of Brexit and other risks, Budget 2018 was about 'keeping the recovery going' – a crude stimulus that saw small amounts given to most people at the expense of bringing about real change in those areas that need it the most.**

Budget day is the main opportunity in the legislative calendar for the Government to signal how it intends to tackle the major problems of the day. Faced with a housing emergency and an interminable funding crisis in health, by and large, the FG, FF and Independent coalition opted to do more of the same.

With a budget of just over

Budget day is the main opportunity in the legislative calendar for the Government to signal how it intends to tackle the major problems of the day

€1.5bn, Budget 2018 brought the prospect of real progress in health, housing and childcare no closer – in the main, it was a case of more sticking tape to temporarily alleviate ongoing problems. Despite all the hype, housing received less than 10% of new expenditure funding available in the Budget.

Almost all of the €610 million increase in housing expenditure



Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure and Reform Paschal Donohoe launches Budget 2018 outside Government Buildings with a smile PICTURE: RollingNews.ie

had already been provided for and pre-announced. In health, there was no mention of the cross-party Sláintecare 10 year plan, and funding to outsource the waiting list backlog to the National Treatment Purchase Fund was more than doubled. The Childcare sector is in the midst of a recruitment and retention crisis due to unsustainably low pay and yet capitation barely increased by 7%.

At best, Budget 2018 reflected a big failure to understand the needs of the Irish economy and society at this point in time. At worst, it showed up the hands-off, non-interventionist instincts of Fine Gael and their acolytes.

Minor concerns about the economy overheating and the level of national debt were trumped up to justify smaller than necessary in investment into infrastructure and housing. There was window dressing with regard to fiscal prudence by shifting €1.5 billion out of the

potentially productive Irish Strategic Infrastructure Fund into the so-

At best, Budget 2018 reflected a big failure to understand the needs of the Irish economy and society at this point in time

called 'Rainy Day' fund.

Claims that Ireland's public investment will reach international norms by 2019 rang hollow when

put in the context of the catch-up that is required.

In effect, the role of the capital expenditure budget is entirely different to the current expenditure budget. It must meet pent up demand – significant in 2018 given that capital funding was filleted to about less than half of boom-time spending by 2012. It must be sufficient to maintain existing stock. The Fiscal Advisory Council estimates that about half of what is planned between now and 2021 will go to covering depreciation.

It must also meet future demands. The Irish population is expected to grow by 1.1m people over the next two decades. Despite all this, the capital budget is expected to grow by less than half that of the current budget in 2018.

This Budget was supposed to be about improving people's living standards. Yet Government committed over a fifth of its additional resources to ensuring that a single

person on €20,000 would get an extra €1 per week. Those who are self-employed and on double average earnings will get 10 times that per week.

The Irish population is expected to grow by 1.1m people over the next two decades. Despite all this, the capital budget is expected to grow by less than half that of the current budget in 2018.

Ireland's income tax system does have a problem in terms of fairness and simplicity. Among OECD and EU countries, higher income tax rates are typically paid by higher income earners. Wage growth has meant that those on average earnings in Ireland have experienced a fiscal drag and tax thresholds have not moved in line with wages.

What gets lost in the debate is that Ireland currently has the lowest tax wedge for a worker on average earnings among the 21 EU countries in the OECD. It is the gap between what the employer pays out (Pay and PRSI) and what employees receive in terms of take home pay.

This matters in the context of "giving something back" to workers. Living standards cannot be solely defined in terms of what is in people's pockets – if the Government is really interested in prudent management of the public finances, then allocative efficiency must be a priority and that means targeting resources at public services, not the pockets of people already well off.



# Sticking plaster won't fix health service

■ By Paddy Cole

**WHEN Minister Paschal Donohoe took to his feet on Budget day he announced that the State's health spending is set to increase by €685 million in 2018.**

This additional funding means €15.3 billion will be available for health services in 2018. However, when you scratch the surface it is found that beneath the spin this headline-grabbing figure comes with a major health warning.

Taking into account the dramatic increase in the population of patients over 65 accessing public health services, this budget, at best, is just maintaining services as they are at present. At worst, Fine Gael and the Independent Alliance are throwing good money after bad, not learning from past mistakes, further privatising the health service and not addressing the ever-expanding demands being

placed upon public health services.

The reality facing health workers and their patients is that a sticking plaster won't help heal our health service.

On paper, the Budget says it will provide 1,800 additional staff across the acute, mental health, disability, primary health and community sectors but frontline staff won't just magically appear because of some fiscal exercise or political set piece of spin.

The Government must get real on recruiting and retaining workers in the health service, including paramedics, health care assistants, radiographers, nurses, midwives, radiation therapists and other health and social care professionals – and this includes providing unions with a clear road map to address new entrants' pay.

It is also deeply troubling that following months of work by members of the Oireachtas Future

**Sláintecare, a fully-costed, 10-year plan, supported by the ICTU, to implement publicly-funded health-care was published less than three months ago to much fanfare and with cross-party support, but it was never mentioned once in the Budget.**

of Health Care Committee, the Government missed an open goal to begin the job of funding the real reform of health care in Ireland.

Sláintecare, a fully-costed, 10-year plan, supported by the ICTU,

to implement publicly-funded healthcare was published less than three months ago to much fanfare and with cross-party support, but it was never mentioned once in the Budget.

Instead of Sláintecare, what we have is a Government pumping money into privatising health services through the National Treatment Purchase Fund (NTPF).

For people who can afford private health care, the extra €30 million for the NTPF, bringing it to €55 million, will go some way towards helping the middle from "being squeezed" any further but, in reality, this plan pushes public health services deeper into the pockets of private operators.

It means less funding for public health services on which the majority of SIPTU members and their families depend. Moreover, it will prove to be a drop in the ocean of the waiting list figures that look

set to stay well over the shameful figure of 600,000 into 2018 and beyond.

Tragically, but predictably, at the very heart of this tepid budget is a serious lack of ambition to resolve the problems working people face in health, housing and education.

The dogs on the street know that even this record-breaking health budget won't keep pace with expanding health demands, that the deficit in health is likely to grow and another bailout of the service will be required by the end of 2018. We all know this script off by heart by now and until we get real and seize the opportunity provided by Sláintecare, the Government will continue to set record numbers on spending but fail to deliver record successes on outcomes.

## Failing to fix funding crisis in third-level education

■ By Karl Byrne

**THREE months after the publication of the long-awaited Cassels Report, staff and students of third-level education institutions are still waiting to hear about the long-term funding plans for the sector.**

Budget 2018 did herald an important and welcome change with an increase in the National Training Fund (NTF) levy on employers of 0.1% to 0.8% in 2018 and 0.9% in 2019. This will increase employer's PRSI to 8.51% for low income workers and 10.76% for all employees. However, this change will bring in just €47m in 2018, which is only the tip of the much larger funding iceberg in the education system.

It is well short of FG's election manifesto statement that €100 million was needed in the sector to just stand still, due to demographic changes and inflation. The allocation of an extra €310 million between now and 2021 for infrastructural needs in the sector is to be welcomed. However, this does not address the long-term funding crisis in Further and Higher Education as described in the Cassels Report.

There is cross-party consensus that this needs to be tackled as a priority, yet the Government seems to be happy to let these considerations drift along in the Oireachtas Committee for Education and Skills.

Buried in the budgetary documents was the announcement of a review of the reallocation and reprioritisation of programmes funded by the NTF.

This is due to be completed in 2018 but already the Government is signalling a greater allocation of resources towards performance and innovation funding in third level, technology university development and post graduate funding. Just as importantly, the Government has suggested a greater say for employers in influencing how the NTF is spent. There are strong grounds for concern that this may lead to an undue influence in curriculum development and course content in the third-level sector.

SIPTU was also particularly disappointed that there was no announcement to tackle the serious deterioration in staffing levels (academic, professional and support) across the Further and Higher Education Sector.

## Budget exposes flaws in funding Early Years education

■ By Darragh O'Connor

**SIPTU has welcomed a measure of progress for the Early Years sector in Budget 2018, but warned that "fundamental problems" on funding remain to be sorted.**

Positives included a 7% increase in ECCE "free pre-school" capitation and its extension to two years, which will benefit most services, as well as the boost in capital funding

But SIPTU Sector Organiser, Darragh O'Connor warned that government needed to do more.

He told *Liberty*: "The fundamental problems of the Early Years funding system remain. Low pay has resulted in a staffing crisis, with qualified educators, managers and providers leaving the sector. A high turnover of staff impacts on quality. This budget does not address the issue.

"With providers under financial pressure, there's no guarantee the 7% ECCE increase will go towards pay and conditions. Indeed, there's no additional funding for the care and education of children under two years and eight months, or for



Early Years educators celebrate after Wicklow County Council votes unanimously to back SIPTU's call for better investment, support and pay in the sector  
Photo: Darragh O'Connor

those delivering it."

O'Connor pointed out that until national pay scales were set up through a Sector Employment Order (SEO), Early Years would remain a low paid sector.

He said: "The Government needs to make a real commitment to fund an SEO so that workers are recognised and rewarded.

"Beyond pay, we need a long-term vision for the Early Years sector and a plan to get there. We need a high quality, affordable, accessible Early Years sector that is delivered by professional educators and providers, who have decent pay. By building our union, we can make this happen."



# We need supply, supply and more supply



By Marie Sherlock

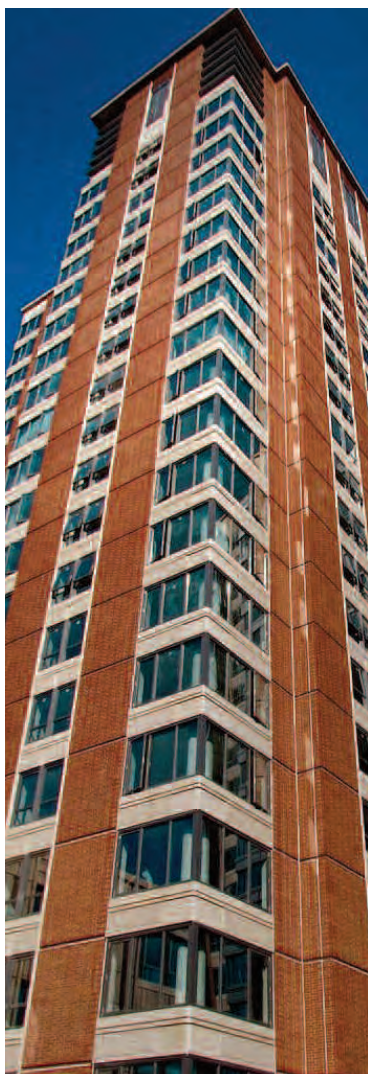
**WORLD Homeless Day happened to coincide with Budget day – 10th October. But the significance was most definitely lost on the Government on a day when just €91 million was allocated to housing from a budget of €1.5 billion.**

To be fair, most of the funding for 2018 had been pre-announced in the Action Plan for Housing and Homelessness. However, despite all the spin and talk of moving towards more housebuilding as opposed to acquisition, the State will largely rely on the private sector to address the homeless and housing crisis into 2018.

At a time when the Government chose to introduce a smaller budget than it was capable of bringing forward, this is unforgivable. Concerns about the national debt and (unfounded) fears of an overheating economy have provided cover for this Government to continue its policy of reliance on the private sector to resolve this problem.

Total funding for social housing will increase by €610 million to €1.8 billion next year. However, almost 30% of it will go to taking people off waiting lists and into insecure, temporary and private accommodation through the Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) scheme. Across the country, the volume of available rental accommodation was a little over 3,000 properties, according to DAFT.ie last August. The increase in HAP funding is expected to cover 17,000 people. There is a real supply issue here and it is far from clear from where these properties are going to come.

The immediate implication is a further crowding out of prospective renters in the private rental sector. Over the first half of this year, "movers" – those changing rental accommodation (as opposed to "stayers") – were facing average rental increases of somewhere between 9% and 13%.



**A person on twice average earnings, on over €73,000 per year and among the top 10% of workers, is currently paying on average over 40% of their net disposable income towards renting in Dublin**

Time and again, the key point is that we need supply, supply and more supply. Just over 15,000 houses in total were built last year, up 18% on 2015 – but less than a third of some estimates of

housing demand. Progress on social housing is even more dismal. Last year, the Department of Housing reported that local authorities built 247 houses with 331 by affordable housing bodies (AHB). In the first half of 2017, local authorities have built just 75 and AHBs have built 455. So, it's a long way off the 3,800 social housing units planned for next year.

In order to make real progress on the housing issue, the State will need to take a much more active role in managing public and private lands for the supply of public housing. To date, the approach has been hands off and it remained that way in Budget 2018. The vacant site tax will increase to 7% in 2019 – but it is a year too late, when more land is needed for development now.

NAMA's role is to be expanded to operate 'Housing Building Finance Ireland' with a €750 million fund to be used to advance loans to developers and builders to build just 6,000 houses.

For all the uncertainty and risks that Brexit brings, the failure of the current Government to fix the housing crisis is alarming. The slow pace of wage increases to date across the Irish economy has given a false sense that time is on the Government's side.

As the scarring effects of the recession on wage negotiations subside, wage demands will have to incorporate the rising price of housing. A person on twice average earnings, on over €73,000 per year and among the top 10% of workers, is currently paying on average over 40% of their net disposable income towards renting a house or apartment in Dublin. That is well in excess of the internationally recognised threshold of 30% for housing costs as a share of total outgoings.

Sooner or later, this housing crisis will have a bearing on the decisions of immigrants and those relocating because of Brexit – issues of consequence to this current Government.

## Unions must be fully involved in new European Labour Authority



By Ger Gibbons

**TRADE unions should be fully involved in the establishment of a new European Labour Authority and should be able to act as labour inspectors under such a body, according to the General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Luca Visentini.**

Visentini was responding to plans announced by European Commission President, Jean-Claude Juncker, in mid-September to establish a new European Labour Authority to supervise and improve co-operation between labour inspectorates in EU member states, such as the Workplace Relations Commission in Ireland.

The EU commission argues that 16 million Europeans live and work in other member states, twice as many as 10 years ago, and that 1.7 million people commute to another member state each day, including over 30,000 who cross the north-south border in Ireland

**Trade unions should be able to act as labour inspectors under the new body, ETUC General Secretary Luca Visentini said**

every day.

While the commission has yet to present formal proposals, media reports suggest it envisages the new agency overseeing the application of European labour rules in member states, carrying out cross-border labour inspections and analysing the labour market situation.

"It seems absurd to have a [Euro-

pean] banking authority to police banking standards, but no common labour authority for ensuring fairness in [the] single market", Juncker said.

In an immediate reaction, the ETUC said it expected trade unions to be fully involved in "working up the proposal and in being inspectors". Researchers at the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) have suggested the remit of the new body should be expanded to include promoting workers' participation in the corporate decision-making of multinational



Photo: ETUC General Secretary Luca Visentini

companies with workers in more than one member state, tackling letter-box companies and assisting in the development of transnational collective bargaining systems.

Members of the European Parliament had previously proposed the establishment of a European labour agency that could intervene when European labour rules aren't respected by companies or enforced by national authorities, with the power to sanction national authorities.

The Commission's precise plans for this initiative may become clearer when it releases its 2018 work programme, which is due by the end of the year. Any formal proposals are likely to take at least another year to be adopted and a further year to be implemented, if approved by governments.



# Progressive forces must unite to promote the common good

Edited extract of speech by SIPTU General President, Jack O'Connor at Biennial Delegate Conference of the union in City Hall Cork, 2nd October 2017

**Politics in our world has caught up with the economics of austerity and tens of millions of people are rejecting neo-liberal orthodoxy. The citizens of the UK voted to leave the EU and those of the US have elected the most openly far right President in modern history.**

We have also seen the dramatic rise of the Front National in France and xenophobic nationalism in several developed northern and central European countries while blatant neo-fascism has re-emerged as a significant force in Eastern Europe.

Notwithstanding the rejection of neo-liberalism, these are not progressive

**We all know the lessons of the tragic history of the Europe of the 1930s.**

developments. It is not the first time that tens of millions of working people and those rendered hopeless by the impact of austerity have lurched into the embrace of their deadliest enemies. We all know the lessons of the tragic history of the Europe of the 1930s.

It is only in those countries where the Left has been able to present a united front, that the

agenda of the Right has been successfully challenged. This was graphically highlighted in the recent General Election in the UK. There, because of the first past the post electoral system, all those on the Left have been forced to stay together in the Labour Party, avoiding the endless splintering that afflicts us in many other countries.

As a consequence and under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, a Democratic Socialist, uncontaminated by the compromises of the recent past, they were able to offer inspiration and hope to tens of millions of people, particularly among the young, on the basis of a solidly traditional Social Democratic manifesto.

Similarly, in Portugal, the Socialist Party, supported by the Left Block and the Communist Party, has managed to continue to govern, gradually rolling back the damage inflicted by the austerity agenda, rebuilding the economy and offering hope again. In France and Spain and indeed in Greece, vibrantly electrifying new forces on the Left have emerged, but unfortunately they are focused too much on the destruction of the traditional Socialist parties, thus leaving the field open to the Right.

Here in the Republic of Ireland we are still only emerging from the most serious economic collapse experienced in any developed country in the World since the Wall Street Crash of 1929. We in this Union, along with others in the Labour Movement, were forced to adopt a very difficult and unpopular rear-guard strategy to defend jobs, conditions and the basic social and economic infrastructure as much as possible.

We did not embrace that

strategy lightly, or because we thought that one-sided austerity was fair or that it was a good idea, or that it was by any means the best way out of the crisis. We came to it only reluctantly, when we ultimately realised, that we were faced with overwhelming odds. Then we did what any intelligent army does in those circumstances.

It retreats a bit, erects what-

dividual members who stood with the Union, whether they agreed with us or not, throughout what has been the most difficult period in our economic history.

But we have been regaining ground. We have been winning pay increases across the private and commercial semi-state sectors. The process of pay restoration in the public service which

inforces deeply ingrained and carefully cultivated misconceptions of individual self-interest. However, it is not in our actual self-interest as individuals at all.

It is not in any of our interests as individuals that young people have to pay multiples of the cost of building a house to put a roof over their heads, due to the absence of a properly funded public housing programme. Neither is it in our interests as individuals that people have to waste their scarce resources paying ever escalating private health insurance premiums, due to the absence of a properly funded public health service. It is not in our interests as individuals, either, that people do not have access to the best education, training and re-skilling facilities in the world, due to the absence of a properly funded education system.

And it is certainly not in our interests as individuals either,

**The bottom line is that we must have decent public services and it is far better that we fund them together as a community, through taxation, rather than allowing ourselves to be ripped off by private predators.**

began with the Lansdowne Road Agreement in the middle of 2015 has continued with its extension this year. We have also begun to utilise the provisions of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015 to win pay increases, which are legally binding on the employers, across whole industries, as well as new recognition agreements in a number of individual companies.

The tax cutting narrative re-

that the potential productivity and growth of our economy is compromised by inadequate public investment.

What's actually being perpetrated under the guise of 'promoting the incentive to work' or 'rewarding people' is a dif-

**For working people, the issue of the right to organise and bargain collectively, is central to the success of our ambitious strategy for 2022.**

ferent thing altogether. It's the criminal degradation of our public services, in order to facilitate the wholesale robbery of the people by a veritable army of

land hoarders, speculators, licensed drug peddlers and corporate money lenders!

It's time to wake up and smell the roses delegates, because instead of paying tax to fund our public services, together as a community, we're actually ending up paying twice as much and more to these legalised bandits.

That is why we are advancing the proposition that all available resources should be focused on the primary national project of housing our people, caring for the young, the elderly and the ill, supporting our people with dis-

abilities and educating, training and re-skilling our people in order to build a decent society for everyone who lives on the island of Ireland, between now and the centenary of the foundation of the State in 2022. This would be a laudable project around which we could mobilise as a people, and forget about cutting taxes until then.

The bottom line is that we must have decent public services and it is far better that we fund them together as a community, through taxation, rather than allowing ourselves to be ripped off by private predators. Those advocating tax cutting, which inevitably disproportionately benefits the better off, conveniently ignore the fact that Ireland's public spending, as a share of gross national income, is joint bottom of the list of EU countries and one third less than the average EU member state.

There will be more finance available to government from 2019 onwards, after the structural deficit is eliminated but it will still not be enough to achieve the dramatic improvements required. We will also have to adopt a more flexible interpretation of the EU fiscal rules, as advocated by our own Union and indeed laterally even by the employers' organisation IBEC. This would release somewhere between €4bn and €7bn over the next five years.

Then there are the matters which are entirely and absolutely within our own control. For example, there is absolutely no justification to go on gifting bad employers in the hospitality sector, a direct subsidy of €500m from the

tax payer through concessionary VAT rates which would build more than 2,500 local authority houses. They won't even go into the Joint Labour Committees to negotiate a living wage for their employees, who are among the lowest paid in the country. The wealthier generally will have to contribute more.

For working people, the issue of the right to organise and bargain collectively, is central to the success of our ambitious strategy for 2022.

**It will be necessary to forge a new alliance of all the genuinely progressive forces on the island of Ireland who are committed to the primacy of the common good to realise this great aspiration.**

This is because collective bargaining takes place at the point at which the benefits of output are distributed and very often where the nature and character of jobs are designed.

The OECD estimates that we are the 3rd most unequal country in Europe, measured by market income. This is off-

set to some degree by the more progressive aspects of our tax system, but it is manifestly evident in the workplace.

Thanks to the efforts of the Labour Party, the 2015 Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act has progressed collective bargaining rights further than ever before in the history of the State. But, workers in Ireland still do not enjoy a constitutional entitlement to participate fully in collective bargaining with their employers.

This will require a Constitutional Amendment. So, we will have to work with everyone who cares about workers, about equality, about low pay, about precarious work and exploitation, to press for a referendum to provide for the fundamental right to engage in collective bargaining for every worker in Ireland.

What we are promoting here in this comprehensive proposition for social progress, which is rooted in the values of social solidarity would serve as the kernel of a new relationship between all the people who inhabit this island, including those who are coming from elsewhere to pursue the hope of a better life along with us. It would see us all enjoying a better future, framed in the context of the European community of nations, (but not in some kind of Federal Super State) and from that platform we would all play our part as citizens of the world.

It will be necessary to forge a new alliance of all the genuinely progressive forces on the island of Ireland who are committed to the primacy of the common good to realise

this great aspiration.

Meanwhile, we will continue to work hard organising workers in Northern Ireland. Our membership there has been growing steadily for a number of years now.

The trade union movement in both jurisdictions is also focused on ensuring that workers do not pay the price of Brexit – and we are all fully engaged to that end, working with our comrades across the entire island.

We must also continue to do whatever we can to extend support to those who are suffering the burden of oppression, injustice and exploitation throughout the world. We are prioritising support for the beleaguered people of Palestine who are surely the victims of the greatest ongoing crime against humanity since the holocaust.

Delegates – none of the objectives I have outlined in this, my last Presidential address, are for the fainthearted. Nothing that's worth achieving ever is! It involves rowing against the tide.

I am confident as well that all of you and those who are the custodians of the legacy of Connolly and Larkin will be equal to the task.

I salute you all and through you all the members of the union and their families. I hope that whenever you are faced with the choice between making noise and making a difference, you'll chose to make a difference, whether that means erecting barricades or charging over them. I hope you will go on rowing against the tide in the battle for equality for everyone!





■ By Frank Connolly

**PRESIDENT Michael D Higgins is expected to announce whether he will seek a second term of office by next summer as he continues a busy schedule of engagements in Ireland and abroad over the coming months.**

Popular backing for another presidential term is significantly high as he enters the final year of his first seven-year term with 64% of voters expressing support for the proposal that he should be returned unopposed to the largely ceremonial but important position as head of state next year.

With a presidential election due in October 2018, President Higgins has indicated that he will announce his intentions following what he described as his "full programme of events" into the spring of next year.

Speaking during a 19-day visit to Australia on 9th October, President Higgins said that he will concentrate on his duties and commitments before making a decision on whether to run for a second term.

"At an appropriate time, I will say what it is. I will take everything into account. I will decide...how I might best contribute to Irish society at that time," he said. He added that he would not wish to impede anyone else wishing to run as a candidate should there be a presidential contest.

"We are in a democracy and a republic, after all," said the 76-year-old President who has placed the deepening of democracy and the creation of a true republic at the centre of his speeches and initiatives over his past six years in office.

A former Labour Party TD and government minister, President Higgins has won ever wider appeal among the Irish people and the diaspora, including during visits and engagements across Ireland and abroad.

He has also impressed the leaders and peoples of many countries during his state visits, including to Britain, China, Latin America, Africa, the Far East and most recently Australia.

He has been a regular visitor to Northern Ireland, which is consistent with his many years of campaigning for a peaceful and just solution to the political conflict on the island.

His speeches during his term have underlined his critique of the neo-liberal model of capitalism; of the exploitation workers, past and present; on the importance of the rights of women, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged people in Ireland and across the globe. He has spoken much of ethics in politics, society and in the workplace and in the role of the state in protecting the most vulnerable, in providing proper health and housing and other public services.

As pressure mounts for Michael D to go for second term, we ask...

## Is President Higgins our greatest export?



President Higgins receiving an honorary doctorate from the University of Western Australia  
Photo: Maxwells



President and Sabina are greeted by Her Excellency, the Governor of Western Australia  
Photo: Maxwells

PICTURES: Maxwells, Dublin; President.ie

He has proven to be an engaging personality when meeting with the people he visits in communities in Ireland and across the world, usually accompanied by his wife Sabina Higgins, an accomplished actress. President Higgins is a socialist and formidable left-wing intellectual, who brings a fresh and welcome insight into current as well as historical, political and economic matters.

Last year, he attracted criticism from the right-wing media and political forces for his expression of

admiration for the late Fidel Castro and the successes of the Cuban revolution.

The criticism, some from anti-Castro elements in Miami, Florida, did little to dampen the enthusiasm for his considered and articulate assessments of the courageous people who campaigned and fought for a just society, in Ireland and across the globe, over the course of the last century and more.

He has long expressed and acted in solidarity with the oppressed

President Higgins has won ever wider appeal among the Irish people and the diaspora... he has also impressed the leaders & peoples of many countries during his state visits, including to Britain, China, Latin America, Africa, the Far East and most recently Australia

and impoverished in Palestine, Central America, Africa and Asia. Earlier this year he travelled to Cuba, Colombia and Peru, while he was in the US in 2014.

He played a significant role in the commemoration of those who fought for an Irish Republic during the 1916 Rising which led to the War of Independence against British rule.

He led the State commemoration of the Irish Citizen Army in Liberty Hall where the Rising was planned and where the Proclamation was

printed. He also attended a number of concerts and events organised by SIPTU to mark the centenary of the Easter Rising.

Three years earlier, he was to the fore in recognising the significance of the Dublin Lockout of 1913 when 20,000 workers and their families were starved into submission by aggressive and exploitative employers in one of the poorest cities of the then-British Empire.

He led an historic state visit to Britain in April 2014 to meet with Queen Elizabeth to reinforce the importance of the peace process which has helped to heal the wounds of 800 years of colonial conquest by Ireland's nearest neighbour and to meet with Irish communities across the UK.

At the recent SIPTU conference, there was a strong expression of hope by General Secretary Joe O'Flynn that President Higgins would stand for a second term. It is a call that has been echoed by many in Ireland, and across the world.

If he remains as fit and healthy as he is today, it seems that the widely held support, at home and abroad, for another seven years of President Higgins may well prevail.





Local Authority Workers gather at the start of the SIPTU Biennial Delegate Conference on Monday 2nd October to launch the campaign calling for decent jobs and apprenticeships for young people. Photo: Graham Seely

## 'Your County, Your Youth, Your Future' local authority recruitment campaign

The 'Your County, Your Youth, Your Future' local authority recruitment campaign was launched at an event on 2nd October in Connolly Hall, Cork, attended by county council workers from across the country.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Brendan O'Brien, said: "The 'Your County, Your Youth, Your Future' campaign is a major new initiative which aims to unite the requirement to recruit more local authority workers with the needs of young people seeking employment in their

home counties. "Since the economic crash of 2008 the numbers employed by local authorities across the country has fallen by at least 20%. Over the coming months local authorities across the country must recruit more outdoors, roads and administrative workers if they are to fulfil their statutory duty to provide essential services." SIPTU Local Authority Sector President, Matt Henry, said: "The extension to the Public Service Stability Agreement, which was recently ratified by trade unions and the government, includes clauses which deal directly with the need to connect public service recruitment to

dealing with the issue of youth unemployment. "We will be mobilising local authority workers across the country to ensure that these clauses are fully utilised so that councils once more have the resources to provide adequate services and that their workforces are replenished with young workers." SIPTU activists in each local authority area in the country will be running publicity and lobbying campaigns focused on services and employment needs in their own county or city. For more information see the 'Your County, Your Youth, Your Future' Facebook page.

## SIPTU secures deal for Home Care workers

**A NEW deal negotiated by SIPTU representatives with the HSE will result in thousands of home care workers receiving a significant boost to their incomes.**

The increase arises from the recognition by HSE of travel time, job security through a minimum and maximum working week, a fair reward for any unsocial hours worked and the opportunity to up-skill and develop in an ever-growing industry.

Speaking to *Liberty*, SIPTU Organiser, Ted Kenny said: "This new deal is underpinned by fairness and decency for all home care workers and the people who rely on home care services.

"Our campaign has resulted in an extra €13 million to provide additional home care services by di-

rectly employed home care workers. The new deal guarantees our members minimum working hours, the opportunity to upskill and, most importantly, to work as part of a team."

Ted Kenny said that the coming months give members the opportunity to take stock of any new roster arrangements and that a SIPTU sub-group has been set up to provide guidance on template rosters in a bid to ensure members' rights and interests are protected.

"SIPTU representatives are very clear that we see the role of the home care worker expanding. That is why the commitment to fund additional investment in training is so important and why we are pursuing a job title change on behalf of our members from 'home help' to 'home care assistant'."



Staff at SIPTU Workers Rights Centre and the Irish Second-Level Students Union (ISSU) launch the new helpline. Photo: Paddy Cole.

## Launch of new helpline for second-level school students

A new helpline for second-level school students with workplace issues was launched on 25th September, at an event in the SIPTU Welcome Centre, 33 Eden Quay, Dublin 1. The helpline is operated by the SIPTU Workers Rights Centre and is aimed specifically at assisting members of the Irish Second-Level Students Union (ISSU).

ISSU President, Ben Smith, said: "We are delighted to partner with SIPTU on this campaign to inform our student members of their rights in the workplace. We found, from research we completed dur-

ing the summer, that many young people were unaware of their rights at work."

SIPTU Campaigner, Dan O'Neill, said: "The overwhelming majority of young people surveyed supported the right to be represented by a union in the workplace, the right to strike, to protest and to join a trade union. Young people also expressed the view that they thought trade unions played a positive roll in society."

**The helpline number is:  
1890 747 881**

# Jim Larkin Credit Union

SOMETIMES WE ALL NEED A LOAN FOR THE IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE

If you're a SIPTU member in the Dublin Region, the Jim Larkin Credit Union is open for you

If you are interested in joining the Jim Larkin Credit Union, call 01 8721155 or email [jimlarkincu@eircom.net](mailto:jimlarkincu@eircom.net)

**OPENING HOURS:**

**THURSDAY**  
7:00 p.m. - 8:15 p.m.

**SATURDAY**  
9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Jim Larkin Credit Union, Liberty Hall, Eden Quay, Dublin 1



The Port of Cork is the key seaport on the South coast of Ireland acting as a major facilitator of imports and exports into the region. We are proud to join the Supporting Quality Campaign along with other major Irish brands.

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Please continue to support the workers behind the brands and protect quality jobs in Ireland!

a joint  
initiative



[www.supportingquality.ie](http://www.supportingquality.ie)





# Supporting Quality plaque for Heineken Ireland

**DURING the SIPTU biennial conference in Cork, Heineken Ireland hosted an evening for delegates from the union's manufacturing division at its brewery in Leitrim Street, Cork.**

On behalf of the Supporting Quality Campaign, Gerry McCormack presented the membership plaque as recognition of Heineken Ireland's continued support for the campaign – the aims of which are to protect quality jobs in Ireland by promoting quality products manufactured in Ireland.

At the presentation, SIPTU Sector Organiser Mick Browne said: "We value Heineken Ireland's support for the campaign and look forward to continuing our strong working relationship with the company into the future."



Top row: Seamus Linehan, Heineken Ireland; Fabia Gavin of the Supporting Quality Campaign; Heineken Ireland shop steward Tony O'Connell. Bottom row: Mick Browne, SIPTU Sector Organiser; Eileen Hadden, Heineken Ireland; incoming SIPTU Deputy General Secretary Gerry McCormack, and Heineken Ireland shop steward Siobhán Spillane

PICTURE: Scott Millar



## Left Lives in 20th Century Ireland

Liberty Hall  
19th October  
at 5.00 pm

Umiskin Press is delighted to launch its sixth title- *Left Lives in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland* jointly edited by Francis Devine & Dr Jack McGinley.

The book contains the following essays:

Shay Cody	P T Daly
Charles Callan	John Mulhall
Francis Devine	Inez Mc Cormack
Francis Devine	Jim Mc Fall
Michael Halpenny	Dominic Behan
D R O'Connor Lysaght	John Dowling
Bill Mc Camley	James Fearon
Jack Mc Ginley	Frank Cluskey
Emmet O'Connor	William Walker
Conall Parr	Sam Thompson & James Ellis
Sheila Simmons	Evelyn Owens
& Francis Devine	John Swift
John P Swift	

Hardback & Paperback copies available on the night at special launch prices. Trade enquiries welcome at [www.umiskinpress.wordpress.com](http://www.umiskinpress.wordpress.com) or [jmcginley@siptu.ie](mailto:jmcginley@siptu.ie)

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## Che Guevara stamp sell out



An Post has confirmed that the initial print run of the Che Guevara stamp which features an image designed by Irish artist, Jim Fitzpatrick, has sold out.

It described the demand for the stamp as "unprece-

dented".

The €1 stamp, which was released to mark the 50th anniversary of the revolutionary's death, went on sale in early October with a run of about 122,000 stamps.

# Lily's life in the union



SIPTU Sector Organiser Teresa Hannick presents Lily McMorrow with the Markiewicz-Partridge Award in July for her outstanding contribution to the labour movement

■ By Scott Millar

**T**HE decades of union membership of Lily McMorrow were recognised by the SIPTU Sligo District Council with the presentation to her of a specially commissioned engraved mirror in late July.

Lily started work at 14 years of age in a basket factory on Finisklin Road in Sligo in 1964. She said: "I was given a job in the punnet department making baskets for strawberries. The first thing this girl told me was I had to join the union. I didn't know what she meant by this as I was only in the door."

"She continued to train me, then we became friends and after about two months she wanted me to take over the collecting of the union money. It had to be collected every week and then handed into the ITGWU hall."

Lily became involved in her local Branch, eventually being elected chairperson with the help of union official Noel Kilfeather. Lily married her husband Gerry in March 1970. Shortly after this the factory where Lily worked closed down, the products it produced having been replaced by cheaper plastic versions.

'Being part of the union played a big part in my life, I learned so much. It gave me the courage to stand up and speak out against injustice. In particular it gave me the confidence to be involved in the fight against the removal of cancer services from Sligo Hospital'

Lily said: "We were all called to get our redundancy money. I got £79 for my work time there. I thought I was rich." She used the money to buy a cot, a pram and baby clothes for her first baby. Over the following years, Lily fought a successful battle against cancer before returning to the workforce in the Bruss car components factory in Sligo.

Her new place of work was not unionised but, as Lily recalls, "the strangest thing happened. The boss wanted me to make arrangements with the union official, Noel Kilfeather, to plan terms of employment, sort wages, shift allowances, holiday pay and other issues. Noel asked me to be present at the talks."

Lily was appointed the factory's

first shop steward. "All the talks had to be thrashed out with the workers over three shifts. It took time and we had to ballot the workers to accept or reject." The agreement was overwhelmingly accepted and Lily stayed on in her new shop steward position.

She was again elected chairperson of her Branch committee. Lily retired from Bruss in 2001. Of her many years of union membership, Lily said: "I enjoyed my time and learned a lot. Being part of the union played a big part in my life, I learned so much. It gave me the courage to stand up and speak out against injustice. In particular it gave me the confidence to be involved in the fight against the removal of cancer services from Sligo Hospital."



## "The World is in a State of Chassis"

Wed 18th Oct 2017 - Cois Life Bar, Liberty Hall



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# Docklands communities remember victims of submarine attack

■ By Pádraig Yeates

**T**HE sinking of the Lockout food ship the SS Hare and a local collier (coal ship) the SS Adela within a fortnight of each other by German U-Boats in 1917 was remembered by local Dublin dockland communities last month.

Large crowds attended the commemoration events, which were organised by the Adela-Hare Commemoration Committee. Plaques were unveiled on the North Wall and Sir John Rogerson's Quay by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mícheál Mac Donncha and the Mayor of Holyhead, Ann Kennedy.

Both vessels were involved in the Lockout but had very different stories.

The Hare was the first vessel despatched to Dublin by the British TUC with vital food supplies to keep 15,000 trade union members and their families from starvation during the Lockout, while the Adela belonged to Tedcastle McCormack, one of the leading coal firms in the city, which imported blacklegs to support William Martin Murphy's ruthless strategy for breaking Jim Larkin's Irish Transport and General Workers Union.

When the First World War broke out the Royal Navy imposed a blockade on the Central Powers in an attempt to starve them into surrender and the German government retaliated with submarine warfare. The German campaign reached a peak in the Irish Sea during 1917, when it became known as 'U Boat Alley'.

The Hare was sunk on December 14th, 1917 off the Kish Bank by U-62. Fourteen of the 23 crew were from Dublin city and county, and a further member was from Longford. Twelve crew members died, of whom six were from Dublin, including the only female fatality, Mary Jane Arnott.

On December 27th, 1917, the Adela was sunk off Holyhead with a shipment of coal for



The ceremony at North Wall in September to commemorate the sinking of the SS Hare



The Lockout food ship the SS Hare



1,000 Irish mariners lost their lives in WWI while bringing vital supplies to these islands. Without their collective sacrifice the populations of Ireland and Britain would have starved

Dublin by U-100. All but one of the 25-strong crew were lost. Nineteen of those who died were from Dublin city and county.

Seventeen of the 36 seafarers who died on these two vessels were from Dublin's dockland communities, and many of their descendants were in the crowd. These later travelled out in the ship St Brigid to lay a wreath at the site of the Hare's sinking.

One thousand Irish mariners lost their lives in the First World War while bringing vital supplies to these islands. They are largely forgotten today, along with another 12,000 British seafarers who died. Without their collective sacrifice the populations of Ireland and Britain would have starved.

SIPTU will also be commemorating the loss of the SS Hare at the time of the centenary in December details to be announced.

Anyone wishing to obtain a copy of the superb booklet published by the Adela-Hare Commemoration Committee to mark the centenary can do so by emailing: [adelahare1917@gmail.com](mailto:adelahare1917@gmail.com)



# Fatah and Hamas agree historic deal

**PALESTINIAN** organisations Fatah and Hamas announced in mid October that they had brokered a reconciliation agreement following two days of intensive discussions hosted by the Egyptian government in Cairo.

Azzam al-Ahmad, the head of the Fatah delegation, and Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh confirmed the deal.

The deal will allow for new elections to create a single government for Palestine advocating for the first time in years both the West Bank and Gaza as well as dealing with security, the economy and other issues.

Ahmad said the dialogue was "in response to the aspirations of the Palestinian people to end the division, achieve national unity and strengthen the steadfastness of our people".

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas had issued instructions to the Fatah delegation to make every effort to achieve national reconciliation and to end the divisions.

He stressed that the Cairo meetings were a historic opportunity to achieve national reconciliation which "should not be missed because it will serve the interests of the Palestinian people and their just cause".



The talks took place against a backdrop of the absolute devastation of Gaza by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in recent years which has led to thousands of deaths. More than 1,500 children were killed in the IDF onslaught on the Palestinian enclave in 2014.

The region's infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, water and electricity supplies have been severely damaged. Food and medical products are also in short supply.

Added to this has been the expansion of the illegal settlements by Israeli settlers, restrictions on access to Muslim shrines in Jerusalem and the continuing harassment and abuse of Palestinians travelling to and from Israeli controlled areas for work.

"In response to the aspirations of the Palestinian people to end the division, achieve national unity and strengthen the steadfastness of our people"



The destruction of GAZA

There has also been a recent clampdown on visitors from other countries, including Ireland, wishing to travel to Palestine to learn directly of the experience, and to express solidarity with its people.

The agreement clears the way for a single unity government of Palestine which will control the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. The unity government will run all institutions including the security

forces as well as border crossings with Israel and at Rafah, the only access from Gaza to Egypt. It is expected that the full handover of administrative control of Gaza to the new government will be completed by December this year. Thousands of Palestinians in Gaza and across the West Bank celebrated the unity agreement following the announcement on Thursday 13th October.



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# Hanna and her sisters – feminist and revolutionary



Review by  
Michael  
Halpenny

**Hanna Sheehy Skeffington  
Suffragette and Sinn Féiner**  
By Margaret Ward

**HANNA** Sheehy-Skeffington is sometimes referred to as the widow of Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, journalist, opponent of the "Great War" and one time member of the Army Council of the Irish Citizen Army who was murdered by the British military in Portobello Barracks, Dublin, during Easter Week 1916.

However, she was so much more than that. Long before she met Frank she was a journalist, feminist and socialist and after her husband's shooting remained active in public life in the cause of women, equality and in politics as a supporter of Irish Independence.

A graduate of the then Royal University (UCD), she worked as a teacher of languages in the College of Commerce in Rathmines. She and her husband founded the Irish Women's Franchise League in 1908 and later the radical *Irish Citizen* newspaper. Dismissed from her teaching post because of her political activism, along with her husband she supported the workers' side during the 1913 Lockout and was an opponent of the imperialist war in 1914.

She was a political confidante of James Connolly and was chosen by him as one of a small number of commissioners to administer civil government in 1916 in the event of a rebel victory and pending free elections. Later, she became an executive member of Sinn Féin and campaigned and raised funds in North America. She was banned from returning to Ireland by the British government.

She supported the anti-Treaty side during the Civil War and later again she joined Fianna Fáil on its foundation but quickly left over the question of entry into the Dáil. A lifelong socialist, she visited the Soviet Union as secretary of the Friends of Soviet Russia. More than that, a lifelong feminist, she was a founding member of the Women's Social and Progressive League in 1938.

"the ablest of the women we have in public life in the Ireland of the last 30 or 40 years".

*Cathal O'Shannon, ITGWU obituary 1946*

Through it all, she maintained her journalism and an extensive correspondence and this volume edited by historian, Margaret Ward, is testament to a woman described by Cathal O'Shannon on her death as "the ablest of the women we have in public life in the Ireland of the last 30 or 40 years".

As a public speaker he said she was "in a class by herself", while

"In her, the cause of Irish freedom had no better champion".

the *Workers Review* wrote, "In her, the cause of Irish freedom had no better champion".

In fact, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington's writings reveal a champion of many causes. On education, she campaigned for university education for women and on pay for women secondary teachers. On feminism and the cause of votes for women she argued for "Militant militancy".

"Desperate diseases need desperate remedies and if the vote is wrested from Government by methods of terrorism ...who can say it wasn't worth a mutilated letter, a cut wire, a Premier's racked nerves?"

She was a consistent and persist-



Hannah Sheehy-Skeffington: legendary feminist, socialist and republican  
PICTURE: Public Domain

ent opponent of the 'Free State' government in all its manifestations but did not shrink from attacking Fianna Fáil when it came to power.

She campaigned vigorously against De Valera's Conditions of Employment Bill which, she said,

"out-Hitler's Hitler, under section 12 it gives the Minister for Industry ...the power to limit the number of women in industry or remove them altogether".

It removed any vestige of allegiance she had to voting for the party, albeit "as a choice between

bad and indifferent".

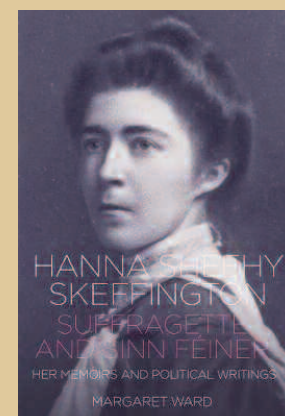
Looking back after 30 years on the murder of her husband and others by Crown forces, she wrote " ...it is not the brutality of the British Army in action against a

She campaigned for university education for women... On feminism and the cause of votes for women she argued for 'Militant militancy'

people in revolt ...but the automatic and tireless efforts on the part of the entire official machinery, both military and political, to prevent the truth from being made public".

It could have been written yesterday about the unfinished business of a public enquiry into the Dublin and Monaghan bombings and their atrocities.

She was a truly remarkable woman and deserves nothing less than to have her writings presented to us by an historian of the calibre of Margaret Ward and more importantly to have them read, the better to inspire our thoughts and actions today.

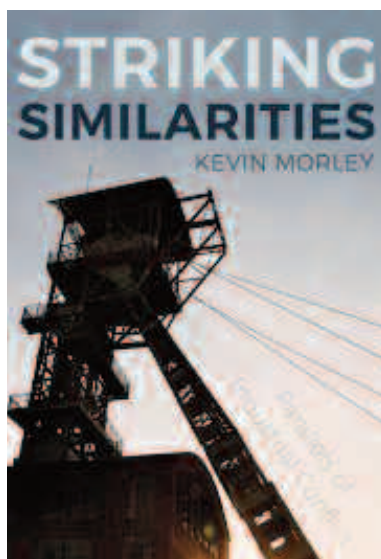




# A tale of two struggles



Review by  
Michael  
Halpenny



**Striking Similarities**  
By Kevin Morley  
Book Guild Publishing

**T**HE 20th century witnessed three important landmarks of working-class militancy on these islands: the Dublin Lockout of 1913, the British General Strike of 1926 and the British Miners' Strike of 1984/85. Two of those (1913 and 1926) form an integral part of Irish and British labour history.

Indeed in the case of the Lockout it has been described by President Michael D Higgins as a foundation event in the establishment of the Republic. On the other hand, the miners' strike lies in that no man's land between history and contemporary memory for anyone over the age of 40.

This refreshingly honest book draws comparisons between two of those seismic events: the Lockout and the miners' strike. It is a tale told with a spirit and intent of solidarity and which encompasses not just the respective combatant unions – the ITGWU and the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) – but also the communities from which they came.

In his treatment of the Lockout, Kevin Morley demonstrates a deep understanding of both the industrial relations and political dimensions of that dispute, seeing it for what it was. While ostensibly fought on the key fundamental of the right of workers to join and have recognised the trade union of their choice, it was



The SS Hare docks in Dublin with food and supplies for families of those locked out in 1913. Picture: UCC Multitext



A picket during the British Miners Strike of 1984/85. Picture: Wales Online (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

nothing less than class war forged by the employers of Dublin on the workers of that city.

He discusses in some detail the role of women, including that of Delia Larkin and the Irish Women Workers Union, drawing parallels with the way in which women stood shoulder to shoulder with the miners in 1984 to defend jobs and communities.

At the hard edge of the Lockout he also discusses the role of the Irish

Citizen Army (ICA), noting in passing that the first such defence organisation may well have been the "Workers Police" organised by the Transport Union during the Wexford Lockout of 1911.

In particular, Morley analyses the role of union solidarity between British and Irish workers in 1913, reminding us that the Miners Federation of Great Britain (MFGB), the precursor of the NUM, contributed £1,000 a week to keep the food

kitchens going in Liberty Hall.

Turning to the miners' strike of 1984/85, the author paints his picture on a wide canvass, detailing the history and growth of trade unionism and militancy among miners.

The year 1920 was the high watermark of union organisation in Britain with approximately 6.5 million workers in membership. Of these, the miners were among the most significant, accounting for roughly one sixth of all union members.

Morley analyses the role of union solidarity between British and Irish workers in 1913, reminding us that the Miners Federation of Great Britain, precursor of the NUM, gave £1,000 a week to keep the food kitchens going in Liberty Hall

During the General Strike of 1926 when mine owners sought to impose savage pay cuts, the miners famously declared "not a minute on the day – nor a ha'penny of the pay!" They hung out to the bitter end.

In the 1970s, their militancy undiminished, the miners and the NUM are credited with the downfall of the Conservative government of Edward Heath. When Margaret Thatcher came to power at the end of that decade, she and her government were determined to face down the NUM – what they described as the "enemy within".

Her government deployed all the resources at their command to defeat the miners and destroy their communities. Kevin Morley lays bare in compelling detail the extent of that determination, drawing comparison between the parts played by the state, the police, the press and the employers in both 1984 and during the Lockout.

However, he also describes the enormous solidarity among workers at home and abroad, in particular the repayment of the debt owed by the workers of Dublin for the support of the miners in 1913.

At the end, what emerges is hope rather than despair, on the one hand to see through the unfinished business of 1913 – full-blooded union recognition, and in the case of the UK, to see the resurgence of left-wing politics under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn and his ambition to roll back the tide of austerity.



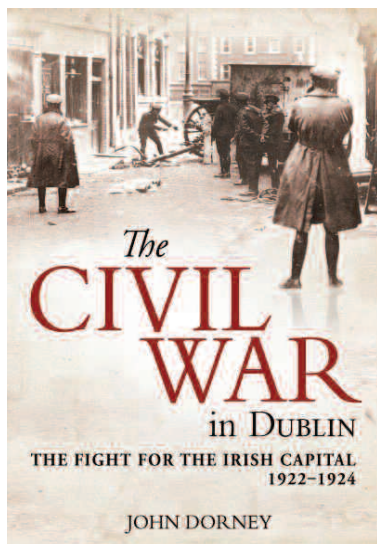
# The battle for Dublin

**The Civil War in Dublin**  
By John Dorney  
Merrion Press

NOT TOO far from where I live, embedded into the low wall of a playground on Upper Rathmines Road, is a small stone cross. It is dedicated to a young local man who was killed in the closing months of the Irish Civil War in Dublin. Thomas O'Leary was a captain in the 4th Dublin Battalion of the anti-Treaty IRA and was last seen alive in the custody of the Free State Army. His body, riddled with 22 bullets, was dumped at the gates of (the then) Tranquilla convent.

John Dorney's book attempts to chart the grisly progress, firstly of the "Battle for Dublin" and then the guerrilla war that followed, in the course of which young Thomas O'Leary was murdered. The chapter headings themselves practically tell that tale: The Siege of the Four Courts; The Battle for Dublin; Urban Insurgency in Dublin; the Murder Gang; Executions.

The war appeared to be a struggle between those who could not win (the anti-Treaty IRA) and those who could not afford to lose (the Provisional Government). In all of this, ordinary citizens and the trade union movement were largely bystanders or ineffectual opponents of "militarism".



As a Free State officer later admitted, they were losing popular support and their soldiers were war weary – but the deliberate policy of executions broke the IRA morale. Understandably, few are looking forward to commemoration in 2022-'23

However, things might have turned out differently. Casualty figures confirmed by Dorney show that Free State forces in the city lost more men killed (95) in the 11 months of fighting than the Anti-Treaty IRA (87). However, of the anti-Treaty dead, half were accounted for by both formal and informal executions by Free State forces.

In fact, as Dorney further relates, opting for execution was a "vital strategic move" on the part of the Free State, ostensibly to counter the enormous drain on resources in countering the perceived effectiveness of the anti-Treaty side's low-intensity war.

As former Free State officer Paddy O'Connor later admitted, they were losing popular support and their soldiers were war weary – but the deliberate policy of executions broke the IRA morale.

Understandably, few are looking forward to its commemoration in 2022-'23.

John Dorney's pacy book, which includes new research, helps us to better understand the events of nearly a hundred years ago. What followed thereafter, North and South, was the "carnival of reaction" which James Connolly had warned would be the inevitable consequence of partition in which workers equally inevitably paid the price.

That we should remember.

Michael Halpenny



## Irish Labour History Society 2017 Conference

### Morning session: The life of Sean O'Casey

Papers presented by Christopher Murray, Martin Maguire and Manus O'Riordan

Afternoon session:  
Ireland and the  
Russian Revolution  
Talks by Paul O'Brien, Helena Sheehan  
and Emmet O'Connor

**Saturday, October 21st**

11am to 4.30pm

ILHS premises, Beggars Bush, Dublin 4

The full programme is available to download a [www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com](http://www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com)  
Conference subscriptions are €15 for members (€20 for non-members). Please book in before 19th October through the PayPal link on [www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com](http://www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com) (For those who are not able to book online, please phone Beggars Bush at 01-6681071, Monday-Thursday 10am-4pm, Friday 10am-1pm)

**Irish Labour History Society**  
An Cumann Staire Lucht Soathar na héireann

[www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com](http://www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com)

# Peeling back the layers on Lockout history

**The Dublin Lockout 1913 – New Perspectives on Class War & its Legacy**  
Published by Irish Academic Press (2017)

THIS volume of essays on the 1913 Lockout and its legacy is edited by Conor McNamara and Pádraig Yeates, whose magisterial work *Lockout* (2000), remains the standard reference point for students of the period.

Contributors drawn from home and abroad, including the two editors, attempt to focus on a class analysis of the event that the book describes as the "nearest thing Ireland had to a debate on the type of society that was wanted by its citizens".

It's hard to disagree with Yeates' view that its commemoration was the "Cinderella" of the Decade of Commemorations, though the



Larkin arrested: predictable coverage from British tabloids but some of the best Lockout reporting was done by the US-based *Christian Science Monitor*

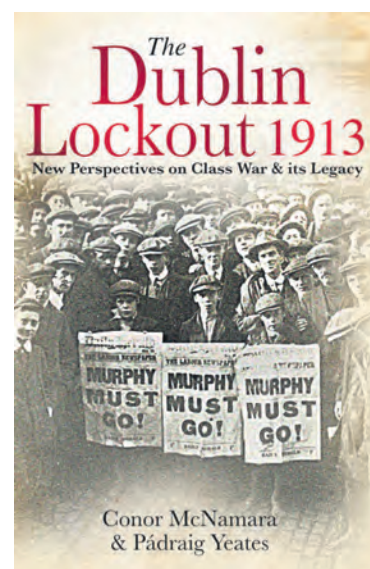
trade union movement and particularly SIPTU did more than their best to ensure that it wouldn't be.

Essentially, the book seeks to

peel back the onion layers of class in Ireland, then and now, and to relate it to the challenges of today. In a chapter titled *The Layers of an Onion*, Brian Hanley notes that while "class was everywhere during the centenary of 1913", the most positive result of the centenary has been a new interest in the importance of class division in Ireland.

Further afield, Meredith Meagher examines the way in which the Lockout was seen by Irish-Americans at the time. She contrasts the approach of the more conservative *Irish World* newspaper with that of the Fenian and separatist *Gaelic American*.

The *Gaelic American* "emphasised the brutality of events in Dublin", but in fact both papers ultimately avoided "uncomfortable analysis of the social chasms that events in Dublin 1913 graphically



exposed". The honours for best coverage she interestingly gives to the *Christian Science Monitor* for its daily reports on the Lockout to American readers.

Other contributors such as oral historian Mary Muldowney discuss how 1913 was commemorated while Donal Fallon deals with young workers, in this case, newsboys, in a chapter titled *Quick-Witted Urchins*, noting that while there is evidence of newsboy involvement in the revolutionary period, none gave a statement to the Bureau of Military History. It was as if they passed like shadows.

And that is precisely why books such as this are so important, not just to remember, but to recalibrate our understanding of history, in particular such an important and compelling period as the "decade of revolution".

Michael Halpenny



**TRIBUTE Rodney Bickerstaffe**

# 'A warm and principled man'

**R**ODNEY Bickerstaffe, former general secretary of UK trade union Unison, died on 3rd October at the age of 72. Rodney, who led the public sector union NUPE before it became Unison, was also a former president of the Trades Union Congress (TUC), President of the UK National Pensioners Convention and President of the NGO, War on Want.

Paying tribute to Rodney Bickerstaffe, UK Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said: "Words do not come easily after the awful news of Rodney's death. He was a warm, decent and principled man, an outstanding trade unionist and socialist, and a great friend and support to me over many years ... Rodney was always global in his views and perspectives, a real internationalist."

Bickerstaffe had close links with SIPTU and visited Liberty Hall a number of times during his career, although his links with our union were much closer than many people realised.

Rodney's mother Elizabeth was born in 1920, the eldest of 10 children. During the second World War, she was training as a nurse in

**'An outstanding trade unionist and socialist, and a great friend and support to me over many years. Rodney was always global in his views and perspectives, a real internationalist'**  
– *Jeremy Corbyn*

Whipps Hospital, East London. One day, a carpenter from Dublin by the name of Tommy Simpson walked into the hospital complaining of stomach pains, and a war-time romance was sparked between the two.



Soon Elizabeth found herself pregnant with Rodney. However, like many war-time romances it was short-lived. Tommy returned to Dublin but in more recent years, Rodney sought to make contact with his father.

In Autumn 1997, Rodney was visiting Dublin to attend a trade union conference when he decided to knock on the door of the last known address he had for his father. There was nobody in, but an elderly neighbour told him of another Simpson who lived a few kilometres away.

The old man told Rodney that he thought he might be related, and put his daughter Ann in contact with him by telephone. Ann turned out to be the niece of Rodney's father and told Rodney that his father had three other children in Ireland: Liam, Frances and Tommy.

As it turned out, Rodney's brother Tommy was also an active trade unionist and political activist. Tommy has been a long-time member of SIPTU and has served as President of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions. He was also a candidate for the Green Party in a number of local and general elections.

Rodney is survived by his wife, Pat, and their four children.

## THE KEVIN MCMAHON MEMORIAL LECTURE

# LESSONS FROM THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

**Date: Friday, 17th November**

**Time: 7.00 p.m.**

**Venue: Liberty Hall**

**Main Speaker – David Kotz**

**(Economist, author of Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System)**

**Debate Panel – Jack O'Connor (SIPTU General President)**

**Helena Sheehan (Author of The Syriza Wave)**

**Brian Hanley (Co author of The Lost Revolution)**

**Chair: Tish Gibbons (SIPTU College)**





**OBITUARY Seamus Kelly**

# Tireless union and community activist

**F**RIENDS and colleagues were shocked and saddened when the news filtered through on the 11th June last of the sudden and untimely passing of Seamus Kelly.

Seamus was a thorough gentleman and was always available to lend a helping hand when needed. He began his working life as a bus driver in England before returning to Monaghan to train as a mechanic in Gibson's Garage. In 1968, he joined the Outdoor Staff with Monaghan Co Council, subsequently taking up the position of Machinery Yard Supervisor where he remained until his retirement nine years ago.

He was a member of the Branch Committee of the FWUI and later SIPTU. On the death of Frank Keelaghan in 2002 he was elected Chairman of the Monaghan 20/21 Branch.

He was subsequently elected to the Regional Executive Committee



Seamus was a thorough gentleman and was always available to lend a helping hand when needed. He applied a common sense analysis to every situation in which SIPTU members were involved

and he applied a common sense analysis to every situation in which SIPTU members were involved. Seamus served two terms on the National Executive Council and took part in numerous union events and conferences.

Seamus was also a tireless community activist. He was a eucharistic minister with the Catholic Church; chairman of Aghabog Dramatic Society; and he raised funds for many charities including his local GAA club, Aghabog Emmetts.

Seamus will be truly missed by all of us who had the pleasure of knowing and working with him.

There was a large attendance at his funeral in Aghabog, including SIPTU national officers Jack O'Connor, Gene Mealy and Joe O'Flynn.

Seamus will be sadly missed by his wife Bridget and children Sean, Pauline, Eileen, Donna, Richard and Cherelle, as well as his many other relatives and friends.

May his gentle soul rest in peace.

**OBITUARY Tommy Walsh**

# Spotting a job ad by chance led to a life of organising workers

**FRIENDS and colleagues of former Assistant National Executive Officer Tommy Walsh were greatly saddened to hear of his passing on 23rd September.**

It was the fortuitous spotting of a newspaper advertisement that led Tommy Walsh to embark on a very successful, but sadly curtailed, career as a union organiser.

Born in Whitehall in Dublin in 1940, Tommy had achieved a good Leaving Certificate, and with a job in a finance house lined up, it looked like his future lay in the accountancy profession. However, before he started on this path he noticed an ad in a newspaper from the ITGWU seeking trainee union officials.

"My da had always told us how important the trade unions were in ensuring working people got a decent wage and 'a fair shake' from their employers," he told *Liberty* last year. "It must have struck a chord with me because I got really excited about the prospect of working for the union."

He got the job and started working for the ITGWU in September 1959. Tommy's first assignment was in the Hotels' Branch, under Mickey Mullen, who would go on to become the union's general secretary.

"It was a good time to work for the union in the hotel industry," said Tommy, "as morale was high



Tommy Walsh: his dad's union views 'struck a chord' with him

and the union was really respected."

By the mid-1960s, Tommy had been transferred to the No. 14 Branch, organising workers in general engineering and motor car assembly. In 1971, he was promoted to work in Liberty Hall, working with, and learning from, Paddy Donegan, Dan Shaw and Tom O'Brien, among others.

It was during this period that he met his future wife Maria Quirk. They married in 1972 and had two children, Lavinia and Thomas.

"Between my work and the family, there wasn't a whole lot of time for social pursuits. I joined the local branch of the Labour Party, went to watch Naomh Mearnóg, the local GAA team, and of course,

attended Croke Park for most of the appearances of my beloved Dubs," he said.

In April 1983, Tommy was appointed as national group secretary, in charge of organising workers in a number of major industries, including transport and Bord na Móna.

In 1990, on the formation of SIPTU, he was appointed to the position of assistant national executive officer, responsible for the whole of the private sector and membership organising nationally.

In the early 1990s, he also organised a national 'Buy Irish Campaign'. The campaign had the slogan *Buy Irish and the Job's Right*. It was very successful and helped to boost employment numbers and the morale of members when spirits were at a very low ebb, he recalled.

On 21st January 1997, during a meeting of the National Oil-Rigs Committee in Cork, Tommy took ill and was rushed to the Cork University Hospital with a severe stroke. After a lot of remedial support and very hard work, he became somewhat 'mobile' again, with the help of a mechanical wheelchair. He returned to work until his 60th birthday and retirement.

Tom is survived by his wife, Maria, and their two children, Lavinia and Thomas.

**TRIBUTE Tom Lundy**

# Passionate about union issues

**TOM Lundy, who died on 10th September, began his apprenticeship with Panton & Watkins Painting Contractors at 14 years of age.**

Tom, who was born on Amiens Street in Dublin in 1941, soon joined the Irish National Painters and Decorators' Union becoming a veteran member and activist.

He served on the union committee from the early 1970s eventually becoming President, a role he filled with energy and enthusiasm and of which he was extremely proud.

Along with Gerry Fleming and Paddy Coughlan he began supplying voluntary painting services and help to various charities, including the housing agency, Threshold, and the Larkin Unemployment Centre in the north inner city.

He continued to work at his trade right to the end and was always passionate about union and working class issues. He also enjoyed hill-walking in Wicklow.

Tom endured his illness coura-



Tom Lundy took pride in his work and his union

geously and passed away with dignity surrounded by his family including wife, Angela, his daughters, Sandra, Karen, Gillian and son, Tom Jnr.

He also left 10 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.





Football fans hold Catalan flags

# Wrapped in the flag

By Kevin Brannigan

**I**AVE these images in my mind. As a six-year-old, I used to sneak into my front room where we had two pictures hung on the wall. Not a Rembrandt, which we couldn't afford in a council house, but a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and a smaller picture of Pádraig Pearse.'

So began Republic of Ireland manager Martin O'Neill in his 2008 speech at Áras an Uachtaráin on the theme of being Irish.

The Derry man is a pivotal figure in this island's football and cultural history. The first Catholic to captain the Northern Ireland national side he can remember being booed onto the pitch at Windsor Park, though that soon stopped when his ability began to show.

He now stands on the verge of leading the Republic to two major tournaments in a row – thanks to a fellow Derry man's goal in Cardiff. Meanwhile, another Northern Catholic called O'Neill aims to do the same in Belfast this November.

Football in Europe has always had

to navigate the tricky waters of European nationalism.

Thirty-five European countries competed for the right to reach Italia '90. This time around, three decades of collapsing political blocs and national awakenings later, the list had grown to 55.

A few days before the continent's star players departed their clubs for international duty, the Catalan independence referendum once again pushed football and politics awkwardly together.

With the Guardia Civil running riot in the streets outside, FC Barcelona, that great symbol of modern commercialised football and Catalan nationalism, juggled its dual responsibilities to Nike and its membership by succumbing to a middle-of-the-road gesture of defiance by closing its gates to fans for a league match to a Las Palmas side which had arrived with Spanish flags embroidered on their jerseys – if Barca had refused to play they would have lost six valuable league points.

In the post-match interviews Gerard Piqué, a Catalan who came up through the youth ranks at

Barcelona and who has a European and World Cup winner's medal for Spain, broke down in an interview with the media when questioned over his emotional reaction to the police violence of the preceding days and suggested he would leave the Spanish national side if the

a blow.

Before Euro 2008 it was Aragonés who christened the team La Roja simply meaning "The Reds", a contentious term in Spain given the country's political make-up, where to be a La Roja was traditionally to be communist and anti-Franco.

Thirty-five European countries competed for the right to reach Italia '90. This time around, three decades of collapsing political blocs and national awakenings later, the list had grown to 55

manager felt so inclined.

Fast forward a few days later and the inevitable boos ring out from Spanish supporters towards Piqué as he takes the field for Spain.

By the end of the week Spain had qualified comfortably for next summer's tournament but the unity of the national side that swept all before them under the reign of Luis Aragonés seems to have been dealt

The now deceased Luis Aragonés was no left-winger and denied any political connotation in the nickname but to those looking for one it seemed like an olive branch.

In the Franco era the Spanish side developed a style of football known as "Furia Española". It was chest-out arrogance. When the side played, the Basques, Galicians and Catalans looked the other way.

Under Aragonés they developed "tika-taka" – a variation on the Dutch concept of Total Football; it endeared the Spanish to the world.

As the Spanish team tika-taka'd its way to victory in Vienna, Kiev and Johannesburg the world looked on at a "new Spain", symbolised by Basque, Catalan and Madridista footballers celebrating while wrapped in their regional flags but playing under the Spanish banner. Finally, Spain was done with civil war politics and reconciled as one in harmony, rather than under Franco's jackboot.

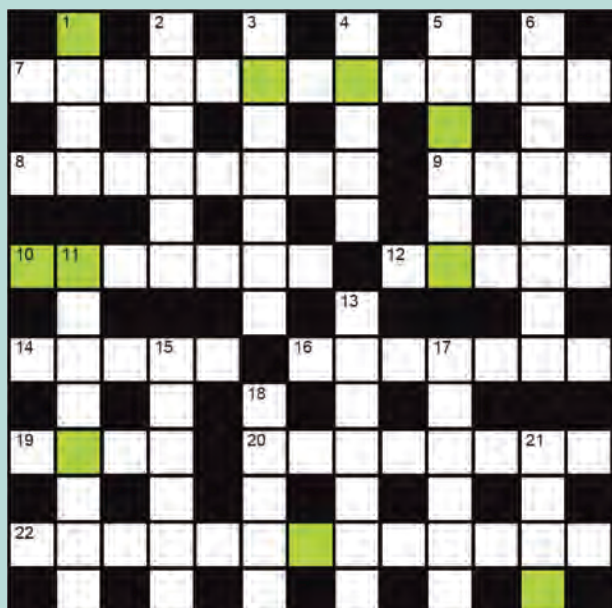
The media demands a simple narrative to explain complex topics such as Spanish nationalism. In Luis Aragonés' national team they had found one.

Next summer, "both Irelands" could again be competing side by side at a major tournament, with players from the North coming from the two historical traditions on the island.

If so, the media will use the imagery to paper over the cracks. But as Spain and Catalonia have shown, there's only so much smiling footballers can do for society.



# Liberty Crossword



\*Correctly fill in the crossword to reveal the hidden word, contained by reading the letters in the shaded squares from top to bottom.

Email the hidden word to [communications@siptu.ie](mailto:communications@siptu.ie) or post to Communications Dept., Liberty Hall, Dublin 1 along with your

## ACROSS

- 7 Non-sustainable business model (7,6)
- 8 Required (8)
- 9 Scandinavian city (4)
- 10 Lift (7)
- 12 Death row reprieves (5)
- 14 Founded by Larkin and Connolly (5)
- 16 State created in UK after 1945 (7)
- 19 Male ruler (4)
- 20 Make vision possible (8)
- 22 Causes a sore throat (13)

## DOWN

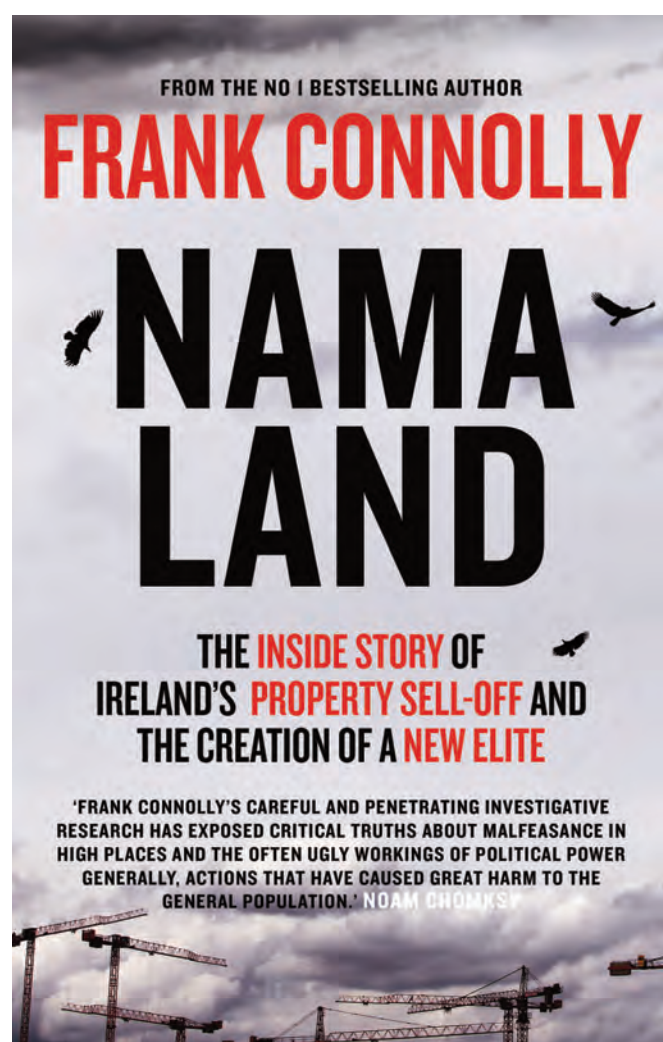
- 1 Crucial in Holland (4)
- 2 North of the USA (6)
- 3 Mix of Hebrew and German (7)
- 4 "All kidding \_\_\_..." (5)
- 5 Essential to swallow (6)
- 6 Organised by IBEC (8)
- 11 Place their country first (8)
- 13 An argument in support (7)
- 15 Composed the Ride of the Valkyries (6)
- 17 Home of the Franks (6)
- 18 Home of St. Johnstone FC (5)
- 21 Funding advance (4)

name and address and you will to be entered into a **prize draw to win a €200 Arnotts voucher**. The winner of the crossword quiz will be published in the next edition of Liberty.

\*Terms and conditions apply.

The winner of the crossword competition in the July edition was Gabrielle Rowley. Co. Mayo.

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