

# Liberty

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# New law - win for low paid

by Scott Millar

New laws providing greater protections for low paid and precarious workers will come into force on 1st March following a long and successful campaign by SIPTU activists.

The measures include the banning of zero hour contracts, minimum payments for certain 'if and when' workers and a requirement for employees to be issued with a statement of their core terms of employment within five days of commencing a job.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, played a central role in the activist campaign, and later negotiations, which led to the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018.

"The legislation was hard fought for and hard won by unions," she said. "It will provide precarious workers with much stronger legal protections. However, the legislation will only make a meaningful impact on workers' lives if they are informed as to their new rights and they have the capacity to secure them."

She added: "Unions have a critical role now in organising workers to ensure that their employers are implementing this new law. While there are protections for workers against penalisation under this legislation, vulnerable workers will need the backing of a union to ensure that they are protected when making a case

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School children protesting at Leinster House on 13th February 2019 over climate change. See pages 4,6 & 7.  
Photo: RollingNews.ie



## WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE

# 1890 747 881

8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.,  
Monday - Friday  
wrc@siptu.ie



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## Collective agreement signed with George Best Hotel in Belfast

A collective agreement which will ensure good jobs in the soon to be opened George Best Hotel in Donegall Square, Belfast, was signed between management and SIPTU Organisers, in December. The deal has already resulted in approximately 20 staff becoming SIPTU members, while many more will join in the coming weeks as more workers are hired.

SIPTU Organiser, Niall McNally, said: "In a sector where nearly three in four workers in Northern Ireland are paid below the living wage of £9 (€10.29) an hour, it is a breath of fresh air to see Signature Living, the George Best Hotel management company, move to ensure good working conditions for its employees.

"It is welcomed that the employer recognises the key role that the voice of workers, as expressed through their union, plays in ensuring a secure, fair and equitable workplace which allows both the business and workforce to prosper."

McNally added: "The commit-



George Best Hotel, Belfast.

ment to ban zero-hour contracts, guarantee working hours and pay as a minimum the living wage, will result in secure employment for workers."

Chairman of Signature Living, Lawrence Kenwright, said: "We're not a typical hospitality company because we aren't just motivated

by making money. We are a company that has a clear social conscience – we see staff as the backbone of our success. We thought it was only right that we were aligned with SIPTU to ensure we are offering the best terms and conditions. It is the right thing to do."

## UN report criticises Irish fishing industry

In an unprecedented move, four United Nations (UN) special rapporteurs have signed a joint letter damning the Irish government's work permit scheme for non-European workers in the fishing industry.

The letter, signed by the special rapporteurs for human rights, racism, slavery and trafficking in persons, states that the Atypical

Work Scheme (AWS) introduced in 2016 'is not in line with international law and standards related to trafficking in persons and the human rights of migrants.'

The International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) warned the Government that the scheme would facilitate the exploitation of foreign workers in the Irish fishing industry when it was introduced.

ITF co-ordinator for the UK and Ireland, Ken Fleming, says: "This is

further vindication of what we've been saying since the scheme was brought in. The US State Department and the Council of Europe have already criticised the AWS.

"It is particularly worrying that instead of ending this scheme the Irish government is proposing to introduce permits for other sectors where employers say they cannot afford to comply with Irish and EU employment laws."

*Continued from page 1 — New law - win for low paid*

with their employer or a third party. We need to make trade unions the one-stop-shop for precarious workers to secure their new rights."

The impetus for the new laws began when the SIPTU Young Workers Network launched their 'End Zero Hours' campaign in 2014 to highlight the impact of such contracts on young workers. The campaign was then taken to union activists through information provided at conferences where the message was driven home that the spread of precarious work practices threatened the long term future of all workers.

Precarious work was found to not only be evident in the service industries but also in areas such as Home Care and higher education. SIPTU members made the growth of precarious work a major political issue and union representatives allied with others, including Mandate and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, began to push Government for action.

In the negotiations for the new Act there were attempts by government officials to underplay the extent of the problem of precarious work practices. However, this was successfully countered when SIPTU organisers made available

contracts that were being imposed on workers in sectors such as catering, which clearly contained conditions that made a stable working life impossible.

"This new law provides workers with more tools in their fight for stable, rewarding and economically beneficial employment. In the coming months, SIPTU organisers and activists intend to ensure the new legislation does indeed allow more workers and families to obtain a better quality of life", said Buckley.

*See Liberty View page 21.*





SIPTU and Fórsa members protesting outside the Department of Finance on Monday (18th February) calling on finance minister, Paschal Donohoe, to implement a 2008 Labour Court recommendation to pay Community Employment supervisors and assistant supervisors an occupational pension. Photo: Paddy Cole

## CE supervisors protest Government failure to respect pensions ruling

A one day strike by community employment (CE) supervisors and assistant supervisors took place on 18th February to highlight the failure of the Government to respect a Labour Court recommendation concerning their right to a pension.

The workers, who are members of SIPTU and Fórsa, held joint regional protests outside INTREO centres in Cork, Waterford, Athlone, Letterkenny and Galway, as well as a protest outside the Department of Finance in Merion Street in Dublin.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Eddie Mullins, said: "CE supervisors play a key role in the provision of

much-needed community services such as crèches, meals on wheels, upkeep of community halls, GAA and soccer pitches, Tidy Towns support and maintenance of green areas around the country."

He added: "They have been waiting more than ten years for the Government to provide them with a pension scheme in line with a ruling of the State's leading industrial relations body – the Labour Court. CE Supervisors believe they have waited patiently for long enough. They have now launched a campaign of industrial action in order to get the Govern-

ment to respect the Labour Court ruling and provide a pension scheme for them."

SIPTU activist and CE Supervisor at the Noreside Resource Centre, Yvonne Moriarty, who attended the protest in Waterford, said: "We provide representation to the public in workers' rights issues and very successfully deal with cases in the Labour Court. However, here we are, after winning a decision 11 years ago and we cannot even get the Government to speak with us. No wonder employers often don't adhere to workers' rights in this country."

## Call for right to housing

Land which could be used to provide more than 60,000 social and affordable houses are already in public ownership and could be built on immediately, a seminar on housing organised by the Raise the Roof campaign was told last month.

Housing expert, Mel Reynolds, told over 200 people in the Communications Workers Union conference centre in Dublin that the local authorities and the National Asset Management Agency



Delegates at the Raise the Roof Conference in the CWU Conference Centre in January.

(NAMA) controlled lands which could be immediately used for public housing and would not require lengthy planning delays.

The one day seminar held on Wednesday, 30th January also heard from UCD academics, Orla

Hegarty and Tony Fahey as well as Tanya Ward of the Children's Rights Alliance. Rebecca Keatinge of the Mercy Law Centre spoke on the imperative to enshrine the right to housing into the Irish constitution.

# Raise the Roof in Cork

The Raise the Roof campaign is to hold a major rally at Cork city Hall on Monday 11th March. The rally will be held in support of a motion calling for urgent investment in a local authority led public housing programme, to be tabled at a meeting of Cork City Council on the same day.

Based on the demands of the Raise the Roof alliance, the motion also calls for an end to forced evictions into homelessness and for the introduction into law or the Constitution of a legal right to housing.

The Raise the Roof Alliance brings together trade unions, including SIPTU, the National Women's Council of Ireland, USI and the National Homeless and Housing Coalition as well as political, community and housing ac-

tion groups and charities in an effort to force a change in government policy in order to deal with the housing emergency.

The One Cork group is helping to organise the 11th March rally along with political, community, women's and students organisations in the city who are seeking to mobilise large numbers of people affected by the crisis in housing supply, soaring rents and the record number of homeless people.

The rally will take place at City Hall at 5.00 p.m. with music by Cork based performers, Karan Casey and Myles Gaffney. A further Raise the Roof rally will take place in Galway on 8th April involving the One Galway and local political, student, women's and housing action groups.

See page 17.



**RAISE  
the  
ROOF**  
Homes  
For All

**RALLY**

**Monday  
11th March  
5.00 p.m.  
Cork City Hall**

Music by  
Karan Casey  
and Myles Gaffney

**Join us  
and make  
your  
voice heard**

Support the  
Right to Housing:  
[www.ictu.ie/raisetherooftpetition](http://www.ictu.ie/raisetherooftpetition)



[www.ictu.ie/raisetherooft](http://www.ictu.ie/raisetherooft)

#RaiseTheRoof • #HomesforAll



# A future based on need not greed

■ By Frank Connolly

**THE existential threat posed to the planet and the human race cannot be averted without a fundamental restructuring of the way work and production is organised, according to US environmentalist and human rights activist, Professor Aviva Chomsky.**

In Dublin to attend a seminar entitled *Climate Change – the Whole Picture*, on 21st January, Chomsky told *Liberty* that societies need to restructure the economy and the jobs market to ensure that skills meet human need rather than for profit.

"We put more value on goods that harm the human race and drive global warming rather than on meeting human needs. We need to talk about how our economic system can be transformed in a rational way and to resist the voracious quest of capital for profit," she argues.

The concept is not utopian, she argues, given that the current system of production rewards those who contribute most to climate destruction. "We need a



Prof Chomsky: 'We need a rational transformation of our economic system'

green new deal which is a means of opening a way to transform the economy and which spreads the benefits of capitalism and makes it better for people," she argues. The

New Deal in the post war US did not take into account the environmental challenges and how the development of capital was in direct conflict with the needs of the

planet, Chomsky insists. Following decades of production fuelled by fossil fuels and concentrating on the manufacture of highly destructive and climate polluting goods, including weapons of mass destruction, the needs of the human race are now in direct conflict with the demands of capital, she says.

Carbon emissions and pollution by industries serving the needs of wealthy owners and shareholders are now the greatest challenge to the survival of the planet.

Chomsky, who is professor of history at Salem University in Massachusetts, cited an example, with an Irish connection, of foreign corporations colluding with right-wing paramilitaries in Colombia to extract coal in order to supply the climate damaging power plants in the US and at Moneypoint in Ireland.

The 40-mile long and eight-mile wide Cerrejon in the La Guajara region of north Colombia employs some 10,000 workers but its owners exploit the indigenous workforce, displace entire communities and have caused massive environmental damage in an area where people live in extreme poverty and

are often without electricity. Trade union organisers and human rights activists in the area have been routinely killed by right-wing paramilitary organisations, she said.

The open cast mine supplies most of the coal used in the ESB Moneypoint plant in county Clare as it did for a power plant in her home town of Salem for many years which led to her campaigning for 20 years on human rights, environmental and social justice, Chomsky said.

The climate change seminar organised by Sinn Fein MEP, Lynn Boylan in the European Parliament offices in Dublin, also heard that three of the world's largest mining multinationals which operate the Cerrejon mine have a marketing company headquartered in Dublin and benefit from low Irish corporation tax levels.

This was further incentivising fossil fuel extraction and made Ireland even more complicit in human rights failures associated with the mine, the seminar heard.

See Vic Duggan article page 6

# Kilbarrack to Cape Town

ON 6th January, two young Dubliners began the challenge of a lifetime, to cycle the length of Africa to raise funds for the Kilbarrack Coast Community Programme (KCCP) in Dublin and for Orphanage Orlandi in Namibia.

As part of their 'When We Go South' challenge, Lorcan Byrne and Nicholas O'Brien from Kilbarrack intend to bike their way through 10 countries, travelling more than 12,000 kilometres. The journey is expected to take them between five and six months.

Before setting off on the challenge, Lorcan told *Liberty*: "We want to be adventurers who make a difference both in their hometown and further afield.

Every penny donated will go directly to our chosen charities and not to any of the expenses of our challenge."

Lorcan's father, Declan, who works in the KCCP, is a well-known and respected SIPTU activist who is also one of the main driving forces behind the Dublin Dock Workers



Cape Town or bust!  
Lorcan and Nicholas

Preservation Society.

Last June, the two men were among a group of cyclists who completed a 140 km cycle from Dublin to Wexford to raise monies for KCCP.

Among the those supporting them in their new challenge are author Roddy Doyle, singer Damien Dempsey and Mattress Mick. To keep up to date on the Lorcan and Nicholas' African journey, visit 'When We Go South' on Facebook.

To contribute to their chosen charities visit 'When We Go South' on [gofundme.com](http://gofundme.com)

## Kilbarrack Coast Community Programme

THE second heroin epidemic affected all disadvantaged areas in Dublin in the early 1990s. In Kilbarrack, local community activists joined forces with the statutory agencies to try and tackle the problem. The KCCP was launched in July 1997 and year-on-year its drugs and alcohol rehabilitation services have been expanded.

## Orphanage Orlandi

BETWEEN 28 and 35 children aged from birth to 18 live in the Orlandi House of Safety, which was set up in 1995 in Namibia. Great emphasis is put on nutrition, hygiene and education. It is the aim to prepare the children for their future, to procure them a place in a surrogate family and to help them find a way into normal life again.



# 'Double header' honours Luke



By Des Geraghty

FANS of Luke Kelly and the Dubliners, old and young, took to the streets in large numbers on 30th January to celebrate the unique unveiling of two new sculptures of their lost idol, Luke.

More than three decades after his death, the people of Ireland, represented by President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina; the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Nial Ring; city councillors; the Kelly family; John Sheahan – the last man standing of the original group – and an abundance of well-wishers, braved the harsh winter elements to welcome the arrival of the two 'heads' on the streets of Dublin.

On the day, no one present could recall any previous occasion when two sculptures were unveiled in the one city, on the one day, of one notable citizen, but an old fan of Luke's remarked to me "sure Luke was worth any two of them".

In a curious way, the 15-year process that gave us these wonderful new additions to the Dublin street scape on both sides of the Liffey, achieved a remarkable result worthy of a great celebration. My only regret on the day was that Jimmy Kelly, my comrade and friend



Andy Irvine (front) with performers at gig for Luke Kelly  
Picture: Andrew Campion Photography

and loyal SIPTU official, did not live to

see his dream fulfilled. In the 35 years since his death in Dublin's Richmond Hospital, Luke's music and song has continued to entertain and inspire many people across the generations and across many borders. The quality of his passionate singing is forever enhanced by the power of his belief in human dignity, equality and social justice. He sang out without apology, for the poor and oppressed, the workers; and sought

by entertainment and example to lift up people's spirits and enable them share in the sheer 'Joy of Living'.

Luke and the Dubliners were part of the peaceful revolution that began in the early 1960's and saw the people of this country begin to shake off the cobwebs of a conservative Church and State.

They were worthy ambassadors for a newer era of change, a time that saw the rise of many diverse movements for equality and human rights. They helped to enliven our tradition of music and song and reawaken a latent spirit of self-confidence and pride in being Irish, though their appeal was universal. That spirit still resonates strongly in the hearts of the people of this country.

Two fine artists, Vera Klute and John Coll, have given us two worthy, though very different physical reminders of Luke Kelly with the full support of the Dublin City Council.

Liberty Hall was the venue for the final celebration on the great 'Day for Luke', where Luke Kelly and the Dubliners entertained us many times and where Gerry Hunt, who paid for and donated the South King street sculpture, once performed at a James Connolly concert I helped to organise in 1964.

President Michael D. Higgins and his wife Sabina made us all proud by their presence at the celebration where singers Damien Dempsey, Aoife Scott and members of Lankum, among others, performed to a packed house.



Damien Dempsey and John Sheehan in Liberty Hall  
Picture: Andrew Campion Photography



Photo from left Sabina Higgins, President Michael D. Higgins and sculptor Vera Klute beside the newly-unveiled statue of Luke Kelly which stands on the banks of the Royal Canal near Guild and Sheriff Streets  
Picture: RollingNews



Sculptor John Coll stands next to his tribute in bronze to the iconic Dubliners singer, which is flanked by President Michael D. Higgins  
Picture: RollingNews

Luke and the Dubliners were part of the peaceful revolution that began in the early 1960's and saw the people begin to shake off the cobwebs of a conservative Church and State



# Future proof the planet - now



By Vic Duggan

**AS HUMAN beings, we are designed to be able to process vast amounts of complex information to inform the countless decisions we make every day.**

Some are split-second decisions of little import – such as where to sit as we enter a room. Others are potentially life-changing and warrant a period of reflection – such as what to do after secondary school, or who to marry.

But, we tend not to sweat about the small stuff. We take mental shortcuts so that we don't waste precious brain power calculating the most advantageous seat to sit in. Often, we'll simply sit in the same seat as last time!

Climate change is another catastrophe in the making. Other than those few members of the Flat Earth Society, we all know that man-made global warming is well under way. The science is uncontested. The proof is in the increased frequency of extreme weather events, the melting polar ice caps, and the slow but inexorable rise in sea levels.

Even for those of us who have faith in the science and who recognise the urgent need for public policies to combat climate change, there is still a natural tendency to underestimate the scale of the problem. It is hard to conceptualise the difference in the impact of a mere 1.5 degrees versus 2 degrees centigrade increase in temperatures, or what a ton of carbon emissions look like. Our mental shortcuts compound the problem.

Others have an intrinsic short-term interest in either denying the science or opposing the necessary policies. Big oil firms know that decarbonising the economy will hurt their bottom line. Meanwhile, the agriculture sector – source of a third of Irish carbon emissions, and constituting the country's best-organised lobby group – fear that further moves towards sustainable farming will make it impossible for them to make ends meet.

Cue the hysterical backlash at the thought of our Taoiseach re-



Drought in Africa

PICTURE: Tim J Keegan (CC BY-SA 2.0)

Using proceeds of the carbon tax as a down-payment for a universal basic income by 2030 could be a commitment to the sort of 'just transition' that nearly everyone could get behind

ducing the amount of red meat he consumes for health and environmental reasons!

Business as usual means the world is likely to see a rise in temperatures of 2 degrees centigrade from pre-industrial levels. In October last year, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) set out in a report the vast difference that could be made if the increase in temperatures was limited to 1.5 degrees, but it would require a massive shift in behavior.

For slackers like Ireland, the bar is even higher. But, we owe it to the planet and to our own future generations to take action now and play our full part. We need to target zero net carbon emissions by 2050 and put in place a step-by-step plan to achieve it.

If we don't take action, it is future generations that will bear the heaviest burden. But our not-too-distant future selves will also have a cross to bear. Since Ireland has made so little progress towards re-



Activists in the US are rallying behind the idea of a Green New Deal

PICTURE: Becker1999 (CC BY 2.0)

ducing its carbon emissions, from next year we will be faced with annual fines of a half billion euro or more. Even if the economy keeps growing strongly, this will mean hard choices – higher taxes or lower spending.

But, the messaging around climate change action is all wrong. It's all pain and no gain. We talk about higher carbon taxes, eating less meat, flying less or leaving the car at home. These are all sacrifices, and those of us struggling to put dinner on the table can hardly be expected to willingly shoulder a greater burden.

This is why we need to concentrate on the upside as much as the downside, on the benefits the zero-carbon transition can bring as much as the sacrifices it will entail.

New 'green collar' jobs in retrofitting every building in the country; new opportunities for rural Ireland in sustainable farming and eco-tourism; facilitating off-grid and mini-grid power generation so that small-scale producers can sell back to the grid electricity that they don't use themselves.

In the same way as we need to be ambitious in terms of pitching



Firebrand: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

PICTURE: Dimitri Rodriguez (CC BY 2.0)

the carbon tax at the level necessary to change behaviour and meet our emissions targets, we need to be more ambitious about what we do with the proceeds.

Sending every household in the country a cheque in the post – the so-called 'fee and dividend' model – might be the most simple approach in the short-run. But, such is the scale of the challenge, we have to go even further.

If we are to quadruple the carbon tax to €80 per ton by 2030 – let alone increasing it to a minimum of €300 per ton, as recommended by the ESRI – then there will be a significant pot of money, even taking into account the impact of changed behaviour. This will be enough to ensure a 'just transition'; enough to revolutionise our tax and welfare system.

Using proceeds of the carbon tax as a down-payment for a universal basic income by 2030 could be a powerful commitment to the sort of 'just transition' that nearly everyone could get behind.

We need as much ambition in rethinking the social contract as in decarbonising the economy. Reinvigorated by their mid-term election last November – with newly-elected socialist firebrand Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez helping lead the charge – activists on the left of the Democratic Party in the US have rallied behind the idea of a Green New Deal, with precisely these twin social and environmental objectives in mind.

That enacting such sweeping legislation while a Republican occupies the White House, that achieving its ambitious targets is probably impossible, and that much of the policy detail still needs to be defined is beside the point.

It is a recognition of the scale of the problem, a rallying point ahead of the 2020 US elections, and a framework for a progressive legislative programme thereafter. In short, it's a good start.



# Skipping school to save the planet

By Darcey Lonergan

**INSPIRED** by the 16-year-old climate activist Greta Thunberg, school students around the world including here in Ireland are taking up the call for urgent action by governments to tackle climate change.

Last month, Thunberg addressing world leaders at the World Economic Forum in Davos, said: "Adults keep saying we owe it to the young people to give them hope. But I don't want your hope – I don't want you to be hopeful, I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day, and then I want you to act as if you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house is on fire because it is."

Thunberg underlined that the older generations needed to acknowledge that they have failed to protect the environment.

"We need to hold the older generations accountable for the mess they have created, and expect us to live with. It is not fair that we have to pay for what they have caused," she said.

Thunberg has also called on business leaders and politicians to commit to "real and bold climate action", and to focus on the "future living conditions of mankind" rather than economic goals and profits.

Thunberg launched her campaign last year by going on strike for three weeks outside the Swedish parliament, lobbying MPs to comply with the Paris Agreement. After the Swedish elections, she continued



her protest every Friday, where she is now joined by hundreds of people.

In November, thousands of students skipped school in Australia to show their anger at the lack of government action on climate change. On January 25th, there were strikes in Germany, Belgium and Switzerland.

In Belgium, 12,500 students went on strike and plan to strike weekly until the EU elections in May. School strikes also took place in 15 cities and towns in Switzerland. In Germany, an estimated 30,000 students left their schools across more than 50 cities to protest on the issue.

On 13th February students from Educate Together and other schools across Dublin held a protest outside Leinster House.

*Darcey Lonergan is USI SAVES2 Energy and Sustainability Manager*



School children at Leinster House on 13th February 2019 over climate change. Photos: RollingNews.ie

# ICTU - workers must not pay price of Brexit

**CONGRESS** General Secretary, Patricia King, has warned of the dangers of a no-deal Brexit as the clocks tick down to midnight on 29th March.

"We are now six weeks away from the UK exiting the EU and with each passing day a 'no deal' Brexit is looking more likely," she said. "As a body that represents the interests of over 800,000 workers across the island of Ireland, we are seriously concerned about the political, social and economic implications of such a 'no deal' Brexit for workers and their families across the island."

King pointed out that a 'no deal' Brexit cuts right across the letter

**March  
29**

and spirit of the hard-won Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and peace process, and that such a scenario had to be avoided at all costs.

She claimed it had the potential to set back and further undermine important North/South and East/West relations for some time, as well as undermining strands 2 and 3 of the agreement.

"We need to ensure that workers' rights and conditions of employment are protected in any post-Brexit scenario north and south of the border and that when devolution returns in Northern Ireland – as it is crucial it returns – the Assembly maintains decent workers' rights and labour standards by implementing EU directives in these areas."

King continued: "In the event of a 'no deal' Brexit it is critical that the Irish government intensifies its ongoing engagement with the ICTU and other social partners in responding to such an emergency situation. It is also essential that the UK government sets up and

implements our proposal for a Forum for Social Dialogue in Northern Ireland whereby we can seek to mitigate the worst consequences of a 'no-deal' Brexit for workers and others."

She added: "Both the UK and Irish governments will need to respond to such an economic emergency by setting up appropriate Brexit Adjustment Assistance Funds (BAAF) in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland respectively. This is critical to meet the challenges of job and economic displacement. We must ensure that workers across this island do not pay the price of Brexit."



Warning: Patricia King



# SIPTU secures permanent contracts for TCD staff

MANAGEMENT at Trinity College, Dublin, has handed permanent contracts to more than 50 non-academic staff in the last year – a move which follows a long-running SIPTU campaign against the spread of precarious work in the third-level education sector.

Trinity SIPTU activist, Maria Kelly, pointed out that a further 20 workers were already on 'contracts of indefinite duration' – awarded to staff employed on fixed-term contracts for four years or more – with a further nine still on probation. These employees are ex-



Contracts: welcome development at TCD

pected to be made permanent in the near future.

She told *Liberty* that while progress was being made SIPTU members remained concerned about the way in which some positions were being advertised at the university.

In July 2017, the Government issued a guidance note to higher education institutions, urging them to curb the use of temporary contracts for administrative and support staff. It advised all third-level institutions that support and administrative staff should be offered permanent contracts unless they were working from a specific

date, completing a specific task, or working on a specific event.

The note also informed colleges that they were expected to "offer permanent contracts" to all administrative and support staff on temporary contracts in what would be considered a permanent position.

Kelly said SIPTU representatives would "continue to vindicate the rights of our members until we are satisfied that the guidance note is being followed and our members are being treated fairly".

## SIPTU welcomes Dáil move on JobPath

DÁIL Eireann passed a Sinn Féin-sponsored motion, on 7th February, calling on the Government and Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) to cease immediately all referrals to the JobPath service and end the mandatory aspect of the scheme.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Eddie Mullins, told *Liberty*: "Since its introduction in 2014, SIPTU representatives have consistently expressed great concern at the preference shown by DEASP for JobPath and other schemes which amount to the privatisation of employment services.

"The Sinn Féin-sponsored motion which was passed by the Dáil is extremely important. If the Government is serious about saving money for the taxpayer, it must end its contract with the JobPath providers and use the more cost-effective community-based employment schemes."

He added: "In that context, we fully agreed with the motion which also calls on the Government to 'properly resource and expand existing job activation schemes which are community-based, including the Local Employment Service, Adult Guidance Service, Community Employment, Rural Social Scheme, TUS and Job Clubs'."

### AD feature

## 90 years of QuickCover

In 2019, Brassington's Insurance trading as QuickCover.ie is celebrating 90 years providing choice, expert advice and peace of mind to people all across Ireland. We are proud to continue our long standing relationship with SIPTU and look forward to ensuring that you and your family are fully protected while you travel during 2019.

When it's time to get away, it's time to go to QuickCover.ie

We want you to travel the world with the best insurance cover in place so you can go and see all you possibly can with the peace of mind that if the unthinkable happens, we'll be there for you.

Our package, available exclusively to SIPTU members, not only provides market leading benefits and extensive coverage, but comes with guaranteed excellence in both service and advice.

With prices starting from just €58\* for an annual, multi-trip policy, your exclusive SIPTU policy also includes, at no extra cost, worldwide cover and for the adventure seeker, winter

sports, scuba diving and golf cover.

QuickCover.ie provides all policyholders with access to our 24hour, 365 day a year, multilingual Medical Emergency Assistance Service.

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## Labour Court review of Construction pay

THE Construction Industry Committee (CIC) of ICTU, has applied to the Labour Court for a review of the Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) which governs rates of pay and other conditions for building workers.

SIPTU Organiser, John Regan, said: "The CIC, which comprises SIPTU, OPATSI, BATU, SIPTU and Unite, requested that the Labour Court conduct a further investigation into the terms and conditions of the employment of workers in the construction sector, in particular workers' remuneration in terms of basic pay, travelling time, the standard daily and weekly hours of work as well as pension contributions and the definition of the construction sector."

He continued: "The SEO for the construction industry came into force in 2017. After 12 months there can be a request for it to be reviewed."

"Union representatives initially asked the employers if they were willing to make a joint request to the Labour Court for a review but they were not at this time."

Regan added: "However, the unions believe that the SEO needs to be reviewed, particularly in light of studies showing that tens of thousands of more workers are needed in the construction industry."

The review is expected to be concluded by the summer.

# Driving workers rights at Dublin Bus

TERESA McGrath, from Cabra West, was recently elected as the first woman representative to sit on a SIPTU shop stewards committee at Dublin Bus.

She has worked for the company since August 2008, first as a driver in Donnybrook and since then at Summerhill in the north inner city.

Teresa has also completed the shop stewards course at SIPTU College which will give her a good grounding in her new role as a workplace representative.

"I really enjoyed the course and I took a lot of things out of it," she told *Liberty*. "I will be honest and fair in representing SIPTU members and in dealing with the challenges they face. They include the challenges arising from the changes to routes and other issues."

During her 11 years as a Dublin Bus driver, Teresa has received nothing but positive feedback from passengers.

"I've never had a problem with a passenger and have always been complimented for my safe driving and good manners. I get on well with the lads at work and was delighted to be chosen in the ballot for the shop stewards committee at Summerhill bus depot."

Teresa and her partner, John Farrell, also face challenges on the domestic



front, not least helping out with looking after their young grandchildren. All in all, it's set to be a busy time ahead for the first woman shop steward at Dublin Bus.

Steering Committee: driver Teresa McGrath was elected first woman representative on the shop stewards committee at Dublin Bus  
Photo: Paddy Cole

# SIPTU activists protest low pay at Irish Ferries

THE failure of Irish Ferries to pay its workers the minimum wage was highlighted in a protest by SIPTU activists and organisers in Dublin Port on 8th February.

SIPTU Organiser, Jerry Brennan, said the protest was about raising awareness that Irish Ferries ships sail under the flag of Cyprus, rather than the Irish flag.

"They portray themselves as Irish, but they don't fly the Irish flag, because if they did they



Irish Ferries' new vessel W.B. Yeats, which sails under the Cypriot flag



Flying the flag for fair wages. Photo: Paddy Cole

would have to pay the Irish national minimum wage," he said. "They fly under the flag of convenience of Cyprus."

Irish Ferries de-registered from the Irish maritime register and opted to place the company on the Cypriot register in 2006. The company also does not employ seafarers directly, but through a third party agency.

"Seafarers based in Ireland cannot compete fairly for jobs which pay wages which do not provide enough money for workers to maintain a decent standard of living," Brennan added.

A similar protest was also held by RMT and Nautilus members in Holyhead in Wales. Both events were part of the wider Fair Shipping Campaign against the exploitation of workers in the maritime sector organised by the European Transport Workers' Federation.



# Home care workers seek move on pay



By Paddy Cole

Over the last number of weeks, SIPTU members across Dublin have been engaged in a consultative process on union proposals to secure pay justice, fair hours and decent con-

tracts for home care workers will benefit workers in the sector.

Speaking to Liberty, SIPTU Shop Steward in Crumlin Home Care Ellen McNamee said: "Workers can feel alone and isolated working as a home care worker so it's important to have a union in your corner. We want to secure pay restoration and progression in a

way that ensures that our roles are recognised and respected. We appreciate the efforts of our union to ensure we are not forgotten."

SIPTU Shop Steward in Trinity Home Care, Samantha Byrne told Liberty that members were determined to secure pay restoration similar to other Section 39 workers.

"Members have been frustrated

by the manner in which both our employers and the Government have ignored us to date. We will continue our fight for better and improved terms and conditions for our members. This can only be achieved by organising our members into the union and by pursuing our issues through a campaign similar to the successful one carried out by Section 39 workers.

Our members are up for the fight."

SIPTU Organiser, Damian Ginley said: "These proposals recognise the important role of home care workers in providing services to some of the most vulnerable in our communities. Members understand that they are now finally on a journey which will deliver pay restoration and a say in future pay movement."

## European public service workers Congress for Dublin

DUBLIN is to host the 10th Congress of the European Public Services Union (EPSU) this summer.

Over the course of four days in June, trade union delegates from across Europe will gather to set out and put in place a programme of action.

Held every five years, this year's Congress will focus on the need for trade unions to embrace digitalisation, to continue to fight privatisation and to work in more collaborative ways to build solidarity and union power.

Speaking to Liberty following a meeting of the EPSU Communications Network in London, EPSU Communications and Campaigns Officer, Pablo Sánchez Centellas said: "Digitalisation has the poten-



Members of the EPSU Communications Network with Unison Head of International Relations Nick Crook (far right) following a recent meeting in London, with UK Labour Party MP Tony Lloyd and TUC Senior Policy Officer Elena Crasta, on Brexit

tial to positively transform public services and the jobs of public service workers. Quicker and easier access to services and increased participation of citizens can be combined with better quality jobs as repetitive work is replaced with more fulfilling tasks.

"Digitalisation has benefits but also poses risks and it is important for trade unions to deal with the potential downside.

"At the Congress, we will look to kick-start this debate with delegates and map out how trade unions can get the best result for members from the digital transformation.

"Another major topic is the fight for public ownership," he added.

EPSU's General Secretary, Jan Willem Goudriaan said: "We are fighting for a future for all. Public service unions are at the forefront to ensure a more democratic soci-

ety, a society that cares for all.

"A precondition is more democracy at our workplaces, strong collective bargaining and qualified and decently paid public service workers.

"Our Congress will discuss how we grow the power of unions to give all workers in Europe a voice on the decisions that matter to us, our families and our communities."

## Game changer for radiographers and radiation therapists

Groundbreaking new rules covering the status of radiographers and radiation therapists was agreed recently when the long-awaited Basic Safety Standard for Radiation was transposed into Irish law.

SIPTU National Executive Council member, Michelle Monaghan, welcomed the news and said that the new law has given radiographers and radiation therapists the status of referrers and practitioners in legislation, something the union has always campaigned for.

She said: "This law gives radiographers and radiation therapists definitions under statute which will allow for greater effectiveness in the service and enhance and advance the roles of both professions significantly."

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Kevin Figgis told Liberty that this legislation has given radiographers and radiation therapists a real shot in the arm and a renewed confidence that their vital role in the health service is being fully recognised by the State.

He said: "This new law will go a long way towards enhancing our members' professional development and status in the health service. At the moment, we are conducting a nationwide poster and information campaign on the vital roles our members play across the health service and the importance of trade union membership in radiography services.

"While this law brings a long campaign from our members for this recognition to an end, it also allows our members to expand the campaign to advance their vital role in the public health service."

## Services News

### Surplus Clerys funds given to LauraLynn Clinic



Photo left to right: Gillian Neary (LauraLynn), John Flannery (former Trustee of the Clerys Workers Trust Fund) and Sarah Meagher (LauraLynn) at the presentation of the cheque on 18th December 2018.

A surplus of €1,627.48 from the Former Clery's Workers Trust Fund, which the Deed of Trust decreed should be donated to a 'children's charity', was donated to the LauraLynn Clinic (Ireland's Children's Hospice) on Leopardstown Road on Tuesday 18th December 2018.

## SIPTU Cleaners surveyed ahead of ERO negotiations

Thousands of SIPTU members in the contract cleaning sector are being asked to specify their top five concerns ahead of talks on a new Employment Regulation Order (ERO) for the industry.

The current ERO increased the hourly rate of pay for contract cleaners by a total of €1.05. Other issues dealt with in the ERO include rostering, deductions for uniforms and communications with employers.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Diane Jackson, said: "The survey will give our representatives a better

overview of members' concerns and where they are seeking improvements in the lead up to talks with employers at the Joint Labour Committee."

She added: "We are beginning a similar process with members in the contract security industry. The information from this survey will also be used to inform upcoming negotiations on a new ERO."

To receive surveys for completion contact your local SIPTU Organiser or Service Division Administrative Assistant, Peggy Rafter, at prafter@siptu.ie



## 5.5% pay increase at Teleflex Medical

SIPTU members in the medical devices manufacturer Teleflex Medical in Annacotty, County Limerick voted to accept a new pay agreement during February that secures them a 5.5% pay increase over the next 24 months.

SIPTU Organiser, Allen Dillon, said: "Percentage pay increases

amounting to 5.5% will be implemented in stages over the period from 1st January 2019 to 31st December 2020. Our members have also agreed to fully co-operate with on-going changes at the company."

He added: "In addition, the rotating shift premium will increase from 11% to 12% effective 1st January 2021."

## SIPTU members at RAP win recognition



RAP workers and supporters during strike action last year.

## Pay deal for SIPTU at Novartis

SIPTU members in Novartis Lab Analysts in Ringaskiddy, county Cork, have voted to accept a new pay agreement which will see significant increases for workers until 2022.

SIPTU Organiser, Allen Dillon, said: "Pay increases at Novartis Lab Analysts have to date been determined by benchmarking against six comparable pharmaceutical companies within the sector in Ireland. The 2018 benchmarking exercise has been agreed by both parties. This benchmarking exercise provides for an average basic pay increase of 5.4% retrospective to 1st March 2018 across a 10-point pay scale."

He added: "Independent benchmarking ceases with the 2018 exercise and going forward scale



movement will be determined through local collective bargaining.

"In addition to the 5.4% increase it has been agreed to implement a further three pay increases, with a 3.4% increase from 1st March 2019, a 2.4% increase from 1st March 2020, and a 2.4% increase from 1st March 2021. The agreement expires on 28th February 2022."

## Members in Pfizer to attend WRC meeting on pensions dispute

SIPTU members working in the Pfizer plants in Ringaskiddy and Little Island in county Cork will attend a meeting of the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) in relation to proposed pension changes at the company on Wednesday, 20th February.

SIPTU Organiser, Ray Mitchell, said: "Our members in the Pfizer Plants in Ringaskiddy and Little Island have, in accordance with a re-



quest from the WRC, also deferred their scheduled industrial action."

SIPTU members voted, in early February, to accept a deal brokered between union representatives and management at Rapid Action Packaging (RAP) over recognition, pay and grade structures for hourly paid employees at the company's plant in Gweedore, county Donegal.

The agreement recognises the right of SIPTU to represent employees at the plant. It also contains a three-year pay deal that will provide for a 6% increase in

basic pay over the three years.

SIPTU Organiser, Declan Ferry, told *Liberty*: "The agreement has been accepted by the majority of members at the plant and the company will now proceed with implementation.

"We are pleased to have been able to conclude this agreement with the company. RAP is a significant employer in the west Donegal area and this agreement provides employees with clarity on both the pay and career structure that is available to them."

RAP management also welcomed the outcome of the ballot and said it looked forward to continuing to work with employees and the union in addressing the challenges that the company faces, not least of which will be the impact of Brexit on the business.

The agreement resulted from talks which followed a week of strike action by workers at the plant in September last year.

## Graduate Outcome Survey reveals pay poverty in Early Years sector

A 'Graduate Outcome Survey' published by the Higher Education Authority on 18th February, has revealed the extent of low pay and precarious work facing newly qualified graduates in the Early Years sector.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Darragh O'Connor, said: "The extent of poverty pay in the Early Years sector, which is revealed by this survey, is shocking. It found that 43% of honours degree graduates in the sector earn less than

€20,000 per year which is well below the Living Wage of €23,000. The survey also reveals that 35% of honours degree graduates are on precarious contracts.

"The low pay and precarious contracts which graduates in the Early Years sector have to endure has led to a staffing crisis. Staff turnover is 25% per year and research consistently shows that this undermines the quality of the service provided to children. High staff turnover is also undermining the sustainability of services which struggle to recruit qual-

ified educators."

He added: "The stated plan of the Government is to have a graduate led Early Years sector by 2028. However, unless low pay is addressed this important objective will not be achieved. Currently, Early Years educators earn on average just €11.18 per hour, with thousands working 15 hours each week and 38 weeks each year on precarious contracts."

"Ultimately, the Government must step up and adequately invest in the Early Years sector."



MEATH



## Meath District Council Housing Seminar

Meath District Council is to hold a seminar on housing and homelessness emergency on Friday 15th March at the Ardboyne Hotel in Navan. The keynote speaker will be homeless campaigner, Peter McVerry.

The seminar will focus on the impact of the housing and home-

lessness on families in county Meath.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, John Regan told *Liberty*: "The focus will be on the local impact of what is a national crisis. Research presented at the seminar will include what public and affordable house building plans are currently in place in the county and on quantifying the real level of homelessness and

housing need in the area."

SIPTU Meath District Council Chairperson, Anton McCabe, said: "The guest speakers are professionals in the field who have studied the housing situation in Meath concerning issues such as how many families are in temporary housing, hotel accommodation, and rentals. Solutions to the crisis will also be presented."

Meath District Council

### Tackling the Housing and Homelessness Crisis in Co. Meath

**MEMBERS' SEMINAR**

Friday 15th March  
Ardboyne Hotel, Navan  
9.30 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.

For further information,  
call the Navan Welcome Centre,  
Tel: 046 902 3437



Keynote Speaker:  
Fr. Peter McVerry

NORTHERN

## Northern Ireland District Banner Appeal



Become a work of art by donating to the Northern Ireland District Banner Appeal. SIPTU Northern Ireland District offers you the chance to be immortalised on its new Banner.

The Northern Ireland District Committee has retained the services of the famous Durham Banner Makers to design and create a new Banner.

The front central portion of the banner will be a silk painting of James Connolly speaking to workers in the shadow of Belfast factories. Durham Banner Makers have offered to paint your likeness

onto the faces in the crowd.

Your face or the face of a loved one will be regaled on the banner for a lifetime. A number of people have already taken up this unique opportunity and a few places remain.

For a donation of STG£200 or €200 you can guarantee your place in this exciting new People's Art Project.

Contact Anne at the Belfast Hub office for more details at 028 903 14000 or from the ROI: 048 903 14000

You can also donate through our JustGiving page <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/anne-thompson-3>

LIMERICK

Gúna Nua Theatre Company presents

# Bread Not Profits

Cleeve's Factory 17<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> April 7.30pm

Limerick, April 1919  
The world watches as a city takes on an empire

Celebrating the centenary of the Limerick Soviet, in which the workers of the city declared a general strike in defiance of the British Army, 'Bread Not Profits' will bring history to life in an exciting and immersive piece of theatre. With a script by Mike Finn (Pigtown, The Unlucky Cabin Boy), direction by Terry O'Donovan (On the Wire), and music by David Blake (Brad Pitt Light Orchestra), 'Bread Not Profits' is a unique, dramatic celebration of one of the city's proudest moments.

Tickets: €25 / €20

Limerick District Council

## Fighting Precarious Work in Limerick Today & Why Trade Unionists Should Commemorate the Centenary of the Limerick Soviet

**MEMBERS' SEMINAR**

Friday 12th April  
South Court Hotel  
Limerick  
4.00 p.m. – 7.00 p.m.



Keynote Speaker:  
Dr. Michelle O'Sullivan,  
University of Limerick

Followed by  
Limerick Soviet  
Centenary Social



DUBLIN

# Larkin Remembered



JIM Larkin, the founder of our union, was remembered at a commemoration event in Glasnevin Cemetery addressed by SIPTU General Secretary Designate, Joe Cunningham, and organised by the Dublin District Council, on 31st January.

Before the event SIPTU Honorary President, Padraig Peyton, and SIPTU Honorary, Vice President, Bernie Casey, laid wreaths at Larkin's grave marking the 72nd anniversary of his death.

In his address, Cunningham focused on the centenary of the Democratic Programme and the unions' campaigners against precarious work and for public housing. He concluded with a call for the members to get behind the campaign to name the new Children's Hospital in honour of midwife, nurse and Citizen Army

member Kathleen Lynn.

"As Ireland's largest union representing the dedicated staff who actually deliver health services," he said, "I want to announce that we are throwing our support behind the campaign initiated by Noirín Byrne, herself a former union activist and health professional, to have the hospital named after Kathleen Lynn."

He added: "By calling on it to be named after Kathleen Lynn we would also be declaring our own commitment to the ideals of the struggle for independence, to put children at the centre of all our endeavours, provide them with housing, education, and with decent jobs as they move into early adulthood."

"These were the aims of our founders, Jim Larkin and James Connolly, and they remain our objectives today."

See page 15.

SIPTU Honorary Vice-President Bernie Casey and SIPTU Honorary President Padraig Peyton lay wreaths on the Larkin grave in Glasnevin Cemetery on 31st January 2019.

Photos: Caroline Muray



SIPTU General Secretary Designate Joe Cunningham addressing the Larkin Commemoration.

## Clerys community agreement must be respected



A PUBLIC call has been made by the SIPTU Dublin District Council and the Justice for Clerys Workers Campaign for the developers of the former iconic department store to fully adhere to the existing community benefit agreement for the site.

In a statement released on 25th January, SIPTU Dublin District Council Secretary, Brendan Carr, said: "In March 2017, the then owners of the store and representatives of the former workers concluded a detailed agreement which brought to an end the dispute surrounding the unacceptable manner in which Clerys was put out of business."

He added: "Integral to the agreement is co-operation between developers, local community groups and unions on the future development of the site in a manner which that ensures the maximum benefit for the north east inner city of Dublin. The agreement includes clauses concerning the employment of former Clerys workers, local training and employment programmes as well as measures to ensure the safeguarding and development of the cul-

tural and historical importance of the site."

Carr continued: "A Dublin City Council sub-committee was formed to oversee the implementation of this agreement. We look forward to engaging with the developers concerning their plans and co-operation on the full implementation of the Clerys Community Benefits Agreement."

Justice for Clerys Workers spokesman, John Finn, told *Liberty*: "Myself and my colleagues expect this agreement to be fully respected by the new owners. We look forward to ensuring that this development is one that works for business, those who are employed in it and the surrounding local communities."



### SIPTU District Council co-ordination meeting

A very productive meeting of SIPTU District Council Officers and Co-ordinators was held in SIPTU College in Dublin on 7th February when upcoming campaigns and events were planned and discussed. Photo: Paddy Cole

**SIPTU MAY FEST**  
SIPTU MayFest will take place from 1st-12th May - see page 30 for the full 2019 programme.

**HAVE YOUR SAY**  
**Election 2019 Questions and Answers**  
**Tuesday, 23rd April**  
**Liberty Hall Theatre**  
**7.30 p.m.**

All Dublin European Parliament election candidates and a representative local election candidate from each political party are invited by the SIPTU Dublin District Council to take part in questions and answers session with Dublin members. The focus will be on issues of concern for trade unionists in the Dublin area.



**WATERFORD**

# Cardiac Care march in Waterford



Waterford 24/7 Cardiac Care demonstration held in Waterford on 19th January, 2019. Photo: John Power

A large delegation from the SIPTU Waterford District Council was among the several thousand protesters who took to the streets of the city on 19th January to call for the provision of round-the-clock cardiac services at University Hospital Waterford.

The group 'Health Equality for the South East' co-ordinated the rally with other campaign groups to highlight what they describe as

a "continuing lack of adequate cardiac care in the region".

Protesters congregated at The Glen in Waterford city before marching to John Robert Square during the demonstration, entitled 'South-East Broken Hearts'.

At the rally, survivors of cardiac illnesses described their dissatisfaction at having to travel to Cork city for some cases requiring urgent cardiac care.

## Waterford District Council Seminar and Local Area Committee Briefing

**Friday 1st March**  
Tower Hotel  
Waterford

**10.00 a.m.**  
Local Area Committees  
Briefing on Brexit and  
Employment Miscellaneous  
Provisions Act 2019

**11.30 a.m.**  
District Council Seminar on  
Tackling the Housing and  
Homelessness Crisis in  
Waterford

**Keynote speaker:**  
**Gerry McCormack,**  
**SIPTU Deputy**  
**General Secretary**

For further  
information call  
David Lane on  
087 678 4766

### BRAY AND DISTRICT COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS

Founded 1917

Celebrating

**100**  
YEARS

OF LEADERSHIP CONTINUITY  
CAMPAIGNING AND PROGRESS

### BRAY WORKERS MEMORIAL FUNDRAISING TABLE QUIZ



Affiliated to  
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

**28th March, 2019 8.00pm**  
**O'Driscoll's Sea Side Bar, Bray**

Table of 4 - €40

**MAYO**



Mayo District Council activists and organisers.

Mayo District Council

### SEMINAR AND LONG-SERVICE BADGE PRESENTATION

**Thursday 28th March**  
SIPTU Office, Castlebar

**SLIGO/LEITRIM/  
ROSCOMMON**

### District Council members to march for St. Patrick's Day

The St Patrick's Day parades in Bundoran in county Donegal and Sligo will include delegations from the SIPTU Sligo/Leitrim/Roscommon (SLR) District Council.

SLR District Council Secretary, John McCarrick, said: "The decision to take part in the St. Patrick's parades was made at the January meeting of the District Council. Taking part in such community events ensures that people are aware that the union is active in their area and ready to defend their rights as workers."

At its February meeting the SLR District Council was addressed by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions national co-ordinator for the One Project, Fiona Dunne. She updated the members on the progress of the One Galway and One Cork projects as well as the Sligo-Leitrim Council of Trade Unions.



# Kathleen Lynn's name should be on the door of new children's hospital



By Ethel Buckley

**OUR Union's National Executive Council has decided to support a campaign to have the new national children's hospital named after Dr. Kathleen Lynn.**

Lynn was a prominent member of the Irish Citizen Army who worked closely with James Connolly.

A west of Ireland woman, born in Killala, county Mayo in 1874, she became involved in nationalist and labour politics and was for a time, vice president of the Irish Women's Workers Union. She worked with Constance Markievicz (who was a distant relative), Helena Molony and Delia Larkin during the 1913 Lockout providing medical care to strikers' families. This is where she met her life-partner Madeleine ffrench-Mullen.

In 1914, James Connolly asked the two of them to join the Irish Citizen Army. In her diaries she described herself as a follower of Wolfe Tone and a comrade of James Connolly. She was very

Lynn co-founded, along with her partner ffrench-Mullen and other women members of the Irish Citizen Army, St Ultan's Children's Hospital

aware of Connolly's commitment to women's rights and she believed that the words on equality in the 1916 Proclamation were his.

She was involved in the 1916 Rising in the City Hall garrison.



Dr. Kathleen Lynn (left) with her life partner Madeleine ffrench-Mullen  
Photos: Courtesy History Ireland

After the leader of the group Seán Connolly, was shot and killed, she assumed leadership of the garrison; when they were arrested she described herself as "a Red Cross doctor and a belligerent".

Lynn co-founded, along with her partner ffrench-Mullen and other women members of the Irish Citizen Army, St Ultan's Children's Hospital. This year marks the centenary of St Ultan's, which opened on Dublin's Charlemont Street on 29th May, 1919.

It was a time of appalling poverty in the city, when 160 out of every 1,000 babies died before their first birthday. A baby born in the tenements was 22 times more likely to die than one born into a middle class home nearby.

While some religious orders had

established hospitals in the past, everyone entering them had to subscribe to the Catholic faith and they were dominated by a still overwhelmingly male medical profession dedicated to a private healthcare model. Except for a few poor charity patients, everyone had to pay. No-one entering St Ultan's had to defer to any religion or pay a penny.

It was the first hospital established, managed and staffed entirely by women. The hospital was a hive of innovation and pioneering research. Its ethos was based on the values of social justice as outlined in the 1916 Proclamation and the Democratic Programme of the first Dáil which had placed the care of children "as the first duty of the Republic".

St Ultan's would later be snuffed out by powerful vested interests ranging from doctors committed to a private healthcare model, to the Catholic Church, which found the existence of a lay establishment run by rebel women and radical medical pioneers intolerable.

Today we are still paying the price for the adoption of a privatised health model, as we are for our developer-led housing policy. Last month lead emergency medical consultant at Temple Street Children's Hospital, Dr IK Okafor, reported that the number of children discharged last year with "no fixed address" was 842, up almost 30 per cent on the 651 discharged in 2017, itself a record high.

The vast majority of these children, 85 per cent, were presenting with illnesses and injuries directly attributable to the unsuitable accommodation in which they and their families were forced to live.

We have now departed so far from the ideals of heroic pioneers such as Lynn that the Government is talking about inviting private enterprise sponsorship of hospital wings in the new Children's Hospital.

A campaign to name the hospital after Lynn has been launched by the 1916 Relatives Association and led by retired SIPTU member Noreen Byrne. The campaign has

won the backing of the National Women's Council of Ireland as well as prominent health professionals and historians including the President of the Royal College of Physicians, Professor Mary Morgan, and UCD Professor of Modern Irish History, Diarmuid Ferriter.

SIPTU's campaign will be co-ordinated by our Dublin District

No-one entering St Ultan's had to defer to any religion or pay a cent...

Council. A members event is planned for Liberty Hall in May, the details of which will feature in the next edition of *Liberty*. I encourage all members who take inspiration from Kathleen Lynn's vision, courage and activism to get involved in this campaign.



St Ultan's, Charlemont Street, Dublin, in 1919.





Setting out priorities for the year...

## Big Start 2019 Campaign

THE Big Start National Committee met in January to debate strategies and plan out the campaign for the year ahead in SIPTU College in Dublin.

Big Start Campaign coordinator, Darragh O'Connor, said: "A key theme of the day was building a strong voice for Early Years educators and positively influencing

government policy. Activists from across the country also set out their priorities for the year and reported back on the campaign's rapidly increasing membership."

SIPTU organisers are working with Early Years educators across the country. If you want find out more or get involved phone 01 858 6365 or email [bigstart@siptu.ie](mailto:bigstart@siptu.ie)

## Push to secure childcare sector SEO

THE next 12 months will be crucial for the Big Start Campaign in its push to secure decent pay and conditions for workers and adequate state investment.

Big Start Co-ordinator, Darragh O'Connor, told Liberty: "2019 is going to be a huge year for Early Years educators. Membership of the Big Start campaign and the union is growing fast.

"This year will be crucial for building a platform from which to demand Government lives up to its commitment to create a decent Early Years sector which does not force workers and parents into financial hardship."

He continued: "A key aim of the

SIPTU Big Start Campaign is to secure a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) for the Early Years sector together with increased investment in it.

"The Government must step up to the mark and increase spending on Early Years to the international benchmark of 1% of GDP. This is particularly necessary if we are to ensure that implementing decent pay for educators and affordability for parents that will not undermine the viability of providers in the sector."

To find out everything you need to know about the Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) that is going to transform Early Years education visit [www.bigstart.ie](http://www.bigstart.ie)



Government ACS initiative discussed

## Early intervention must be backed

EARLY Years educators and managers met to discuss the Government's new Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS) and its impact on the viability of early intervention childcare services at the SIPTU Offices in Kilkenny in late January.

SIPTU and Community Childcare activist, Mick Kenny, said: "High-

quality early intervention can have a dramatic impact on a child's life, particularly those from a disadvantaged background.

"Funding to address affordable childcare is welcome for working parents, but the ACS scheme is simply not suitable for early intervention services for children in complex situations. It is forcing us

to deliver a model of service that we cannot budget for."

He added: "The Government committed to a DEIS-type funding scheme for childcare services in areas of disadvantage. This needs to be fast-tracked to ensure the sustainability of these incredibly important services."

## Cork TDs briefed on childcare crisis



THE Cork Big Start Early Years Committee (BSEYC) met with local TDs on 28th January to discuss the worsening crisis in the childcare sector.

Cork BSEYC chair, Timms Crotty-Quinlan, said: "We had fantastic cross-party support at the meeting in the SIPTU office in Connolly Hall in Cork. Among those who attended the meeting to discuss the mounting issues facing Early Years educators and providers were TDs from the Labour Party, Sinn Féin, Solidarity-People Before Profit and Fianna Fáil."

She added: "The crisis runs much deeper than the pressing issue of affordability for parents.

The Government needs to take a more rounded approach to the funding of the sector and dramatically increase investment so as to address the issues of affordability, sustainability and professionalisation. Only then will we begin to see a functioning sector which works for parents, children, providers and educators."

Following the establishment of a Big Start Campaign National Committee in 2017, local county committees began to be set up in 2018. The Cork Big Start Early Years Committee comprises seven professionals from both community and private settings childcare providers from across the county.



25 enthusiastic Early Childhood Care and Education students at Dungarvan College, county Waterford, were given a presentation and update of the SIPTU Big Start Campaign by SIPTU Organiser Theresa Butler on Friday, 25th January



# Time to Raise the Roof again



By Michael Taft

ANOTHER parliamentary report, more criticism of current housing policy. The Oireachtas Housing Committee's recent report questioned "whether Rebuilding Ireland can remain as the current blueprint for tackling the issues of housing and homelessness". This is a polite way of saying what most people concluded some time ago – government policy is not working.

The Government insists that the primary delivery vehicle for housing is the private sector. To this end, it must employ a range of subsidies to developers and private interests. This is not only costly; it has the perverse effect of driving up prices. And there is less money for policies that could really make a positive impact. Let's look at some of these subsidies:

## 1) The Housing Assistance Payment (HAP)

This is the flagship scheme among a number of rent subsidies. These subsidies provide payments to tenants who cannot afford their rents in the private sector. They will cost the state more than €3 billion over the next few years.

These payments are ultimately a subsidy to the landlord. Secondly, subsidies drive up rent as landlords can keep raising prices at the public's expense. Third, in the long-term, they are more costly: it is cheaper to build public housing and rent it directly to the tenant.

On this last point, the Government doesn't have to take our word here in Liberty. The Department of Finance's own analysis last year concluded: "It is estimated that, based on the Local Authority areas analysed, the . . . cost of delivering units through mechanisms such as HAP, RAS and leasing is higher than construction and/or acquisition." Enough said.

## 2) The Land Development Agency

The purpose of this agency is to coordinate all publicly-held land with the purpose of developing it for house-building. In theory, this is a good idea. The State owns a lot of land and not just at local authority level. Land is also held by public agencies, including NAMA, Government departments, semi-states, etc. A co-ordinating agency



Raise The Roof protest in Dublin last year



PICTURES: RollingNews.ie



The Government insists the primary delivery vehicle for housing is the private sector. To this end, it must employ a range of subsidies to developers and private interests. This is not only costly; it has the perverse effect of driving up prices

can create efficiencies and provide more land for house-building.

The problem is we don't know what the Government intends to do with this land. The fear is that it will engage in a massive transfer to private developers who will build for profit, selling or leasing 10% or 20% of the houses back to the state – at market rates.

Land would be lost, affordability wouldn't really be affordable and the costs to public authorities of leasing or purchasing would be higher than if they just built the houses themselves. The Land Development Agency has the capacity to engage in the biggest transfer of public wealth to private interests since the bailout of bank creditors and the massive property disposals of public lands by NAMA.

## 3) The House Building Finance Agency (HBFI)

This little-known agency was established by the Government to support smaller developers who couldn't get bank loans. Recently, the Government made available €750 million to the agency to loan out. Some might argue this isn't a subsidy since the agency will be lending at 'market rates'. This is true. But look at the alternative.

The State can borrow at ridiculously low rates – one per cent – and this is likely to continue for some time as Eurozone governments continue to depress their economies through irrational austerity policies. The market, however, lends at 8%. The developer's borrowing costs are thousands of

euros more a year which is passed on in a higher mortgage.

This simple comparison makes the point – lending at 'market' rates only embeds high costs into house prices (while the bank earns more in interest payments). In the end, it is the purchaser who pays the subsidy and the higher mortgage, with the developer making a tidy profit. If the State built the house itself, it could sell or rent it at a much lower price.

HAP, the Land Development Agency, the House Building Finance Agency – all these are just a few of the subsidies and incentives to private developers and the private housing sector. The alternative is simpler and much less costly:

- Public land for public housing only – no sell-offs to private interests.
  - The State to build houses for affordable rental and affordable purchase – without profit or speculation.
  - And whether for rent or purchase – no means-tests.
  - In other words, public housing for all.
- It is time to Raise the Roof . . . again.



# No excuse for pulling back on projects



By Marie Sherlock

**IF EVER** we needed a reminder of the legacy of the crash, it has been the response to the cost overruns to the National Children's Hospital.

Despite the public finances now being in surplus and the cost of public borrowing remaining at a historical low, it is remarkable that so many buy into the notion that a cost overrun in one area of spending has to be made up for by cutting back on much needed projects elsewhere.

Last week, we heard that €100 million has to be reduced from the health budget to upgrade maternity units and elderly care facilities among others.

The cost over-run caused by "low-balling" or under-representing the true cost of the tender bid is now presented as something of a new phenomenon. It is not.

Standard practice over the past decade in most major public private partnerships across advanced countries has been to include penalty clauses for cost overruns. It appears that no such clause applied to the National Children's Hospital project.

What is more worrying is that lax practices within one project have now ensured that punishment will be inflicted on many other, long-awaited and much-needed ones. This is the classic accountant's response to a cost over-run. But this is a society and economy we live in, not a busi-



Aerial view of the site and model for the new National Children's Hospital at the St James's Hospital

ness.

What the Government calls "prudence" in terms of its management of the public finances is little more than conservative accounting practice – it is designed to manage the public finances in the here and now.

This mindset is not solely confined to health infrastructure. It also prevails in official thinking on housing. Local authorities cannot borrow directly from the Housing Finance Agency but instead have to seek approval from the Department of Housing.

This centralised approval system means there is a major blockage in the system in approving access to finance for local authorities because such borrowing is added to

the stock of national debt.

The stock of national debt is frequently portrayed as a major concern and risk factor for the Irish

The reality is that money is available now to deliver on long awaited and major infrastructural investments

economy. Yes, the total volume of debt as a share of modified gross national income is above where we would like it to be but the far more

important metric is the cost of servicing and timing of the refinancing of that debt.

Just think about your mortgage – the vast majority of us would be crippled if the full loan was called in immediately. Rather it is our ability to pay the monthly loan repayments that is important. It is vital to understand that most references to the national debt are designed to distract from the true nature of the public finances in Ireland at this point in time.

The reality is that money is available now to deliver on long-awaited and major infrastructural investments, but only if the Government chooses to do this.

This is not a call for across-the-board spending hikes. Instead, it is

a call to deliver on current and capital projects that will ultimately expand the productive capacity of our economy and improve the quality of life for workers and all those living here.

Planned exchequer surpluses over the next half a decade should not be a badge of honour. The EU's fiscal rules do not require budgetary surpluses and the Government's commitment to them reflects the myopic thinking that it has with regard the very substantial housing and demographic challenges that lay ahead.

Despite the fanfare surrounding the new National Development Plan which is costed at €116 billion over a 10-year period, the actual additional financial commitment over and above what is currently being spent is relatively modest.

Capital spending in 2027 will only be €5.8bn higher compared to 2018. This comes in a period where the Government is planning to generate cumulative exchequer surpluses of up to €12.7 billion between 2020-2023.

There can be no doubt that the threats to our public finances are very real, whether from Brexit, international tax recommendations by the OECD or a sudden change in corporate tax revenues here.

But a threat is no excuse for pulling back on planned projects when they are necessary, when failure to act will cost more over the long run and when the money is actually available.

## Fair play in retirement for public service workers

**SIPTU members have generally welcomed new legislation, which came into force in December 2018, which allows public servants to voluntarily retire up to the age of 70.**

However, the union is demanding that the Government adequately recognises the contribution made by hundreds of public servants who reached the compulsory retirement age of 65

before the end of 2017.

Many of these workers, largely out of financial necessity, stayed in work on a 12-month temporary contract, because the state pension age had been changed from 65 to 66.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, John King, said: "From talking to members from across the public service, it is obvious that those who had to take a temporary contract on retirement have

been left short-changed.

"When the new law came into force, the Minister for Finance, Paschal Donohoe, said he was commissioning a report on public servants who had been forced to retire between 6th December, 2017, and the commencement of the legislation. He added that on consideration of this report he would advance plans to assist these workers.

"Our members affected by this

anomaly, many of whom have provided decades of loyal public service, are demanding action now. We believe that these workers should be given the option to extend their 12-month retention arrangement up until age 70, and get all the increments due to them. SIPTU, along with our colleague unions on the Public Services Committee of Congress have made a submission to the minister on this matter."

He added: "On a broader point, workers should not have to stay in physically demanding jobs until the age of 70 out of financial necessity, even if it is under the guise of being voluntary. SIPTU members are calling on the Government to ameliorate the raising of the old age retirement which in many cases is causing the financial necessity for such workers to remain in work."





By Loraine  
Mulligan

ON 14th February, Theresa May suffered another embarrassing defeat in Westminster on a motion seeking continued support for her revised negotiation approach to replace the Backstop (i.e. the mechanism to ensure an open border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) with "alternative arrangements".

The result was driven by the hard-line eurosceptic wing of the Conservative Party who feared that the wording could take a no-deal Brexit off the table. While the motion is not legally-binding, it is a further sign of deep divisions within the party over Brexit.

#### Labour struggles to define its position....

Discord within the House of Commons is not limited to the governing party. Labour is also struggling to maintain a united front. Jeremy Corbyn faces mounting pressure within his party to support a motion in parliament that would give the people a final say on Brexit. On Monday, 18th February Labour backbenchers resigned from the party.

The Labour leader had attempted to break the House of Commons' deadlock over Brexit by writing to Theresa May on 6th February offering support for a Brexit deal which contains elements including a permanent Customs Union with the EU, "close alignment" with the Single Market and a guarantee to "keep pace" with protections and workers' rights across Europe.



House of Cards:  
UK Parliament

PICTURE: Berit Watkins (CC BY 2.0)

# Game of Russian roulette plays out in the Commons

However, the offer was rejected by the British prime minister on the basis that the UK should be able to strike independent trade deals. Corbyn's correspondence made no mention of a second referendum. Keir Starmer, Shadow Brexit Secretary, insisted the proposal did not take the option "off the table" but many activists and MPs are impatient for the leader to give his explicit support to a public vote.

In this context, it was useful for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to have met with Keir Starmer and Tony Lloyd, shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, on 11th February in Dublin.

Congress General Secretary, Patricia King, stressed the importance of protecting the Good Friday Agreement and avoiding the

negative economic impact of a hard Brexit, North and South.

Assistant General Secretary, Owen Reidy said: "Keir Starmer acknowledged the need for a Backstop and was able to provide reassurance that Labour policy reflected this, notwithstanding the concerns they have."

#### Concerns Theresa May is 'running down the clock'...

Meanwhile, EU negotiators continue to insist the Withdrawal Agreement cannot be re-opened. Theresa May has not ruled out the possibility that British politicians could be presented with a 'take-it-or-leave-it' vote within days of the Brexit deadline of 29th March.

Negotiations with the EU may be dragged out until the scheduled European Council meeting on 21st

March. This would leave MPs with a stark choice over whether to accept the withdrawal deal – or a tweaked version – or allow the UK to crash out.

Labour's motion on 14th February to force a "meaningful vote" on a Brexit deal by February 27th was defeated. Moreover, a motion from the Scottish National Party to delay the Brexit process for three months did not receive enough support from either Labour or Tory MPs. The next battleground will come on 27th February when May will table an amendable motion setting out a way forward, if there is no deal with the EU by 27th of February.

Labour MP Yvette Cooper's initiative, which would allow MPs to prevent a no-deal exit, is expected to come back into play at this

stage.

Some Labour parliamentarians, led by MPs Phil Wilson and Peter Kyle, may want to go further by proposing that any deal endorsed by parliament is subject to public approval. There is a lot that could happen between now and then – and up to the very end game.

#### Irish preparations for a no-deal Brexit...

The Irish government is stepping up preparations for the prospect of a worst-case scenario. Steps are being taken to implement the state's 'Contingency Action Plan', including the publication of an Omnibus Bill to introduce emergency legislative changes in the event of a no-deal Brexit.

It is made up of 17 parts, covering areas such as transport, health-care, social protection, transport, education and more. No plan is set out about managing the border with Northern Ireland in the event of a chaotic departure by the UK.

Political consensus remains steady about preventing the re-emergence of hard infrastructure. However, there will be difficult negotiations to come to find alternative mechanisms that would allow Ireland to uphold its obligations as a member of the European Union.

SIPTU Brexit spokesperson and Deputy General Secretary, Gerry McCormack, has called on the Government to engage further with trade unions in talks to protect jobs and workers in exposed sectors; to prevent transport chaos and to provide stability in relation to essential consumer goods.

There may well be many twists and turns yet to come in the Brexit story, but the gravity of the situation makes it more urgent than ever to find a viable way forward.

**SIPTU**

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## European Labour Authority set up

THE European Trade Union Congress (ETUC) has called on the EU institutions to adopt quickly the agreement reached on Thursday 14th February by the European Commission, Parliament and Council on the Regulation to set up a European Labour Authority (ELA).

The ELA will strengthen workers' rights by helping national authorities apply and enforce European labour law and to fight abuses in labour mobility, social security and the posting of workers.

It will also improve the information to workers and employers about their rights and obligations, co-ordinate and support inspections and facilitate cooperation be-



Liiana Carr: 'Useful step forward'

tween member states in applying and enforcing EU law.

ETUC Confederal Secretary Liiana Carr said: "Setting up the European Labour Authority is a useful step forward in the fight against the abuse of workers' rights. It also

represents progress in putting the European Pillar of Social Rights into practice. The authority must play an active role in tackling bogus self-employment and letter-box companies."

Positive elements of the agreement include: employers and trade unions being able to bring cases to the attention of the Authority; the competence of the ELA in the coordination of social security systems; and the safeguard for the autonomy of employers and trade unions to reach collective agreements as well as for unions to take industrial action.

However, the ETUC was disappointed by the restrictions on ELA's role in international transport, where major abuses are known to have taken place.



# Is Public Service Stability Agreement compromised?



By John King

**IN OUR view the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA) remains standing but has been compromised by the Government decision to accept the Labour Court recommendation issued over the nursing and midwives dispute, following hearings in early February.**

The specific proposals advanced

by the Labour Court to resolve this dispute will be considered by the nursing unions.

The decision on their acceptance, or otherwise, is one for the members in those unions, including by members of the SIPTU nursing committees who are due to meet in the coming days.

It is evident that the Minister for Finance and Public Expenditure, Paschal Donohoe, now accepts there is a degree of flexibility within the PSSA. This flexibility will be used to advance the interests of SIPTU members in the public service. The extent to which

the PSSA has been compromised remains to be seen and the 80,000 SIPTU members in the public service will continue to accrue the benefits which were successfully negotiated for them in 2017.

The new situation presents an opportunity to ensure anomalies and problems in the agreement's implementation, such as the roll-out of job evaluation schemes, is effectively dealt with.

The methodologies utilised to produce the nursing proposals, and the acceptance by the Department of Finance and Public Expen-

diture that they are within the parameters of the agreement, means that they must be available to all other groups and grades of workers in the public services equally.

Once this new situation has been fully analysed and considered, we will commence a consultation process with SIPTU sectors across the public service.

This process will include an examination of all legitimate claims concerning failures in the implementation of the PSSA and anomalies that have arisen from it.

SIPTU representatives will also

consult with our fellow Congress-affiliated unions within the public service concerning how the PSSA can be improved while maintaining its integrity.

Your union will then advance members' claims with the Government.

If our members within the public service are not equally and fairly treated in relation to their concerns, SIPTU members will be left with no alternative but to advance our legitimate claims through strike and industrial action.

# SIPTU advancing to pay restoration

**AT THE beginning of 2019, SIPTU members working across the public service took another step on the journey towards full pay restoration.**

Under the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA), pay increased by 1% for workers earning up to €30,000 and the pension levy threshold rose to €32,000, putting more money in the pock-

ets of public servants. The deal will also deliver another 1.75% of pay restoration in September with a further raising of the pension levy threshold and a 2% increase on basic salaries due next year.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, John King, told *Liberty*: "As well as pay restoration, the PSSA guarantees an end to the pension levy on any non-pensionable elements of

public service incomes. This breakthrough in public service pay policy, ensures our members, particularly those who rely on these to boost their low incomes, will see a real difference in their take-home pay.

"In 2018, our union continued to force the issue of 'new entrants' pay and won a deal that will see public sector workers hired after

2011 receive a significant pay boost on 1st March."

He added: "However, perhaps the most crucial elements of the PSSA are some of the non-pay provisions, including strong protections against outsourcing.

"Our union has long fought against the privatisation of public services. We will continue to ensure the PSSA is used to its fullest

extent to curtail this undermining of our members' futures and the quality of services in health, education, community and public administration.

"When necessary, SIPTU will continue to support our members in taking industrial action to protect and advance the integrity and delivery of our public services."



One Galway activists involved in the 'My Tip, My Reward' initiative with senators Ged Nash and Paul Gavan.

# One Galway launches tips drive

**THE 'My Tip, My Reward' campaign, an initiative of the One Galway movement, which aims to ensure that staff employed in the hotel and restaurant sector personally benefit from their hard work by being allowed to keep customer tips.**

SIPTU Organiser and One Galway activist, Clem Shelvin, told *Liberty*: "One fifth of minimum wage work-

ers in Ireland are employed in the hotel and food sector and a customer's tip can make a huge difference to cover basic living costs.

"It is not a substitute for a decent wage rate or the solution to the issue of low pay but a few euro more in the pockets of staff in the hospitality sector can help make ends meet for them."

One Galway activists are also supporting The National Minimum

Wage (Protection of Employee Tips Bill), which has been proposed by Sinn Féin Senator, Paul Gavan.

The legislation is designed to ensure that workers have a legal right to their tips and that all restaurants would be required to display their policy on how their tips are distributed.

For further details contact galway@onemovement.work or visit www.onemovement.work



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# Liberty View

## New law an opportunity to organise precarious workers

### The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act which comes into effect in March is a win for the trade union movement that will provide unions with new opportunities to organise precarious workers.

Enactment of this legislation has come about due to sustained trade union campaigning to highlight an exponential increase in precarious work across a number of sectors. The campaign, waged by this union for over five years, working with the ICTU and other Congress affiliates, demanded greater protections for workers in relation to working hours and certainty of earnings.

Regina Doherty T.D., Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection has described the Bill as "one of the most significant pieces of employment legislation in a generation."

SIPTU representatives have highlighted the fact that an increasing number of workers are working in precarious situations often not knowing from one week to the next how many hours they will work or what their earnings will be. This degree of uncertainty has dire implications for workers and their families' income, budgeting and housing.

The enactment of this legislation and its enforcement by trade unions should bring more

**The legislation was hard fought for and hard won by unions. It will provide precarious workers with much stronger legal protections**

certainty to the lives of tens of thousands of workers across the island.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary Ethel Buckley, working with ICTU General Secretary Patricia King and Congress industrial official, Liam Berney, as well as Mandate trade union General Secretary, John Douglas, played a key role in securing the legislation.

The legislation was hard fought for and hard won by unions. It will provide precarious workers with much stronger legal protections. However, the legislation will only make a meaningful impact on workers' lives if they are informed as to their new

rights and they have the capacity to secure them. Unions have a critical role now in organising workers to ensure that their employers are implementing this new law.

The Act will benefit all employees. One of the provisions is a requirement on employers to issue employees with a written statement of their main employment conditions within five days of starting in a job. Crucially, the statement must include their daily and weekly hours of work. However, the Act will have most impact on employees in sectors where atypical or precarious contracts are more common, such the health and care sectors, higher education, tourism and hospitality, retail and restaurants.

From March, employers will be required to make a minimum payment of three hours pay where a worker is called into work but where the employer makes no work available. While this provision will be welcome across a number of sectors, it will provide crucial additional protection of earnings to workers in the services industries such as hotels, restaurants, cafes, bars and shops where getting called in and being sent home again with no pay has become a widespread rostering practice by employers.

During the campaign and subsequent negotiations with government officials, SIPTU representatives highlighted the growth in the use of precarious employment contracts such as 'if and when' contracts and zero hour contracts.

SIPTU's Young Workers Network launched their 'End Zero Hours' campaign in 2014 to highlight the impact of such contracts on young workers. A 2015 young worker survey carried out by the Network, found that zero hours contracts were a significant contributor to in-work poverty with 89% of under 35s struggling to make ends meet. 21% of respondents said that they felt their job could end at any time and 20% said their employer gave them less than one day's notice of their working hours.

The employer's side and some media commentators argued at various stages in the negotiations that these types of contracts were not a common feature in the Irish labour market. SIPTU representatives supplied department officials with copies the standard-issue contracts of employment of a major multi-national corporation operating in the Irish food service sector along with a number of hotel industry contracts that were the very definition of zero hours. The department officials

were able to see the evidence of such employment practices and were convinced that as legislators they had to intervene to enhance the legislative protections for workers in these industries.

Hyper-casual and precarious contracts really began to proliferate in recent years in the industries where the employers are refusing to sit down with unions within the Joint Labour Committee system to negotiate employment conditions and in the care and education sectors. The anti-worker practices

**Securing this legislation is a big step forward in the fight. It now falls to us to ensure that workers know their rights and have the organisational capacity to vindicate them effectively**

are also evident across the non-union manufacturing sector.

Under the new legislation, zero hours contracts will not be lawful where there is a continuing employment relationship. They will, however, be permissible in very limited circumstances, for example, in emergencies or short-term relief work to cover routine absences.

A provision of the new Act which will be particularly welcomed by workers in the retail industry will be an entitlement, in most circumstances, to be placed on a band of hours that more accurately reflects the hours the worker works. Securing this provision is in no small part down to the Dunnes Stores workers.

At the 2016 SIPTU Services Division biennial delegate conference entitled 'Fighting for the Future of Work', delegates issued a declaration to fight for better legal protections for workers against insecure and precarious work. Securing this legislation is a big step forward in the fight. It now falls to us to ensure that workers know their rights and have the organisational capacity to vindicate them effectively.

While there are protections for workers against penalisation under this legislation, vulnerable workers will need the backing of a union to ensure that they are protected when making a case with their employer or a third party. We need to make trade unions the one-stop-shop for precarious workers to secure their new rights.



# Realising the dream a century on



By Tom Healy

**THIS YEAR** we mark the centenary of the First Dáil. The Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress played a significant role in shaping the 'Democratic Programme' of the Dáil meeting in January 1919. Yet, much of what was contained in that document was subsequently forgotten or dismissed.

Along with other trade unions, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union – now SIPTU – played a constructive role in helping to steer Ireland towards a coherent social vision for the entire island of Ireland.

The challenge remains. Following a bruising economic crisis after 2008, the lessons of economic and policy development have not been learned or applied by Government. Witness, for example, the partial or complete non-implementation of the 'Vacant Site Levy' tax across local authorities in the midst of a housing crisis. The rights of property still come before the rights of workers, families and children to a home and a living wage.

Reclaiming the debate from a tired and lazy group-think will require a programme of systematic education and organisation on the part of the trade union movement. We need to move towards a new democratic programme informed by the same principles as those enunciated in 1919 but against a very different global and local context.

Three big challenges confront us: (1) a growing and ageing population with all that this implies for healthcare, pensions, education and many other areas; (2) new technologies that will transform the way we work, travel and live; and (3) the crisis of the environment that will threaten life on this planet for our children and our children's children.



Members of the First Dáil, including Michael Collins, Cathal Brugha, Arthur Griffith, Éamon de Valera and Eoin MacNeill



Protesters at an ICTU anti-austerity march in Dublin in the wake of the 2008 crash  
PICTURE: Congress

the cultural and community life of the world around us should be made easier by creating pathways that are flexible and that give access to the supports and services that are needed. A living wage is one essential part, only, of an effort to eradicate poverty among those at work.

## Reclaiming the 'social wage'

The 'social wage' refers to public goods such as education, health-care, income support, transport and other services. Work is the basis of the social wage through taxes and the employment of those in the public service. The best way to tackle poverty is to secure jobs and wages that pay.

Well paid employment enables people to live with dignity and provides the resources for investment and maintenance of a high level of 'social wage'.

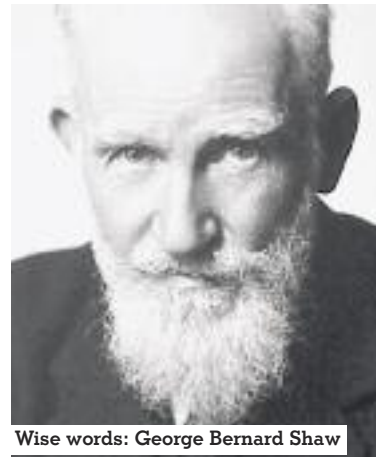
## Reclaiming enterprise/ industrial policy

To be for equality is not to be anti-business. A dynamic, pro-business environment can co-exist with a strong social protection safety net as well as a creative and dynamic partnership between public, private and voluntary bodies. A greater role in the running of enterprises for workers, consumers and communities could boost productivity and address some of the challenges posed by climate change and the need to switch away from fossil fuels.

Now, let's leave the last word, here, with George Bernard Shaw: "You see things; and you say 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say 'Why not?'"

**On the 15th April, *An Ireland Worth Working for – Towards a New Democratic Programme* will be launched in Liberty Hall by the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI). This book will set out how a new Ireland can be created and what it might look like. You are very welcome to come along.**

Tom Healy is Director of the Nevin Economic Research Institute



Wise words: George Bernard Shaw

PICTURES: Public Domain

We must not let others claim those areas vital to a progressive social and political vision. In the trade union movement we need to claim work, the 'social wage' and 'enterprise' development.

## Reclaiming work

Work – paid or unpaid – is central to who we are. It is vital that people have access to all forms of work that match their skills and needs. Employment rates need to be higher. However, we need to pay more attention to the quality of work including the wider array of benefits, rights and guarantees.

Reconciling the different roles of work, caring and participation in



**SIPTU Migrant Worker Support Network  
Residential Training and Networking Weekend  
5th & 6th April, Limerick**



More details on our Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/SIPTUMigrantAndInternationalWorkersSupportNetwork/>





A bagpiper leads a colour party during a ceremony to honour the ICA garrison which held the City Hall during the 1916 Rising

PICTURES: RollingNews.ie

# Decade of Commemoration - Let's tell the People History



By Heather Laird

**THE Irish government, in recent statements on commemorations, has placed considerable emphasis on inclusivity and empathy. For example, in an Irish Times special supplement the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Josepha Madigan, endorses “multiple and plural” commemorations of the sort that won’t “ignite old tensions”.**

The vision being put forward is one of a healthy co-existence of competing viewpoints. Underpinning this vision is perhaps the suggestion that the 1966 commemorations of the Rising were at least partially accountable for the outbreak of violence in Northern Ireland later that decade.

What this suggestion masks, of course, is the material inequalities that the Catholic community in the North were experiencing at that point in time as a result of well-documented discrimination with regard to jobs and housing.

When remembering this discrimination, we are forced to confront the fact that some of the viewpoints that we are now expected to



President Michael D Higgins in Liberty Hall in 2016.

recognise and respect were not necessarily designed to co-exist with other viewpoints; they themselves were exclusive rather than inclusive. What is needed in these final years of the Decade of Centenaries is not a soft-focused relativism that turns everything into a two-dimensional harmless version of itself, but an openness to multiple voices and stories that does not preclude evaluation. The starting point for such an openness is the construction of a complex historical narrative of the period we are currently commemorating. The starting point should not be a determination to avoid offending

anyone. Some Irish historians have had little involvement in the Decade of Centenaries, believing that commemorative practices produce “bad history”. Others have been enthusiastic contributors, quite rightly recognising that this is a golden opportunity to bring their research to a much-wider audience than they normally have access to.

But to follow the official line and set out in your historical research and the presentation of that research not to offend anyone is as likely to have a distorting effect on that research as deliberately setting out to offend someone.

Narrative should have a strong socio-economic dimension and not purely focused on the political...

ways been far too focused on a narrow political arena and have hindered the development in Ireland of a bottom-up history with a strong socio-economic focus.

In late January/early February 1919 the first of more than a hundred ‘soviets’ was established in Ireland when the workers occupied the Monaghan Asylum and ran it for a week in a successful attempt to improve their wages and conditions.

The most famous of the subsequent ‘soviets’ took place later that year when, following the declaration of Limerick City as a Special Military Area, workers took over and ran it for almost two weeks.

Next year, 2020, is the centenary of intensified agrarian agitation. And officially returned ‘agrarian outrages’ were higher in 1920 than in any other year since 1882, at the height of the land war.

Some of the ‘agitators’, particularly in the east of the country, were agricultural labourers seeking better working conditions and wages. In addition to holding strikes, labourers disrupted fairs and attacked farms.

In the west, the dominant form that the ‘outrages’ took was the seizure of land, sometimes carried out by large groups that included women and children. In most cases the land seized in the early 1920s was then broken up into tillage holdings for individual small farmers or landless labourers, but there were also some experiments in collective farming.

The stories of these urban workers, agricultural labourers and small tenant-farmers could easily be sidelined if the latter years of the Decade of Centenaries remains firmly focused on how to deal sensitively with the competing political visions of a hundred years ago. But these stories are as important, if not more so, to the construction of the aforementioned complex historical narrative as the stories of the RIC men that the state is now so concerned to remember.

*Heather Laird is a lecturer in the School of English, University College Cork. She is the author of Commemoration (Cork: Cork University Press, 2018).*

The starting point for such an openness is the construction of a complex historical narrative of the period we are commemorating



## Supporting Quality is delighted to announce daa has joined our campaign!



**SUPPORTING  
QUALITY**

Protecting Quality Jobs in Ireland  
Promoting Quality Irish Products



As an organisation whose role it is to help Ireland connect to the rest of the world, daa understands the importance of building strong and supportive relationships that underpin Ireland's success. daa is therefore delighted to join the Supporting Quality Campaign to celebrate the work of and promote the products and services provided by the 21,000 people whose jobs are based at Dublin and Cork airports. daa is proud to be part of this innovative campaign that helps protect quality jobs in Ireland.



a joint  
initiative



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





## Longstanding and important relationship

**THERE are close to 2,000 SIPTU members employed by daa in Dublin and Cork Airports. Members are employed to carry out a number of roles in daa including in the Airport Search Unit, Airport Police and Fire Service, as well as clerical and operative staff.**

SIPTU Aviation Sector Organiser, Neil McGowan, told Liberty: "SIPTU and daa have a longstanding and important relationship. Our membership in daa is growing along with the company and plays the crucial role in making it a success and generating its consid-

erable profits."

TEAC Division Organiser, Greg Ennis, said: "SIPTU supports the expeditious construction of the new €320 million northern runway at Dublin Airport and welcomes daa announcement of its €900 million expenditure plan to cater for extra capacity.

"The hard work of thousands of airport terminal employees has laid the ground for record year-on-year growth and major dividends being paid by daa to the State. It is crucial that trade union members and their families continue to support key Irish companies such as

daa and our crucial state-owned transport infrastructure."

"The measure of the importance which daa places on its relationship with its workforce and the good health of the Irish economy is clear from our decision to join the Supporting Quality campaign," said daa Chief People Officer, Brian Drain.

He added: "Once we were introduced to the campaign by SIPTU, daa certainly felt it was something we wanted to be involved with."



Supporting Quality Marketing Director, Fabia Gavin; SIPTU Aviation Sector Organiser, Neil McGowan; daa Head of Marketing, Louise Bannon; daa Chief People Officer, Brian Drain; SIPTU activist and daa Facilities T2, Peter O'Reilly; SIPTU activist and daa ASU, Yvonne Ward; and SIPTU activist and daa ASU, Des Larkin

# Crucial global connections

**AS AN island nation competing in a globalised marketplace, our connectivity with the rest of the world is critical. Dublin and Cork airports, working with airline customers, have a direct role in the growth of tourism and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Ireland.**

The airports are two of the most important sources of job creation in the State. The immediate vicinity of Dublin Airport has one of the highest employment densities in the country, with 19,200 people directly employed at the airport alone while approximately 100,000 additional direct and indirect jobs are generated by the airport.

The activities of Dublin Airport play a major part in the overall performance of the Irish economy. In 2016, it contributed €8.3bn to Ireland's GDP, 3.1% of the total. This is significantly higher than the contribution of many entire sectors of Irish industry.

There were more than 10.6 million visitors to the island of Ireland in 2017. About 71% of these entered and left through Dublin Airport, equating to 15 million passenger journeys. These visitors came from across the globe and travel throughout the country; for example, Dublin Airport accounts for 30% of all visitors to Northern Ireland.

Cork Airport plays a crucial role in attracting and maintaining FDI investment in the region, which is the Irish and European base for several leading pharmaceutical multinational companies. Passenger numbers at Cork Airport increased every year during the 10 years between 1998 and 2008 by an average of 14.8% per annum from around 1.3 million to more than 3.2 million.



PICTURES: daa

Passenger numbers returned to growth in 2016, with a year-on-year increase of 7.7% to 2.23 million passengers. This number has now risen to more than 2.30 million.

### Products and Services

Showcasing scores of major Irish and international brands. The Loop shopping area at Dublin and Cork airports offers a world-class retail experience to passengers and

a global shop window for a host of Irish products. Travellers benefit from great discounts on leading high street names in beauty, fragrance and fashion plus exclusive offers on books, electronics and alcohol as well as the expertise of the staff who provide advice to customers on everything from the right skincare choice to the best Irish whiskey or gin.

Services such as online shopping on theloop.ie and the innovative

Shop and Collect (which facilitates passengers travelling within the EU who want to buy goods from The Loop but do not want to take the goods with them to buy on departure and collect when they return) help make the shopping experience as smooth and easy as possible.

There is also a full portfolio of travel services to help passengers get to and from the airport. Dublin Airport Car Parks have more than 22,000 spaces, offering both proximate, short-term parking as well as long-term parking in sites adjacent to the campus. The Dublin Airport car park team are on hand to provide assistance for all car park users – whether that is help in finding their car or a jump start for a flat battery. Indeed, one of the car park team members recently came up with a simple but highly effective idea to help passengers – a handy luggage tag provided free of charge at bus stops on which the location of your car can be noted.

### Socially responsible

Dublin Airport runs a €10 million Community Fund, building on decades of support provided to a wide range of local community initiatives. The Dublin Airport

Community Fund will invest €400,000 per year over 25 years in local projects focused in areas such as environment and sustainability, sports and recreation, social inclusion and community development, health and wellbeing as well as culture and heritage.

Furthermore, daa runs a Charities of the Year scheme each year to provide funding support to a group of charities that are selected based on votes from staff. Teams from right across the organisation get involved in fund-raising activity with daa matching the funds raised. Since being established in 2007, the daa Charities of the Year scheme has raised more than €2.6 million for a total of 24 Irish charities

### The future...

A new 3,110 metre runway is currently being developed at Dublin Airport. The North Runway will enable airlines to expand existing services, add new routes and grow connections to Ireland's global markets in Asia, Africa and the Americas. This project will support tens of thousands of new jobs, enhance connectivity and increase customer choice and value.

Work is also advanced on Dublin Airport Central, a major new development that will create more than 40,000 square metres of office accommodation and a new landscaped public space connected to Terminal 2. Up to 4,000 employees will be located at Dublin Airport Central upon completion of this first phase alone.



## Cork Airport: the gateway to the south...

**Cork Airport, Ireland's second-largest international airport, is entering its fourth year of consecutive growth, forecasting a 7% growth increase in passenger numbers for 2019 with approximately 2.6 million passengers expected to pass through its doors.**

More than 50 routes are on offer from Cork Airport across the UK, continental Europe and the east coast of the USA. daa is committed to continuing this growth and it looks promising

as weekly passenger numbers in January were up 10% already on last year.

The recent addition of a direct transatlantic service has benefitted the south of Ireland hugely in terms of inbound tourism and business from the US.

Cork Airport won the prestigious World Routes 2018 Marketing Award in the 'Best Airport Under Four Million Passengers' category, a global accolade recognising excellence in aviation marketing in September last year.



# ICTU urges Government backing for 'constructive dialogue' in Venezuela

**THE Irish Congress of Trade Unions has called on the Government to promote dialogue to foster a peaceful solution to the Venezuelan crisis, instead of stoking tensions in the region.**

Ireland has joined a number of countries, including the UK, Germany, France, Spain, the US, Canada and several Latin American countries, in endorsing Juan Guaidó, Venezuelan opposition leader and president of the national assembly, who has declared himself interim president of Venezuela. In its 12th February

statement, ICTU voiced its concern at the escalating international interference – including possible military intervention – in the internal affairs of a sovereign nation.

Vehemently rejecting a "militarised solution" to the crisis, the statement said the people of Latin America had "not forgotten" the history of US-backed military rule in the region.

"It is our view that Venezuelans need to resolve their differences through constructive dialogue and democratic processes, without resorting to violence.

"International intervention risks

intensifying existing political divisions and inflaming tensions that are the consequence of the severe social and economic crisis facing the country."

ICTU called on the Government to abstain from seeking regime change and intervening in the sovereign affairs of Venezuela and instead promote stability "through constructive dialogue with the international community".

The statement concluded: "We stand in solidarity with the people of Venezuela and support their right to peaceful self-determination."



PICTURE: PP Comunidad de Madrid (CC BY 2.0)

# Threat of US military action hikes up tension

By Paul Dobson

**THE latest North American attempts to retake control of Venezuela's oil reserves have caused instability in the region. This one, however, has raised the ominous threat of direct, US-led, international military action in the Latin American country like never before.**

Washington's man in Venezuela, Juan Guaidó, who is the president of the National Assembly and comes from a US-educated past, is the leader of the hard-right Popular Will party which is best known for leading the 2014 and 2017 street violence which sought to oust President Nicolas Maduro.

Guaidó, who illegally and unconstitutionally proclaimed himself "interim president" on 23rd January, has since failed in his efforts to take control. None of the organs of state, public institutions or the army have recognised him as the country's leader, with Maduro, who was elected in May 2018, continuing to be in command.

This failure of Guaidó leaves him little option other than to rely on international allies, including several Latin American and EU countries which have recognised him as the legitimate president in clear violation of international law and the UN Charter and are supporting the destabilisation efforts of the US.

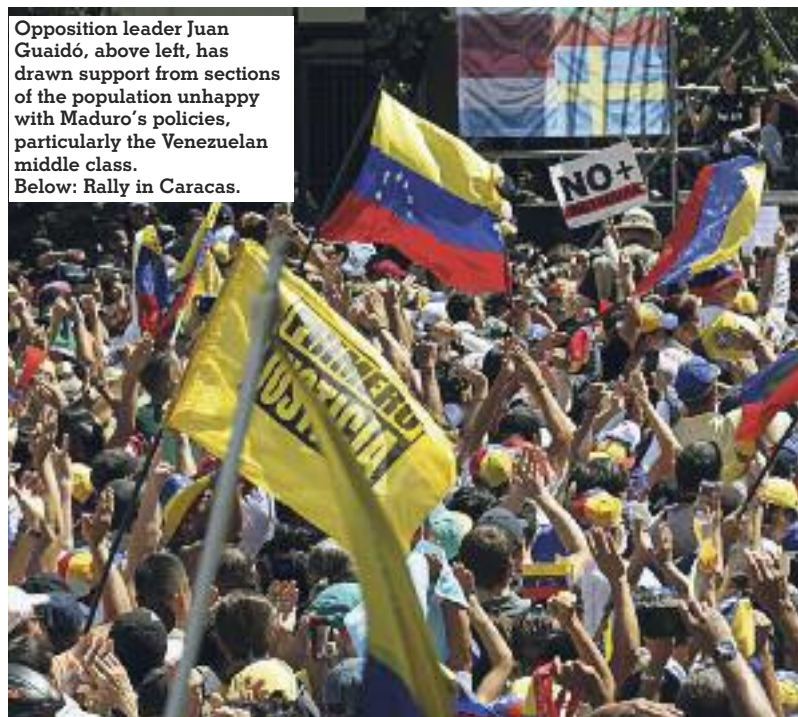
Through crippling sanctions, a well-constructed "humanitarian aid" PR stunt, a recently announced oil embargo which will



Opposition leader Juan Guaidó, above left, has drawn support from sections of the population unhappy with Maduro's policies, particularly the Venezuelan middle class. Below: Rally in Caracas.



President Maduro at his second inauguration in January



PICTURES: Public Domain; Alexcocopro (CC BY-SA 4.0)

itary force in Venezuela, it could destabilise the entire region and spark a bloody, long-lasting encounter. The Venezuelan popular forces are well organised and highly patriotic, and the armed forces are loyal to Maduro.

Pro-government organisations, which are putting valid criticisms of Maduro's government to one side for now, are currently rallying around the defence of the democratic system and their right to sovereignty and self-determination, just as they did in 2002, 2014 and 2017.

Venezuela's struggle for national liberation is still lacking a significant push in the economic sphere, with the importing, mono productive local economy still highly dependent on US multi-national corporations and thus economic sanctions applied by Trump.

While the Bolivarian project continues to enjoy significant support among the poorer masses, those who actually suffer the most from the harsh economic recession the country is living through, Guaidó has managed to mobilise a large section of the disenchanted population, mostly through the middle and upper middle classes, and both sides are holding regular marches and rallies.

Venezuela's future looks dark, but through international solidarity and a call to respect international law and a people's right to self-determination, Trump's latest plan can be defeated, hopefully without the shedding of too much Venezuelan blood.

Paul Dobson, a journalist at venezuelanalysis.com, is based in Merida, Venezuela

Pro-government organisations, which are putting valid criticisms of Maduro's government to one side for now, are rallying around the defence of the democratic system

cost Venezuela \$30 million a day, and the sabre-rattling of military intervention, Washington is playing a dangerous, and potentially bloody, game in the region.

Should Trump decide to use mil-





By Francis Devine

AS THE centenary of the Limerick Soviet looms, Limerick Council of Trade Unions suggest that "at a time when the political, business and financial gurus of our nation are proving, in the most spectacular fashion, their inability to provide us with a stable, sane and rational society", trade unionists should remember when Limerick's workers "took control of the city and ran it so effectively" and the "people's needs were put before profit and real democracy flourished if only for a short while".

While making global headlines at the time, the Soviet has since become part of the exclusion of workers' role in Ireland's revolutionary period. Many events were conveniently forgotten and still struggle for appropriate recognition in the catalogue of commemorations in the Decade of Centenaries, notably the general strikes against conscription and for the release of political prisoners; the Munitions of War and Motor Permits Strikes; and the rash of factory occupations and soviets in Munster.

By the time the new states were created in 1922, governments in both jurisdictions were preparing to marginalise workers' interests and to forget the labour movement's contribution to the achievement of partial independence.

It was not until SIPTU activist Joe Harrington's mayoralty in 1999 that a plaque commemorating the Soviet was unveiled on Thomond Bridge in Limerick city.

From January 1919, the War of Independence became a guerrilla conflict between the IRA and British government. In Limerick, 28-year-old Robert Byrne, who had worked as a telegraphist from 1916, was active in the Association of Irish Post Office Clerks – today's Communications Workers' Union (CWU) – and a Trades Council delegate.

In December 1918, he became Adjutant, Second Battalion, Limerick Brigade, IRA. He was arrested in January 1919 for attending the funeral of Limerick Volunteer John Daly and dismissed from the Post Office.

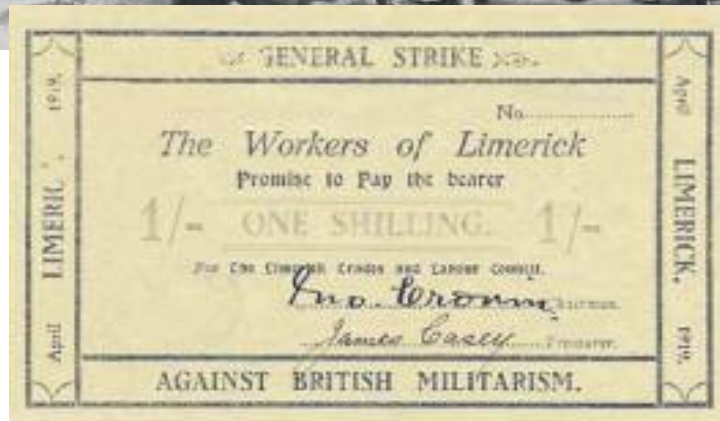
Limerick Trades Council mounted protests against the harsh treatment of prisoners and Byrne went on hunger strike. By 8th March, he was confined under RIC guard in St Camillus's (Limerick Workhouse) Hospital.

On Sunday, 6th April, the IRA attempted to rescue Byrne, Constable Martin O'Brien being killed in the resultant affray and Byrne wounded, bleeding to death later that day near Meelick where a



# Remember Limerick 1919! A rallying cry for workers

Members of the 1919 Limerick Soviet Back row: T McDonnell, J Carr, J Coffey, M Ryan, M Bennis, D O'Reilly, M Gabbett. Fourth row: F Whelan, M Daly, T Bourke, J Roberts, J McQuaine. Third row: P O'Sullivan, W O'Brien, G Dunne, P Hehir, J Flynn, B Rea, L Kelliher, D O'Loughlin, J Hogan, C Johnson, M Reddan, J O'Keeffe. Seated: D Griffin, R P O'Connor, J Casey, J Cronin, A Walsh, J O'Connor, P Dowling. Front: J Buckner, C Carey, M Browne, and J Leahy



memorial was unveiled to his memory in 2015. Thousands attended Byrne's funeral.

On 9th April, in response to these events, the British Army's

Brigadier Griffin declared Limerick city and surrounds a 'Special Military Area'. RIC permits were demanded from anyone wishing to leave or enter the city from Mon-

day, 14th April and heavily-armed troops occupied the city.

On Sunday, 13th April, Limerick Trades and Labour Council called a general strike and ordered non-cooperation with the authorities. A Committee – styling itself 'Soviet' in recognition of the Russian Revolution of 1917, widely welcomed by Irish workers – ran the city, facilitating commerce by printing their own money, controlling food prices, publishing a news sheet, and maintaining civil order.

Ultimate success depended on solidarity action throughout the country, but national leaders – within Labour and Republican cir-

cles – while expressing sympathy with Limerick, were unwilling to sanction practical solidarity. With monies low and confusion among an isolated leadership, the Catholic Bishop of Limerick, Denis Hallinan, and Mayor, businessman Alphonsus 'Phons' O'Mara, met with strike and military leaders and negotiated a conclusion to events on 24th April. It was a fudge. Martial law remained but was not strictly enforced until finally lifted in early May.

For trade unionists today, the Limerick Soviet of 1919 can "be a cautionary tale and a rallying cry". For some, it was "basically an emotional and spontaneous protest on essentially nationalist and humanitarian grounds, rather than anything based on socialist or even trade union aims". For others, it was "a microcosm of how the Irish struggle for freedom could succeed" where, as Connolly prophesied, the working class would be the only class to deliver it.

With Brexit uncertainties and discussion of the British border in Ireland developing – not to mention austerity, housing and health crises, migration and global environmental issues – workers, as in Limerick in 1919, should actively consider the form of society best suited to the common good.

In agitating for such a society, they will quickly discover the same ambivalence and opposition that those in Limerick were faced with. The Limerick Soviet should nevertheless be celebrated as part of workers' heritage and the lessons from its collapse learned, after all the point of history is – to paraphrase Karl Marx – not merely to interpret it but to change it.

PICTURES: Public Domain



# Impassioned believer in economic justice...



By Michael Halpenny

**To The Promised Land - Martin Luther King and the Fight for Economic Justice**  
By Michael K. Honey  
Published by Norton

THERE'S a photograph of the American Civil Rights March on Washington DC on 28th August 1963 and, in that well-worn phrase, it is truly iconic.

However, the photo is not of the Lincoln Memorial which served as a platform for the soaring oratory of Martin Luther King's historic "I Have A Dream" speech. Rather the picture is of the march itself as it progressed, with linked arms, towards its destination.

If you look closer behind King and union leaders A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin, you will see trade union placards demanding 'Full Employment', 'Jobs For All Now!' and 'Decent Housing Now!' Then you begin to understand that the march was organised not just on the vital question of equality and civil rights but also on that of economic justice and was in fact, called 'The March for Jobs and Freedom'.

For King the two were inseparable and from very early on in his political career he questioned what good it does "to eat at an inte-



Dr Martin Luther King believed that the fight for economic justice was inseparable from the struggle for civil rights

grated lunch counter if you don't earn enough money to buy a hamburger and a cup of coffee?"

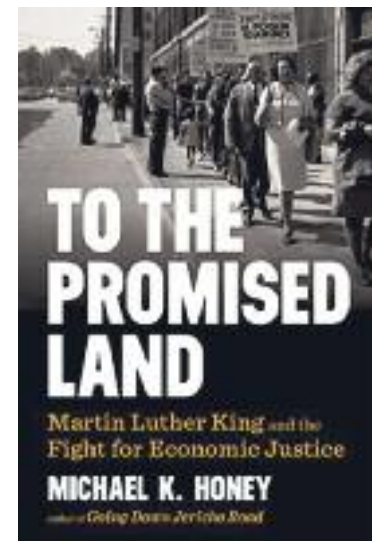
Thus while the early civil rights movement and the march on 28th August 1963 led to the enactment of the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts, the agenda of the organisers anticipated the struggle for economic justice to come: national minimum wage, extension of Fair Labor laws, anti-discrimination legislation in hiring, a programme of public works and training for the unemployed.

Most representations of King and his legacy lie in the comfort zone of memorialising an impassioned advocate of peaceful integration. Few reflect his equally impassioned advocacy of economic justice and union rights for the poor and workers, personified in the Poor People's Campaign.

Labour historian Michael K. Honey seeks to redress that imbalance in his timely book published last year to mark the 50th anniversary of King's assassination in Memphis.

He reminds us that King insisted on going there to honour a commitment to support striking refuse workers who were fighting for collective bargaining rights and better wages and conditions. More than that, Honey says that "King elevated it (the strike) as part of an epochal movement for human freedom".

Far from being a plaster saint of safe liberal values, the author ex-



plains how his subject, King, worked hard from his earliest political days to build alliances with trade unions on economic freedom as well as civil rights agendas. He was regarded as a threat by J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI and also by those who thought he should retire gracefully from the ring after the advances of the Civil Rights Acts.

He didn't and he wouldn't and his call for economic restructuring, which was at the core of the Poor People's Campaign, was a "true revolution of values".

This book is inspirational testament to those values and their enduring relevance to workers today, not only in the United States but across the globe.

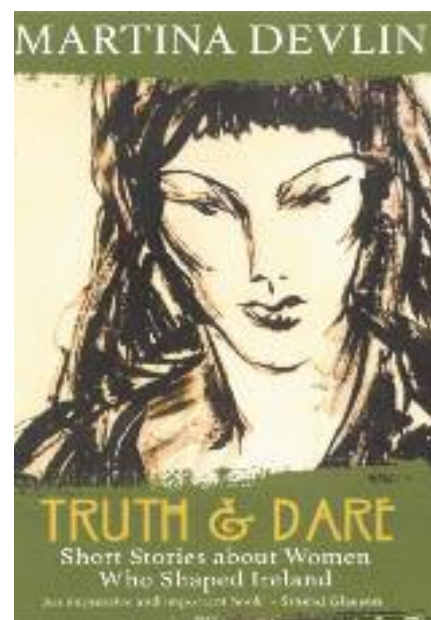
Michael Halpenny

## Daring lives re-imagined

**Truth & Dare**  
by Martina Devlin  
Published by Poolbeg Press

IN HER first book of short stories, writer Martina Devlin takes on an ambitious and challenging task of fictionalising the lives of women who helped to shape their country at key moments of Irish history.

The women whose fictional stories are told in *Truth & Dare* (Poolbeg) range from the 1798 rebel and anti-slavery campaigner, Mary Ann McCracken, to Anna Parnell, founder of the Ladies' Land League in the late 19th Century and Kathleen Lynn who fought at City Hall



in Dublin during the Easter Rising of 1916.

Others who feature as the main characters in the 11 short stories, imagined by Devlin, include Cork educationalist, Nana Nagle; the republican historian, Dorothy McArdle; and Tyrone-born writer, poet and workers' rights activist, Alice Milligan.

The book provides a unique insight into the lives of these powerful – but often forgotten – women, and the revolutionary and tumultuous times in which they lived.



Former Dublin Bus worker, Denis Kennedy, received his 50-year SIPTU badge and scroll in January. Denis began his career as a bus conductor in Birmingham, England, before returning to Ireland in 1967 where he transferred his union membership to the ITGWU. Pictured right: Denis as a young bus worker in Birmingham and his 1967 ITGWU union card.



# 1919 and the rise of Red Clydeside



By Michael Halpenny

**Glasgow 1919 – the Rise of Red Clydeside**  
By Kenny MacAskill  
Biteback Publishing

ONE of Glasgow's best known modern landmarks is an equestrian statue of the Duke of Wellington. However, what really makes it stand out is the brightly coloured traffic cone stuck at a rakish angle on the 'Iron Duke's' head.

Glasgow may have been styled the 'second city of the Empire', but reverence for lawful authority has not been one of its most distinguishing characteristics.

A short gallop away is the city's George Square where one hundred years ago, on January 31st 1919, 60,000 striking workers demanding a 40-hour week were read the Riot Act, before being baton-charged by police in what came to be known as Glasgow's 'Bloody Friday'.

The reason they were campaign-



John Maclean

Glasgow may have been styled the 'second city of the Empire', but reverence for lawful authority has not been one of its most distinguishing characteristics

ing for a 40-hour week was because the employers in this global centre of heavy industry insisted on maintaining as much as they could of wartime working conditions and would not go below a 47 hour week. They wanted to hold onto profits and have a reserve army of the unemployed to draw on.

On the other hand, the strikers, whose ranks were swelled by demobbed soldiers of the not-so 'Great War', wanted the reduced hours so that there would be enough work to go around, especially for those veterans who'd been promised 'A Land Fit For Heroes'.

The line of demarcation could not have been clearer.

Looking nervously over his shoulder to a post-war Europe also in revolt, the Secretary of State for Scotland warned that this was "Scotland's Bolshevik Revolution".

In London, the cabinet panicked and the following day, 10,000 troops and the tanks were mobilised to confront the strikers and the demobbed 'war heroes'.

In the event, there was no revolution and while the strike leaders were arrested, most were acquitted, though four – including the later



Lord Manny Shinwell and the communist Willie Gallacher – were sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

Nevertheless, the workers and their leaders would have their revenge. Three years later in the general election of 1922, Independent Labour (ILP) candidates, including Shinwell, won 10 out of the 15 Glasgow constituencies. In nearby Motherwell, the Communist Party's

Walter Newbold took the seat from the Unionist (conservatives).

'Red Clyde' was well on its historic way.

In a new book just released, former Scottish Justice Secretary and SNP politician, Kenny MacAskill, describes those days of hope in stirring detail. Separating fact from myth and drawing on primary sources, he delineates the characters and events of January 1919. More than that, he analyses the enduring legacy of 'Red Clyde' and its influence over the last century of politics in Scotland.

In doing so he also references the role of ILP women activists such as Agnes Dollan and Mary Barbour as well as the historic connections to the left movement in Ireland. He bookmarks James Connolly and the vehement support of the great John Maclean and others on the Scottish left for the struggle in Ireland.

This is a worthy reminder that there is another Scotland beyond the warming skirl of the pipes or romantic biscuit box views of the (depopulated) Highlands. With so many connections, both historic and contemporary between workers in both Ireland and Scotland, this is part of our story too.

# Johnny's war in 16 ballads

**The Ballad of Johnny Longstaff**  
by The Young'uns

AROUND this time 80 years ago Dubliner Eugene Downing was coming to terms with life as a wounded veteran of the Spanish Civil War. In December 1938, and lucky to be alive, he was repatriated to Ireland as the war ground to a fascist victory.

Among other international brigaders who also made it to their homes was his comrade, Johnny Longstaff, from Stockton-on-Tees in the North East of England. They remained lifelong friends.

Now in the centenary year of Johnny's birth, BBC award-winning folk group, The Young'uns, also from the North East, have been touring with a multi-media show telling the story of Johnny Longstaff and his comrades.

With a number of notable exceptions, the 16 songs, delivered mainly in powerful close harmony acapella, are original lyrics inspired



The Young'uns: acapella and commitment

by Johnny's own words from interviews recorded some years ago by London's Imperial War Museum.

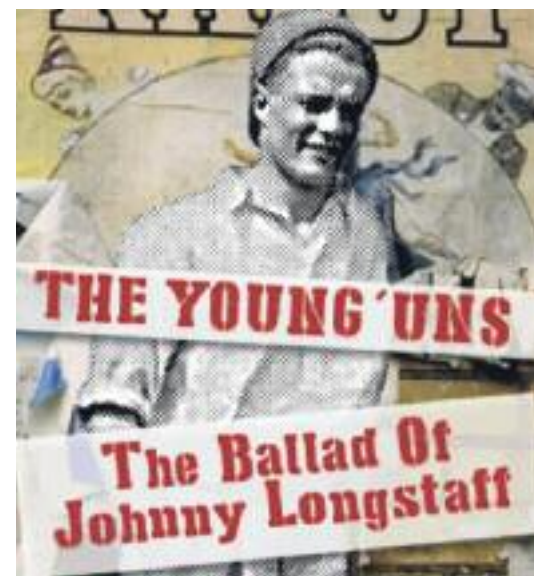
Their verses take you with the teenage Johnny on the Hunger Marches of the 1930s, to confronting Britain's home-grown fascist Blackshirts in London's East End and finally to Spain where the

19-year-old fought for the Republic.

Cheek by jowl with stirring Hunger March anthems such as *Carrying the Coffin*, (air *Battle Hymn of the Republic*) are the International Brigade's iconic *Ay Carmela* and *Valley of Jarama*. In between there is both humour

(*Bob Cooney's Miracle*) and pathos (*No Hay Pan*).

The constant thread is the voice of Johnny Longstaff narrating his own tale to a backdrop of projected photo stills and contemporary footage. This was (and remains) a must-see show and recently played to a packed house in Dun



Laoghair's Pavilion Theatre, where the wheel of life came full circle. Among the audience was the nephew of Johnny's friend and comrade, Eugene Downing, retired SIPTU official Brendan Byrne.

Michael Halpenny



SIPTU MayFest 2019 aims to celebrate and invigorate workers culture with a series of events in the home of Irish trade unionism. This festival season includes plays and events that deal with working class history, culture and politics.



**Wednesday 1st May**

## The Dublin Council of Trade Unions celebrates May Day

Cois Life Bar, Liberty Hall  
7.45 p.m. till late

The annual Dublin Council of Trade Unions May Day March concludes with musical entertainment in the home of Irish trade unionism.

## Raising the Roof

Photographic Exhibition  
Liberty Hall Theatre  
7.30 p.m.

The launch of a photographic exhibition on aspects of the housing crisis and the trade union response to it.



**Thursday 2nd May**

## Mindful Creation

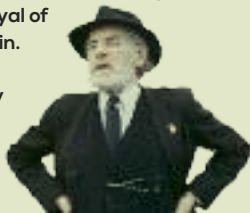
Connolly Hall  
6.00 p.m.

Launch of a multi-disciplinary art exhibition which explores the causes and effects of good and poor mental health by the young people of the Darndale, Priorswood, Bonnybrook and Kilbarrack areas of Dublin.

**Friday 3rd May**

## The Bard of Drumcondra

Liberty Hall Theatre, 6.00 p.m.  
Showing of a short documentary on the trade union banner maker and actor Jer O'Leary who was famed for his portrayal of ITGWU founder Jim Larkin. Many of Jer's impressive banners will be on display on the night and throughout MayFest 2019.



**Saturday 4th May**

## Bring Out the Banners Walking Tour

Liberty Hall, Eden Quay, 10.30 a.m.  
Meeting place: Liberty Hall Lobby, Eden Quay  
Time: Start time is 10:30am to arrive back at the Teachers' Club, Parnell Square for drinks and an informal session

Tour presented by Howth Singing Circle in conjunction with the Communications Workers Union, Mandate and SIPTU

**Monday 6th May**

## Family Fun Day for Homeless

Liberty Hall, 1.00 p.m.

Focus Ireland, SIPTU and Fórsa welcome homeless families from the Dublin area for a day of respite and fun in Liberty Hall. Refreshments and children's entertainment is provided as well as an opportunity to meet famous Irish sport stars.



**Tuesday 7th May**

## Global Solidarity Vibes

Connolly Hall and Cois Life Bar, 6.00 p.m.

SIPTU Global Solidarity, in conjunction with the Movement of Asylum Seekers Ireland (MASI), hold an evening of multi-cultural music and entertainment



**Wednesday 8th May**

## The Worms that Saved the World

Liberty Hall Theatre  
10.30 a.m.

Author Kevin Doyle will read and discuss his book, where a group of worms band together to defend the Old Head of Kinsale, with an audience of children invited from local primary schools.



The Clé Club presents:

## Hugh Geraghty Memorial Event

Connolly Hall and Cois Life Bar  
7.00 p.m.

Lecture on the Belfast Engineering Strike 1919 by Dr. Pdraig Yeates

## 'The World's ill Divided'

Connolly Hall and Cois Life Bar  
8.00 p.m.

An evening of songs of international working class struggle.

**Thursday 9th May**

## 'Just Guff'

1.00 p.m., Connolly Hall

HOT POTATO PRODUCTIONS presents 'JUST GUFF' by Jim Ward with script development and direction by Jenny Bassett. A cracking new one act play seasoned with pathos about Irish politics past and present.



**Thursday 9th May**

## The wearing of the Green

Connolly Hall and Cois Life Bar, 7.00 p.m.

SIPTU Sport present an evening of discussion on identity and Irish sport. The panel will include Irish international sport stars and leading sports journalists.



**Friday 10th May**

## 'Just Guff'

1.00 p.m., Connolly Hall

HOT POTATO PRODUCTIONS presents 'JUST GUFF' by Jim Ward with script development and direction by Jenny Bassett. A cracking new one act play seasoned with pathos about Irish politics past and present.



**Friday 10th May**

## The Hope Collective

Connolly Hall and Cois Life Bar  
7.00 p.m.

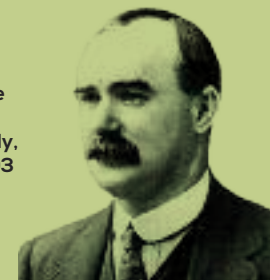
Lively discussion and music from the Irish punk community with a focus on positive progressive social change.

**Sunday 12th May**

## Songs and Stories for James Connolly

Liberty Hall Theatre  
7.00 p.m.

An afternoon of talk, music and performance all linked to the life and times of James Connolly, executed on this day 103 years ago.



SIPTU would like to take this opportunity to thank all sponsors and supporters for their help in making May Fest a success.

Presented by:





*Lisa O'Neill*  
with special guest  
**John Francis**  
Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2019  
Liberty Hall Theatre, Dublin




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**Ozanim Come Dancing**  
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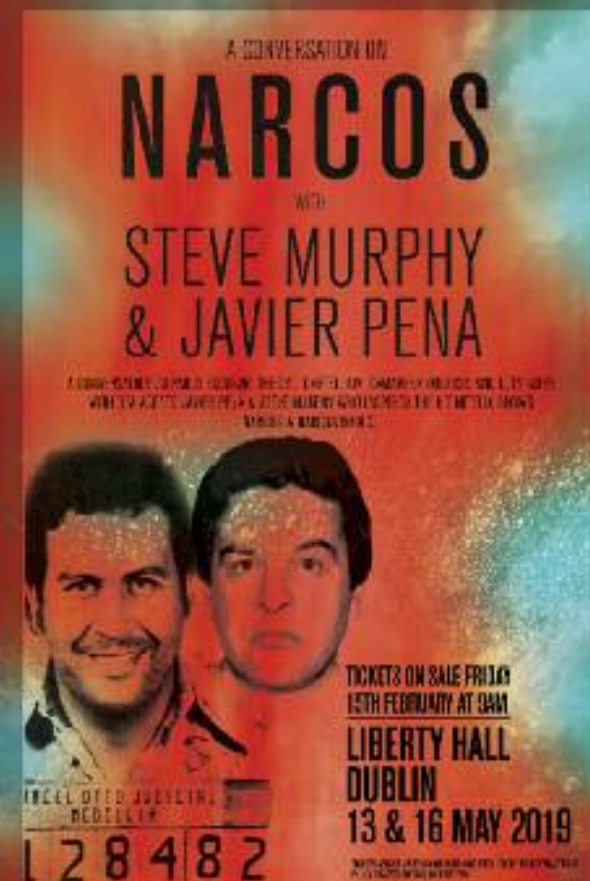


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**For Liberty Hall Theatre bookings contact Laura Woods, E-mail : [lwoods@siptu.ie](mailto:lwoods@siptu.ie) or Tel: 01 858 6354 for more information.**



**OBITUARY** Tommy Perkins

# Tommy was like the brother I never had...

I FIRST met Tommy in the old ITGWU premises in Gardiner Street, Dublin, in 1964. I was unaware of it then, but this was to be a meeting that largely shaped our future for the rest of our working lives.

The rebuilding of Liberty Hall was nearing completion and the National Executive Council was in the process of re-organising the branches of the union.

At that time, Tommy was working in Killeen Paper Mills. Number 16 Branch, better known as the

Printing Branch, was to be part of the restructuring, catering for workers in the printing and allied trades.

Arising from this, Clondalkin Paper Mill, Killeen Paper Mills and Swiftbrook Paper Mills were assigned to No. 16 Branch.

From the opening of Liberty Hall in April 1965, the Killeen Section Committee met every second Sunday of the month during which time I really got to know Tommy. I attended conferences with him at Killeen and observed his knowl-



A true friend:  
Tommy Perkins

edge of the trade, his ability to debate with confidence on the matters at issue and his commitment to the task in hand.

On the retirement of the late Michael Ryan, RIP, the vacancy for his replacement was advertised and Tommy was successful in his application for the post.

"Cometh the Hour, Cometh the Man." That was the beginning of not just a good working relationship, but a friendship that stood the test of time over 55 years.

Tommy was deeply committed

to his family as they were to him. Tommy suffered a lot in his last few years and was particularly distressed by the untimely death of his dear wife, Julie, in 2015. The best tribute I can pay to Tommy is, and I have said this to him many times over the years: "I never had a brother, but if I had, I wished it was you, my friend."

Now rest in the peace of the Lord.

My sincere condolences to all members of the Perkins family.

**Michael McDermott**

**OBITUARY** Alan MacSimoin

# Revolutionary of the 'struggle from below'...

SOME dedicated activists get involved in every major campaign of the day. However, Alan MacSimoin seemed to be involved in all the minor ones as well, without a let up, over five decades. As well as that he remembered it all – in detail!

He also displayed a considerable breadth of interests and enjoyment of various ways of reaching out to people where they were at.

The duration of his commitment to trade union and community campaigns stands out. Though Alan was taken from us last December far too soon at 61, he began his activism at a phenomenally young age.

During his decades he fulfilled many roles from school student militant, to organiser of the unemployed, staunch trade unionist, shop steward, rank and file democrat, socialist activist, anarchist,

campaigner and community activist, writer, historian, editor and media innovator.

For many years, until redundancy, Alan was a shop steward in Trinity College Dublin Students' Union. He was a member of the old SIPTU Education Branch Committee. Since then he worked as a tour guide and children's entertainer.

Alan was involved in almost all the long series of campaigns against each centralised wage deal. He was a co-editor of SIPTU Fightback, a regular newsletter produced at the end of the last century.

He focused on criticising without denunciation. Alan believed the union was his union and he would have been greatly moved by the SIPTU turnout and guard of honour at his funeral in Glasnevin

Cemetery.

The popular affection exhibited for Alan on that occasion came from his ability to work with others with friendship and humour without loss of principle.

Alan was a revolutionary and an anarchist. In both cases he gave the lie to any mainstream misuse of those terms. He worked for a revolution in the social order. In his day that meant small political organisations and publications and not-so-small contributions to historical movements.

He sought to support every struggle-from-below with an unbending insistence on grassroots organisation and control. Alan did in his time what a revolutionary could do, mostly routine, unsung, small scale work. His involvement was constant and occasionally of historic importance. When the X

Case burst on to Dublin City centre in 1992 – in a spontaneous wave of anger the hastily-organised rally at the GPO was chaired from the top of a van by Alan. His activity was of extraordinary relentlessness, constancy and consistency.

The bigger picture was painted too, in the intellectual contribution to the organisation he helped to establish, and later moved away from, the Workers Solidarity Movement, and in his own writing.

He showed anarchism to be a serious body of politics, and in particular Alan's 'Platformist' anarchism with its orientation to the organised working class.

We have lost his democracy, realism, human touch to politics, great knowledge, wit and humour. Yet Alan lives on in the movement to which he contributed so much.

Alan will be sadly missed by his



Man of principle:  
Alan MacSimoin

beloved wife Mary, children Claire, Oisín and Ruth, step-children Oisín and Sian, his grandchildren, brothers, sister and step-mother as well as his extended family and friends.

**Des Derwin**



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



# Artist, actor and activist laid to rest

By Scott Millar

ON St. Stephen's Day 2018 our union lost a person who played a crucial role in defining its image as a cultural entity in the modern era, with the death of Jeremiah 'Jer' O'Leary.

A man who had lived many lives in one, Jer was a husband, father, son, brother, friend but it was as an actor, activist, artist and raconteur for which he was known widely throughout his native Dublin and beyond.

His upbringing on the Northside of Dublin, from an early age brought Jer into contact with the progressive traditions of the city, which had underpinned Larkinism and gave strength to its undercurrent of socialist-republican radicalism.

It was in breathing fresh life into this culture, which welds trade unionism to the struggle for self-determination, that Jer would make an outstanding contribution.

The eldest in a family of four (with siblings Margaret, Denis and Carmel), Jer was born and reared in Drumcondra. He left school at 14, but developed an encyclopaedic knowledge of Irish history, international revolutionary struggles and the arts due to an enormous appetite for reading, and an equally passionate love of films, particularly Westerns.

In the late 1960s he became centrally involved in assisting the activities of the Dublin Housing Action Committee in its fight for homes for the working class. In the early 1970s he served a prison sentence for a politically-motivated robbery and it was during his time in Mountjoy Prison that he was encouraged to develop his artistic abilities.

Following his release, Jer placed his talents at the service of the trade union movement both as a banner maker and actor. In the late 1970s he repeatedly won National College of Art and Design-judged art competitions for ITGWU members. ITGWU General Secretary Micky Mullen then commissioned Jer to design a new set of banners for the union and set him on the course to become the country's leading designer of graphic expressions of political causes.

His trade union banners, the first of which he designed with his wife Eithne, displayed a unique ability to blend socialist politics with a forceful fresh artistry and often incorporated the original Starry Plough design alongside imagery of James Larkin and James Connolly. Jer's banners were honoured with exhibitions in Dublin, New York and even Havana and re-



Jer on the Anti Bin Tax March organised by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions in October 2003. Photo:RollingNews.ie

"All those who love and appreciate Irish art and theatre will have been immensely saddened by the news of the death of Jer O'Leary, activist, actor and orator. Known for his film and television work in a variety of roles and in particular, his seminal work with directors Jim Sheridan and Neil Jordan and his portrayal of trade union leader Jim Larkin, Jer O'Leary will for ever be remembered for his unstinting political activism."

– President Michael D. Higgins

"Jer's contribution to the culture of trade unionism in Ireland was immense and his work will live on and continue to inspire future generations of trade union activists."

– SIPTU Deputy General Secretary Ethel Buckley

## Remembering Jer...

"Jer's generous, intelligent and larger-than-life personality shone through in all he did, from acting to banner making to simply regaling friends and fellow workers with his many stories and interests. He was a true Dub and a true Irish republican."

– Sinn Fein President Mary Lou McDonald



Jer's long-time friend and artistic collaborator, film-maker Jim Sheridan, at the funeral



A lone piper led the cortege...

main at the centre of protests and marches to this day.

Jer also revitalised the radical traditions of the labour movement through his portrayal of James Larkin on the stage, at protests, May Day marches and state com-

memorations. Jer first took on the role of bringing the great labour agitator back to life in the Non-Stop Connolly Show in Liberty Hall in March 1975, a seminal production in Irish political theatre directed by John Arden, Margaretta D'Arcy

and Jim Sheridan.

His portrayal of the ITGWU founder came to even greater public prominence thanks to a legendary production of James Plunkett's *The Risen People*, directed by Peter and Jim Sheridan.

Jer was very honoured to become synonymous with the portrayal of the union leader. He said: "Playing Larkin is a pleasure and an honour. Some parts are just performance tasks, but Larkin was one of the finest specimens of humanity – a wonderful mind, great courage with the heart of a lion, unusual vision, and a voice like rolling thunder."

The *Risen People* was the beginning of a brilliant creative relationship with Jim Sheridan, and their personal friendship stretched back to when both men played football for their local team, Whitworth Celtic. From *My Left Foot* to *In The Name of the Father*, there is hardly a Sheridan-directed film in which Jer did not appear.

A hospital porter for more than 40 years, Jer was a member of the ITGWU (No. 5 and No. 18 Branches) and later Equity and SIPTU Health. On retirement he was an active member of the Region 1 (Dublin) SIPTU Retired Members Committee. He left the Official Republican Movement to join the Communist Party of Ireland in 1976 but maintained friendships throughout left, republican and trade union circles in Dublin and beyond.

Jer's life knew great personal sorrow. In 1998, his son Diarmuid died in a fire in Glasgow after celebrating a famous league victory for Celtic. It was only the support of his wife and two daughters, Nora and Clare, which saw him through his intense grief. In 2009, his younger brother, Denis, died. The death of Eithne in December 2017, was perhaps one final blow from which he could not recover.

In a wake organised by SIPTU and held in the Mansion House in Dublin, the talents, good humour and commitment to trade unionism were recalled in contributions by elected representatives, friends, family and comrades. Jer marched with his banners one final time along the Ballybough Road in the inner city of Dublin for his funeral Mass which was attended by actors, politicians, union leaders and his many friends.

In her final tribute, Jer's sister, Margaret recalled their happy childhood, adding: "Our Jer was just an ordinary bloke, to whom nature gave many talents and those talents and his commitment were made available to the benefit of all who asked."

Jer will be fondly remembered and sadly missed by his daughters Nora and Clare; sons-in-law Dave and Richie; grandchildren Conor, Liam, Erin, Seán and Luke; sisters; cousins; nieces; nephews; relatives and many friends.

PICTURES: RollingNews.ie





Tommy Robinson. Photo: Shayam Barjesteh van Waalwijk van Doorn



Scottish police struggle to keep rival factions apart outside Celtic Park following rumours that Tommy Robinson, left, was going to be among the travelling support at last month's Celtic v Airdrie Scottish Cup game

# Feeding off the terraces...



By Kevin Brannigan

**IT'S A mid-January Saturday evening in Glasgow's East End and the pubs are full of rumour. The Scottish Cup fourth round has been raging all day and Airdrie are in town to take on Celtic. But the rumour mill has more than just the staff and players of Airdrie on the guest list for tonight's encounter.**

Apparently, the former English Defence League (EDL) generalissimo and now UKIP political advisor Stephen Yaxley-Lennon – also known as Tommy Robinson – is among the visiting Airdrie support. WhatsApp group's buzz and the rumour grows from a whisper to a rallying cry of defiance. The Celtic fans are not going to let Tommy Robinson into their ground. He shall not pass.

The scene moves from the pubs of the Gallowgate to the away end entrance of Celtic Park. Airdrie fans make their way into the ground through a human tunnel of police lines which is in turn holding back the assembled body of Celtic fans, who don't appreciate his right wing politics trying to block the way.

Here and there small skirmishes break out where those on either side have managed to momentarily slip police lines. Arrests are made.

With the clock ticking past five the Airdrie fans, defiant after a

day's boozing and emboldened by the apparent victory of simply making it inside the ground, unfurl Union flags, let off smoke bombs and launch into the usual songbook.

A Chelsea Headhunters (a notorious football hooligan gang linked to Combat 18) flag is spotted among the away support, but Tommy Robinson has proven to be just a rumour. He didn't pass because he didn't appear. A myth. A work of fiction, just like his name.

He had been in Glasgow, though, just 24 hours earlier. Robinson and a people carrier full of supporters had turned up at the constituency office of Scottish National Party representative Stewart McDonald, blocking off all exits as they demanded to "speak" to the MP. McDonald, speaking in the House of Commons, in October 2018 had labelled Robinson a "violent, racist thug and fraudster" after spotting him on the grounds of Westminster being wined and dined in the House of Lords by a UKIP peer.

It's likely Robinson was very pleased with the reports he would have received from Celtic Park on that Saturday evening. Without even needing to be present his myth had helped spread fear.

Believed to be born to an Irish mother and Scottish father in Luton, Stephen Yaxley Lennon/Tommy Robinson has been using the football terrace for recruitment purposes for more than a decade. Since his recent incarceration for almost bringing down a child sex abuse trial, his subsequent release pending refer-

...lampposts [are] emblazoned with Union flag stickers featuring Tommy's face and the word 'Hearts'... it's not a good look...

ral of the case to the Attorney General, his name has become a terrace anthem in some parts of Britain.

In December, former Hearts captain and now BBC pundit and SNP member Michael Stewart warned that a sub-section of Hearts fans are also venturing down "a very, very dark road".

A walk around Gorgie in Edinburgh's west end, where the atmospheric Hearts ground is situated, leads you past lampposts emblazoned with Union flag stickers featuring Tommy's face and the word 'Hearts'. It's not a good look from either a graphic design or societal point of view.

How the son of an Irish immigrant who sees himself as an English nationalist has come to be a folk hero for sections of Scotland's football hooligan community would probably require more paper than is available to tease out. Or perhaps that's to lend some undue credit to the morons who have decided to hitch their anti-im-

Italian right-wing politician Matteo Salvini dubbed racist taunting of a black player 'heavy teasing'



**STOP IMMIGRAZIONE ILANDESTINA**

PICTURE: Fabio Visconte

migrant wagon to Tommy's non-stop circus.

But Britain doesn't stand alone when it comes to the rise of fascism on the terraces. In Italy at the St. Stephen's Day game at the San Siro stadium in Milan, the black Napoli defender Kalidou Koulibaly was booed for the entire match. The crowd ignored the pleas of the stadium announcer to lay off the monkey chanting.

Before the game rival groups from Milan and Napoli fought street battles resulting in the death of one of the ultras, Daniele Belar-

dinell, who was hit by a passing car as he fled the scene.

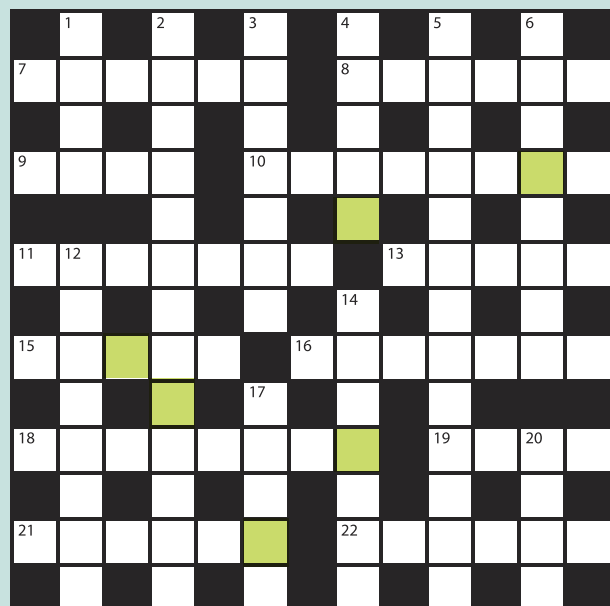
Italy's right-wing Interior Minister Matteo Salvini described the abuse suffered by Koulibaly as "heavy teasing". Salvini, just 10 days earlier, had shown up to an AC Milan Ultras show of strength. As the giant flags waved and pyro erupted, he walked on to the park to take the salute. By his side was AC Milan hooligan leader and convicted drug pusher Luca Lucci. Salvini, like Tommy, needs the terraces.



# Liberty Crossword

## PRIZE DRAW

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(see back cover)



### ACROSS

- 7 French philosopher (6)
- 8 An American (6)
- 9 Stew ingredient (4)
- 10 Three wheeler (8)
- 11 Simple breathing apparatus (7)
- 13 Conflict (5)
- 15 Construct (5)
- 16 Strong storm (7)
- 18 Creepy crawlies (8)
- 19 Ireland (4)
- 21 US State (6)
- 22 Some Russians (6)

### DOWN

- 1 A recreational space (4)
- 2 A national holiday that took its modern form in the USA (2,8,3)
- 3 The key animal in the film Kes (7)
- 4 Its flag has two green stars (5)
- 5 A wide and deep amount of knowledge (13)
- 6 Sees the world as it is (8)
- 12 Vikings (8)
- 14 Ancient Iran (7)
- 17 Where to see "The Last Supper" (5)
- 20 Taverns (4)

\*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 name and address and you will be entered into a **prize draw to win a €200 One4All 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 December issue was Anne Canny, Co. Clare.

**Answer: Constitution**

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