

# Liberty

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# Vote for public housing

by Frank Connolly

Across the country, SIPTU and other trade union, political and community activists are campaigning to tackle the two most pressing issues for hundreds of thousands of workers and their families - the worsening housing emergency and the spread of precarious work practices.

On Monday, 8th April, hundreds of people attended a Raise the Roof rally in Eyre Square in Galway and called on the City Council to follow the example of Cork, Dublin and other local authorities and endorse proposals to resolve the housing crisis.

The Raise the Roof proposals, which were also endorsed by a vote in Dáil Éireann last October, call for hugely increased investment in public housing, action against evictions and spiralling rents and the creation of a legal right to housing.

The Raise the Roof campaign includes the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, National Women's Council, the Union of Students in Ireland, the National Homeless & Housing Coalition, the ONE Galway and One Cork movements and a range of housing charities and community groups. The campaign is planning a major national rally in Dublin on 18th May, days before the local and European elections.

SIPTU General Secretary Designate, Joe Cunningham, said: "The housing emergency and the spread of precarious work practices are the two greatest crises facing workers and their communities

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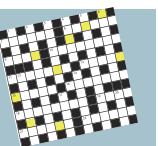


Several hundred people attended the Raise the Roof rally in Galway on Monday 8th April. It was addressed by Marian Spelman, president of Galway Council of Trade Unions, Karina Timothy from Threshold, Bridget Kelly from the Galway Traveller Movement and Megan Reilly of NUIG Students Union. Leo Moran of the Sawdoctors, Nicola Joyce and Noelle McDonnell of the Whileaways and Pauline Scanlon provided the entertainment.

*Photo: Andrew Downes, Xposure*

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## WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE

# 1890 747 881

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



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## Connolly Centre to open



Model of the James Connolly Visitor Centre, Falls Road, Belfast.

SIPTU activists will be amongs those attending the launch of a new visitor centre focused on the life and work of trade union leader James Connolly.

The James Connolly Centre, which is located at 374 to 376 Falls Road, will open on Friday, 19th April, with

a parade to the venue from Conway Mill, Conway Street, which will commence at 5.00 p.m.

The centre is close to where James Connolly and his family lived following his appointment by James Larkin as the ITGWU organiser for Belfast in 1911.

Among its exhibits is an original

1916 Proclamation with the printing blocks that made it and a dedicated video library of interviews about James Connolly done in partnership with RTE archives, as well as books, pamphlets and other memorabilia.

## USI votes to support Ballina Coca Cola workers

The Union of Students in Ireland (USI) voted to back the campaign to secure collective bargaining rights for SIPTU members employed in the Coca Cola manufacturing plant in Ballina, county Mayo.

At the USI annual conference in Castlebar, county Mayo, in early April, delegates mandated their officer bard to write to Coca Cola demanding that the company respect

the workers right to be represented by the trade union of their choice for collective bargaining purposes.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, said: "When they act in solidarity workers and students are one of the most powerful forces for social change. This has been the case globally and in Ireland over many decades. USI's pledge of support for SIPTU members being denied their human rights by Coca Cola in Ballina will

send a powerful message to that company."

SIPTU Manufacturing Division Organiser, Teresa Hannick, said: "SIPTU members in Ballina Beverages in Coca Cola welcome the USI Congress support for their campaign for collective bargaining rights. They also welcome the USI Congress support for the IUF Taste Zero Rights campaign."

*Continued from page 1 — Vote for public housing*

in Ireland today. As a union we have researched the ways in which they can be most effectively tackled in a manner which will benefit workers.

"We are now engaged in ensuring activists have the information and the resources they need to make the difference when campaigning to resolve these issues at community and national levels."

Many of those affected by the housing emergency are in work but due to precarious employment practices, including rolling short-

term contracts, variable working hours and low pay have no viable route to attaining suitable homes.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, said: "Our union must lead campaigns at both the national and local level to end the housing crisis and ensure that people can have fulfilling working lives.

"The housing emergency and precarious work are not only impacting adversely on hundreds of thousands of workers but corroding the very basis of our communi-

ties. SIPTU activists through our developing District Council network are seeking to tackle these twin problems by building alliances with other trade union activists, civic society and community groups, including through the Raise the Roof campaign.

She added: "Together we can work to create an Ireland where workers feel secure in their employment and do not have to fear that they may not be able to maintain a home."

*See Liberty View page 22.*



# Awards for union-backed Sean O'Casey play revival



By Padraig Yeates

IT MIGHT have been entitled *The Lost O'Casey* but ANU's latest production won the best actress award for Sarah Morris as well as the award for best new play for Louise Lowe at the Dublin Theatre Festival.

It was also unusual in that the co-producers with The Abbey Theatre were SIPTU, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, and Fórsa. They backed this ambitious project because it gave a challenging new perspective to problems of homelessness, unemployment and addiction in 21st century Dublin.

This reworking of Sean O'Casey's original 1924 short play *Nannies Night Out* not only captures the essence of the original but brings it up to date and gives it the immediacy and intimacy of watching television in your own living room, except the audience literally shares the room and the experience with the actors.

O'Casey's work was lost in The

Abbey archives until Lowe, one of Ireland's most powerful and certainly most prolific playwrights, retrieved the script.

It had been buried by the then Abbey board after it was decided

of Corporation flats off Mary's Place and the bleak car park of the INTO.

As the *Irish Times* theatre critic Peter Crawley put it, Sarah Morris's achievement was all the more

the back of an ambulance, or imploring people not to forget she ever existed".

It was also a bold venture for the trade union movement to be involved in as it explores new ways

and helping introduce such radical drama to a wider public is very



ANU Lost O'Casey cast and crew at the awards on Sunday 31st March.



Heartrending portrayal: Award winning actress Sarah Morris

that it was too black and despairing for post-Civil War Dublin. It is to the national theatre's credit that it facilitated this reworking of the plot and its relocation in immersive settings around the north inner city, from open spaces such as Parnell Square to the intimacy

remarkable because she "performed on no conventional stage at all... sharing her heartrending, battered Nannie with audiences, sometimes one person at a time. You met her drinking on the sofa of a flat marked for demolition, or reading quavering affirmations in

of heightening public awareness of issues such as the housing crisis, precarious employment and the social and mental health problems they bring in their wake to theatre-goers.

If the play was very much in the tradition of O'Casey, promoting it

much in the tradition of Liberty Hall, which Big Jim Larkin promoted as a cultural centre from the union's inception, a tradition continued by James Connolly right up to the Easter Rising.

O'Casey himself learnt his trade writing and acting on the Liberty Hall stage long before his work was produced at the national theatre at the other end of Old Abbey Street a century ago.



## RAISE the ROOF

### Homes For All

SIGN THE PETITION

Support the Right to Housing and help bring and end to the housing emergency.

Sign the petition now:

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



## NATIONAL PROTEST

### Saturday 18th May

1.00 p.m.

Assemble Parnell Square  
Dublin 1





# Success for private sector pay campaign

Significant pay rises continued to be secured across the manufacturing sector during March, with workers in the Apple Computer production plant in county Cork among those benefiting from SIPTU's private sector pay campaign.

One of sixteen deals agreed for SIPTU organised manufacturing employers in March. The deal at Apple will see permanent and fixed purpose workers' pay rise in stages by more than 6% by September 2021.

And workers at the company on a contract of indefinite duration will benefit from a rise of €1,950 in their base salary over the lifetime of the agreement.

Meanwhile a pay deal agreed with P&G in Newbridge, county Kildare, covers the period from 1st January 2019 until 31st December 2021 and includes a total increase of 12.1% over its duration for SIPTU members..

Other clauses in the deal include one week extra sick pay from 1st January, 2019, and the retirement award changed from a catalogue gift to a payment of – and increased in value to – €1,200, also from 1st January 2019.

Separately in the Agriculture, Ingredients, Food and Drink Sector, workers at Brett Brothers in county Kilkenny, received an annual pay rise of 2% for the next three years – one of a number of firms where agreements were reached.

# Pennsylvania homecoming for Mollies banner



The banner is unfurled outside of Jack 'King of the Mollies' Kehoe's house in Pennsylvania

In late March, an ITGWU banner dedicated to the Molly Maguires, the Irish-American miners group of the 19th century, featured at a event in Pennsylvania, the region where the men lived and died.

It was brought to the home of Jack Kehoe, the so-called 'King of the Mollies', who was executed in 1878 but posthumously pardoned.

Kehoe's great-grandson was present to see the banner raised outside his ancestor's former house which is now a museum.

The banner – which was designed by the late Jer O'Leary – was loaned for the event by SIPTU, and Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley sent a solidarity greeting.

# Campaign against precarious work in education

A CAMPAIGN to fight precarious work in higher and further education was initiated at a meeting of workers in the sector at an event to mark International Women's Day, on 8th March, in Liberty Hall.

Among those addressing the meeting were workers directly affected by precarious employment,



Picture Caption: (left to right) Senior Lecturer at the University of Limerick, Dr Michelle O'Sullivan, UCC Anti-Casualisation Campaign member in Queens University Belfast, Jennie Carlsten, SIPTU Education Sector Chair, Maggie Ronayne and SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, pictured beside the original banner of the Irish Women Workers' Union in Liberty Hall, Dublin, on Friday, 8th March. Photo by: Paddy Cole.

including several who had endured low paid, rolling short-term contracts for years, and even decades. Employment law experts, in-

cluding Maynooth University Law Lecturer, Professor Michael Doherty; Senior Lecturer at the University of Limerick, Dr Michelle

O'Sullivan; and SIPTU Education Sector Organiser, Karl Byrne also joined the discussion.

SIPTU Education Sector Chair, Maggie Ronayne, said: "Women are disproportionately impacted by the spread of precarious work practices in the education sector in Ireland from cleaners to catering staff to temporary administrative staff to lecturers.

"Precarious employment – be it hourly paid, fixed-term contract or outsourced working – is also an enormous but largely overlooked problem in the sector. Tackling precarious work is crucial to achieving gender equality and pay equity."

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, told Liberty: "Workers from across the sector discussed the issues affecting them and decided to take action by stepping up their union organising through utilising traditional methods complemented by social media and other tactics."

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# Solidarity is the answer, Brussels rally told



By Paddy Cole

**On land, at sea and in the air, more than 10 million Europeans work in transport. They provide vital services that we all depend on. But, sadly, they are under attack.**

That is why a delegation of activists, shop stewards and organisers from SIPTU's TEAC division took to the streets of Brussels recently to demand fair conditions for all transport workers across Europe.

Speaking to *Liberty*, European Transport Workers Federation (ETF) President Frank Moreels said: "Employers try to divide workers from different countries and professions to drive down wages and conditions."

"Most national governments turn a blind eye, and the EU does too little to protect transport workers from this social dumping and exploitation."

He added: "The result is job losses, dangerous conditions, unfair pay and precarious contracts."

In a rousing address to more than 5,000 European transport workers



TEAC Division Organiser Greg Ennis delivers stirring speech at Brussels rally



Greg Ennis with comrades from ETF.

PICTURES: Paddy Cole

SIPTU TEAC Division Organiser, Greg Ennis said: "It is clear from the huge turnout that it is the same story all over Europe. Social dumping creates the conditions for political resentment and it has to stop."

"By adding our voice to this campaign and standing up for good jobs across all modes of transport we are sending a powerful message to politicians that Europe must do better to build a more social Europe with fair, well-enforced rules and a strong right to collective bargaining."

"Workers have to react, and the

Social dumping creates political resentment and it has to stop

only answer is solidarity," he added. ETF General Secretary Eduardo Chagas told *Liberty* that Europe can do better and transport workers from the Arctic Circle to the Mediterranean Sea were standing together to lead the way.

"We have a positive vision for better jobs in Europe, and our Fair Transport campaign has inspired unions across the continent to act," he said.

SIPTU National Executive Council member and Dublin Bus worker, Ann Ryan said the funding of reliable, affordable public transport for every citizen across Europe is a question that each politician contesting the European Parliamentary elections in May should answer.

She explained: "EU elections are just round the corner. In 2019, Europe's transport workers are standing together and demanding that our politicians step up and deliver Fair Transport in Europe for all."

## 40 years fighting for workers

**The retirement of Jack O'Connor after 40 years with SIPTU marks the end of an era for the union and its members.**

In 1979, Jack was the youngest person to be appointed as a branch secretary of the FWUI and he went to hold the positions of regional secretary, vice-president (2000) and, from 2003 to 2017, general president of the union.

An enthusiastic supporter of the merger of the FWUI and the ITGWU into SIPTU in 1990, he was a powerful advocate of Jim Larkin's vision of 'one big union' and passionately believed in the importance of a united trade union movement as the most effective means to advance the interests of working people across Ireland.

As president of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Jack O'Connor promoted the creation of the Commission on the Irish Trade Union Movement and sought to have its radical proposals for a more effective and efficient labour movement endorsed in 2011.

His leadership of SIPTU and Congress coincided with the deepest economic recession since the 1930's following the financial crash of 2008 and forced the trade union move-



Jack with members of his family. From left to right: his son Michael, wife Paula, and daughter Emer.

ment across the public and private sectors to adopt a defensive strategy in order to protect jobs and living standards.

As the key figure identified with this strategy and with the leadership of the movement, Jack O'Connor was vilified by banking, business and employer interests, backed by a powerful right-wing media, seeking to make working people pay for a crisis for which they were in no way responsible.

In all his actions and statements

during what was arguably the most challenging period faced by workers in Ireland since the 1913 Dublin lock-out and the revolutionary years that followed, he sought to emulate the principles and positions of the founders of the modern Irish trade union movement, Jim Larkin and James Connolly.

In this regard, he was supported during his term as general president by the National Executive Council and national officers of the union and by its strategic management team.

He actively promoted the role of women in the union and encouraged the work of the Equality Committee. He also played a significant part in the establishment of the SIPTU Global Solidarity Committee which highlights the oppression and exploitation of

workers across the world.

His editorials for *Liberty* over recent years demonstrated a coherence and integrity that many union members associate with Jack O'Connor's deep commitment to worker's rights and social justice.



Photo right: SIPTU General Secretary Joe O'Flynn, Retired SIPTU General President Jack O'Connor and ICTU General Secretary Patricia King. Photos by: Paddy Cole.



# Unions launch “More Power To You” campaign

TRADE unions, including SIPTU, representing more than 30,000 local council workers have launched a campaign for substantially increased revenue and funding powers for local authorities.

The ‘More Power To You’ campaign, which includes SIPTU, Fórsa and Connect, was launched in Dublin on 27th March and also calls for legislative changes to facilitate directly-elected mayors and restore and expand town councils, which were abolished in 2014.

The campaign includes local power pledges for local election candidates to sign which will commit them to ‘More Power To You’ aims.

SIPTU Public Administration and

Community Division Organiser, Adrian Kane, said: “All over Europe, privatised local services are being brought back under direct local authority provision because publicly-provided services are usually better quality, better value for money and more environmentally sustainable.

“The ‘More Power to You’ campaign is about bringing power closer to the people, and creating decent local employment through the direct provision of local authority services. It’s time to reform Irish local government to reflect the EU principle of subsidiarity.”

Connect public sector official, Derek Kelleher, said: “As the largest craft union in Ireland, Connect believes we have the members with the knowledge and skills to take

back control of these vital services, which would provide quality and quantity faster than any private sector providers.”

The launch also saw the release of a new research paper, *Democracy Works If You Let It* by Dr Mary Murphy of Maynooth University, which revealed that only 8% of Irish public spending occurs at local government level, compared to an EU23 average of more than 23%, and that a quarter of the Irish spend is not fully under local authority control. It underlined that, with just one city or county council for every 148,507 people, Ireland has far fewer local municipalities than similar-sized European countries.



SIPTU Public Admin and Community Division Organiser, Adrian Kane, President Fórsa Ann McGee, head of Local Government Fórsa Peter Nolan and Derek Kelleher Connect Ireland at the launch of “More Power to You” in Dublin. The campaign is to reclaim the role of local authorities and local democracy. Photo: Picture It Photography

# Vital advice for workers... stay SunSmart this summer



By Kevin O'Hagan

**SKIN cancer is the most common cancer in Ireland with almost 12,000 people being diagnosed in this country every year with the condition.**

Most cases of skin cancer are directly caused by UV rays from the sun. Outdoor workers (including construction workers, tradesmen, agriculture workers, fishermen etc.), who spend most or a lot of their time outdoors are at a higher risk of skin cancer.

That is why we are really delighted with the opportunity to partner with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions this year, to bring this message to workers across the country.

UV rays, which burn the skin, can be harmful from April to September from 11.00 a.m. in the morning until 3.00 p.m. in the afternoon. It's important to remember that UV rays can be present on both sunny as well as cool and cloudy days.

Many people are great for taking care in the sun when abroad but not at home in Ireland. But it's just as important and it needs to be part of our daily routine, particularly if we work outside.

The Irish Cancer Society conducted research recently which found that 90% of the days be-

tween April and September had a UV level high enough to do damage to the skin.

For anyone who works primarily outdoors, it is even more important to be aware of sun protection. To reduce your risk, simply follow our SunSmart code to stay safe in the sun.

1. Seek shade when UV rays are at their strongest – generally between 11.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m.

For anyone who works primarily outdoors, it is even more important to be aware of sun protection

2. Cover up by wearing a shirt with a collar and long shorts. Wear a hat that gives shade to your face, neck and ears.

3. Wear wraparound sunglasses. Make sure they give UV protection.

4. Slop on the sunscreen. Use sunscreen with SPF minimum 30 UVA protection (higher for children) 20 minutes before going outside and re-apply every two hours – more often if swim-

ming or perspiring.

5. Be aware of and check the UV index – if it's higher than 3 then burning is likely.

6. Keep babies under six months out of the sun.

Anyone who is working outdoors or spending a lot of time outside should take extra care if they have pale or freckled skin that does not tan or burns before it tans, naturally red or fair hair, blue, green or grey eyes, a large number of moles (50 or more), if they burn easily or if they or a family member have a history of skin cancer.

Generally, if you are working outside, the best piece of advice to follow is to try and organise your day around the sun's strongest rays. So if you can, get a lot of your work done before 11.00 a.m. or after 3.00 p.m. and if you take a break during the midday sun, you should be able to avoid the highest UV levels.

And always remember to check your skin regularly. If you notice any changes at all, like a mole changing colour or shape, or a new growth or sore that doesn't heal in a few weeks, please talk to your doctor.

For any concerns or queries about cancer, contact the Cancer Nurseline on 1800 200 700 or visit one of our 13 Daffodil Centres nationwide. For more information log on to [www.cancer.ie](http://www.cancer.ie)

Kevin O'Hagan is Cancer Prevention Manager at the Irish Cancer Society



# Cork people and council support Raise the Roof

Hundreds turned out in atrocious weather conditions for a rally organised by the Raise the Roof campaign along with local trade union, political, housing and community groups in Cork on Monday, 11th March.

The rally was held in support of a motion before Cork City Council in favour of the Raise the Roof campaign proposals to end the housing crisis and which was passed with the backing of all parties except Fine Gael.

Among those who addressed the rally were Cork Council of Trade Unions President, Barry Murphy and Mandate official, Lorraine O'Brien, as well as representatives of homeless and housing agencies and community groups. Local mu-

sicians, Myles Gaffney and Gerald Ahern, entertained the large crowd gathered opposite City Hall on Lapp's Quay.

The failure of Fine Gael to support the motion was condemned by Murphy. He said: "As a movement we are deeply disappointed in the response from Fine Gael councillors in Cork. They are presiding over the worst housing crisis the State has ever seen but refuse to recognise the suffering their policies have created."

He added: "It appears they have no desire to help ordinary people, rather their preference seems to be with private landlords and private equity funds. This is something which we will be communicating over the coming weeks in the run-up to the local and European elections."



SIPTU activists join hundreds of trade unionists, community activists and local public representatives for Raise the Roof rally in Cork.

Photos: Tim Gannon

## FAI workers anger at Delaney rent claims

SIPTU members employed by the FAI have expressed anger that they had to endure pay cuts during a period when the organisation was covering the rent of its former CEO John Delaney.

SIPTU Sport Sector Organiser, Denis Hynes, said: "The FAI was paying rent of €3,000 per month for a house used by John Delaney during a period when the organisation was claiming to be unable to

restore the pay and conditions of employment of our members due to financial constraints."

He added: "This has angered our members who had to wait until January of this year to receive the final restoration of their pay after long and difficult negotiations between management and SIPTU representatives." The rent subsidy to Delaney amounted to the annual income of some FAI employees.

## Pay rises for workers in SIPTU Services Division

More than a dozen companies have reached pay agreements with SIPTU members in the Services Division in recent weeks. Pay rises were secured by workers at a wide variety of companies from the food distributor BWG Foods Ltd to

Smurfit Display to the Limerick and Castleroy golf clubs. Several of the agreements included one off payments as well as pay rises averaging approximately 2.5% per year.



# CE supervisors set to escalate campaign over pensions

**COMMUNITY** Employment (CE) supervisors have decided to escalate their industrial action aimed at forcing the Government to implement a Labour Court recommendation over their right to a pension.

The decision was unanimously taken at a meeting of more than 100 delegates in the Midlands Hotel, Portlaoise, county Laois, on 21st March. Details about the escalation will be announced at a press conference in Dublin on 16th April. And following this, there will be a rally outside Leinster House.

The dispute involves 1,250 CE supervisors who play a vital role in delivering a range of community services, including elder care, child care and drug rehabilitation.

These workers don't have an oc-



CE supervisors protesting outside the Department of Finance against the current injustice CE supervisors face. CE supervisors still have no occupational pension despite a favourable Labour Court recommendation over 10 years ago. Photo: Paddy Cole/Scott Millar



CE supervisors at the Portlaoise meeting where it was decided to escalate their industrial action. Photo: Scott Millar

These workers don't have an occupational pension scheme, despite a 2008 Labour Court recommendation that one should be set up for them.

cupational pension scheme, despite a 2008 Labour Court recommendation that one should be set up for them.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Eddie Mullins, told *Liberty*: "At the meeting there was considerable anger expressed in relation to the hypocrisy of the Government in failing to implement a recommendation by the Labour Court, the State's highest industrial relations body."

He added: "These workers took strike action as a last resort for one day on 18th February in an effort to persuade the Government to negotiate with them so that they can have access to an occupational pension scheme and a decent income in retirement."



Tom Walsh (left), a long serving member of the NEC and the State Related Sector Committee was presented with a 25 year badge and scroll by the Deputy General Secretary, John King, on his retirement from Teagasc and elected SIPTU positions. Photo: Paddy Cole

## Unions set up DCU joint forum



**SIPTU and IFUT activists have set up a Joint Union Forum in Dublin City University.**

The Joint Union Forum, which will meet each month during the academic year, will have responsibility for dealing with issues, where it is agreed, that affect members collectively.

Pictured left are members of the SIPTU and IFUT union workplace committees in DCU as well as officials from both unions lining up on campus in March.

## ITF secures assistance for Indonesian fishers stranded in Dingle

A group of Indonesian fishers who had been stranded in Dingle, county Kerry, during March, were successfully repatriated to their home country and were paid monies outstanding to them after the intervention of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)

ITF Inspector, Michael Whelan, said: "On Monday, 11th March, 13

men who had been working on board the fishing trawler, the Christian M, presented themselves at Dingle Garda Station. They stated that for months they had been working on the UK registered vessel without their working hours being properly recorded and in oppressive conditions.

"Following the intervention of the ITF the company which owns the vessel paid what was owed to

the men and for their repatriation home."

He added: "The same vessel was detained in November 2017 in Castletownbere, county Cork, for similar employment problems and due to a cockroach infestation. Such situations are unfortunately becoming a more regular occurrence and steps must be taken to ensure rogue employers are held accountable."



**Workers' Memorial Day Ireland**

Remember the dead,  
fight like hell for the living

Sunday 28th April 2019



# What a fully unionised hotel looks like

By Scott Millar

THE Imperial Hotel is one of the great institutions of the hospitality sector in Cork city and its workers are stalwarts of our union in the "real capital".

The workplace has had an organised union for more than four decades and 'the Imperial' continues to maintain a very well run workplace committee under the leadership of chief shop steward and NEC member, Tim Herlihy.

The impact of working in an establishment with a well-organised union is evident to pastry chef Rebecca McCarthy, who has worked in the Imperial for 14 years.

Before she came to work in the Imperial, she was employed in a hotel without workplace representation for 10 years.

"There is a very big difference between working in a unionised hotel compared to one that isn't," she told *Liberty*. "In a previous hotel where I worked you got paid for a 39-hour week but you could end up doing more hours. In the Imperial the management has to deal with issues such as overtime. I don't think people in non-union hotels realise the difference when you work in an organised hotel. I think if they did, a lot more would join the union."

Rebecca represents kitchen workers on the workplace committee which oversees union activity in the hotel. The other sections in the hotel and their representatives are front of house, Christy Buckley; restaurant staff, Annette Browne; and maintenance and spa staff, Michael O'Brien.

"On the first Tuesday of every month the committee meets," said Tim. "After that we meet with the HR department if there are issues to be addressed. We try and deal with all the issues that we can in-house but, if needed, we can call upon a union official." When Tim gets an issue to deal with he will always attempt to deal with it by close of business on that day. He feels if it is not dealt with in a timely fashion it will impact negatively on hotel and this is not good for all involved.

He added: "We are very lucky here. We have a good committee that gels together and we are generally able to sort stuff out."

Tim said: "The relationship between the company and the union committee is very good and we meet with the company every month just to see that everything



Chief shop steward Tim Herlihy heads up the well-run workplace committee



Rebecca McCarthy, Christy Buckley, Michael O'Brien, SIPTU Organiser Ed Kenny, SIPTU Organiser Jerry Browne, Annette Browne and Tim Herlihy. Photos: Scott Millar

is running smoothly. We have a new General Manager, who has worked in five star properties across Europe and is very well focused on the wellbeing of his employees. I'm looking forward to working closely with the General Manager and the HR manager to improve even better conditions for the members."

Their work ensures that not only are workers' rights fully respected but also that the hotel generally provides a better service for guests.

Annetta Browne said: "Having the union means if you ever have a problem with terms and conditions, staffing levels or such you can go to your shop steward. Getting your basic entitlements such as overtime, working on Sundays – that is what the main focus is on."

"The main issues the union would help with are rosters," said

We are very lucky here. We have a good committee that gels together and we are generally able to sort stuff out

Rebecca. "We don't do split shifts anymore – that was a big issue. When I started here you could do three splits a week that was 8.00 a.m. to 3.00 p.m. and then back at 6.00 p.m. to 11.00 p.m., now you might just work a longer day."

The union has also been able to ensure that practices that are detrimental to staff and guests, such as 'speed up' have not been

enforced. "There was an attempt to increase the number of rooms serviced each day by accommodation staff from 13 to 15 but that was resolved through the intervention of the union," said Michael O'Brien.

Michael represents approximately 40 members including those employed by a spa facility attached to the hotel. He added: "The spa has been there 13 years. Terms and conditions in the spa are at its highest because we have good union membership there. Their union membership is recognised and we generally operate as the one entity."

A key place where SIPTU members in the hotel learn about the committee's activities and keep up to date on developments throughout the union is from the information posted on the canteen notice board.



The Imperial Hotel, South Mall, Cork city.

Tim said: "This is really important – keeping people up to speed on what is happening is crucial."

The committee plays a leading role in negotiating collective agreements with management each year. The most recent agreement secured a 3% rise across the board for all employees. Among other clauses within the deal was one to ensure workers' contracts were adjusted to fairly reflect the hours they regularly worked.

Christy said: "We wanted to have a two-year agreement. The management say they want to do it yearly because they say that they can't financially plan longer than that at the moment."

He adds that the energy that Tim brings to his role as chief shop steward has been key to the committee's success. "When he gets an issue to deal with he is like a dog with a bone with it. He goes hunting right, left and centre and he will not give up on an issue until he gets it fixed."

The importance of the whole committee to workers is also emphasised by Christy.

"We are here to help each other and we make sure we do. Many people in the hotel are young so they need people that have a long service to stand up for them. That is why the committee is so important – we have the experience, we have gone through it, we know what happens in hotels so at least we can be there to help them along."

The importance of the union is something which Tim believes has to be promoted to new employees.

"We have to educate them about the benefits of a union. I have found that to be the case in particular with some migrant workers that have joined us in the last few years. However, once they have joined they are very clear of the benefits."



# 7,000 SIPTU Health workers in strike ballot on pay



By Paddy  
Cole

**SIPTU representatives have confirmed that more than 7,000 health support grade staff will be balloted for strike action later this month.**

The move came following a decision taken by the SIPTU Support Sector Committee at their Annual General Meeting in Liberty Hall last month to take action in response to an ongoing dispute about pay awards granted under



SIPTU Health Support Sector Committee AGM agreed to take action on pay  
Photo: Aoife Ní Shúilleabháin

agreed job evaluation processes.

SIPTU Health Division Organiser, Paul Bell said it was both "disappointing and regrettable" that the Government decided to frustrate an agreement which it freely entered into under the Lansdowne Road Agreement in 2015.

He told *Liberty*: "The Government has chosen to frustrate an agreed job evaluation process and refused to engage on the findings. The process categorically confirmed that our members have been underpaid for many years and should be entitled to migrate to pay scales which recognise their

contribution to the provision of essential health services."

Bell confirmed that the pay awards due range from 5% to 7% and mainly apply to healthcare assistants, maternity care assistants, laboratory aides and surgical instrument technicians.

He added: "Despite the determined efforts of SIPTU representatives to engage on this matter the Health Service Executive and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform have sidestepped their obligations. The time for prevarication is over. The time for action is now."

# Cook up better deal on hospital chefs' pay



Left to right: HSE chefs Graham Lynch, Christy Carroll and Gilbert Rayas from Temple Street Hospital are taking a stand for pay migration for all chefs in the service. Photo: Graham Seely

**UP TO 1,000 chefs employed in hospitals are to ballot for strike action in the weeks ahead.**

For so long a forgotten group in the health service, the chefs are campaigning to ensure the Government implements the recommendations of a review that will see their pay realigned with other highly-skilled craftworkers.

Natasha Linehan, a chef at St Finbarr's Hospital in Cork, pointed out that the roles and responsibilities of chefs have changed significantly over the last two decades.

She said: "All chefs have qualifications but our grade is not aligned to any other group in the health service. It has been 20 years since there last was a specific pay review for our grade. We have been forgotten for so long we are organising to make our voices heard."

SIPTU Health Division Organiser, Paul Bell confirmed that chefs

have had their roles reviewed and it was determined that their pay scale was not appropriate to that of a modern skilled craftworker.

He told *Liberty*: "An independent review identified that chefs have no pay relationship with any of the craft groups within the public service and should be permitted to migrate to the existing craft pay scales."

"This migration, while of a small cost to the health service, is hugely significant for our members and in particular for future pay movement."

"Until recent months, we also understood that the Department of Health and HSE had agreed to co-operate with and implement these changes."

"They have failed to do this and our members feel badly let down and want to take action," Bell added.



Natasha Linehan: 'We've been forgotten for so long'

# HSE must 'step up' for St Vincent's Centre workers

**SIPTU representatives have called on the Health Service Executive (HSE) to step up and lift the workers of St. Vincent's Centre, Cork, out of "employment limbo".**

SIPTU Industrial Organiser, Sharon Cregan, explained that St Vincent's – a Section 39 organisation – was previously governed by the Sisters of Charity but switched to the COPE Foundation in the autumn of 2018.

In March 2017, staff were ad-

vised, following a Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) recommendation that the service was to be de-registered and that the HSE would assume responsibility for the centre pending the implementation of a different service provider.

Over a year later, in September 2018, it was announced that the COPE Foundation would take governance of St. Vincent's Centre and TUPE legislation would apply, protecting the terms and conditions of SIPTU members.

Cregan told *Liberty*: "The initially positive reaction to the certainty this change would bring has subsided. No substantial progress has been made since the September 2018 meeting and our members have demanded that the HSE steps up and takes action."

"It is wrong that loyal workers who provide such a vital community service should be left to remain in employment limbo while the HSE sits on their hands."

She continued: "We have been

advised that the HSE and the Sisters of Charity are to enter a mediation process in the coming weeks. It is our understanding that there is a case before the High Court in respect of defining the 'actual employer' since the religious order stood down in March 2017."

"What makes matters more stressful for members is that the COPE Foundation cannot be 'engaged' as the employer until a definitive judgment is made."

Staff pension contributions, which have been deducted from

the staff's salaries continuously since March 2017, are currently in the possession of the HSE yet they have not been paid against their records.

Cregan added: "This is having a major effect on members' social media and PRSI entitlements."

"The staff have also been advised by the pension scheme administrator that their scheme is 'closed off'. It is unacceptable to treat people this way."



# Abbey concerns raised in letter to Minister

By Karan O'Loughlin

ON 7th January a letter of concern, signed by hundreds of theatre workers, about issues relating to The Abbey Theatre was sent to Josepha Madigan, Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Subsequently this led to a series of meetings between management at The Abbey, a number of the signatories and union representatives.

Some 425 actors, writers, producers, costume professionals, technicians and agents signed the letter, which was written to the Minister to highlight concerns over the direction The Abbey had taken since directors Neil Murray and Graham McLaren were appointed.

Those who added their names to the letter expressed dismay that the changing artistic model of producing fewer in-house productions and presenting or co-presenting had impacted on the theatre sector in Ireland.

They argued that a reduction in the number of the National The-



atre's own productions had led to less diversity, and reduced employment opportunities for artists already struggling to make a living in Ireland.

According to the letter, The Abbey had directly employed 123 actors in Abbey productions and 90 actors in readings and workshops in 2016.

In contrast, only 56 actors directly worked at the theatre in 2017. No figures were available for readings or workshops for that year.

The first meeting with Abbey management on 1st February identified a range of issues and in March a further five bilateral meetings were held to deal with specific groups of workers.



Abbey Theatre

At a meeting for actors and agents on 12th March, pay scales for co-productions and presentations and the lack of a permanent designated casting function was discussed.

Current workshop practices, delay of contracts, and engaging with young actors also came up in the talks and a full response and a set of proposals is expected by mid-May.

Meanwhile, Equity is in talks with The Abbey on updating the collective agreement and on in-

creasing pay. It was agreed that the bottom rate was no longer viable, so the current minimum of €600 for a first appearance is now being applied.

It was also agreed that the current pay scale has too many points and that this should be reduced.

At the meeting Equity representatives also set out their expectations on pay growth.

The next meeting between Equity and the Abbey is scheduled for Wednesday 8th May.

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## Manufacturing Sector

# Challenge of Brexit dominates agenda

**ALL THREE** Sector Annual General Meetings in the Manufacturing Division took place on Friday 22nd March in Liberty Hall. Set against the backdrop of news of an extension on Brexit, scores of activists from across the island of Ireland gathered for an intense day of debate and discussion.

The day culminated in a seminar featuring SIPTU Deputy General Secretary for the Private Sector, Gerry McCormack on how the UK's departure from the European Union will potentially impact on the pay packets of thousands of manufacturing workers.

In her address, SIPTU Manufacturing Divisional Organiser, Teresa Hannick thanked members and or-

ganisers for the hard work they have put in over the last year to increase density and win union recognition in workplaces across the country.

Members heard detailed and encouraging reports from Sector Organisers, Pat Flannery, Alan O'Leary and Michael Browne on the important advances the union had made over the last 12 months.

These include the securing of pay agreements, protections and workplace improvements for thousands of workers in the Electronics, Engineering and Industrial Production, Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals and Medical Devices and the Agriculture, Ingredients, Food and Drink sectors, respectively.



Left to right: Raimonda Grina, SIPTU Organiser, Evelina Saduikyte, Olga Jurova, SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Teresa Hannick, Lidia Cichocka and Manuela Ciurlik. Photo: Paddy Cole



Joan McClean, second left, receives long service award from Mick Browne, Gerry McCormack and Teresa Hannick

## Wholesale, Retail, Distribution & Related Sector

# Members support drive for Living Wage

**A NEW** weapon to meet the challenges facing workers organised across the Services Division SIPTU was launched at the Wholesale, Retail, Distribution and Related Sector AGM held in Liberty Hall on Monday 4th March.

The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, came into law on the same day, and members heard how this vital piece of legislation would re-tip the scales and make progress in giving workers back control.

Speaking at the meeting SIPTU Sector Organiser, Michelle Quinn claimed this legislation would give workers on flexible and low-hours contracts new rights and entitlements over working hours and pay but cautioned that this would not happen if workers were in strong unions and holding bosses to account.

SIPTU Services Division Organ-

iser, Karan O'Loughlin spoke on a number of organising and campaigning initiatives the division was pursuing.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary for the Private Sector, Gerry McCormack gave a detailed presentation on the challenges of Brexit while SIPTU Honorary Vice President, Bernie Casey outlined the

work of the union's Global Solidarity Committee. Members of the sector also endorsed a motion to campaign and fight for a living wage for all workers.

Sector chairperson, John Finn said: "The substantial difference between the current minimum wage of €9.80 and the living wage of €11.90 means that many work-

ers in the services industry fall short of having a decent and secure standard of living.

"Given that the living wage is a measure of income calculated to give people a very basic but socially acceptable standard of living, the sector finds it unacceptable that workers should be forced to work for any less."



SIPTU Sector Organiser, Michelle Quinn (centre) with SIPTU Shop Stewards Kevin Oglesby (left) and Noel Durack Musgrave (right) supporting the SIPTU campaign against Zero Hour contracts. Photo: Paddy Cole

## Ambulance Sector

# AGM hears about progress made on a number of fronts

**OVER** the last year, members of the SIPTU Ambulance Sector have continued to provide vital public services to the most vulnerable people while union representatives have made progress across a number of areas.

Speaking after a well-represented Annual General Meeting of

SIPTU ambulance professionals in Liberty Hall on Thursday 21st March, Sector Organiser, Miriam Hamilton told *Liberty* that these areas included pay and professional development but claimed that the setting up of an independent review of the role and responsibilities had been the biggest advance for members in a decade.

She said: "It has long been the view of SIPTU Ambulance Sector that our members have fallen behind in relation to the recognition of their role."

"Our members believe that their status is not reflective of their actual skill set and the major contribution they make in the delivery of frontline medical services espe-

## Ballot on new nursing contract 'premature'

Members of the SIPTU Nursing and Midwives Sector Committee have determined that a ballot on a proposed new nursing contract would be premature.

Speaking to *Liberty* SIPTU Health Division Organiser, Paul Bell, said: "Following a meeting of the National Nursing and Midwifery Sector Committee on Monday 8th April in Liberty Hall, a decision was made not to ballot members on Labour Court recommendation (LCR21942). The Government has failed to confirm crucial details on a revised contract of employment for the proposed enhanced nursing and midwifery role. SIPTU representatives will not initiate a ballot or make a recommendation to our nursing and midwifery members until we are in position to present all the facts to our members."

Bell also confirmed to *Liberty* that SIPTU representatives will not conduct a ballot until all negotiations are concluded on behalf of SIPTU nursing members working across mental health services. "SIPTU representatives have previously warned that a one size fits all model will not work and that proposals aimed at resolving the nursing and midwifery dispute in the acute settings will not be accepted as a resolution to claims presented by nurses in the mental health sector," he said.

cially when existing pay grades are taken into account."

The independent process started in early January and will conclude this summer.

It covers the roles of advanced paramedic, paramedic and emergency medical technician in the National Ambulance Service.



## Health Sector

# SIPTU Allied Health Professional Sector growing in strength

Membership is growing and groups within the SIPTU Allied Health Professional (AHP) family are getting organised and winning change in the workplace. That was the message coming out of the AHP Annual General Meeting last month.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Kevin Figgis, told *Liberty* that members in the sector are heartened by the progress made over the last year which saw a National Radiography Review take shape and pay restoration begin in earnest.

He said: "Members have played a huge role over the last twelve months in growing the sector and taking ownership of what direction they want to see their profession go."

"The National Radiography Review and the new ground-breaking legislation of the Basic Safety Standard for Radiation have both played significant roles in assisting the growth of the sector."

"In 2019, we plan on continuing to build and giving voice to Allied Health Professionals nationwide."

At the Care Sector AGM members of the SIPTU Care Sector were buoyed by the news that recognition is finally on the way for thousands of health care assistants.

Guest speakers at the AGM included Rosarii Mannion, National HR Director of the HSE, and Sean McHugh, who has been charged with reviewing the roles and functions of health care assistants.

SIPTU Care Sector Organiser, Marie Butler told *Liberty* that members left the AGM extremely optimistic and hopeful for the future.

She said: "We have campaigned for a long time to have health care assistants registered and respected. The review recommends a permanent national forum be

# Recognition major boost for SIPTU health care assistants

established in order to ensure the ongoing implementation of recommendations and development of the health care assistant grade.

"This is very positive news and recognition of our work to get the development of the grade on the national agenda."

SIPTU Care Sector Chair, Ann Marie Tibby claimed the review recommendations had given members a real boost.

"Health care assistants have

come a long way," she said. "We provide all the 'hands-on' care that patients need and can play a vital role in solving the health crisis."

"We are determined to see the recommendations of this review implemented in order to develop the grade further and establish our rightful place as a profession to be respected in the health service."

# Successes in the ID sector

THE Intellectual Disability Sector played a huge role in securing pay increases for thousands of workers over the last 12 months.

Dedicated activists from Rehab Group; Cheshire Ireland; Ability West; St Aidan's, Wexford; Western Care; and others all put their shoulders to the wheel and campaigned to make sure that workers caring for the most vulnerable won pay justice.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Tony Kenny, said the 'Pay Justice for Section 39 Workers' campaign was one of the highlights of the year and a blueprint for building density.

He continued: "The efforts of our members and officials throughout the Section 39 campaign was extraordinary. By working together, we organised hundreds of new members and won a major national campaign."

"There is still some work to be done and our members and sector are determined to ensure that justice is delivered to all Section 39 workers."

Speaking at the AGM, SIPTU Health Division Organiser, Paul Bell said that the decision to establish an Intellectual Disability Sector in 2017 has been vindicated through the success of the Section 39 campaign.

"By having our own ID sector, we are giving a voice and platform to workers who care for the most vulnerable people in our communities. Over the coming years, the sector will only grow as more and more people are being cared for in congregated settings and in the community."

"That gives us a major opportunity to organise," he added.

## Construction Sector



Greg Ennis and Willie Noone make a presentation to Matty Conroy in recognition of his decades of service to ESB SIPTU members in advance of his retirement in May

# Fastest growing sector in SIPTU

THE SIPTU Construction Sector is the fastest growing sector in the union.

Over the last 12 months, organisers and shop stewards in the sector have been busy securing better pay for workers and holding non-compliant employers to account.

SIPTU Construction Sector Organiser, John Regan, told *Liberty*: "The biggest threat facing members in our sector now is bogus self-employment."

"SIPTU has been campaigning vigorously to highlight this all-too-common practice and we intend on ramping up our campaign even further over the coming months."

Members were told at the AGM that union representatives have been busy working to establish a new Sector Employment Order (SEO) for the sector that is due out this summer.

The SEO includes a 12% pay increase, improvements in pension entitlements, a 39-hour week and premium payments for hours after



Miriam Smith receiving a presentation from Transport Sector Organiser John Murphy and Transport Sector President Tommy Wynne to recognise her great contribution to the sector

the 39-hour week.

On the evening, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary for the Private Sector Gerry McCormack gave a presentation on the impact of Brexit and SIPTU TEAC Division Organiser, Greg Ennis spoke of plans to grow the Division into the future.

## Transport Sector

# Fighting back and educating to organise

SIPTU Transport Sector members are fighting back to win pay increases and secure rights across the sector, according to SIPTU Transport Divisional Organiser, Greg Ennis.

He said: "Workers across the sector are receiving increases in pay and members are continuing to do all that is possible to protect transport workers, including using targeted and intelligent industrial action and strike action, where necessary and appropriate."

And Ennis emphasised that increasing trade union density re-

mained key focus for the union.

"We must build to create maximum leverage to influence our agenda and those of all working people," he told *Liberty*. "Our members' political awareness and understanding is crucial."

Ennis continued: "That is why we are actively encouraging our members participating in SIPTU's Educate to Organise programme in order to understand why working people carried an unfair disproportionate burden during the last economic recession, compared to those at the top table of banking, commerce and capitalism, who wrecked our economy."

## PACD Sector

# Why focused campaigning delivers for our members

MEMBERS of the SIPTU Public Administration and Community Division have voiced dissatisfaction with the Government's refusal to engage on issues of major concern across the Division at their recent AGMs in Liberty Hall.

Members were also updated about a number of union initiatives, including the 'Justice for CE Supervisors' and 'Big Start' campaigns in the Community sector, the ongoing drive to tackle the twin problems of under-funding

and precarious employment in the Third Level Education sector, as well as the 'More Power To You' campaign in the run-in to the local elections. Members were also addressed by SIPTU Honorary Vice-President, Bernie Casey about the work of the SIPTU Global Solidarity Committee.

"Where we work in focused ways the results are there for all to see," said Division Organiser, Adrian Kane. "Well thought out, strategic campaigns connect with younger workers and are key to trade union renewal."



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# Where SIPTU is making the games people play now

By Scott Millar



Minted: where the Monopoly money is produced

FEW people may realise that if you are playing Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit, Guess Who, Connect 4, Battleships, Cluedo, Top Trumps, 30 Seconds or Sequence there is a very strong possibility that they were produced by SIPTU members in the Cartamundi Ireland Ltd in Waterford City.

These are just some of the products produced at Europe's largest games manufacturing facility in the Cartamundi Group. The Waterford plant opened in 1977 and since then it has produced tens of millions of board games.

Initially, the plant was run by Hasbro but since 2015 it has been part of the Belgian family-owned Cartamundi Group.

SIPTU Chief Shop Steward Tom 'Tucker' Healy, said: "The company believes in excellence through investment in its people. Such an approach works well with the aims of the trade union to see workers leading fulfilling working lives with good conditions and wages that can support a family life."

Such an approach has resulted in many of its approximately 280 full-time SIPTU members remaining at the plant for decades. Tom has been employed in the plant since 1987 while his fellow shop steward, Bridget Burrows, has 32 years of service.

She told *Liberty*: "When I started working here I didn't think I would be here for that length of time. However, I work with a great team of people. This plant has allowed me to rear my daughter and send her to university, so it's also been a rewarding place to work."

The workforce is mainly drawn from the local Waterford area, with some travelling from south Tipperary and south Kilkenny. The plant also has a strong tradition of family members working together. Shop Steward, Jane Millea, has worked at Cartamundi for 18 years, her brother also works in the plant and



Photo from left to right: HR Generalist, Conor Byrne, SIPTU Shop Steward, Tom 'Tucker' Healy, HR Manager, Lisa Kenneally, SIPTU Shop Steward, Jane Millea and SIPTU Shop Steward, Bridget Burrows. Photos: Scott Millar

It's that sort of place... people work here and are happy with it

her mother is a former employee.

"It's that sort of place," she said. "People work here and are happy with it so family members are also interested in getting a job."

Recent years have provided challenges for the company, with some games production lost to lower cost plants in China and the growth of video games. Tom points out that despite this the plant has weathered the storm.

He said: "The plant underwent a restructuring prior to the last recession and even with the rise in popularity of game consoles it has

maintained a healthy production schedule with more than 16 million games produced last year."

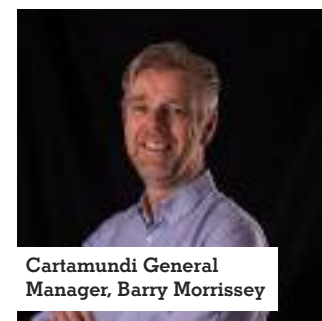
With the agreement of the unions, management at the plant has also brought in imaginative initiatives such as whiteboards at each production line for workers to note down their thoughts on improvements. There is also a star reward system by which the production manager rewards staff with tokens for innovation. These can then be used to claim rewards including Cartamundi branded merchandise.

"It's a system which works well with people pleased to see that their input into the production process is being recognised," said Tom.

The plant is also a place where many young people get their first experience of being part of the union with the

workforce increasing by up to 200 workers during peak production periods. Each of these workers joins SIPTU, even if only for a few months.

General Manager, Barry Morrissey, said: "Cartamundi Ireland are very proud to be part of the Supporting Quality initiative. It is important to us, as an Irish manufacturing company, to our employees, our local community and our customers, to continue to produce quality products here in Waterford."



Cartamundi General Manager, Barry Morrissey

Shop Steward Tom Healy credits the Cartamundi Group with investing in its workforce: 'Such an approach works well with trade union aims'





**Mayo**

# SIPTU Welcome Centre opens in Castlebar



Cutting of the ribbon at the opening of the new Welcome Centre in Castlebar

THE SIPTU Mayo District Council launched its new Welcome Centre at the SIPTU offices on Moneen Road, Castlebar, on 28th March, at an event where the long service of union activists was also recognised.

Among those who addressed the launch were the cathaoirleach of Mayo County Council and SIPTU shop steward, Councillor Blackie

Gavin; cathaoirleach of Castlebar Municipal District and retired SIPTU official, Councillor Michael Kilcoyne; and SIPTU General Secretary designate, Joe Cunningham and SIPTU Workers Rights Centre Head, Rachael Ryan.

SIPTU Workers Rights Centre advocate Martina Weir said: "People who call into the Welcome Centre will be assisted with advice in a private and confidential manner.

Furthermore, we will provide them with representation if they wish to avail of the expertise and knowledge of the SIPTU Workers Rights Centre concerning any workplace issues."

SIPTU Mayo District Council coordinator, Pat Flannery, said: "The new SIPTU Welcome Centre in Castlebar will be open to SIPTU members and the general public. Workers can call in for advice

Monday to Friday from 9.30 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. and from 2.00 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. or contact the centre on (094) 9021382." Following the official opening of the Welcome Centre, more than 30 activists were presented with badges recognising 25 years of union membership. Certificates were also given to six recently-retired shop stewards.

**Meath**

# Crisis could become a 'catastrophe'



SIPTU and housing activists, public representatives and YouthReach participants attended seminar in Navan, county Meath

HOMELESSNESS campaigner Fr Peter McVerry has claimed that up to 500,000 people across Ireland were living in a housing situation that was causing them distress.

He made the comments at a SIPTU Meath District Council seminar on housing and homelessness in Navan on Friday, 15th March. He pointed out that the "crisis"

had the potential to become a "catastrophe" over the next two to three years. Fr McVerry outlined how more people were living in overcrowded accommodation waiting for housing, with many in poor private rentals not complaining over fears they would be evicted.

More people were also living with their parents, while others were spending between 50% and

60% of their income on rent.

SIPTU researcher Michael Taft told the seminar that there were over 1,960 households on social waiting lists across Meath. He said a third of these had children and that 40% had been on the list for more than five years. Average rents in the county had also risen by 48% in the last five years and now stood at more than €1,000

per month.

SIPTU Head of Equality and Policy, Marie Sherlock and SIPTU Head of Communications, Frank Connolly outlined the proposals from the trade union movement to resolve the housing crisis including the activities of the Raise the Roof campaign aimed at achieving the implementation of these solutions.

**Dublin**

# Your chance to quiz a Euro election hopeful

EUROPEAN Election candidates and representatives from each of the parties contesting the local elections in Dublin are being invited to attend a question and answer session in Liberty Hall on Tuesday, 23rd April, at 7.00 p.m.

The event is being hosted by the Dublin District Council in order to give SIPTU members an opportunity to find out exactly where the various candidates stand on key issues that matter to them. All SIPTU members in Dublin are welcome to attend.

SIPTU Dublin District Council joint secretary, Brendan Carr told *Liberty*: "This event is an important opportunity not only to find out where candidates stand on issues but also to make clear to them issues of concern for SIPTU members."

The Dublin District Council will be running the MayFest Festival from 1st May to 12th May in Liberty Hall.

**SIPTU MayFest will take place from 1st-12th May - see page 32 for the full 2019 programme.**





Left to right: SIPTU Limerick District Council members march in the St Patrick's Day parades. SIPTU and Big Start activists in Sligo, Leitrim and Manorhamilton take part in local parades as part of the celebrations.



# Children's minister backs SEO for childcare sector

**THE Minister for Children has backed a Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) for the Early Years sector to address the low pay crisis at a meeting of the Early Years Forum in early March.**

SIPTU Head of Strategic Organising and Campaigns, Darragh O'Connor, said: "As the estimates

process for Budget 2020 begins, we are making sure that the Early Years sector is a priority.

"However, there needs to be a guarantee that increased funding will go towards pay. That's why SIPTU members have been campaigning for an SEO. The Minister is now on board and recognises that additional funding is needed

– this is a big step forward."

An SEO is a legal mechanism that can set down minimum rates of pay and conditions for managers, room leaders and educators.

To introduce an SEO, a union needs to be "substantively represented" in a sector. The Big Start campaign is currently more than half way to its target of the num-

ber of workers that it wishes to organise before formally starting the process of securing an SEO.

SIPTU activist Catherine McKearney told *Liberty* "There are more than 25,000 people working in the Early Years sector and until now we never had a union.

"Not only do we now have a voice for the first time, we have a

plan and an opportunity to win better pay and conditions.

"The challenge is to build our union to get an SEO and the funding needed."

If you want to arrange a meeting or talk to a SIPTU Organiser, please text or call **087 106 9560** or email [bigstart@siptu.ie](mailto:bigstart@siptu.ie)

SIPTU activists marking International Women's Day by launching low pay research in Dublin. Photo: Aoife Ní Shúilleabháin



## SIPTU Study shows Early Years lowest paid sector

To mark International Women's Day, the SIPTU Big Start campaign has released research showing that childcare, which has an overwhelmingly female workforce, is the lowest paid sector in the Irish economy.

SIPTU researcher, Michael Taft, who conducted the study, told

*Liberty*: "Pay in the Early Years sector is 53% below the average pay for all employees and would have to rise by 11.4% just to reach the next lowest paid sector. It is little surprise that staff turnover is at 25%, directly undermining quality in the sector."

Early Years educator, Niamh Crowley, said: "This research shows that of all the low-paid

sectors in the Irish economy, it is the Early Years care and education sector which is the lowest paid. The other stand-out statistic is that the workforce is overwhelmingly female at 98%."

She added: "To hear that we are the lowest paid workers in Ireland is just awful. We work so hard every single day, we do everything that we are supposed to

do but we are just not valued the way we should be."

Childcare Co-ordinator, Lisa Purcell, said: "It's disgraceful that we're the lowest paid sector in Ireland. Everyone in the sector needs to pull together so that the importance of our work is recognised and to achieve the pay rise that we deserve."

We work so hard every single day, we do everything that we are supposed to do but we are just not valued the way we should be

## Graduates being failed by Early Years sector

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

SIPTU Organiser, Ann O'Reilly, 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 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."

USI President, Síona Cahill, told *Liberty*: "The HEA Graduate Outcome Survey has given solid proof to what we already know about the sec-

tor, which is, that more graduates are employed now than in previous years yet they are among the worst paid graduates in the country.

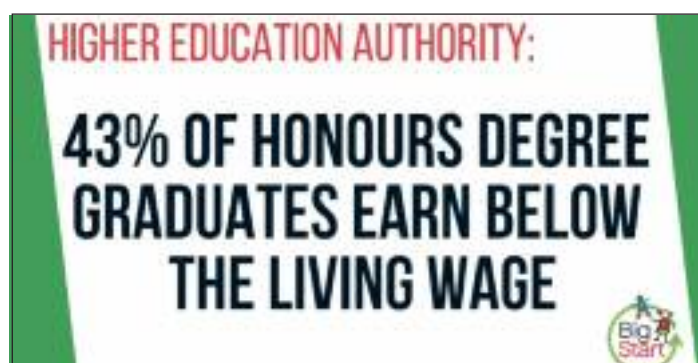
"The fact is that we have come out of a recession. It is an expectation – not a privilege – that a higher percentage of graduates are finally being

employed within their own country."

She added: "Students are coming through third level education with no promise of a decent living wage and that women are being expected to earn an average of €3,983 less than their male co-workers, despite having the same degree."

"This survey is something we must learn from and strive to improve upon going forward, not celebrate."

Meanwhile, SIPTU Organisers attended the USI Annual Congress in Castlebar, county Mayo, on April 2nd and 3rd to promote the Big Start campaign among students.





# Tax: the number of feathers to be plucked depends on number of pillows to be filled



By Vic  
Duggan

**JEAN-BAPTISTE Colbert**, French Finance Minister under Louis XIV, colourfully explained that taxation consisted of “in so plucking the goose as to procure the largest quantity of feathers with the least possible amount of squealing”.

Those on the left have long advocated squeezing the rich until the pips squeak. What almost everyone can agree on, however, is that a tax system should be progressive so that those with the broadest shoulders bear the greatest burden.

There are those that would wish to tax the rich simply as a blunt instrument to reduce income and wealth inequalities. A better approach is to establish what public goods and services, and what sort of welfare state, government should provide and then set about financing it in the most efficient and equitable way possible.

Before deciding how many feathers to pluck, you should see how many pillows need to be filled.

US Senator Bernie Sanders has already snatched one big victory from defeat. Many of the ideas he advocated in the 2016 Democratic primary – such as universal health-care paid for through progressive taxation – have become mainstream for the 2020 edition.

With more than a dozen declared candidates, including Sanders himself, the 2020 Democratic primary already resembles something of a policy laboratory. Three ideas emerging from the Democrats' progressive wing warrant particular scrutiny: hiking tax on the inheritance, wealth and income of the super-rich.

Ahead of announcing his 2020 run, Sanders rolled out proposals to increase inheritance tax. In 2017, the Trump administration doubled to \$11m the threshold above which estates are subject to tax rates ranging from 18% to 40%.

Sanders' proposal is to reduce the threshold to \$3.5m, with tax rates ranging from 45% up as high as 77% for billionaires. Only the wealthiest 0.2% of estates, or one in 500, would attract any tax at all – less than 2,000 households per year. This would raise \$2.2 trillion over 10 years.



Bernie Sanders: inheritance tax hike



Elizabeth Warren: annual wealth tax



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: 70% proposal



Jean-Baptiste Colbert: goose analogy

The big advantages of inheritance tax in policy terms is that death cannot be avoided, while it is administratively simpler than a recurrent wealth tax because the liability only needs to be calculated once. On the other hand, the rich have developed ingenious inheritance tax minimisation strategies over the years – to be effective, these loopholes must be closed.

The rich are different than you and me. What really makes them rich is their assets, not their income. Although some countries, such as Norway and Switzerland, still impose wealth taxes, they have been going out of fashion, largely because shifting assets abroad to avoid it has become so easy.

Senator Elizabeth Warren, another declared Democratic primary candidate, proposed in January introducing an annual wealth tax of 2% on assets of more than \$50m, rising to 3% for billionaires. This would hit the richest 75,000 households and bring in \$2.75 trillion over 10 years.

Property taxes are a form of wealth tax, levying tax on the main source of wealth of middle class households. The super-rich usually have vast portfolios of property, financial and other assets – not just the roof over their heads. As Warren said at a recent town hall meeting, all she wants to do is to “include the Rembrandt and the diamonds”.

Progressives' 'auld reliable' is to

raise taxes on higher incomes. Income taxes are harder to avoid and easier to collect, while higher marginal rates are progressive by definition. Economists will be quick to point out the main downside, which is that higher taxes on work will cause people to work less, thereby reducing the tax yield.

Certainly, there are arguments for shifting taxation away from work, in general, but increasing the marginal tax paid by millionaires is not going to cause them to choose unemployment!

Many of the declared Democratic candidates for President have called for reversing the Trump tax cuts on

As Warren said at a recent town hall meeting, all she wants to do is to “include the Rembrandt and the diamonds”.

high earners, but one recently-elected young Congresswoman has gone a step further. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has called for a near doubling of the top income tax rate from 37% to 70% for those earning more than \$10m.

This is not without precedent. The rate was 69% until the early 1980s, since when income inequality has taken off as Republican Presidents from Reagan to Trump slashed taxes for the rich.

In truth, any combination of these three approaches can be followed to make sure the rich pay their fair share. There is no reason why raising the marginal tax rate on the highest earners, increasing inheritance tax on the largest estates or expanding the scope of the property tax to include financial and other assets couldn't work, whether in the US or in Ireland.



# A housing market that's broken...

Michael Taft looks at the impact the housing crisis is having outside of Dublin with a focus on Waterford and Meath...



By Michael Taft

## Waterford

**HOUSING is becoming more expensive in Waterford. While rents are below that of other main urban areas they are now, on average, touching €1,000 per month in Waterford city.**

And they are rising fast. In the last five years new properties coming on the market (through Daft.ie) rents in the city have risen by 63% – the second highest of any urban area with the exception of Limerick city. But it's not just the city. Rents throughout the county have risen faster than any other county in Munster.

House prices show a similar trend. While current prices are well below the national average,

Probably the most dismal statistic, given the housing crisis and the lack of homes for those in need, is the number of houses built by the Waterford Council in 2018. Six. That's all.

they are experiencing a substantial rise – a substantial increase of more than 70% in the last five years. This is more than twice the national average.

For those with severe housing needs the situation isn't any better. There are currently a little over 1,100 on the social housing waiting list in Waterford. There have been reductions in the past few years but this is only because people who move into a private rented accommodation with a Housing Assistance Payment (HAP) are taken off the waiting list. Unfortunately, these private dwellings may not be suitable or have security of tenure.

Still, people are desperate to find a place to live. We can see this

in the fact that a third of those on the Waterford waiting list are currently living with parents, relatives or friends. And we shouldn't make the mistake of thinking that it is only people out of work who are waiting for a social home – more than one-in-four on the waiting list are in employment.

Probably the most dismal statistic, given the housing crisis and the lack of homes for those in need, is the number of houses built by the Waterford Council in 2018: six. That's all. Approved Housing Bodies built none. The total social housing stock grew by less than 200, courtesy of Part IV contributions.

With a crisis in private rents and public housing construction, that's just not good enough.

## Meath

**WHILE there has been much focus on the housing crisis in Dublin, the crisis is now bleeding out into surrounding counties with Meath being particularly affected. For instance, rents in Meath now average over €1,000 per month – with families in need of two or more bedrooms paying more.**

The explosion in rents is equally concerning. Daft.ie shows rents rising by 80% in the last five years. In fact, Meath has the second highest increase in asking rents of any county, including Dublin. Only Louth experienced a higher increase.

Let's put that 80% rent increase in context. During this same five-year period inflation went up by only 1% while wages increased by less than 9% (much of that only in the last year). There is no relationship between rents, prices and affordability in our broken house market.

It's not just about rents. House prices are growing rapidly as well. In the last year national house prices increased by 2%, mainly as a result of flat-lining Dublin prices. But Meath prices increased by 14%, more than six times the national rate. And they are accelerating.

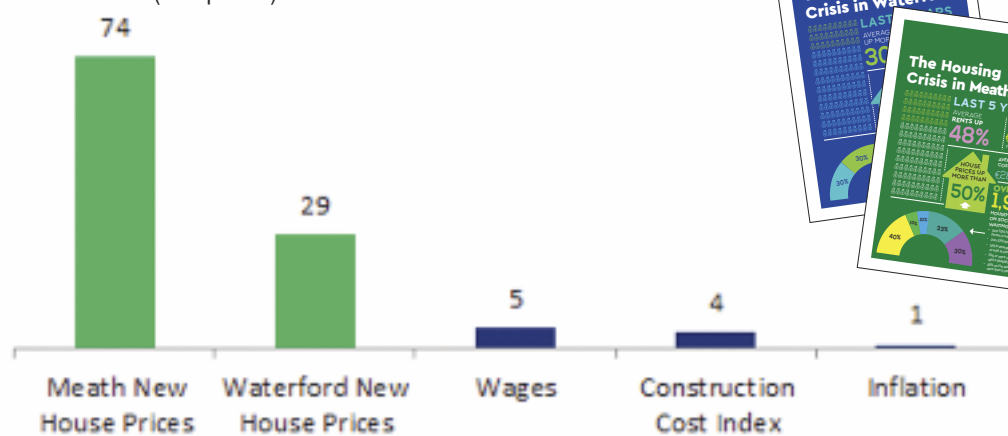
It's not just the Meath rental market that is broken. In the five years up to the end of 2017, Meath house prices rose by 30% – well above inflation and wage increases. It is also above construction costs. The cost of building a house (including wages and mate-



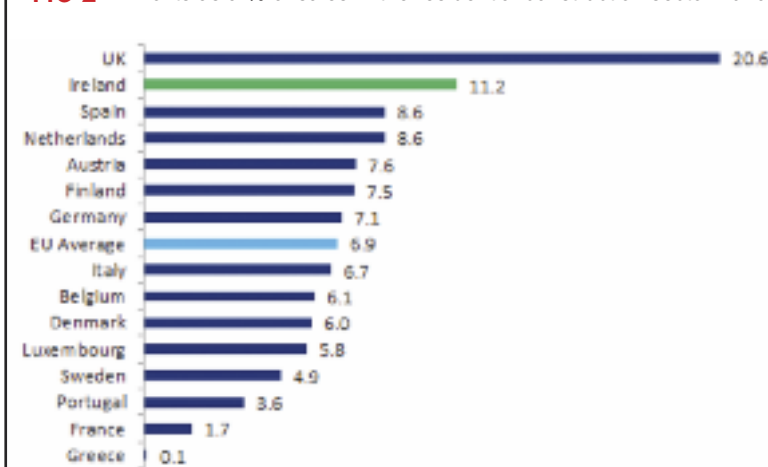
Meath District Council launching campaign on the housing crisis in Meath with Fr Peter McVerry

PICTURE: Paddy Cole

**FIG 1** % Increase in new house prices, wages, construction costs and inflation 2012-2017 (3rd quarter)



**FIG 2** Profits as a % of sales in the residential construction sector 2016



rials) grew by only 4%. (SEE FIG 1) So where did the rest of the price go?

This is something developers and employers don't want you to

know. Ireland has the second highest level of profits in the EU-15 – well above the European average. (SEE FIG 2)

Meath's social housing waiting

list doesn't fare much better. There are nearly 2,000 households waiting for a home. 40% of these households have been waiting five years or longer. Yet Meath County Council built only 36 houses last year and was reliant on voluntary housing groups for new housing (still, this was less than 200).

However, we shouldn't be too quick to judge local councils for the low number of house-builds. Local authorities were hit very hard during the austerity years. Between 2008 and 2017, local authority spending was cut by half and housing investment all but abolished.

Ultimately, the fault does not lie with local councils but with the national government in Dublin, the main source of public housing investment.



# Our over-worked working life



By Michael  
Taft

**THERE** is a growing interest in reducing the working week – usually expressed as a four-day week. Numerous ad hoc examples of private and public sector companies and agencies appear in the media while, here in Ireland, Fórsa recently held a conference dedicated to reducing the working week.

The arguments for a shorter working week range from greater work/life balance, productivity, stress reduction, preparing for the impact of automation, etc. As part of that debate below is some information on how many hours per year people work in Ireland in comparison with our EU peer group (other high-income economies).

This data focuses on full-time employees but it should be noted that full-time is defined as approximately 30 hours by the CSO with possible different definitions in other countries. Further, this looks at the private sector as this is where the introduction of a shorter working week on the same rate of pay will be the most challenging.

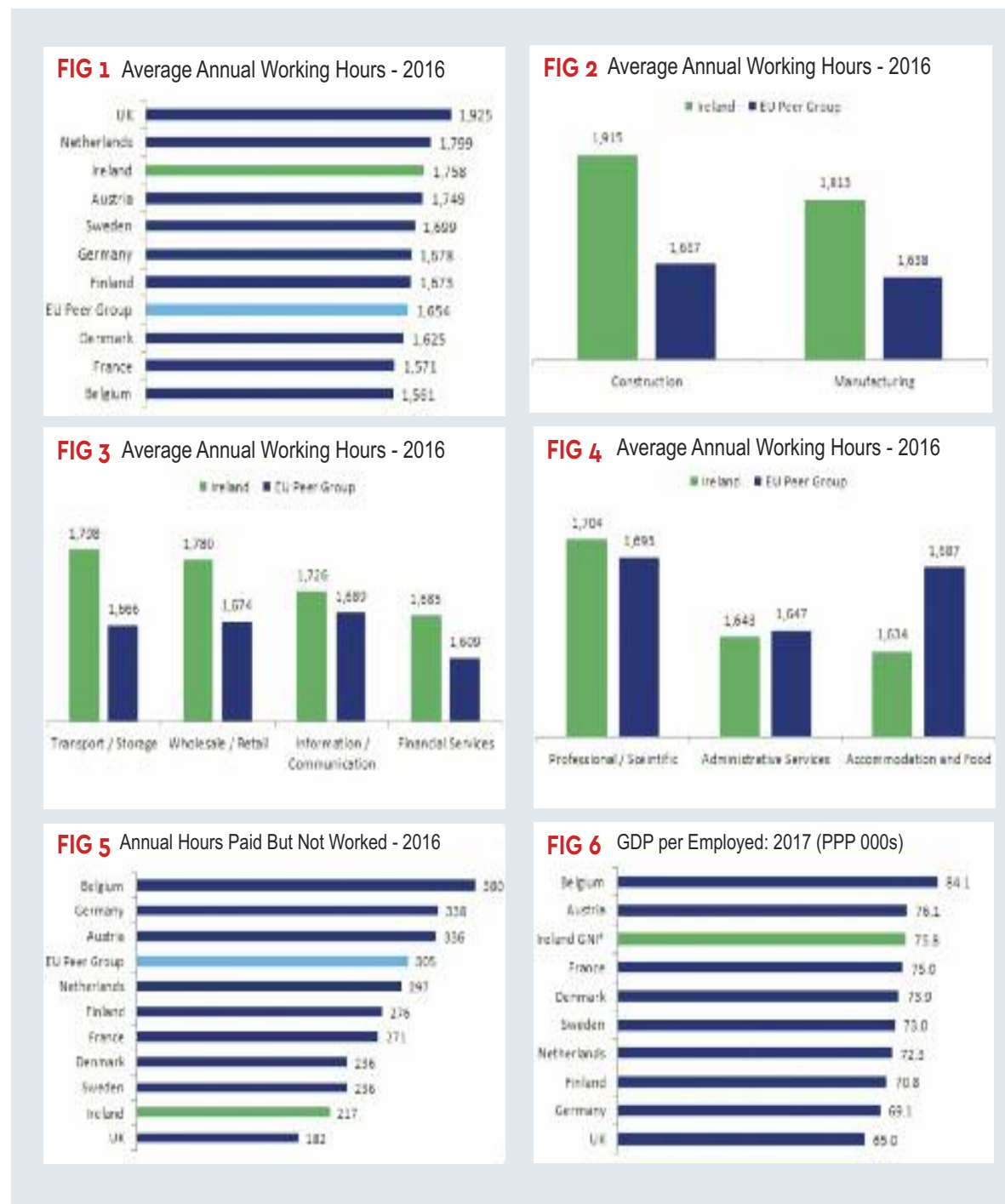
## Private sector economy

In the private sector economy Irish employees work more hours than most other peer group countries. (SEE FIG 1)

The UK and the Netherlands report higher annual working hours. The Netherlands is an interesting case. It has the highest level of part-time workers with 50% of all employees working part-time compared to an average of less than 25% in other countries.

Annual working hours can be reduced in many ways – not just through a shorter working week. For instance, public holidays, statutory annual holidays and additional holiday hours resulting from collective agreements in the workplace can reduce annual hours worked.

In total, Irish employees work the equivalent of 2.7 weeks more than our peer-group average, assuming a basic 39-hour working week (the UK is not included in our EU peer group for obvious reasons; Eurostat is already removing the UK from EU averages). We



don't work the most, but we work more than most in our peer group.

## Working hours by sector

The following looks at sectoral breakdowns. Let's start with the high working-hour sectors. (SEE FIG 2)

- Irish construction employees work more hours than any other sector, and 15% more than our peer group average – 248 hours annually, or the equivalent of 6.4 weeks more per year. A possible contributor to this high level of working could be the emerging labour shortage in the sector.

- Irish manufacturing employees work 11% more than our peer group – 175 hours annually, or the

equivalent of 4.5 weeks more per year.

Turning to medium-high working-hour sectors (SEE FIG 3) we find the following:

- Irish transport employees work 8% more than our peer group – 132 hours annually, or the equivalent of 3.4 weeks more per year.

- Irish wholesale/retail employees work 6% more than our peer group – 106 hours annually, or the equivalent of 2.7 weeks more per year.

- Irish communication and information employees work 2% more than our peer group – 37 hours annually, or the equivalent of nearly one week per year.

- Irish financial services em-

ployees work 5% more than our peer group – 76 hours annually, or the equivalent of nearly two weeks per year. Finally, let's look at relatively low working-hour sectors: (SEE FIG 4)

- Irish professional and technical employees work 1% more than our peer group – 11 hours annually, or the equivalent of less than two days per year.

- Irish administrative service employees work marginally less than our peer group – less than half-a-day per year.

- Irish hospitality employees work 3% less than our peer group – 53 hours less, or the equivalent of 1.4 weeks per year.

It should be noted that the hos-

pitality sector is likely to have high levels of precariousness. The problem here may be that full-time employees don't get enough work.

It's bad enough that we are over-worked compared to our peer group. But we also get fewer paid days off. (SEE FIG 5)

Annually, Irish workers get 88 fewer hours paid without working than our peer group average. That's the equivalent of 2.3 weeks fewer paid public holidays, annual holiday leave, etc.

Some might say this is the price we must pay to have a strong economy. However, other economies with far fewer working days and more paid days off have just as strong economies. (SEE FIG 6)

Belgium, which has the lowest annual hours worked and the highest number of paid days off, has the highest GDP per person employed (factoring in living costs).

In short,  
working  
more  
doesn't  
guarantee  
higher  
output.

On the other hand, the UK has the highest working hours and the fewest paid days off. Yet they are at the bottom. Ireland, while ranking third, is clumped together with a number of other countries which have fewer working hours and more paid days off.

In short, working more doesn't guarantee higher output.

Hopefully the debate over the future of the working week will gather pace. But one thing is for sure. Irish workers are already over-worked. What we need is fewer working hours and more paid time off. Now.



# Liberty View

## Raise the Roof for more public housing

Private rental costs are spiralling, the official number of homeless people is now over 10,000 including more than 3000 children, and the Government has failed to reach any of the building targets for public housing it set out in its Rebuilding Ireland plan almost three years ago.

New figures suggest that people in the private rental market are paying at least 27% of their monthly income for a roof over their heads with some in the major cities coughing up more than 40%. Meanwhile the so called 'rent cap' is being widely breached. For most people on modest or low incomes this leaves little or no money to meet every day needs, not to mind the cost of childcare or other necessities.

In a further blow to the credibility of government claims to have developed a sustainable housing policy, house prices have jumped by 8% in Dublin and 6% state-wide over the past year, making it more difficult for people even on higher incomes to purchase a home.

Then arrived a scathing letter to the Government in late March in which two respected UN investigators criticised the paucity of public housing programmes since 2008 and before. The letter from Surya Deva, chief rapporteur of the UN working group on human rights and transnational corporations

**It is widely accepted that the Government must invest some €2.5 billion each year over the next ten years to meet the needs of those on the social housing list and others on low and middle incomes who require affordable homes.**

and Leilani Farha, special rapporteur on adequate housing, is also a detailed critique of the National Asset Management Agency (NAMA) and its role in what the authors term the 'financialisation of housing' in Ireland.

They claimed that over 90 per cent of loans sold by NAMA, since its inception in 2009, have gone to international, mainly US funds. It

further stated that NAMA and the introduction of Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITS) as well as the sale of non-performing loans by State controlled banks, have contributed directly to the housing and homeless emergency.

"Our chief concern lies with those laws and policies which have allowed unprecedented amounts of global capital to be invested in housing as security for financial instruments that are traded on global markets, and as a means of accumulating wealth," the letter from Deva and Farha asserts.

"This expanding role and unprecedented dominance of unregulated financial markets and corporations in the housing sector is now generally referred to as the 'financialisation of housing' and it is having devastating consequences for tenants. Contrary to international human rights obligations, investment in housing in the Republic of Ireland has disconnected housing from its core social purpose of providing people with a place to live in with security and dignity."

The root cause of the State's failure to deliver decent, affordable housing is the blind allegiance of the main right-wing parties, and the well-endowed interests that support them, to the notion that private builders and developers, including global investment funds, will supply the number of homes required to meet demand.

This ideological myopia flies in the face of reality but it also masks the deeper malaise in housing policy over several decades which has arisen over the decision to abandon the traditional role of the State through its local authorities to deliver social and affordable housing.

It is widely accepted that the Government must invest some €2.5 billion each year over the next ten years to meet the needs of those on the social housing list and others on low and middle incomes who require affordable homes. It is no accident that this is close to the amount put into the pockets of landlords through the HAP scheme and private builders and developers each year by the State.

Although this level of investment was endorsed by a majority Dáil vote in October

last year, the Fine Gael led government, after confidence and supply discussions with Fianna Fáil, refused to make provision for the amount required in Budget 2019. This, despite the support given by Fianna Fáil TD's to the opposition motion calling for this scale of investment as well as an end to forced evictions, proper rent controls and for the right to housing to be incorporated in law or in the Constitution.

These are the demands of the Raise the Roof campaign which involves trade unions,

**The Raise the Roof campaign has also held rallies in Cork in January and in Galway on Monday 8th April to coincide with similar motions at local authority meetings in the two cities and is planning a national rally in Dublin on Saturday, 18th May.**

progressive parties women's and students organisations as well as housing activist, NGO's and community groups across the country. The campaign held its first rally at Leinster House, Dublin on 3rd October 2018 when the Dáil motion was debated.

The Raise the Roof campaign has also held rallies in Cork in January and in Galway on Monday 8th April to coincide with similar motions at local authority meetings in the two cities and is planning a national rally in Dublin on Saturday, 18th May. SIPTU District Councils have also organised seminars to highlight the housing emergency across the country in recent weeks.

It is vital that SIPTU members as well as the broad mass of people who are affected by the housing emergency, whose family members and friends are also struggling to make ends meet on low and precarious earnings and keep a decent roof over their heads, support this campaign and rally. Only a radical change in government policy can solve the housing emergency.



# May's last roll of the Brexit dice



Chaos at Westminster: a hard – or no-deal – Brexit could mean a hard border on the island of Ireland with potentially disastrous consequences for workers North and South



By Lorraine  
Mulligan

## Border controls...

**THE SEPARATE** meetings on Brexit that took place recently between Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, and French President, Emmanuel Macron and then with German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, focused attention on the dilemma of reconciling Ireland's obligations under the Single Market and the imperative of avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

While both leaders maintained solidarity with the Irish government and the Taoiseach reiterated that no concrete plan has been worked out, some form of border controls may become inevitable if the House of Commons fails to reach an agreement to prevent a no-deal Brexit.

The Taoiseach has suggested that, if the UK crashes out on 12th April (according to a new timetable agreed at the last European Council), tariffs and customs duties could be collected online or through tax offices.

He also told the Dáil that Ireland would request that any checks on animals coming from the UK to



Northern Ireland should take place at Northern ports and that the island should be counted as a single unit with regard to phytosanitary standards.

Irish and EU negotiators are emphasising that the UK has obligations to uphold the Good Friday Agreement – whether or not there is a deal – but there is likely to be resistance from London and the DUP to any checks in Belfast.

Workers, North and South, remain deeply concerned about the impact of Brexit on jobs, cross-border travel and peace on the island.

## Another extension?

While the immediate risk of border checks remains worrying, recent political developments offer a lifeline. The British Prime Minister,

Theresa May, last week wrote to the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, asking for a further Brexit extension until the 30th June. The last European Council had granted a revised deadline of 22nd May, subject to ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement by Parliament before 29th March. However, this did not happen so the Prime Minister will present a request on Wednesday, 10th April, to the European Council for additional time, having conceded that the UK will participate in European Parliament elections if necessary. Under an alternative timeframe approved by the EU a cliff-edge crash out on 12th April can be avoided. The House of Commons has also voted several times to reject a no-deal Exit.

The length and nature of any extension to Brexit is now under debate. Donald Tusk has proposed the idea of a 'flexextension' up to April 2020 which could be shortened if the United Kingdom passes an Exit deal before then. However, France has emphasised the need for a credible plan and may insist on safeguards to prevent the United Kingdom – as a voting-member – disrupting big decisions on the EU budget and choice of Commission President. The German chancellor, Angela Merkel, said: "We have to be successful and we hope for a solution that we can agree together with the United Kingdom...where there is a will there's a way". Adding to the complexity is the fact that the House of Commons narrowly passed a Bill which gives MPs an opportunity to advise on the length of extension period that Theresa May should seek from the EU.

## Negotiations with the Labour Party.

The search for a way forward took a major turn when Theresa May reached out to the opposition leader, Jeremy Corbyn, for talks on a Brexit agreement. It remains to be seen whether compromise can be found. Already rancour and opposition are evident within both parties, with resignations by Tory

ministers and MPs and demands from across Labour that any deal should be subject to a peoples' vote.

There are indications that Labour could back the EU Withdrawal Agreement in return for guarantees about a customs arrangement with the EU and maintaining standards on workers and the environment. However, ground has not yet been given by Theresa May on a permanent customs relationship with the EU. It is also not clear whether Labour will insist on a confirmatory referendum.

Labour is pursuing assurances to prevent a new Tory leader ripping up any agreement that is reached with Theresa May. However, nothing would prevent a new leader seeking a mandate to take a different approach through a general election. Equally, the cabinet may not survive a shift to facilitate a customs union with the effect that a general election could be on the cards in the short-term. If talks fail, Theresa May will put forward options on how to proceed, among which may be her Withdrawal agreement, and she would be bound by the outcome of voting.



# Daltaí scoile amuigh ar stailc ar aon na haeráide



By Aoife Ní  
Shúilleabháin

**"Dóite, Báite, Cráite - Dúisigíl!"** Sin é a chan na daltaí iarbhunscoile ós cionn coicís ó shin agus iad amuigh ar na sráideanna ar stailc. D'fhág na mílte dalta a scoileanna an mhaidin céanna i mbailte ar fud na tíre agus iad ag glacadh páirt i stailc ildomhanda ar son na haeráide. Bhí teachtaireacht láidir acu ar an lá, sin é go bhfuil easpa gníomhaíocht ón rialtas ar athrú aeráide.

"Tá ár gcuid cinnirí polaitiúla dár dtreorú gan smaoineamh, tá uair na cinniúna chugainn maidir le todhchaí an chomhshaoil, tá siad ag geáitsíocht leis an phláinéad." Kumi Nadoo, Greenpeace.

Is gluaiseacht í seo a thosnaigh nach mór 9 mhí ó shin nuair a chuaigh Greta Thunberg, cailín óg ón tSualainn, ar stailc ar son na haeráide. Cailín sé mbliana déag í Greta agus shocraigh sí a scowl a fhágaint agus suí las muigh do

pharlaimint a tír le comhartha a bhí daite aici féin sa bhaile. Is iad na mic léinn ós na Stáit Aontaithe a thug an smaoineamh seo di nuair a chonaic sí iad ag siúl amach ós na scoileanna de bharr dlithe gunnaí atá sa tír. D'úsáid Greta Twitter agus Instagram chun a scéal a roinnt agus ní thóg sé i bhfad uaithe leannúint mór a fhás ar líne. Sular bhfad, tugadh cuireadh di labhairt ag cúpla ócáid cosúil le TEDxStockholm agus COP24 Climate Summit agus bhí sí fiú ag Davos chomh maith. D'fhás a leannúint níos mó arís nuair a d'ainmnigh Time Magazine í i measc na déagóirí is mó ag a bhfuil tionchar agus ó shin tá sí tar-éis an gníomhaíocht ildomhanda seo a spreagadh le daltaí agus daoine óg ar fud an domhan ag tógaint páirt i #FridaysForFuture agus iad ag eagrú stailc las muigh do hallaí cathracha ina mbailte féin gach Aoine.

Inár dtír féin is féidir linn a fheiscint go bhfuil fás mílteach tagtha ar an ngluaiseacht anseo agus is daoine óga is mó atá taobh thiar do. Tá siad á n-eagrú féin agus ag fáil gníomhach ar son na haeráide agus beartanna cliste nua-aimseartha á úsáid acu len



Daltaí scoile i mbun agóide i mBaile Átha Cliath mar pháirt don stailc ar son na haeráide a tharla ar fud na tíre ar an 15ú Márta. *Pictiúr: RollingNews.ie*

bhfeachtas a chur chun cinn. Mar phríomh aidhm, tá athruithe á lorg acu i dtaobh polasaithe an rialtais agus iad seo leagtha amach go soiléir acu. Sin iad go bhfágfar na breoslaí iontaise sa talamh agus cosc a chur ar aon bhonneagar breoslaí iontaise nua a thógaint, go mbeadh Éire ag brath ar 100%

d'fhuinneamh in-athnuaite faoi 2030 agus go bhfógraítear géarchéim aeráide agus go roinnfaí eolas ar seo i measc an phobal agus na scoileanna ar fad trí athchoiriú a dhéanamh ar an gcraclam. Tá siad ag iarraidh go dtuigfeadh an rialtas a fhreagracht anois agus polasaithe ceart a thabhairt isteach

le dul i ngleic leis na hathraithe atá romhainn.

Is ceannairí eagraíochtáí na hóige, cosúil le Aontas na nDaltaí Iarbhunscoile in Éireann atá mar chuid lárnach don bhfeachtas seo in Éirinn. Deir Sarah Harte, Uachtarán ANDIE, "Tháinig na mílte dalta amach don stailc aeráide, rud a thaispeáinann go dtuigeann siad an géar ghá atá le gníomhiú ar son na haeráide. Thug sé dóchas agus misneach dúinn chomh maith go bhfuair eamar tacaíocht ar an lá ó eagraíochtáí cosúil le SIPTU. Tá sé tábhachtach go seasaimid le chéile ar mhaithe lenár dtodhchaí."

I measc baill óg SIPTU, is cúis bród dúinne é go dtáinig ár gceardchumann amach agus go dtugadar tacaíocht dos na gníomhaithe óg ar an lá. Taispeáineann sé dlúpháirtíocht láidir idir na glúnta san aontas seo againne agus tá súil agam go spreagfaidh sé na ceardchumainn eile chun seasamh leo as seo amach. Tuigimid cé chomh tábhachtach atá sé seo mar i ndeireadh an lae, ní bheidh aon phoist ar fáil ar phláinéad atá marbh.

Save the Date!

## BUILDING A JUST TRANSITION

*The Case of Bord na Mona*

Major national conference on how we can tackle climate change and build a Just Transition model in Ireland.

**Tuesday 30 April 2019**  
**Bridge House Hotel, Tullamore**

The conference will look at the case of Bord na Mona and how we can use the principles of Just Transition to create new opportunities for the affected workers and the wider Midlands region, ensuring that no one is left behind in the transition to a low carbon economy.

The conference will feature worker representatives, key spokespersons from the major political parties, the international trade union movement and the Nevin Institute. A full programme will be published shortly.

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Irish Congress of Trade Unions

# Festival marks Limerick Soviet centenary

**IT'S REAL history and not a fairy-tale – a workers' soviet was once established in Limerick in the aftermath of World War One and the earth-shattering events in Russia.**

In April 1919, a general strike shook the city to its core. For two weeks local workers took over the reins of power, controlling food production and prices, setting up their own police force and even creating a currency.

They were fighting against the imposition of martial law by the British Army, following the death of trade unionist and republican Robert Byrne.

Tanks were placed on the bridges and the world's media looked on, predicting this could be the spark to ignite a socialist revolution across Ireland.

One hundred years on, the Limerick



Soviet 100 Festival is to celebrate this hidden history, and bring to life this heritage for a new generation.

A Festival spokesperson told **Liberty**: "The Festival will feature plays and films, podcasts and book

launches, workshops and debates, song and dance. Make sure to take part and help us rekindle the flame of revolution in Limerick."



# Securing best deals for the public good



By Senator  
Alice-Mary  
Higgins

**IRELAND** spends billions each year in public procurement. We should be getting the greatest possible benefit from public money spent in this way and making powerful use of the associated leverage.

EU Directives introduced in 2014 allow for a stronger social and environmental dimension to procurement by public bodies. Unfortunately, that potential has been underused and recent controversies have made it clear that we are not only missing opportunities, we are creating problems.

That is why, I brought forward a new Bill to place quality at the heart of public procurement in Ireland.

"Currently, contracting authorities usually chose between a 'price-quality' or a 'lowest price only' approach when designing calls for tender. The collapse of UK construction giant Carillion seems to have arisen among other things from underbidding to win public contracts and the subsequent liquidation of its Irish sub-contractor halted work on six important school projects here."

"An approach which automatically favours the lowest bidder tends to benefit companies which are in a position to put in an undercutting bid. Last year a health expert informed an Oireachtas committee that Irish laboratories tendering for cervical screening in



Placard at a protest about the Cervical-Check scandal outside Leinster House in September last year. Below: Carillion workers  
PICTURE: RollingNews.ie



Union activists protesting outside Irish Construction Excellence Awards in Dublin on 29th March 2019.  
Photo: Aoife

2007/8 were told they had scored highly on quality and turn around time but not on cost. The contract was subsequently awarded to a US provider.

My Contract Preparation and Criteria Bill would make 'price:quality' the default, requiring companies bidding for public contracts to compete on quality as well as price.

Public authorities can still opt for lowest price only but that requires sign off at senior level and a published rationale. The aim is to encourage more thought and accountability at an earlier stage in the process.

This does not mean that procurement becomes more expensive. In the Netherlands, where similar laws were introduced, 73% of contracts still went to a lower bidder but those companies also brought quality to the table. Researchers there found that a price:quality 'approach more than doubled the overall benefits to the public as purchaser.

In the case of the billions earmarked under the National Development Plan 2019-2027, the Bill raises the bar by setting a minimum target of 50% quality criteria on any major project.

There are wide definitions of quality under the EU Directives, but the Bill requires public authorities to give due consideration to guidelines from the Office of Government Procurement that contain established policy targets and commitments in areas such as climate change, employment and social inclusion.

Lastly, the Bill encourages greater awareness around the Public Sector Duty on Equality and Human

Rights by requiring public bodies to provide updates on that duty in their annual procurement reports.

This Bill is not only in line with EU law on procurement, it also reflects a wider momentum for change within Europe's economic policies.

It is increasingly clear that many economic mechanisms could be re-designed to deliver more for the collective common good. A strong, active interpretation of EU procurement law is one step in the right direction.

CervicalCheck is one example of how 'lowest price' may cost far more in the long run, including a deep personal cost for women affected

This is fundamentally about joined-up thinking. By changing the process and culture around public procurement we can deliver tangible benefits in terms of sustainability, standards and social impact. The Public Authorities and Utility Undertakings (Contract Preparation and Award Criteria) Bill 2019 passed in the Seanad on Wednesday 3rd April with the Government abstaining and all other parties supporting.

Alice-Mary Higgins is an independent Senator on the NUI panel and leader of the Civil Engagement Group.



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# Zmiany w prawie pracy i większa ochrona dla pracowników w Irlandii

W marcu weszły w życie przepisy gwarantujące wynagrodzenie i większą ochronę dla pracowników zatrudnionych na skrajnie elastycznych kontraktach. To wszystko dzięki długoletniej kampanii prowadzonej przez SIPTU oraz negocjacom z rządem. To też czytelny sygnał, że wspólne działanie może przynieść korzystane zmiany dla wielu pracowników.

Nowa ustawa ma za zadanie wzmocnić ochronę pracowników którzy do tej pory byli zatrudniani na elastycznych warunkach pracy, bez żadnej gwarancji godzin. Tak niestabilne warunki pracy nie pozwalały pracownikom na normalne życie i stabilne planowanie swojego dnia, czy tygodnia. W skrócie najważniejsze regulacje nowej ustawy the

Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2018 to:

- pracodawca w przeciągu 5 dni od rozpoczęcia przez pracownika pracy powinien go powiadomić na piśmie o stawce wynagrodzenia, o ilości godzin w ciągu dnia/tygodnia, które pracodawca przewiduje, że pracownik przepracuje, a także ogólny czas trwania kontraktu. Pracownik może złożyć skargę do Workplace Relations Commission, jeśli pracodawca nie dopełnił takiego obowiązku, albo podał fałszywe informacje w takim oświadczeniu. Co więcej pracownik nie może być karany, zwolniony albo gorzej traktowany, jeśli zdecyduje się dochodzić swojego prawa przed WRC.

- jeżeli pracownik został wezwany do pracy, ale

pracodawca jednak nie zaoferował mu ostatecznie godzin pracy – pracownik ma prawo do wynagrodzenia tak jakby przepracował trzy godziny

Zmiany w prawie to efekt inicjatywy oddolnej Network Młodych Pracowników SIPTU (Young Workers Networ), który w 2014 roku zainicjowali kampanię mającą na celu zwrócenie uwagi na katastrofalne warunki pracy oferowane młodym pracownikom: żadnych gwarancji godzin, częste sytuacje kiedy pracownik był wzywany do pracy tylko po to, żeby dowiedzieć się, że żadnych godzin pracy nie będzie. Tacy pracownicy byli zatrudniani na tzw 'If and when' kontraktach, gdzie pracownik teoretycznie nie zobowiązywał się do świadczenia pracy a pracodawca do oferowania

pracy. Takie 'śmieciowe umowy' częste były w takich sektorach jak turystyka, hotelarstwo, sprzedaż detaliczna, opieka, albo nawet w szkolnictwie wyższym.

Kampania trwała pięć lat, i zakończyła się podpisaniem ustawy w 2018 przez Prezydenta Irlandii. Podczas negocjacji z przedstawicielami rządu związki zawodowe były w stanie wykazać, że 'umowy śmieciowe' to nie margines na rynku pracy, i przekonać, że bardzo potrzebna jest interwencja ustawodawcza rządu.

Sama ustawa jednak to nie wszystko. Żeby zapewnić jej respektowanie – do tego potrzebny jest dobry mechanizm wprowadzenia przepisów w życie. Podobnie jak odpowiedni mechanizm by móc

przeskoczyć na inny poziom - pracować na stałych umowach ze stałą ilością godzin. Dlatego tak ważne jest, by organizować się w związki zawodowe i być aktywnym w ich strukturach. Związki pomogą zadbać, by pracodawca szanował regulacje prawne. Związki mogą wesprzeć działania mające na celu zapewnienie dobrych warunków pracy. Organizowanie w związki często zaczyna się od jednej osoby, która przyciąga inne. To początek wszelkich zmian, które zostały później wprowadzane w życie. Jeśli chcesz dowiedzieć się więcej o zmianach w prawie napisz do autora artykułu na email: bdorda@siptu.ie



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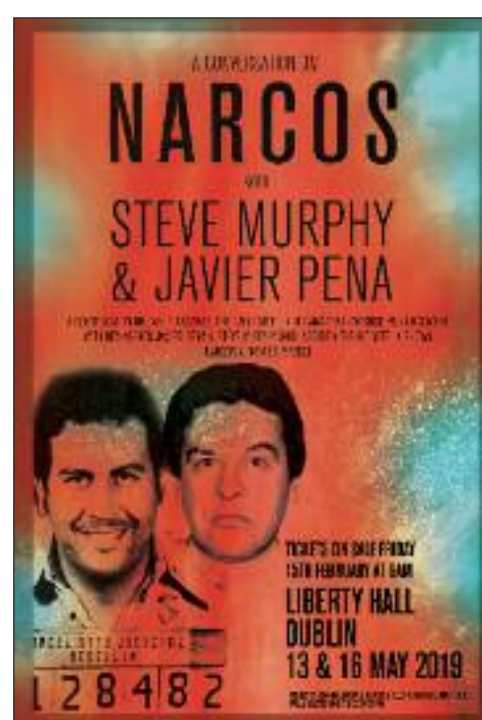
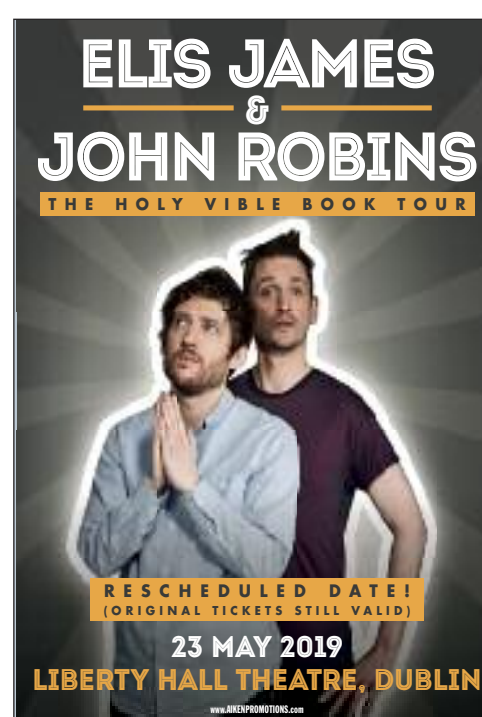
The Union Premium and the  
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Dr Eugene Hickland, DCU

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# One in 10 Uyghurs behind the wire

■ By Isabella Jackson

**AT LEAST one million Muslims in western China are currently incarcerated, without due legal process, in purpose-built high security camps. They have committed no crime, but are treated as criminals simply for following Islamic customs.**

China is no stranger to human rights abuses, but the scale of this systematic oppression makes it probably the greatest violation of human rights since the death of Mao. Some inmates are now being coerced into poorly paid labour.

The UN recently completed its regular review of human rights in China, in which it heard from Amnesty International that Uyghurs (the main Muslim ethnic group in Xinjiang, north western China) are "charged with 'separatism' for peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression and maintaining their cultural identity."

Fasting during Ramadan, giving a child a Muslim name, attending a mosque for worship, advertising halal food, refusing to eat or sell non-halal food, growing a beard, or possessing a Koran or other Islamic items in the home can all result in someone being labelled an extremist.

Initially, young men were targeted, but more recently young women have also been widely imprisoned, leaving some villages with almost no young adult Uyghurs. Approximately one in 10 Uyghurs are now in detention.

Many of those still at home are living in fear and will not speak to outsiders about their faith, culture, or what the state is doing. The surveillance regime is total: Human Rights Watch reported to the UN that the Xinjiang authorities are mandating the collection of DNA samples, fingerprints, iris scans and blood types of all residents in the region aged 12-65 years.

Han Chinese have been sent to stay with Uyghur families to check for any signs of religious practice.

As part of the UN review, 13 member states, including Ireland, recommended that China grant full access for UN inspectors to investigate treatment of Muslims in Xinjiang. Germany and the USA went further, demanding that the camps must close and arbitrary detention must end. The absence of all southern and most eastern EU states from the list of countries to raise the issue is disappointing. Turkey has recently joined calls for the camps to close, though not through the UN. China's response



Expat Uyghurs demonstrate close to the White House against a visit to the US by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2015. Right: elderly Uyghur man

PICTURES: Elvert Barnes

Initially young men were targeted, but more recently young women have also been widely imprisoned, leaving some villages with almost no young adult Uyghurs



Beijing has indicated that the camps may eventually close. International pressure is needed to ensure this happens soon

The current regime dates to 2016 when the former Party Secretary of Tibet moved to Xinjiang, instigated a vast expansion of policing and oversaw the rapid construction of large numbers of detention camps. China initially denied the camps existed until faced with incontrovertible evidence from satellite images of high-security camps and the government's own procurement records online calling for large quantities of barbed wire, pepper spray, police batons, handcuffs, stun guns, and surveillance systems. Beijing then launched a propaganda drive demonstrating the alleged benefits of the 'vocational' training in the camps.

China does respond to international pressure: some detainees have been released where they have been the subject of targeted petitioning, although they are often kept under house arrest.

Small numbers of other detainees have also been released, but on condition that they work in specific, live-in factories for low pay and without freedom to come and go. Factories have been established within or adjacent to detention camps.

Beijing has indicated that the camps may eventually close. International pressure is needed to ensure this happens soon and that forced labour is not the new face of Muslim repression in Xinjiang.



Xinjiang province in the far north west of China. Above: Uyghur men in a detention camp

Wikipedia Map: (CC BY-SA 3.0)

to the UN's recommendations is revealing. It says that what it calls "vocational skills education and training institutions" help "the few people who had been exposed to and affected by extremism to shake off terrorist and extremist

thoughts." It continues: "Instead of cracking down upon these people after they became terrorists and a danger to others and to society, these institutions helped them reintegrate into society, rather than becoming hard-core terror-

ists." This is essentially an admission that the detainees have committed no crime but thought crimes. Beijing argues that the camps should be understood as "another important contribution by China to the international counter-terrorism endeavour," implying that its proactive approach is superior to western counter-terror methods. Rather, it seems likely that mass incarceration and the attempted obliteration of Islam will push at least some Muslims towards extremism.

The Chinese government views all foreign religions with a degree of suspicion, particularly Islam since a rise in religious practice in Xinjiang in the 1990s accompanied growing calls for autonomy from Beijing and even independence, sometimes violently expressed.

After 9/11, Beijing linked this movement to global jihadism, legitimising its attempts to control the Uyghur population. The 'War on Terror' was a boon for Beijing.

*Isabella Jackson is Assistant Professor in Chinese History at Trinity College Dublin*



# Visiting Western Saharan delegation meets politicians and trade unionists



A DELEGATION from Western Sahara led by the occupied country's Minister of Foreign Affairs for Europe, Mohamed Sidati and the Ambassador to Europe, Mohamed Beissat visited Ireland in March.

The country's president, Brahim Ghali, leader of the Polisario Front, was to head the delegation but the Irish Embassy in Spain did not issue his visa in time.

During their visit, the delegation met President Michael D Higgins at Aras an Uachtaráin. President Higgins has a long connection with Western Sahara, having visited the region and written about its illegal occupation by Morocco on a number of occasions.

The delegation also met Sinn Féin president, Mary Lou McDonald; Labour Party leader, Brendan



Western Saharan delegation also met with Sinn Féin president, Mary Lou McDonald, above, and Labour Party leader Brendan Howlin



Mohamed Sidati and Mohamed Beissat with President Michael D. Higgins

Howlin, as well as Richard Boyd Barrett TD, Niall Collins TD, and senators, Alice Mary Higgins, Ivana Bacik and Frances Black.

The delegation sought support for an Oireachtas resolution which would have Ireland recognise Western Sahara as a sovereign state.

During their visit, the delegation informed members of the Oireachtas and SIPTU representatives

about the activities of Irish-headquartered oil company, San Leon, in the region as well as disturbing information on the expansion of Morocco's illegal occupation of Western Sahara.

It is hoped that the President of Western Sahara will be granted a visa shortly to meet with President Higgins and other political and trade union representatives, as had been initially planned.

## Senator Black speaks to UN about Palestine Bill

Independent Senator Frances Black spoke at the United Nations in New York on Thursday, 4th April, about the Occupied Territories Bill.

The Senator proposed this bill in January 2018, and it passed through all stages of the Seanad at the end of last year.

The Bill passed its second stage in the Dáil in January 2019 with

overwhelming cross-party support. It would prohibit Irish commercial involvement with illegal settlements in Palestinian and the occupied territories.

Senator Black spoke on the question of Palestine, setting out viable and practical steps for the international community to prevent its *de facto* annexation by Israel.

During her visit to the US, Senator Black also countered claims by pro-Israel members of Congress about the potential negative implications of the legislation for US multi-nationals in Ireland.

The Occupied Territories Bill is currently going through Committee stage in the Dáil and will be put to a further vote in the coming months.



Senator Frances Black speaking at the UN

## Presentation to retired members in Galway in appreciation of long service



Back row from left: Padraig Browne, Helen Murphy, John James McLoughlin, Cathy McEvey, Imelda Vesey, John McTiernan, Eleanor Finn, John Redmond, John Moynihan. Front Row from left; Paddy Moran, Brid Carr, Tim O'Regan and Diane Jackson.



Alan Billington, from Bray, county Wicklow, who has recently retired from the National Ambulance Service after 40 years of service receiving his 25 year badge and scroll from SIPTU Organiser, Derek Casserly.



Shop steward, Sarah McInerney, organising at Virgin Media, Limerick.



# The Border

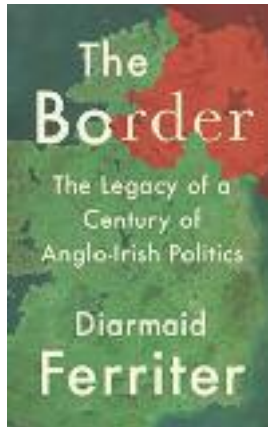


By Michael  
Halpenny

**The Border:**  
The Legacy of a Century of  
Anglo-Irish Politics  
By Dairmaid Ferriter  
Published by Profile Books

Fourteen years after the introduction of Free State customs tariffs in 1923, a young man was charged with the destruction of the Irish customs post at Carrickarnon north of Dundalk in July 1937. It was alleged by the prosecution that this was part of a "spectacular" by a resurgent IRA, destroying border customs installations from Carlingford to Donegal to mark the visit of the new King George VI to the Belfast. Their "welcome" became known as the "Bonfire on the Border".

However, when the case came up in the Circuit Criminal Court, the 22 year old defendant, with no legal training and only a Primary cert, successfully defended himself. He did so by that simple but sometimes neglected legal device of knowing the facts of the case. And the salient fact of these proceedings was that the ordinance survey map for the area showed that the Free State border post was



built in the North. The court therefore had no jurisdiction to hear the case, the learned judge announced that the accused had "scored a bullseye" and defendant was acquitted by the jury.

An interesting, even hilarious, legal anecdote which nevertheless points up the irrationality of a border which was executed in haste and apparent practical ignorance by those tasked with its administration.

Diarmuid Ferriter's book "The Border" explains how an original proposal for the temporary "exclusion" from Home Rule of up to six counties of Ulster received the nod from John Redmond's Irish Parliamentary Party. Ulster Unionists later accepted partition as the best they could do if Ireland as whole could not be retained within what has since been termed by their

DUP successors as "their precious union".

However, as Ferriter points out, that connection was seen then and now as far less than precious and more of an expedient by the government at Westminster. In 1920 Philip Kerr, trusted adviser to the then Prime Minister David Lloyd George, said the Government of Ireland Act establishing Northern Ireland "would accomplish two essential things: it would take Ulster out of the Irish question which it had blocked for a generation and it would take Ireland out of English (sic) party controversies". So, Lloyd George, the "Welsh Wizard" waved his conjurors wand. But, his magic trick didn't do what it said on the tin- on either count. Rather, as the author explains, the PM's "wizard wheeze" only shelved the problem to bedevil English (and Irish) poli-

Actors playing Custom Officers check traffic during an anti-Brexit protest at Carrickarnon, county Louth, last month



PICTURE: RollingNews.ie

tics to this day -as we all know to our cost.

The product of all this and the outcome of the War of Independence were two states on the island: the Irish Free State and six counties statelet of Northern Ireland, accepted by hard line Unionists as a construct to "keep Ulster Protestant". However even from the get go it was made clear to the British cabinet its inhabitants were to be on a different "footing as citizens of Great Britain- subject to a different regime"-Irony to say the least in light of the DUP position on Brexit.

Dividing both new states was a border of 500 kilometres, based on county lines established through conquest and plantation in the 16th and 17th century, cutting towns from their hinterland, even dividing farms and houses. At the

latest count in 2018 there are 208 border crossings with only around 16 "approved". That's one for every two and half kilometres.

Behind this protective but porous frontier northern Nationalists were discriminated against in employment, housing and politics. Even a moderate Nationalist like Eddie McAteer identified with the description of Derry in 1945 as "Ireland's Fascist City". Many felt callously betrayed by the Free State "midwives" of partition, who maintained it was "a damn good bargain". Later successive Dublin governments merely postured and all bear a measure of responsibility for the abandonment of northern Nationalists and workers generally to the cold house that was Northern Ireland.

This intensely readable, short and practical book should join the essential reading list for those, who, engage in debate on Brexit or Irish unity.

The first for shaving here should be the British government and those who, like Nigel Farage, gave no thought at all to the North during the referendum and who, when asked, replied "What problem? There is no problem"

Well they know now.

A lad with a Primary cert could have told them that.

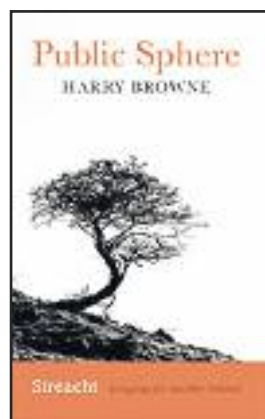
# Bias in old and new media

**Public Sphere**  
By Harry Browne

**HARRY Browne is a senior lecturer in media, a writer and an activist who has made frequent contributions to public debate and the battle for ideas in a changing Ireland.**

His latest work poses the question of what is to be done to ensure that media activity and activism have a positive social influence in a public sphere or space which is in transformation.

It is essentially a call for critical thought and examination about media, its exercise and ownership. In doing so he looks at both "old" (e.g. traditional print newspapers) and "new" media (e.g. internet and



digital platforms).

Part of his focus is on what he terms the "economics of attention" where getting us to continually look and click is the central objective.

And, although it sticks in his craw to do so, the author admits the fact that Donald Trump has

proved himself a master of the, albeit darker, side of that particular art and "is the nearest thing we have to a centre point for a global public sphere".

He looks under the bonnet of media practice in contemporary Ireland and the way in which media deals with events. In a section titled 'Covering Protest' he ex-

plains the largely working-class anti-water charges movement and the Jobstown protest in particular.

Drawing on original research he analyses the press reaction to the perceived more middle-class demonstrations against the war in Iraq finding it initially more benevolent and then less so as mass protest gave way to activism at Shannon Airport, the major transit

stop for Iraq-bound US troops.

In another section, 'We All Partied', its very title calculated to send most of us into orbit, he discusses the role of media in inflating the property bubble and the risky behaviour by the financial services sector that led to the crash of 2007. As much a watchdog that didn't bark as one that rolled over for a good belly tickle and a large dollop of commercial advertising revenue.

Separately he discusses another indispensable topic: media ownership, its concentration and dominance and the role of global players, such as Rupert Murdoch and more home-grown ones, like Denis O'Brien.

As to the developing future he poses the question as to whether

"happy clappy" online pluralism and the new kid on the block, the "citizen journalist", are all they're cracked up to be. Both the illusory former and the unpaid latter, essential components of the new "communicative capitalism" where we are all "content providers".

Nevertheless, though the overall analysis is challenging, he ends by offering some hope. The media, now fractured and mistrusted, won't fix democracy but it might leave some space where we can begin to fix it ourselves.

If it did, that would be something, but the trade union and left movement still has to trust to its own resources. Nobody's going to do our job for us.

**Michael Halpenny**



# Manchester's Bloody Sunday

**Peterloo**  
Directed by Mike Leigh

IN THE summer of 1960 my older brother's school in Ardwick, Manchester, held their speech day in the city's Free Trade Hall.

The original hall (now the Radisson Hotel) was built as a temple to the virtues of free trade, albeit conducted by a relatively "radical" capitalist class.

Nearby was the former St Peter's Fields where, my mother pointed out, what we would now call pro-democracy or civil rights protesters, calling for "one man, one vote", were attacked by British government forces on Monday 16th August, 1819.

The marchers were mostly working class men, women and children, from the mills of industrial Lancashire, some of them, she said,

Of the 60,000 peaceful demonstrators that summer's day, 15 were killed and 600 were wounded, some seriously.

immigrant Irish just like us.

Of the 60,000 peaceful demonstrators that summer's day, 15 were



Before the cavalry were unleashed: scene from Mike Leigh's Peterloo

killed and 600 were wounded, some seriously. In a bitter take on Wellington's victory over Napoleon at Waterloo four years earlier, it was called Peterloo. It was Manchester's 'Bloody Sunday'.

While much of the detail was lost on my then 11-year-old self, the terrible but proud core message from my republican mother, Maire, was not. It was, and – in its bi-centenary year – remains, a landmark in the working-class and radical history of these islands, not least because of the contribution of generations of migrant Irish workers to that story.

The period after the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815 was turbulent to say the least. Post-war depression meant less work, particularly for returning ex-servicemen, as well as wage cuts for those in employment. Bad harvests and the greed of landowners in particular were problem enough, but the Corn Laws which protected high bread prices and prohibited cheaper corn imports created a per-

fect storm for workers who had no voice in Parliament to articulate their just grievances.

It was material to fuel a mass campaign for civil and economic rights. Any such movement for democracy, at a time when a tiny segment of the population elected the House of Commons, would be seen as a challenge to the establishment and the government. And it was.

Mike Leigh's film opens on the field of Waterloo. A young soldier suffering from what is now termed Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder makes his way home to working-class Manchester and his mother, Nellie, played by Maxine Peake ('Silk', 'The Theory of Everything').

It is a bleak landscape which would do justice to the "dark satanic mills" of the radical English poet, William Blake's, "And did those feet in ancient times..." and was no land fit for the "heroes" of Waterloo.

However, if there is crushing hardship, there is also hope as

Any such movement for democracy, at a time when a tiny segment of the population elected the House of Commons, would be seen as a challenge to the establishment and the government. And it was..

workers and middle class, radicals and reformers organise to confront their grievances and petition Parliament.

Cometh the hour and cometh the man in the person of one of the great "reformers" of the day, Henry 'Orator' Hunt (Rory Kinn-

ear). But much more impressively cometh the people as well, abandoning work where they have it, from surrounding towns and villages and converging with band and banner on St Peter's Fields.

The government under Lord Sidmouth (Karl Johnson) is aided by a cabal of spies, informers, hanging judges and blood-thirsty military,

The government under Lord Sidmouth (Karl Johnson) is aided by a cabal of spies, informers, hanging judges and blood-thirsty military, who would score 10 on the Richter Scale of villainy.

who would score 10 on the Richter Scale of villainy. What workers see as just, they see as insurrection.

The inevitable and terrible confrontation sees cavalry unleashed on peaceful marchers in an epic scene in which Mike Leigh ('Mr Turner') pays powerful homage, not just to his own home place, but to a savage but proud chapter in the history of his people.

Michael Halpenny

Gúna Nua Theatre Company presents

## Bread Not Profits

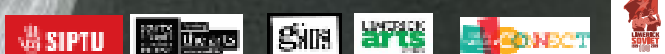
Cleeve's Factory 17<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> April 7.30pm

Limerick, April 1919

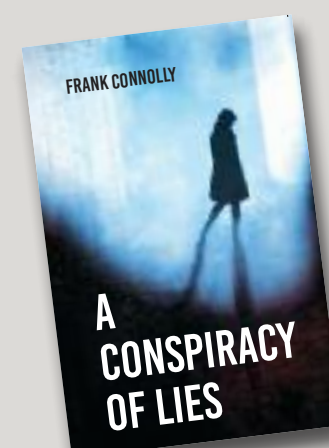
The world watches as a city takes on an empire

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



Out now: A novel by SIPTU Head of Communications, Frank Connolly.





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.

## The Dublin Housing Uprising

Photographic Exhibition  
Liberty Hall Theatre  
7.30 p.m.

Director of Rollingnews.ie and former Dublin Housing Action Committee activist, Eamon Farrell, will launch a photographic exhibition focusing on the housing crises in 20th century and 21st century in Dublin. The photographs will not only show the impact of the crises but highlight the activist and trade union campaigns they have provoked.



**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. Padraig 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**

## Football Lads and Lassies Against Fascism – promoting anti-racism and working class politics within football

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

SIPTU Sport hosts an evening of discussion on the promotion of anti-racism and working class politics within football fan culture. Journalist Kevin Brannigan will interview Willie and Lee of Football Lads and Lassies Against Fascism (FLAF) on the trade union supported campaign against the infiltration of football fan culture in the UK by the far-right, and Jelena Đureinović on the situation in the former Yugoslavia and in Ireland.



**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.

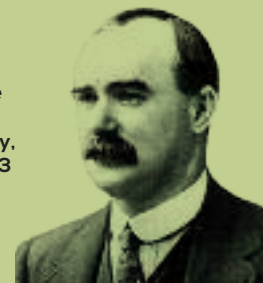
Lively discussion and music from the Irish punk community with a focus on positive progressive social change.

**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.



Presented by:



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



## TRIBUTE

Pat Laffan

# An incredible force in Irish Theatre

**IRISH actor and director Pat Laffan has sadly "shuffled off this mortal coil" after an incredible career spanning six decades.**

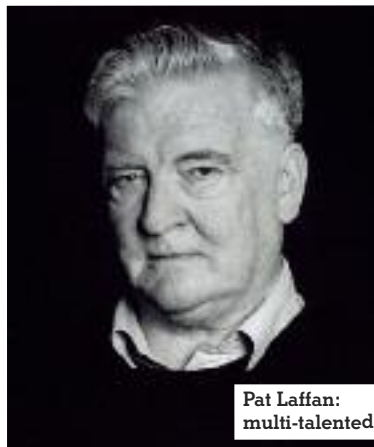
He grew up on a farm in county Meath and, after graduating from the Department of Engineering in UCD, began his career in the Abbey Theatre – despite his mother, allegedly, begging Ernest Blythe to sack him!

Pat became a prolific theatre actor and was the Director of the Peacock Theatre in the 1970s. On

leaving the Abbey he directed in the Gate Theatre until 1982 and later joined the board of the Gaiety School of Acting.

I had the privilege of sharing a dressing room with him at the Gate – and "survived" the long run. Pat didn't suffer fools gladly or otherwise, but there was always a mischievous twinkle in the eyes and, if he liked you, you were a friend for life.

My lasting memory is his performance as Brendan Bracken on radio. I was lucky enough to play



Pat Laffan:  
multi-talented

PICTURE: RollingNews.ie

Churchill opposite him and his generosity as an actor was enormous.

While Pat is perhaps still best remembered as Mr. Burgess in *The Snapper*, he had 70 film and television credits to his name and was at home in comic or dramatic roles with equal aplomb.

He has, quite rightly, been described as an incredible force in Irish Theatre. He was also an incredible force on the cricket field and not always with bat and ball – more intimidating was his fero-

cious glare at erring umpires and wayward bowlers. His Presidency of the Theatrical Cavaliers cricket team was legendary.

A valued and supportive member of Irish Actors Equity, he will be sorely missed in every walk of life, over which he loomed large, passing on his expertise to the benefit of other generations of actors. The whole of the acting profession is indebted to Pat's dedication, multi-talents, wit and pure professionalism.

**Laurence Foster**



**THE JIM CONNELL SOCIETY**

## 21st Jim Connell Festival weekend

**Friday 3rd - Sunday 5th May 2019**

A weekend for Trade Unionists and Socialists. Debate, discussion, food, music and speeches in the town of Kells and the village of Crossakiel celebrating the life of Jim Connell, the man who wrote the socialist anthem - The Red Flag.

For more information visit the Jim Connell Society Facebook page



**Dublin Council of Trade Unions**

# MAY DAY!

**- March and Rally -**

## Housing for all!

**Make housing a legal right**

**Build public housing**

**No evictions**

**Rent control and secure tenure**

**7pm, Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> May 2019**

**Garden of Remembrance**

**Parnell Square, Dublin**

**Trade union, community and housing speakers**

**March behind your union or campaign banner**  
**'Mayfest' music and socialising in Liberty Hall after the rally**  
**March with 'Raise The Roof' on 18<sup>th</sup> May**



**Dublin Council of Trade Unions, Mandela House, 44, Gardiner Street, Dublin 1.**  
email: dctuforum@gmail





Photos: 1815 FC members and supporters in the Liberties in Dublin

# Football against the developers



By Kevin  
Brannigan

**Dublin city has long traded off the folklore myth of 'street football'. The phrase used to conjure up images of John Giles weaving in and out of the fruit market, ball at his feet, as he takes his first steps towards infamy.**

But the same inner-city square where Giles learned his trade now boasts a 'No Football Here' warning. It's hard to have things both ways.

Football in Dublin city has a paradoxical life. While pubs throughout the city and suburbs pack out for Sky TV Manchester United v Liverpool encounters the cities own top flight clubs have spent decades just trying to stay alive.

At the time of writing, though, the cities two old rivals Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians occupy the top two positions in the league table and both are seeing a surge in crowds – Bohs putting up the 'sold out' signs at each home game this season.

The tacky non-culture of the Celtic Tiger generation, brought up to strive for weekend shopping trips to New York and Saturday's spent consuming the English Premier League, is slowly ebbing away. Something is happening in the city.

In his review of Dublin band Fontaines DC debut album *Dogrel* for the Irish Times, music journalist Eamon Sweeney was brought to comment on the atmosphere of the moment.

"The stark reality is that the Fontaines DC generation are adrift in a hyper-capitalist playground of extortionate rents and shameful levels of homelessness, and governed by a political elite who are chronically addicted to optics and spin. *Dogrel* taps into Dublin's rich humour and character. It is a cracking debut that attempts to reclaim the city's soul," Sweeney wrote.

Just across the Liffey from John Giles birthplace in Ormond Square another group is engaging in that same battle for the city's soul.

Pitting those who believe the 'street football' ethos should be nourished and used as a rallying cry to how we use our inner city green and grey public spaces and a property development consortium

which reigned supreme during the Celtic Tiger years of ego fuelled building.

In the heart of Dublin's Liberties district, nestled between flats adorned with the names of mar-

football collective '1815 FC', which has been playing regularly on the Vicar Street site, have chosen to take a stand.

One of the collective's founders, Gav Fahy, outlined how they came

was important to get people out and into their public spaces," Fahy told Liberty.

From speaking to Gav it was clear that the group fits into the narrative of young people no longer willing to be tied down by outdated bureaucracy of a city that caters for private interest first.

"Dublin City Council make it very hard to utilize public space in the city. When we were making the map of available public pitches, not a single person who picked up the phone at Wood Quay (Dublin City Council Head Office) had a clue about any of the 16 pitches in the city," he said. "From a year of playing across the city we've found most public space is built to keep 'anti' social behaviour out and in doing so detracts people from using them for social behaviour."

As Euro 2020 comes into view and Dublin gears up to host group games at Lansdowne Road the cities 'street football' myth will once again be rolled out.

By that time, a hotel will more than likely occupy the Vicar Street site.



tyrs of 1916 and the Vicar Street music venue, lies an open space that has been let go to rot but remains an area utilised by local kids and footballers playing pick-up games. Now though it looks set to become yet another hotel, in a city unable to offer any solution to the spiralling housing crisis.

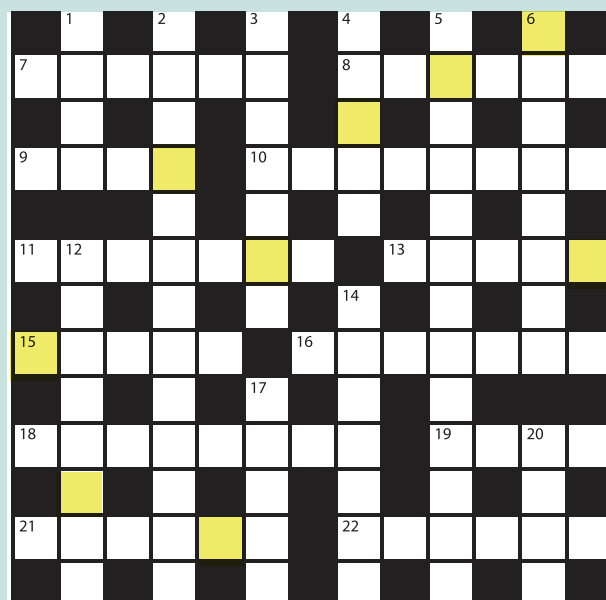
While locals and progressive TDs are leading the fight for the future of their area a Sunday afternoon

together in the first place.

"The club came from the love of the beautiful game, the culture that surrounds it and a desire to play it on our own terms. We play on one of 16 free available public street football pitches between Dublin's canals every second Sunday. Through Sunday Football, 1815 F.C. has grown into a community of friends and footballers of all ages and backgrounds. For us, it



# Liberty Crossword



## ACROSS

- 7 Irish city of USA (6)
- 8 Away from their home (6)
- 9 What comes to mind (4)
- 10 Counts the cost of energy (3,5)
- 11 Not rich. (7)
- 13 Barter (5)
- 15 Pine product (5)
- 16 On deck (7)
- 18 The western ocean (8)
- 19 Export tax (4)
- 21 Talents (6)
- 22 An ineffectual person (6)

## DOWN

- 1 Empty (4)
- 2 To advance in a considered fashion (13)
- 3 Armoured horse warriors (7)
- 4 Cymraeg (5)
- 5 Second in command (4,9)
- 6 Executed by cut to the neck (8)
- 12 To move pass (8)
- 14 Can be swapped for goods (7)
- 17 Hiding place (5)
- 20 \_\_ shop (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 February issue was Pdraig Ring, Cork. Answer: LAEKSA

# Fintan Lalor Pipe Band

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Learners in both disciplines also welcome



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of the trade union  
movement



The Fintan Lalor pipe band as seen on 1913 Lockout Tapestry

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Cois Life Bar, Liberty Hall  
Wed 17<sup>th</sup> April - 7.30pm



Tony Mac Mahon

The Clé Club celebrates **Tony Mac Mahon's 80th birthday** and his unique lifetime contribution to Irish traditional music. We look forward to seeing Tony's many friends and admirers at this special evening. The tribute will feature **Peader Ó Riada, John Kelly, Eamon Mc Givney, Seán Keane, Peter Browne, Paddy Glackin, The Dublin Lasses, Cormac Begley** and many other musicians and singers on the night

**Fear a' Ti - Mick O'Connor**  
Assisted by Des Geraghty

7.30pm - 11pm - Subscription €5 - no pre booking / Doors open at 7.00pm - Limited places  
Contact Sally [cleclub@gmail.com](mailto:cleclub@gmail.com) [cleclub.home.blog](http://cleclub.home.blog)

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