

Liberty

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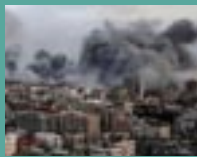
November 2023

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Fighting for the Future of Work

■ by Frank Connolly

Hundreds of SIPTU members from across the country will gather in Galway next week for the Biennial Delegate Conference of the union.

The conference takes place following a year of successful gains for union members in the retained fire service, the health, community and childcare sectors and significant pay rises across employments in services, manufacturing, transport and construction.

Union members have battled to ensure that wages keep track of the vicious cost of living increases in food, energy, fuel and other essential goods and services across the economy, North and South.

The theme of this year's conference is 'fighting for the future of work' and it will address motions that grapple with some of these and other challenges facing workers and the labour movement in the decades to come.

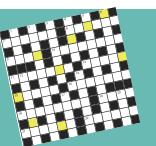
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Ceasefire Now! Over 10,000 people including more than 4,000 children have been killed in Gaza by Israeli forces since 7th October. See pages 18-19.

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WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE
1800 747 881
8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.,
Monday - Friday
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Photo from left to right: Marie Jackman (CE Supervisor), John McGrath (CE Supervisor and Chair of the National Committee), Lynda Scully (Community Worker and NEC member).

CE workers paid too little for too much

A survey of over 1000 Community Employment workers has laid bare the challenges facing people working in the sector. The survey carried out by the SIPTU Community Sector found that a large majority of employees believe they are underpaid and are expected to be available after normal working hours.

Speaking at the launch of the results attended by 200 SIPTU union members in Liberty Hall Theatre on Thursday, 2nd November, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary John King said:

"The resolve and strength community sector members have shown over the last number of years was a key factor in delivering the recent proposal to restore the pay linkage between the community

sector employments and public service.

At the event, SIPTU Organiser, Clem Shevlin told Liberty:

"All community workers deserve a pay rise, but they also need to have a better work-life balance. Over 72 percent of workers surveyed are being contacted out of hours and are working an average of 6.5 hours per week unpaid. That is simply unacceptable."

Damien Dempsey and Lankum to headline Gig for Gaza

Some of Ireland's leading artists will assemble at the 3arena on Tuesday, November 28th for a special Gig for Gaza. Damien Dempsey, Lankum, the Mary Wallopers, Lisa O'Neill and Pauline Scanlon are among the

headline acts for a concert organised by Irish Artists for Palestine in response to the latest brutal assault on Gaza by the Israeli military.

All proceeds from the gig will go to the Medical Aid for

Palestinians charity, with tickets going on sale in early November.

To get your ticket, visit [ticketmaster.ie](https://www.ticketmaster.ie). You can find further information at [irishartistsforpalestine.com](https://www.irishartistsforpalestine.com)

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At the conference SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham, will outline proposals for a new economic model that recognises, respects and rewards those who contribute most to society through their labour.

"We need to insist that workers did not cause this cost-of-living crisis or indeed the previous financial collapse which were the result of greed, profiteering and exploitation by the few at the expense of the many in society," Joe Cunningham said.

"At the conference, we will discuss this issue as well as the basic right of workers to organise in trade unions which is essential if we are to ensure that the future of work is in high quality, productive and well rewarded employment."

International guests include Esther Lynch, the General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, Mick Lynch, General Secretary of the RMT in Britain and Omar Barghouti from Palestine and co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement.

The battle against precarious work is the subject of numerous motions, with one calling for the elimination of temporary and fixed-term contracts where they have taken the place of permanent employment. Other motions call for direct labour to be prioritised in public service agreements and construction, as well as tackling low wages in the higher education sector.

Delegates will discuss the need for the union to mainstream the issues of women workers in collective bargaining as well as placing greater emphasis on young workers in the union. There will also be calls for the Government to establish a Commissioner for Ageing and Older People and a motion reaffirming SIPTU's support for the Pension Promise campaign.

The union's ongoing activism across wider society, from the fight against the far-right to the current crisis in Gaza as well as the Raise the Roof campaign for massive investment in public and affordable housing will also feature at the three-day conference in the Galmont Hotel, Galway.

See page 14.

Community service workers ballot on major pay offer

After the Section 39 strike was halted by a late-night deal at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), SIPTU members will now be balloted on a significantly improved offer.

The WRC offer includes cumulative pay increases exceeding 8 percent for members by March 2024, as well as arrears on the payment of 3 percent dating back to 1st April.

It also includes provisions for pay parity discussions to take place by 1st December, 2023 which will explore further adjustments in funding for organisations and their staff, in addition to a government commitment to sustainable funding for the sector.

As part of the agreement, the Government recognised that the pay of workers in Section 39, 10 and 56 organisations had fallen behind equivalent and comparable grades in public service organisations.

"The significance of this cannot



be overstated," SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Kevin Figgis, said. "Before us we have the opportunity of securing not only substantial pay increases but also a sustainable funding model that has been a core objective throughout

this campaign.

"This pivotal moment is likely to transform the landscape for funding and pay within the Section 39 sector," Figgis added. "It is crucial to recognise the magnitude of this opportunity. It is not just a

proposal, it's a gateway to securing a sustainable future for the sector and our members within it."

The history of this dispute is one of resilience and solidarity. For many years, Section 39 workers had pay parity with their colleagues in the public service. In 2010, they experienced the strain of pay reductions as part of cost-containment measures and in line with the public service.

However, while public servants saw pay restoration and progression through union-negotiated agreements, Section 39 workers were left behind. "Wage cuts, unilaterally imposed more than a decade ago, have been reversed across the economy while our members have been left behind," SIPTU Divisional Organiser Karan O Loughlin said at the time.

This led to a fightback, under the banner of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, to secure pay increases for members and resolve the longstanding issue of pay

parity and funding within the Section 39 sector.

That campaign took various forms, from the participation in industrial action to advocacy through press conferences and media appearances. The dedication of union members culminated in marathon talks and, on 17th October, produced the latest WRC offer.

SIPTU is recommending that members vote yes to the proposals to ensure the pay increases are realised and to provide the union with a pathway to return to talks with the Government to agree future pay adjustments during the life of the next public service agreement.

"We want to take this opportunity to sincerely thank SIPTU shop stewards, activists and strike committees that helped make these proposals reality," Figgis concluded. "Without you, none of this would have been possible."

Save Our Services campaign delivers significant pay proposals



By Aideen Carberry

In the world of trade unions, success is often measured by the impact a campaign has on the lives of its members. The Pay Parity to Save Services Campaign is a prime example of how dedication, perseverance, and the unwavering commitment of workers can yield tangible results. At its core, the campaign has underscored the pivotal role of the worker voice in driving change.

On the morning of Monday, September 25th, staff and activists from SIPTU, Fórsa, and the INMO gathered at Buswell's Hotel, Dublin. They were preparing for a press conference that would announce indefinite strike action across 17 community and voluntary organisations, set to commence on October 17th, 2023.

Helen Power, representing SIPTU and from St. Joseph's Foundation in Cork, expressed her determination, saying she wouldn't budge until the issue was resolved. As a long-time

activist, she vividly recalled a time when pay parity with the public service was a reality. She also remembered the sacrifices made in 2010, when she and her colleagues accepted cuts in pay alongside their public service counterparts. In Helen's eyes, her members were every bit as deserving of the pay increases that public service workers had received since then.

Following the press conference, activists and staff from all three unions walked to Leinster House, where they had their photo taken. This visual statement was a powerful reminder to policymakers that the solution to their predicament lay within the Government's hands. Since the State is often the sole source of funding for these organisations, it was the Government's responsibility to establish a sustainable funding model that would enable these organisations to align their workers' pay with that of the public service.

The press conference and the impending strike action received widespread media coverage, with prominent features on RTE's 1.00 p.m., 6.00 p.m., and 9.00 p.m. news bulletins. The story appeared to be resonating with the nation.



SIPTU Activist, Martha Buckley, spoke on 'Upfront with Katie Hannon' on 16th October.

In the following weeks, the campaign continued to exert pressure on the Government to address the issue, with extensive media engagement. A delegation of activists also briefed members of the Oireachtas on the dispute on 11th October. SIPTU activist Martha Buckley from St. Luke's Home in Blackrock, Cork spoke candidly, emphasising that they felt left with

no choice but to strike to achieve pay justice for pay justice in their sector.

As the strike loomed on the horizon for 17th October, an 11th-hour intervention dramatically altered the course of events. The parties involved were called to the Workplace Relations Commission for talks to explore alternatives to strike action on the afternoon of 16th October. What unfolded were marathon talks that extended late into the night.

That evening, Martha Buckley appeared in the audience of "Upfront with Katie Hannon" on RTE. Her impassioned speech detailed the dedication and sacrifices of healthcare workers, as well as the deep sense of responsibility they felt towards those in their care. While they grappled with the guilt of striking, they believed they had no other option. She called for the Government to intervene.

The morning following her heartfelt plea, a breakthrough occurred at 4.00 a.m, resulting in a set of proposals deemed substantial enough by the unions to present to their members. As a result, the strike was suspended to allow

unions to consult with their members on the proposals.

These proposals include substantial pay increases exceeding 8% by March 2024, with a retrospective element included. The WRC document also commits the parties to further discussions under the auspices of the WRC, no later than 1st December. The purpose of this engagement will be to agree further adjustments in funding for organisations and their staff that will have regard to the terms of Building Momentum and the terms of any successor agreement.

At present, SIPTU and the other unions are in the process of balloting their members on these proposals, with results expected on the week of 20th November.

The Pay Parity to Save Services Campaign serves as a powerful testament to the significance of worker participation in shaping their own destinies. Workers were not just a part of this campaign; they were at its very heart, and their voices rang out loud and clear, bringing about significant change. This campaign is a shining example of the principle that one must speak their mind, even when your voice shakes, and that the worker voice can make a monumental difference.

SIPTU and public transport unions threaten strike action in the North

Trade unions at public transport company, Translink have asked Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for improved funding for basic public services and to seize opportunities to avoid the risk of large-scale industrial action on bus and rail services in Northern Ireland.

The request followed an unproductive meeting between representatives of SIPTU, GMB and Unite with the permanent secretary of the Department of Infrastructure, Denis McMahon, on Wednesday, 1st November who said there was no budget available to provide any pay increase for workers and no timeline for any pay offer to be made in the future.

At the meeting, Mr McMahon said that he regretted that he was unable to provide 'clarity' on a timeframe for a pay increase but that his 'department does not have the resources it needs'.

According to SIPTU Sector Organiser, Niall McNally, the



Union members with second from left, Peter Macklin GMB Regional Official, third from left, Eamon McCullough GMB Senior Rep, fourth from left Terry Donaghy, SIPTU Senior Rep, fifth from left Niall McNally SIPTU Industrial Organiser and first on the right, Albert Hewitt, Unite Regional Officer.

permanent secretary referred to the role of the UK government in setting the budgets for government departments in the North in the absence of a functioning Stormont Executive.

"During the worst cost of living crisis in generations, a nominal pay freeze is intolerable for our members and their families. It is not that long ago that our members

who were classed as front line and essential were being celebrated as they continued to work to maintain bus and rail services throughout the pandemic – now they are being told that they must absorb surging inflation," the unions said in a statement following the meeting.

The three unions have now proceeded to hold concurrent ballots of their members on

industrial action, up to and including strike action. In a letter to Mr Heaton Harris on Thursday, 2nd November they warned that industrial action for a pay increase could commence in December.

"If workers vote for industrial action, given legal notice requirements, the likelihood is that action would commence in early December. Given the involvement of all three trade unions and the density of our membership, the strong likelihood is that any industrial action resulting will bring Northern Ireland to a standstill. It would have a severe impact on the society and the economy. Employees will not get to work, children will not get to school.

"We are writing to you to request an urgent meeting to discuss the need for improved funding for basic public services and to seize opportunities to avoid the risk of large-scale industrial action on bus and rail services in Northern Ireland," the letter said.

SIPTU condemns Bord na Móna "arrogance and hypocrisy" over CEO revelations

SIPTU, the union representing the majority of workers in Bord na Móna, has condemned the "arrogance and hypocrisy" of the semi-state's management after revelations that the company paid a benefit-in-kind tax bill for the €127,000 electric BMW used by the CEO and for his health insurance at a cost of €64,000.

"The largesse that Bord na Móna demonstrates towards its senior management contrasts sharply with its miserly approach to workers in recent years," SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Adrian Kane, said. "When it comes to the just transition and climate change, management's policy appears to be six-figure electric cars for CEOs but unemployment for workers in Derrinlough. In the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, that arrogance and hypocrisy will be difficult for our members to stomach."

As a publicly-supported body, the union said that it was vital that Bord na Móna comes forward and clarifies whether other individuals in senior management are in receipt of similar lavish arrangements.

The Group of Unions (GOU) representing Bord na Móna workers also condemned the "double standards" of the semi-state's management after the revelations. The GOU, comprising SIPTU, UNITE and CONNECT, said "Bord na Móna has refused to pay the benefit-in-kind on professional membership subscriptions for its employees in recent years. This is a prime example of the double standards that workers face from the company's management."

"Numerous Bord na Móna employees have memberships of professional organisations which were considered beneficial to the company. In previous years, the company had funded the cost of these annual subscriptions. However, in more recent times, Bord na Móna has refused to pay the benefit-in-kind element. This demonstrates a sharp contrast in how the company treats its management and its workers."



SIPTU Retired Members President Padraig Peyton addressing a Pension Promise rally outside Leinster House on 3rd October.

'Stop the Stigma' - Unions launch menstrual and menopausal campaign

Trade unions have called on employers and the Government to implement mandatory workplace menstrual and menopausal policies as part of a new campaign. 'Stop the Stigma' launched with a position paper that includes extensive research and a draft policy recommendation.

The coalition comprises SIPTU, Fórsa, FSU, CWU, INMO, INTO, Unite and the ESU, as well as being backed by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). It said improved workplace supports concerning menstruation

and menopause was necessary to protect workers' rights, reduce sick leave absence rates and eliminate unnecessary stress from people's working lives.

"There is a huge need for education and awareness training for all staff in our workplaces, and across society," ICTU Vice-President, Phil Ní Sheaghda, said. "The silence around women's health issues is damaging, and it impacts equality in society and at work."

"The potential for women's careers to be negatively impacted particularly by menopause needs to be eliminated, and education and

awareness training are key to reducing stigma and facilitating the vital conversations women need to have at work."

At the launch, unions said that research had shown that menopause and menstruation concerns were "treated as jokes" in some workplaces, with many "ill-equipped to deal with these health concerns."

Failing to address the specific needs of individuals experiencing menopause and menstruation perpetuates "gender-based discrimination," the position paper said, and further creates an inequitable work environment.

"These supports and policies should not be the exception in any modern workplace, they should constitute standard practice," a spokesperson for the campaign said. "We are calling for modern workplace policies that reflect a modern workforce."

The campaign welcomed Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Gorman's announcement of research and guidance for employers and employees on menstruation and menopause in the workplace that is set to be launched early next year.

Budget 2024 to lock pensioners into poverty

The government's decision to increase the state pension by only €12 in Budget 2024 will "lock pensioners into poverty" for years to come, according to the Pension Promise Campaign.

The campaign, endorsed by SIPTU, called on the government to keep its commitment to benchmark the state pension at 34 percent of average earnings. In order to achieve this, the top rate would need to increase by €53 per week in Budget 2024 – far in excess of the measures announced.

"The 34 percent figure was produced after a technical analysis by the government itself," SIPTU Retired Members Representative, Pat Lamon, said. "It represents the minimum that an older person needs to survive outside of poverty."

"The Budget announcement means that the state pension will be even lower in real terms than last year. With the Survey on Income and Living Conditions indicating that one in five older persons was at risk of deprivation in 2022," Lamon warned, "this decision risks locking pensioners into poverty for the long term."

Major crisis brewing in radiation therapy, SIPTU warns Minister

The Government is sleepwalking towards a major crisis in radiation therapy services across Ireland, SIPTU has warned in a meeting with Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Simon Harris.

The union, along with Higher Education representatives, met with minister Harris to discuss major staffing deficits in radiation therapists which has had a knock-on effect on patient waiting times and left vital equipment idle.

The role of radiation therapy in the health service has been dangerously devalued. Almost half

of people with a cancer diagnosis will require radiation therapy as part of their treatment plan, and radiation therapists are the only profession with the legal authority to deliver it.

Despite this, SIPTU Sector Organiser, John McCamley says, there is a severe shortage of new radiation therapist graduates. "If that shortage continues," he added, "we are facing a major crisis."

"We put to the minister Harris the need to expand undergraduate and postgraduate places to increase recruitment of radiation therapists and to offer supports for students during clinical placements."

Workers must be at the centre of care referendum, SIPTU says

Care work is a "cornerstone" of Irish society that "belongs in the constitution," SIPTU Deputy General Secretary Ethel Buckley argued at the launch of a new coalition this September.

The coalition of civil society organisations, which also includes the National Women's Council (NWC), unmarried parents group Treoir, One Family and Family Carers Ireland, aims to secure a progressive wording for the forthcoming Irish constitutional referendum.

Expected to take place next year in 2024, the proposed referendum follows a Citizens Assembly that recommended removing Article 41.2, which defines a woman's place as "within the home," from the constitution.

Ethel Buckley noted that SIPTU's forerunners in the Irish Women Workers' Union had opposed Article 41.2 in the 1930s, writing to the President to argue that it was "against the principle of equal rights and opportunities enunciated in the Proclamation of 1916."

"We were opposed to 41.2 in 1937. We've been opposed to it ever since," SIPTU's Deputy General Secretary said. "We want it repealed and replaced."

As the union for care workers,



Left to Right: Speaking at the Care Referendum press conference in Buswells Hotel on 7th September 2023 were (left to right) Damien Peelo, Chief Executive, Treoir, Ethel Buckley, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary and Orla O'Connor, Director, National Women's Council.

she argued, SIPTU had a particular interest in the wording of a new amendment. This amendment would need to emphasise the value of care and care work, and provide a basis for stronger rights for those working in the sector.

The union estimates that there are over 100,000 care assistants in the Republic of Ireland, but it is impossible to give exact numbers because the Government has failed to collect the data. This, it was argued at the launch, reflects the lack of consideration afforded to care in Ireland today.

The coalition believes that the forthcoming referendum offers an opportunity to engage in a national conversation over the value of care. "Care work can no longer be an

after-thought," Buckley said reporters, "it is an essential part of our modern society."

However, she also pointed out that care work is not only carried out by those working full-time as carers or care assistants. "We also advocate for the many workers who balance work and care, and who are too often neglected both by employers and by policymakers."

"In making its final decisions on the wording to put to the Irish public, the Government must include care in all its forms, in the home and in the wider community," so that everyone who provides care is recognised," Buckley concluded. "Anything less would not be acceptable to SIPTU."

SIPTU meeting with Nestlé to save jobs

SIPTU representatives have been meeting regularly with Nestlé Wyeth Nutritionals management with a view to saving as many jobs as possible following the shock announcement on Wednesday 18th October that the company plans to close the Askeaton plant in county Limerick in the first quarter of 2026 with a potential loss of 542 jobs.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Neil McGowan, said: "The announcement is horrendous for the workers and their families and has come as a complete bolt from the blue. The plant has provided good employment in the area for decades. It is vital that the decision to close is reversed and as many jobs as possible can be maintained on the site."

He added "there needs to be a razor-sharp focus from all stakeholders to save as many jobs as possible in the area. We are also calling for immediate intervention from the Government to save these jobs that are so vital to the Midwest region, the loss of the Wyeth plant would represent a body blow to the local economy.

Wyeth is a major employer with many suppliers dependant of the site and we are also focused on our members in contract security, catering and cleaning that are employed on site.

SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Greg Ennis attended a meeting between the International Union of Food (IUF) and Nestlé Senior European management, where he highlighted the anger of workers at the announcement and how it was handled and urged senior management to reverse the decision and secure employment in Askeaton.

JUSTICE FOR PALESTINE

HOW CAN WE GET THERE?

Speaker
OMAR BARGHOUTI
Co-founder of the Palestinian BDS Movement

Chair
SEN. FRANCES BLACK

Thursday 16 November, 7pm
Robert Emmet Theatre, Arts Block
Trinity College Dublin

See pages 18-19 on Palestine.

Childcare pay deal in sight

A pay deal for 25,000 Early Years Educators and Managers is in sight.

After months of difficult negotiations, a 5% increase to the current minimum pay rate was recommended by the Labour Court.

Once implemented, this will be the second pay deal for child care professionals in as many years.

SIPTU Head of Strategic Organising, Darragh O'Connor,

said: "Early Years professionals are an example of what can be achieved when workers unionise. Just two years ago, qualified graduates were earning just €13.21 per hour on average. By later this year, they will earn a minimum of €16.28. These are just the first steps on the path to professional pay and conditions."

A third round of pay talks is expected early next year and will be

supported by €21 million of additional government investment announced in Budget 2024. Several other SIPTU priorities were also addressed in Budget 2024, including an Early Years DEIS model to help address inequality, (educational disadvantage) and the expansion of the Access and Inclusion Model that supports children with additional needs to access quality services.



SIPTU delegation of members and activists supporting the Rally for Gaza in Dublin on Saturday, 21st October.

'Domino effect' possible after Supreme Court case

A Supreme Court decision in late October could have wide-ranging impacts for workers facing bogus self-employment, Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) General Secretary Owen Reidy has said.

The Karshan v Revenue Commissioners case was brought against the company trading under the Domino's Pizza name after the Tax Appeals Commission decided that its workers should be treated as PAYE employees rather than self-employed contractors.

The Supreme Court unanimously sided with the Commission on the issue, overturning an earlier Court of Appeal's decision to side with the company by a margin of seven to zero. "The evidence disclosed close control by [the company] Karshan over the drivers when at

work," according to the ruling.

"The Commissioner was entitled to conclude that the preponderance of the evidence pointed to the drivers carrying on Karshan's business rather than their own," it continued.

The ruling is expected to make it more difficult for businesses to

employ large numbers of casual workers under the label of self-employment.

Michael Doherty, Professor of Law at Maynooth University, said that the Supreme Court had "reformulated the established tests" over self-employment.

"Is there a work/wage bargain at all? Does the worker have to personally perform the service, or is substitution permitted? Is the worker controlled?" he wrote on the social media site 'X'.

In a statement responding to the case, ICTU's Owen Reidy said "it shouldn't have come to this" and called for the Government to get "serious" about the problem of bogus self-employment. "This should spur on a decision by the Government to introduce clearer, stronger legislation covering this whole area."

ICTU's Owen Reidy:
"The Government should get serious about the problem of bogus self-employment."

SIPTU condemn HSE recruitment freeze

SIPTU Health Division has called for an urgent meeting with the Health Service Executive (HSE) and Department of Health following the decision to implement a recruitment freeze on many grades within the health service.

The freeze was revealed in a HSE memo which confirmed that grades such as Health Care Assistants, Healthcare Support Assistants (or Home Helps), porters, catering assistants, chefs, security personnel and others will all be affected by the decision.

The union said that such a freeze would also affect agency staff, who have traditionally been used to fill vacant posts, maternity leave or long-term sick leave within the healthcare workforce.

"The decision to implement a recruitment freeze on many of the

grades represented by our union has come as a great shock to our members," Kevin Figgis, SIPTU Divisional Organiser, said. "Many of the grades affected are patient-facing and there will be an inevitable knock-on effect on services."

"What is most alarming about this decision is that we are fast approaching the difficult winter period. Services already struggle to contain the pressures which invariably arise. Our members will now face an impossible situation if a recruitment freeze prohibits the refilling of a vacant patient-facing post within the acute setting or community healthcare."

"The HSE has recently stated its wish to extend service provision across the weekend," Damian Ginley, SIPTU Sector Organiser, said. "This decision will stop any of those plans in their tracks as existing staff are under enough pressure as it is."

Urgent intervention needed as cost of living bites

SIPTU has called for "urgent" government intervention to combat the cost-of-living crisis after the Living Wage Technical Group (LWTG) announced that its calculation of a Living Wage for Ireland rose to €14.80.

"This increase in the Living Wage shows that vast swathes of Irish society will be earning below a minimum standard of living," according to SIPTU Head of Strategic Organising, Darragh O'Connor.

"That is unacceptable and unsustainable," he continued. "The Government must urgently address living costs, in particular those associated with housing and energy."

"SIPTU supports the Government's commitment to increase the minimum wage to 60% of median earnings by 2026. However, unless the Government tackles the profit-driven rise in inflation, a Living Wage will remain little more than an aspiration."

Healthcare Assistant campaign begins in Galway

In September, SIPTU launched a new campaign in Saelta University Health Care Group to encourage Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) to join the union and ensure their role is recognised and respected.

As part of the recruitment drive, union representatives were on-site at the hospital speaking to HCAs about the value of joining SIPTU and sharing information on their rights and entitlements in the workplace.

During the initiative, SIPTU representatives spoke about how the union successfully negotiated a full review of the HCA role in 2018, which recommended that

resources should be made available for ongoing training and development of HCAs.

In addition, the report committed to exploring the possibility of HCAs becoming a professionally-registered grade, alongside providing further career pathways.

"The union is working hard to make sure the recommendations of that report are fully implemented," SIPTU Sector Organiser, Pat Flannery, said. "SIPTU does not just represent HCAs in the public service, it also represents HCAs in the Section 39 sector and private sector. We encourage carers in every employment and setting to join SIPTU."

Doors close at Shalom Nursing Home

Sadness was the overwhelming emotion among staff as the final days care were provided to clients in Shalom Nursing Home in Kilcock, Co Kildare before the remaining clients move to other nursing homes.

Shalom Nursing Home was run by the Presentation Sisters religious order and opened its doors in Co. Kildare in 1994. Staff at the home cared for 33 clients, all elderly members of the religious order.

The hard decision was taken in March 2023 to deregister the nursing home. Management had advised that the home was running at 30% capacity and was no longer

sustainable leading to the totally unavoidable closure.

Negotiations with SIPTU and other unions commenced following the announcement of the closure to allow for full and proper consultation on how services at the nursing home would be wound down. When it became clear that there was no scope to maintain the existing facility, a beneficial redundancy package was secured for union members through the negotiations.

Speaking as staff were saying goodbye to each other for the last time, SIPTU shop steward and healthcare assistant shop steward Angela Ward said: "It really is a sad day for all us staff. Many of us have

worked most of our careers in Shalom Nursing Home. We enjoyed our jobs immensely and got to know the sisters so well over the years. We would like to thank our unions and the management team for the way they conducted the negotiations over the last number of months. We saw at first hand the importance of workers being members of SIPTU."

Several staff are currently pursuing new employment opportunities across the health service. The hope is that the impact of this closure will be minimised on all staff.

The closure process was completed on August 31st, 2023.



INMO Shop Steward Loretta Dixon (Left) and SIPTU Shop Steward Angela Ward (Right) outside Shalom Nursing Home in Kilcock.



Pay Equality to Save Services Campaign outside Leinster House on 25th September, 2023.

SIPTU makes progress on the Serious Physical Assault Scheme



By Aideen Carberry

This will place support grades in line with their colleagues who are employed as medical staff, clerical officers and health and social care professionals.

While the development was welcomed, it doesn't address the issue that an inequity still exists in which not all healthcare workers are treated equally should they need to access the scheme as a result of an assault in the workplace.

SIPTU members working on the frontline of the health service in the same environment as other healthcare workers deserve the same assistance should they find themselves involved in a workplace assault. Workers such as healthcare assistants, paramedics, porters, or security officers are at the same level of risk of assault as any other colleague on their team.

It goes without saying that no worker should find themselves the victim of an assault in the workplace; and it is incumbent on all employers to ensure the safety of their staff. However, if an assault does take place, there is no conceivable reason for workers in the same setting to be treated any less favourably than their colleagues purely because of their job title or the uniform they wear.

SIPTU members are committed to continuing the campaign for equity for all healthcare workers who need to access this scheme.

SIPTU health division members have been leading the charge in having issues relating to equity in the HSE's Serious Physical Assault Scheme addressed. The campaign is concerned that, in the event of a serious physical assault in the workplace, not all workers were being treated equally in terms of access to payments under the scheme.

Historically, the scheme provided for up to 3 months' pay and pensionable allowances for support grades and up to 6 months on the same formula for officer grades. There were two further extensions for nursing grades, one for an additional 3 months with premiums/allowances and a further 3 months on basic salary only (a total period of up to 12 months).

SIPTU representatives recently received confirmation that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform has agreed to partially address this inequity and conceded that support grade staff will now receive up to six months' pay and allowances, in the event they require support following a serious physical assault in the workplace.

Long Covid claim moves to the Labour Court

A claim for special assistance for healthcare workers who have been diagnosed with Long Covid has progressed to the Labour Court, following extensive engagement at the Workplace Relations Commission.

The union claim, lodged by the ICTU Staff Panel of Health Trade Unions, centres on the need for a special scheme for healthcare workers who have been diagnosed with Long Covid, as well as the Special Leave with Pay (SLWP) Scheme provided for healthcare workers who have

tested positive for Covid 19.

The SLWP scheme for all public servants has been reduced to five days in line with the recommended isolation period for the public. However, the HSE guidelines state people should "avoid meeting people who are at very high risk for 10 days. This starts from the first day you have symptoms. This is because you may still be infectious for up to 10 days."

The unions' claim is that the 5-day rule is at variance with the role of a healthcare worker who continuously interacts with

vulnerable people while performing their duties. Unions have sought the days provided for within the scheme to match the period of isolation recommended by the HSE clinical advice and not that for the general population.

The Labour Court hearing on this dispute took place on 27th October 2023. Unions are awaiting the outcome of the hearing and SIPTU representatives will be communicating its members regarding any recommendation that arises.

Workers' rights are students' rights

■ By Karl Byrne

SIPTU, as Ireland's largest union for workers in higher education, stands shoulder to shoulder with the Union of Students in Ireland in calling out the Government for years of appalling underinvestment and poor planning in higher education. The USI struggle is our struggle.

Workers' rights are students' rights. Students and workers have a long and proud history of coming together as one force because students are the workers of today and tomorrow. Many students are putting themselves through higher education by working part time jobs and once graduated all will continue into the workforce. They are paying record high rents, dealing

with a cost of living that is out of control and in many cases earning less than the living wage. Joining a union can change that. Everyday, trade unionists are confronted with precarious employment contracts and attempts to outsource and privatise our members work.

As it stands, postgraduates are doing precarious work to earn their degree and are not being recog-

nised by their institutions as workers. Because of this, these postgraduates are given no stability of wage, leading to a serious crisis in their standard of living. Another budget day cannot just be allowed to come and go without closing the significant funding gap in core funding of the higher education sector.

Seven years on from the publication of the Cassells Report into the

chronic underfunding of higher education, the Government is still tinkering around the edges of this crisis. If it's not fixed we will be left with a completely broken system that cannot meet the needs of both students, workers and wider society. That is not acceptable and needs to change and change now.



Pictured at the Patrick Dunbar Graveside Oration in Sligo on 1 September 2023 were members of the Dunbar Family with Sligo Leitrim Roscommon District Council activists and staff, Honorary President Mary O'Sullivan, Honorary Vice-President John Montgomery and Ethel Buckley, Deputy General Secretary who delivered the oration. Photo by Paddy Cole.

Summer school highlights contributions of care workers

In early September, SIPTU members and activists from across the Northwest gathered in Sligo for the annual Markiewicz/Partridge summer school.

This year's theme was "valuing care," and the school featured heartfelt testimony from nine care workers about the challenges they face in their workplaces. Annmarie Tibby, a healthcare assistant in Monaghan General Hospital, spoke about the experience of losing patients during the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The hardest task I have undertaken in my life to date was double bagging patients for whom I had cared for a long time before Covid hit," she said. "You really wouldn't go to work and do my job unless you cared about people and loved what you do."

Annmarie also described her work with patients who had suf-

fered brain injuries and strokes. "We wash and feed patients, take them to the bathroom, take blood pressures and check their pressure areas. We monitor their moods and try to assist with their spiritual need," she explained. "We try to give them the best potential life they can have."

Organised by the SIPTU Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon (SLR) District Council, the two-day event included speeches and presentations by SIPTU economist, Michael Taft, sociology and social policy academic Dr. Majella Mulkeen, and Eilish Balfe, care policy officer at the National Women's Council and a former Big Start activist.

As part of the summer school, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, gave an oration at the graveside of Patrick Dunbar, a trade unionist who was beaten to death by strike breakers during the 1913 Sligo dockers' strike.

The brutal suppression of strikes across Ireland that year was not, she argued, simply part of a broader national liberation struggle. Instead, it was "planned and executed from beginning to end by wealthy Irish people against their fellow citizens in order to deprive them of the most fundamental right, the right to organise."

More than a century later, SIPTU is still campaigning for the Right to Organise and "whether we prevail will decide whether working people and their families have the capacity to exercise a degree of influence in the architecture of the future of Ireland."

The victory of trade unionists in Sligo, and sacrifices of martyrs such as Dunbar, she said, "ensured Murphy and his henchmen did not succeed in crushing the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union" but it was up to the current generation to realise their fullest vision.

SIPTU members accept improved pay offer at Pfizer

Following the rejection of a Labour Court recommendation a new pay proposal has been accepted by SIPTU members at Pfizer Pharmaceuticals in Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork.

Under the proposal now accepted, pay will increase by 13.75% over three years, as follows:
2% from September 1, 2022;
3% from March 1, 2023;
4.75% from September 1, 2023;
4% from September 1, 2024;
Deal expires August 31, 2025.

The deal was agreed by 300 workers at local level meetings

with SIPTU representatives, following the earlier rejection of the Labour Court's recommendation of 8.5% over two years.

The new deal provides for an average annual increase of 4.58%. The proposal provides for the parties to commence engagement on a new pay agreement in the first quarter of 2025, with a view to completing pay talks within a reasonable timeframe.

Management will also constructively engage with the union on all industrial relations matters that arise in the workplace, in line with normal industrial relations.



Deputy General Secretary, John King (left) presenting SIPTU Local Authorities Shop Steward Dennis Reen with a certificate and badge to mark long service, with Sector Organiser, Brendan O'Brien (right).

SIPTU's fights apprenticeship backlog

SIPTU members in Education and Training Boards (ETB's) all over the country are concerned about the current backlog in the delivery of apprentice training and are working hard to ensure that this backlog will be dealt with through direct labour and not outsources.

There is continuing engagement from the Sector with Minister Simon Harris on this but maximis-

ing the overall capacity of the system for delivery of the numbers of apprentices required is dependent on meaningful engagement and the resolution of the industrial issues facing our members employed by the ETB's. Issues such as rates of pay for cover instructors, grading issues, fixed term/CID contracts and the voucher incentive scheme will all need to be brought to a satisfactory conclusion if our members are to continue to support this project.

'Americonned': human stories behind the low-wage economy

■ By Ronan Burtenshaw

'Americonned,' the breakthrough US documentary about income inequality, had its Irish launch in front of a packed house in Liberty Hall on Thursday, October 12th at an event also including a Q&A with its director, Sean Claffey.

The documentary charts the rise of neoliberalism in the United States from the Reagan era through the 2008 Financial Crash and into the stark divides of contemporary politics, placing the blame for growing social unrest squarely at the door of anti-worker policies.

It exposes the staggering upwards redistribution of wealth in the American economy, arguing that \$50 trillion has flowed from the bottom 90 percent to the top 1 percent in the past 40 years. Today, as CEO salaries skyrocket, 45 percent of American workers make a median wage of just \$10.50 an hour.

'Americonned' reveals the human stories behind the low-wage economy, from tenants facing eviction to truck drivers without healthcare and Uber drivers struggling to cover their bills. It also features leading trade unionists such as the AFL-CIO's April Sims explaining how the labour movement is attempting to overcome widespread alienation.

But the star of the documentary is mercurial Amazon Labor Union organiser Chris Smalls. 'Americonned' follows his efforts to take on the world's wealthiest corporation through lows, such as the crushing recognition defeat in Bessemer, Alabama, and highs, such as the landmark victory in Staten Island, New York.

In his remarks in Liberty Hall, Claffey said that the stranglehold



Journalist Ronan Burtenshaw (left), in conversation with Sean Claffey, director of Americonned.

which major corporations exert over the film industry meant that pro-trade union films "never get made." "The movies are relevant to the times, I know directors approach them, but it's not in their interests."

He added that the task of shooting and editing 'Americonned' had placed him under enormous financial pressure, running up debts on his credit card and almost missing mortgage payments before a sympathetic benefactor stepped in.

Claffey said it was time that the

labour movement across the world took the question of videos, films and documentaries seriously and invested resources into their production. "When you look at the right-wing, they have billionaires who have been doing this for years. Our side needs to step up to the plate."

But he also said that the recent rise of trade unionism in America, with the SAG-AFTRA and UAW strikes, the Teamsters' new UPS contract and organising efforts in Starbucks, gave hope that the movement was on its way back in response to rising inequality.

The Brooklyn-born director discussed his Irish-American roots, with his grandparents hailing from Donegal and Leitrim. Both joined trade unions upon arriving in the United States and, Claffey said, helped to instil the values of the labour movement in his family.

'Americonned' also draws on the experiences of another Irish-American trade unionist, former Biden Labor Secretary Marty Walsh. Walsh, whose parents were Irish immigrants, was a construction worker and president of Laborers' Union Local 223 before entering politics in Boston.

The event in Liberty Hall formed a part of a long and storied tradition of exchanges between Irish and American unions, which stretches back as far as the Molly Maguires and Pennsylvania coal miners in the 19th century, Connolly and Larkin's stints with the IWW in the early 20th century and continues to this day with Irish-American labour leaders such as the Teamsters' Sean O'Brien.

The screening was organised by a coalition of trade unions – SIPTU, Praxis, CWU, Mandate and the FSU – as well as tenants' union, CATU.

US autoworkers force 'Big Three' to "pony up"

After more than a month of a landmark strike, the United Auto Workers (UAW) in America claimed victory with a record deal set to be put to members in the coming weeks.

The strike was launched after the 'Big Three' motor companies – Ford Motor Company, General Motors, and Stellantis – refused to meet union demands for

substantial pay increases in the wake of more than a decade of wage stagnation in the sector following the 2008 Financial Crash.

Throughout the dispute, the UAW could rely on significant bargaining power: the union's 145,000 members manufactured 50 percent of all automobiles produced in the United States, accounting for roughly 1.5 percent of the country's entire GDP.

The tentative agreement was first reached with Ford before the management at Stellantis and General Motors came to the same terms.

Under the terms, base wages will increase by 25 percent between now and April 2028. The top wage for UAW members in the company will rise cumulatively by over 30 percent to more than \$40 per hour, while the starting wage will rise by 68 percent to over \$28 an hour.

The auto deal would also contain a number of other transformative changes, including restoring cost-of-living adjustments lost in 2009, improving retirement plans and granting the right to strike over plant closures, a first in the union's history.

"We told Ford to pony up and they did," UAW President Shawn Fain said. "We won things nobody thought possible. Since the strike

began, Ford put 50 percent more on the table than when we walked out.

"This agreement sets us on a new path to make things right at Ford, at the Big Three, and across the auto industry," he continued. "Together, we are turning the tide for the working class in this country." The UAW have also called on trade unions across America to co-ordinate their contract negotiations for 2028.

ICTU conference discusses alternatives to 'housing failure'

■ By Macdara Doyle

Current housing policy is incapable of delivering sufficient numbers of genuinely affordable homes due to its dependence on private developers and speculative finance, delegates at a recent conference were told.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and Raise the Roof - organised conference was held to mark the launch of new trade union proposals on tackling the ongoing crisis. The paper calls for the creation of a new semi-state body - Housing Ireland - to develop and deliver the public and affordable homes that are so desperately needed.

Launching the paper, ICTU General Secretary, Owen Reidy, drew parallels between the creation of Housing Ireland and the establishment of the ESB in the early years of the State. A new housing semi-state would similarly serve to 'shape' the housing market for wider social gains and to deliver lower cost homes, he said.

"It's about affordability, security and stability," Reidy told the conference. "We need to break the stranglehold of the private sector. We need to focus on driving house prices down."

Addressing the issue of affordability, Technological University of Dublin (TUD) academic Dr. Lorcan Sirr said current policy created



Toby Lloyd, UK-based housing consultant, Ethel Buckley, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Dr. Aidan Regan, Associate Professor, UCD and Lorcan Sirr, Senior Lecturer at TUD. Photos by Tommy Clancy.



INMO General Secretary Phil Ní Sheaghda discusses the housing crisis with the City of Vienna's Michaela Kauer, Threshold's Anne-Marie O'Reilly and NERI's Paul Goldrick-Kelly.

not only a housing crisis but "a housing failure."

The private developer model which dominates official policy was incapable of delivering on af-

fordability, he continued, as it required house prices to continuously rise. If prices were to fall, developers would be unable to attract finance from banks and

would likely stall or slow housing output.

This was echoed by UCD politics professor Aidan Regan, who said the problem extended beyond developers and that "the entire financial system is structurally dependent on prices going up." "It's a systemic effect," he continued, "that's a really difficult thing to tackle, but it suggests we need a structural reset."

Housing expert, Toby Lloyd, highlighted how similar problems were in evidence in the UK housing sector, which was also dominated by private speculative developers and for-profit housing. He

said this model was "structurally incapable" of delivering the secure, affordable homes people need and warned of a regression to a 19th century-style housing sector, characterised by insecurity and rising prices.

This contrasted sharply with the experience of Vienna as outlined by Michaela Kauer, who runs the Brussels office of the City of Vienna. Kauer pointed out that for over 100 years, city authorities had prioritised the not-for-profit model of housing delivery and prevented private interests from dominating the sector.

Today, almost half the city's two million inhabitants live in public or subsidised housing which sees rents capped at affordable levels and tenants enjoying long-term security. Kauer said the Vienna model offered a route out of the current crisis and into wider housing stability, in Ireland and across the European Union.

The conference also heard from Ann-Marie O'Reilly of Threshold on the crisis in the rental sector and the need for a new Right to Housing, along with Paul Goldrick-Kelly of the NERI think-tank on how a new housing semi-state might be set up and financed.

The 'Housing Ireland' paper can be downloaded from the ICTU website at ictu.ie.

SIPTU Retained Fire Fighters accept WRC deal

In early September, SIPTU Retained Fire Fighters voted to accept proposals from the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) to resolve their industrial dispute following intensive consultation and a secret ballot.

The dispute was prompted by the failure of management to table sufficient proposals to address recruitment and retention crisis in the Retained Fire Services, in particular the recommendations contained in the Coyne Report.

In the wake of these failures, the National Retained Fire Fighter Committee met on 19th May and served notice over industrial action. The Labour Court intervened in the dispute and issued a recommendation, but this did not sufficiently address the key issues around structured pay and time off.



Emma Dollard and Keith Lewis, Portlaoise Fire Station on the picket line during the Fire Fighters dispute. Photo: Graham Seely

Accordingly, strike action commenced and continued nationwide for 11 weeks. After this prolonged dispute, the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) invited the parties to further discussions. Following intensive negotiations, the WRC issued proposals to the parties which were accepted by Retained Fire Fighter members.

The WRC agreement, which builds on the previous Labour Court recommendation, includes new pay scales and guaranteed hours for Retained Fire Fighters, bringing the minimum guaranteed pay for new entrants to €18,000 per annum, rising to €21,348 upon reaching eight years of service.

It also established that a minimum of 12 firefighters per station were to be recruited and the reten-

tion of the Driver Mechanic role, which management previously sought to abolish. In addition, 'week on/week off' rosters were introduced, giving structured time off to Retained Firefighters, with the option to 'opt in' on their weeks off to boost earnings if they choose.

"The Retained Fire Fighters are battle scarred after many years of struggle over these issues," SIPTU Sector Organiser, Brendan O'Brien, said. "While the WRC document does not deliver a cure for all that ails the Retained Fire Service, it has created a path forward to commence the transformation that the service needs."

"Fire fighters are to be commended for their steadfast solidarity to each other and to their communities during this very difficult dispute."

ICTU: Ireland's housing system is "not fit for purpose"

A new report from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has labelled the country's housing system "dysfunctional" and "not fit for purpose."

The report calls for the creation of a new semi-state body, Housing Ireland, to work in conjunction with local authorities in "the direct provision of public housing."

ICTU's intervention comes in the wake of a historic housing crisis, with record homelessness, crises in housing supply and affordability, and house prices and rents consistently outpacing wages.

This new semi-state would aim to provide "a systemic response to a deep systemic crisis," according to ICTU General Secretary Owen Reidy and which can offer an alternative to Ireland's "financialised, speculative and unstable private model" of housing provision.

Among the report's more dramatic findings is the scale of collapse in Ireland's public housing provision. Whereas almost one in five people lived in public housing in 1961, the era from the 1970s on saw the sale of two-thirds of the state's public housing units.

This transformation changed the status of public housing from an integral feature of a unitary housing system to "a tenure of last resort for those who could not



SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham (in red jacket), SIPTU Honorary President Mary O'Sullivan (blue jacket) Phil Ní Sheaghda, INMO (left), Sinn Féin TD Eoin O'Broin (second from right), actor Liam Cunningham (third from left) and academic, Rory Hearne (fifth from left) among those leading the Raise the Roof march down O'Connell Street, Dublin on Saturday, 26th November 2022. Photo: RollingNews.

afford for-profit market housing."

That situation was dramatically worsened by the 2008 financial crash, after which there was a 91.5 percent fall off in new construction of public housing and new legislation meant that local authorities were divested of their responsibility for its provision.

"In practice," the report argues, Ireland's current housing system "means that social housing is only seen as a viable option for the poor and is often stigmatised." Housing Ireland would break that cycle, making public housing accessible to a broader range of income levels and creating competition with the

private sector.

The semi-state's intention would be to provide housing on a "cost-rental" basis, with rent based on the cost of building, managing and maintaining the units. This would help to alleviate an affordability crisis which has seen the number of people aged between 25 and 29

living at home double in the past decade.

While Housing Ireland would initially be financed on a one-off basis using a portion of the exchequer's 'windfall' corporation tax receipts, the report also suggests converting Housing Assistance Payments (HAP) from a subsidy for private landlords into a means of supporting further public housing construction.

The report also advocates a substantial growth in the number of construction workers. "This means improving conditions, pay and job security in the sector," it says, as well as "incentivising inward migration, and significantly increasing investment in relevant vocational education and apprenticeships."

Any comprehensive new approach to housing in Ireland, it says, would also need a site value tax to prevent land hoarding, a restoration of the recent eviction ban and a constitutional amendment to recognise the right to housing.

Finally, the report recognises the fundamental importance of housing in the history of the Irish labour movement. "It was the squalor of the Dublin slums in the early years of the 20th century," Reidy notes, "that provided much of the motive force for the establishment of the modern trade union movement."

Michael D attends Irish Labour History Society International Conference

The conference in September to mark the 50th anniversary of the ILHS saw almost 300 delegates attend events in Liberty Hall, Trinity College and the Fórsa headquarters. An additional 200 online participants joined from Ireland, the UK, Australia, Germany, Romania, Switzerland, France, the Netherlands, and Turkey.

The breadth of the conference – without taking account of film presentations, the Markievicz lecture, book launch or social evening "hedge school" – included over 30 sessions, with more than one formal input to many of these, across the four days. In excess of 60 speakers contributed, with each session chaired by a nominee of the ILHS.



Deputy General Secretary John King (left) welcomes President of Ireland Michael D Higgins and Sabina Higgins to Liberty Hall for the opening ceremony of the Irish Labour History Society Conference (ILHS). Also pictured are past ILHS President Dr Jack McGinley (second from right) and current President Shay Cody (right).

SIPTU fire fighters win at World Police Fire Games



A 5 man team of SIPTU fire fighters competed in The World Police Fire Games in Winnipeg this August.

The World Police Fire Games are the second biggest multi sporting event in the world with over 10,000 members of the emergency services competing in 80 different sports.

The Olympics Games is the only other multi sporting event that is

bigger. American, Canadian, Spanish, German teams, to name but a few, will send over 200 competitors to the games.

This makes this small 5 man teams' efforts and results more impressive, not only competing against much bigger teams but also achieving two Gold medals, five Silver medals, three Bronze medals and a World Police Fire Games record for weightlifting in total.

Ireland's 'Great Slowdown'



By
Michael Taft

Amidst the noise of the last budget tax cuts, once-off spending increases, tax bands and social protection rates – there is one projection buried deep in the budget papers that received little attention but which will have considerable implications for the economy and living standards in the years ahead.

The Government is projecting average annual growth rates out to 2030 will be 2 percent. That may not seem all that interesting until we compare it with previous periods of growth.

In the boom years prior to the crash, the average annual growth rate was nearly 6 percent. In the recovery period after the crash, average annual growth rates were 4 percent. However, it is estimated that average annual growth rates will fall to 2 percent until 2030.

In the years ahead, economic growth will slow considerably. This is not surprising. Analysts have been predicting this slowdown here and throughout Europe. Some are predicting growth rates after 2030 will fall to 1 percent – essentially an economic drought.

There are many explanations for this slowdown: ageing demographics, climate change and technological disruption (increasing use of AI and automation). Whatever the reasons, it will have considerable implications. Let's look at two areas.



Pictured are shoppers on Henry Street in Dublin as the ESRI reports that purchasing power will be lower in 2024 than in 2020. Photo: RollingNews

Wages and Profits

Over the last 20 years profits have been growing at a faster rate than wages. Over the Covid lockdowns profits grew at more than twice the rate as wages. Wages have not been keeping pace with productivity; or put another way, wages have not kept pace with the growth in business income that workers themselves have produced.

While employers have been grabbing a larger share of productivity growth, during periods of relatively high growth they could do this and still leave enough for wages to grow in real terms (i.e. after inflation). Government tax cuts also help to increase after-tax income. In short, when there's a lot of money

around, there's enough for everybody even if some take more than they need.

But what happens when economic growth slows? Profit and wage growth slow down. Here's the problem: if employers want to maintain their past profit levels, they need to grab more of productivity – leaving workers with even less. A growth slowdown, therefore, intensifies the struggle over reduced income growth.

Where workers are organised, they are in a stronger position to defend their living standards against employer greed. But what about the overwhelming majority of private sector workers who are not organised – especially in the low-wage, low value-added sectors? In a low-growth environment, the

unorganised will have few defences.

The Social State

Lower growth has implications for the social state – public services and social protection. While there is a lot of focus on tax increases to fund public services, it is growth that actually drives tax revenue. Higher growth means higher wages and spending, increased employment, higher profits which can fund more investment. When growth slows, so do all these components.

Just like the intensification of the struggle between employers and employees over a smaller pool of resources, we will witness something similar with regard to the social state. There will be increased competition between different public services (health or

education), between public services and social protection (higher pensions or more nurses) and between social spending and capital investment.

We are already a significant under-spender on public services. We'd have to spend an additional €9 billion on public services in 2024 just to reach the average of those high-income EU countries.

So what is government projecting for public services in the years ahead? By 2026, public services will be cut by nearly 2 percent in real terms per capita. Instead of increasing our investment in public services to catch up with other EU countries, we are actually falling back.

To be fair, this projected cut in public services is a base-line. The government could correct this in subsequent budgets. However, early signs are not encouraging with recruitment freezes in the health and home care sectors. And if the Government persists with tax cuts, this will divert even more money away from vital services.

In all this, the need for a vibrant and growing trade union movement becomes even more necessary. It is only the trade union movement that can resist employers in the workplace and promote the living standards of workers. And we need organised labour to stand up for public services. What other civil society organisation has the capacity to fundamentally reframe the public debate and policy options?

But let's be clear: we will need to do this in the context of ever-increasing competition over dwindling resources. If we don't meet this challenge, who will?

Unionised workers safer during Covid

■ By Ronan Burtenshaw

A new report into essential workers' experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic in Ireland has found sizeable discrepancies in risk for lower and higher-paid workers and that trade union presence in the workplace helped deal with the harsh effects of the pandemic.

The report, the fourth in a series based on University College Dublin (UCD)'s Working in Ireland Survey 2021, was carried out by Maria Belizon, John Geary and Paul MacFlynn in conjunction with the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI).

Its findings include six in ten essential workers being placed at "moderate to high risk" of

contracting Covid-19 in their workplace during the pandemic.

This risk was particularly stark among lower-paid workers, with 38 percent of those earning below €20,000 and 39 percent of those earning below €40,000 at high risk of contracting the virus. By contrast, only 5 percent of those earning above €65,000 were deemed at high risk.

"Covid-19 mitigation strategies were much better implemented for higher earner essential workers than they were for essential workers on lower wages," the report concluded.

Women workers and those in care professions were at disproportionate risk of contracting

Covid-19 in their workplace, the report found, leading it to argue that there was a "gendered disparity" in the fallout from the pandemic.

Workers in human health, public administration and defence were also prone to high risk, with the untimely provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and a slow rollout of Covid-19 protocols cited as the primary reasons for workplace failures.

Alarming, the report also uncovered evidence that significant numbers of essential workers felt ignored by management. While 70 percent said they had voiced concerns over safety to their bosses, half of those reported that their

worries were not addressed.

The evidence showed that essential workers, and in particular women, were more likely to work over 40 hours per week during the pandemic. This, in turn, led to increased levels of anxiety.

In its conclusions, the report was unequivocal about one factor which improved essential workers' conditions when Covid-19 was at its height: membership of a trade union.

"The presence of a union in the workplace," its authors wrote, "paved the way to a greater mitigation of the harsher effects of the pandemic."

The report also recommended "vindicating workers' rights to

access union representation" through legislative change and acknowledging "the importance of work-life balance" in ensuring that over-work does not become a feature of future emergencies.

Finally, the report shone a spotlight on the absence of essential workers' voices from much of the mainstream political, media and academic discussions on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Ireland.

"Public debate has generally neglected to reflect upon and learn from the experiences of essential workers during the pandemic," the authors said, before adding "we regard this to be a shameful omission."

LibertyView

Tackling inequality starts in the workplace



By Joe Cunningham

We are entering a period of increased uncertainty: with geo-political instability, climate change, and artificial intelligence automation as well as interruptions to trade. Our response must be to

build a resilient economy - one that can withstand shocks and exploit opportunities despite wider risks. These shocks and risks can be external, arising in other parts of the globe. Or they can be homegrown like the recent housing crisis. A resilient economy is built on strong foundations that can reduce risks, adapt to changing circumstances and still prosper.

A number of policies must be put forward to build resilience. For instance, if an economy relies too heavily on one sector, it could suffer a severe downturn if there was a shock to that sector. This describes Ireland's reliance on multi-nationals. We need to diversify and build a strong domestic sector that can compete in international markets.

There is one policy approach that doesn't get much mention but which can be a major contributor to resilience; namely, equality. Studies conducted since the great recession have identified rising inequality as a contributor to the crash. The OECD recently did an about-face on this subject. Prior to the crash, it championed 'market liberalisation', a code word for weakening labour bargaining power. Today, since it discovered the debilitating effects of inequality, it is producing papers celebrating the benefits of collective bargaining.

Equality is at the heart of a resilient economy. When we discuss the issue of inequality in society, we usually think of the inequality between rich and poor households; and how we can address this through taxation and social protection

benefits. This is an important issue. But for trade unionists, equality starts in the workplace. We can measure this in three ways.

First, the relationship between profits and wages. Since 2000, profits have grown at a faster rate than wages. This means that workers' pay is not keeping up with productivity. During the Covid lockdown and cost-of-living crisis, inequality between profits and wages has grown further. In fact, the Central Bank has stated that excessive profits are a major contributor to inflation. This established the profoundly unjust situation whereby wages were suppressed below the rate of productivity and workers had to pay higher prices.

Second, Ireland has one of the highest levels of market inequality in the EU. This measures the level of inequality in the economy before taxation and social protection payments. Ireland has the third highest level of the 27 EU countries.

Third, Ireland has one of the highest levels of wage inequality, this is the gap between the highest paid and the lowest paid. We rank near the top of this depressing table.

This is the inequality that starts in the workplace, the inequality between employees and employers, the inequality between the lowest paid and the CEOs and senior managers.

Excessive profits are a major contributor to inflation. This set up the profoundly unjust situation whereby wages were suppressed below the rate of productivity and workers had to pay higher prices

None of this is the basis of a resilient economy. We are seeing low pay, precarious work contracts, lack of bargaining power and gender pay gaps,

with more and more income and resources flowing to the top. This is an economy ill-prepared to withstand future shocks, never mind ensure a prosperous society.

If inequality starts in the workplace, then that is where we must address it. This is what trade unions do. When workers organise through a trade union, when they negotiate a collective agreement, inequality is reduced. Collective bargaining is key to increasing labour's share of income, especially for the low paid. It is key to closing the gender pay gap. We can start to redirect the flow of income from profits and dividends to the living standards of the women and men who produce the goods and services.

But we must also redirect policy as well: vindicating the right to collective bargaining, taxing excessive profits, reducing precarity and raising statutory wage floors. We have had some success but we still have a long way to go.

We can start to redirect the flow of income from profits and dividends to the living standards of the women and men who produce the goods and services

By reducing inequality in the workplace and in the economy, we can make it easier to ensure inclusive living standards for everyone: pensioners, people with disabilities, children living in disadvantaged areas and the long-term unemployed. Reducing inequality is a win-win for society.

That's why, for SIPTU, we cannot build a resilient economy without growing equality, starting in the workplace.

SIPTU fights for the future of work at Biennial Delegate Conference

SIPTU delegates from across Ireland will gather in Galway later this month for the union's Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC)

The BDC follows a landmark year for SIPTU, which has seen the union and its members firmly on the front foot industrially. This was emphasised recently by the offer for members working in health and community services, which will deliver pay increases of 8 percent, arrears payments and the restoration of pre-austerity era pay relations.

In the Services Division, national collective bargaining was restored for private security workers, while the Covid-19 pandemic recognition payment was secured for 5,000 contract services workers in frontline health settings. The Community Sector also saw the introduction of a national sectoral collective bargaining.

Members in the Manufacturing Division have won considerable pay increases through collective bargaining as the union has fought to stay ahead of vicious and spiralling cost of living increases, many the result of profiteering and price gouging.

The threat of strike action delivered a guarantee that water services workers could remain in the Local Authority while retaining all of their current terms and conditions. Successful strike action by Retained Fire Fighters also delivered an agreement, while pay increases and a future pay determination mechanism were won for Community Employment Supervisors and Assistant Supervisors, as well as members in Rural Social Schemes and TÚS.

The theme of this year's conference is 'fighting for the future of work' and motions will grapple with some of the greatest challenges facing workers and the labour movement in the decades to come. Delegates will hear proposals for a new economic model that recognises, respects and rewards those who contribute most to society through their labour, which will be advanced by SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham.

International guests include Esther Lynch, the General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, Mick Lynch, General Secretary of the RMT in Britain and Omar Barghouti from Palestine and co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement founder.

At the BDC, motions in the name of the National Executive Council (NEC) will be debated on the cost-of-living crisis, the right of workers to organise in trade unions, improving the quality of employment in Ireland and protections for those laid off from their jobs.

Among these is the recent

Delegates will vote on measures to tackle the rampant inflation and profiteering that is hammering living standards for working people. One motion calls for public services to be provided free at the point of delivery, for energy and housing to be considered public goods and for stronger price regulation.

As the threats posed by climate change deepen, delegates will also discuss the importance of climate action. Motions would mandate the union to fight for jobs and conditions in future green initiatives, as well as calling for the Government to establish a Just Transition Commissioner.

There are a range of health and care sector motions, ranging from protecting existing terms and conditions under the proposed new Sláintecare system to ensuring safe staffing levels in the Health Service Executive (HSE).

There will also be calls for the roles of care and healthcare assistants to be fairly recognised and rewarded.

In addition, conference will debate how to improve pay and conditions for workers represented by SIPTU across the economy,

**FIGHTING
FOR THE
FUTURE
OF WORK**

The battle against precarious work is a subject of numerous motions

Proposals for a new economic model that recognises, respects and rewards those who contribute most to society through their labour will be advanced by SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham



campaign by workers at the temporarily shutdown. Tara Mines, which has highlighted the gross inequality in the social protection system. They are calling for the introduction of a pay-related social insurance benefits system.

The battle against precarious work is a subject of numerous motions, with one calling for the elimination of temporary and fixed-term contracts where they have taken the place of permanent employment. Other motions call for direct labour to be prioritised in public service agreements and construction, as well as tackling precarity in the education sector.

Motions in the name of the National Executive Council (NEC) will be debated on the cost-of-living crisis, the right of workers to organise in trade unions, improving the quality of employment in Ireland and protections for those laid off from their jobs

including increasing pay for workers in the community and Early Years sectors as well as re-establishing a Joint Labour Committee for hospitality workers.

After recent successful industrial action, SIPTU delegates will hear proposals for challenging the continuing recruitment and retention crisis in the Fire Service. The BDC will also debate a series of proposed workplace reforms, from extending access to remote or blended working to supporting worker directors on boards.

There will be motions advocating an enhanced role for unions in health and safety legislation, as

well as the restoration of labour inspectors, the numbers of which have been severely curtailed in recent years.

In addition delegates will hear the case for increasing the statutory redundancy cap to €1,000 for each week of work accrued.

Conference will debate calls to recognise the vital work done by the union's shop stewards. There will be proposals to empower shop stewards in recruitment and re-establish a Shop Steward Development Fund.

Motions will encourage the union to mainstream the issues of women workers in collective bargaining as well as placing greater emphasis on young workers. There will also be calls for the Government to establish a Commissioner for Ageing and Older People and a motion reaffirming SIPTU's support for the Pension Promise campaign.

Finally, delegates will discuss the union's ongoing campaigning in wider society, from the fight against the far-right to apartheid in Palestine and the Raise the Roof campaign for investment in public and affordable housing.

The Biennial Delegate Conference will take place from 13th to 16th November in the Galmont Hotel, Galway.

Candidates for Honorary Vice-President

Eugene Murphy

After major consideration and a lot of support and encouragement from my fellow union members, I have decided to put my name forward to run in the election for Honorary Vice-President of our great hard-working union. I am currently on my second term on the NEC.

I have been a member of our union since I left school and I have served the union in a wide range of capacities. It has been my privilege for the past number of years to serve as President of the Energy Sector. The sector, currently faces strenuous if not turbulent times with climate change, but aims to ensure that employment continues for our union members under the Just Transition model or alternative meaningful employment going forward.

I am currently Chairperson of the Group of Unions (GOU) in Gas Networks Ireland and Uisce Eireann. This Group incorporates



trade unions from Connect, Fórsa, Unite and SIPTU. The GOU has worked very hard and successfully to ensure excellent terms and conditions for all of our union members. I feel I have gained

respect among my peers for my straightforward approach and ability to get the job done. I am an active member of the ICTU Energy Committee, which plays an important role in fighting for the

improvement and protection of workers' rights during these times of focusing on 'A Greener Environment'. We aim to ensure that workers conditions and security of employment are to the forefront of any changes that will occur.

In my role as pension trustee for over 20 years and while serving on five different pension schemes on behalf of union members, I went back to college to gain the IORPS 2 pension qualification. I have successfully mediated for various SIPTU Sections with employers to address outstanding issues on behalf of our members over the last number of years. Just recently I helped to mediate a settlement with SIPTU and GMC in the construction sector. My role ensured that I have experience in dealing with public and private sector employments. I have also been to the fore in ensuring that members interests are brought to the attention of the various political representatives when required.

I have been an active member on the National Executive Council in relation to union policy and I firmly believe in the importance of this trade union in society. I stand proudly by in what it has achieved and accomplished and the difference it has made for working people. I also believe I have the experience and energy required to hold the role of Honorary Vice President as we head into the future. I always support all sectors in the union in our struggle for better terms and conditions for all workers.

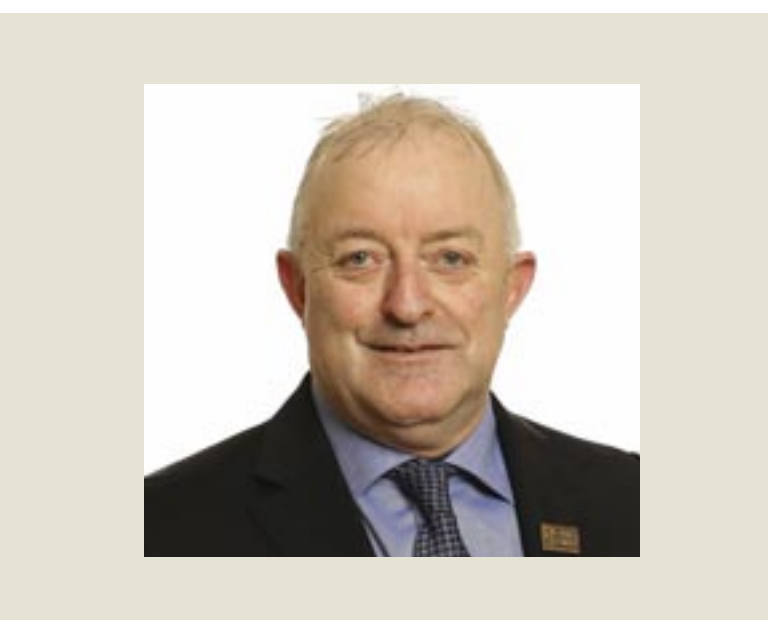
I would consider it a privilege and an honour if I receive your support for Honorary Vice-President. As my track record has shown on behalf of my fellow workers I have represented through my working life, I will work tirelessly with the NEC and the General Officers and most importantly my fellow union members for a better working life for all.

Alan Lindley

I joined the ITGWU when I started my working life nearly four decades ago. Since 1992 I have served as a shop steward and have been a Representative on the National Joint Industrial Council for Civil Service Departments, representing both indoor and outdoor grades in Waterways Ireland, which is a North/South Body under the Good Friday Agreement.

I am also in my second term as a member of the union's National Executive Council (NEC). I am fully aware of the workings of SIPTU. I currently hold the position of President of the State Related Sector, I was a member of the SIPTU Consultative Forum, and past member of the PACD Division Committee. I am currently involved in numerous community-based organisations, where I enjoy communicating with a whole range of groups and bringing people together with a common objective.

I have worked in both the public sector and private sectors and have



a wide knowledge of the terms and working conditions in both sectors. My values are entrenched in the fight for fairness, and a sustainable future for both workers and the union going forward.

Members ask, why am I running as a candidate? My answer is

simple, to be the voice for those that are not heard and progress fair and decent outcomes for working people across society.

As a trade unionist I appreciate the education system, but it is underfunded and under constant budgetary pressures that should never be placed on a civil society

which believes in an education for all. There should be no barriers to education or glass ceilings.

In health we need a health system that values the patient, but also the members who deliver it. Underfunding rears its ugly head and holds back a progressive health system that benefits all in society, not just those that can afford it.

In the public sector we have to deal with the anomalies created where public sector workers are working for between €4 and €5 per hour below Construction Industry Federation (CIF) rates of pay. This is creating a crisis for local authorities, state agencies and health sectors across the country in retention of staff and is not sustainable. This will need to be addressed going forward and I intend furthering this at the NEC for a fair resolution.

The core of this union starts with the members, calling for better terms and conditions across workplaces. They are ultimately what this union represents: the shop steward!

My commitment going forward will be to the shop stewards in

SIPTU. Listening to members' interests whether in the private sector or public sector is fundamental to our growth. I will be representing all workers and acknowledging the inherent challenges across both sectors in SIPTU faced by shop stewards.

I would like to build on the successes that I have achieved such as negotiating a new pension for the nearly 900 members in the North/South bodies that brought substantial pension benefits for all members. These outcomes can be made in other employments and replicated when supported, planned and fought for. Never underestimate the power of collectivism.

The support for SIPTU College is vital for a stronger union to advance in an ever-changing society. The housing crisis is a symptom of greed and inaction. We need to build over 50,000 social and affordable houses a year and change the planning regulations so local people can build in their own communities. The Government needs to invest now before we lose another generation of our youth to emigration.

Candidates for Depu

Karan O Loughlin

I have been a member of SIPTU for 32 years since I worked in a factory in Shannon where I was the shop steward for 10 years before taking up the job with the union in January, 2000 in the Limerick Number 2 Branch. Since commencing work with the union, I have worked across all sectors of the union, both public and private.

I am seeking your number 1 vote for election to the position of Deputy General Secretary for the Private Sector because I have the qualifications and experience for the job and because I have a proven ability to lead.

I have a strong capacity for collective membership engagement. I like to engage with members and regularly have general meetings with groups of members. I have strong communication and listening skills as well as well-developed media skills.

Our union needs visible leadership in the private sector and if elected the following will be my priorities:



- To grow our union and to keep our union's policies and successes in the public eye,
- To keep educating and winning with our existing members,
- To educate and organise new members,
- To maximise our industrial power to deliver for members and for fairness in society,

Examples of key achievements

- Leading and winning the 2 major industrial disputes for SIPTU members working in water services and in the Retained Fire Service
- Successful track record of organising, leading, and supporting members to win union recognition disputes for

example - Irish Express Cargo, Stobart Road Transport and Doyle Shipping

- Worked with members and activists to reorganise and grow the membership of the film and television industry and to negotiate strong collective agreements from a challenging position.
- Worked with activists and industry leaders to create the introduction of a special social protection scheme for artists and to create the pilot programme for the Basic Income Scheme for Artists in Ireland.
- Founding member of the Homeless and Housing Coalition
- Secretary of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions for 10 years
- Represented the union on several boards of governance in the education and construction sectors and served on the board of the ICTU Limerick Resource Centre

Academic achievement

Having left school at 15 years of age, I am a strong supporter of lifelong learning. As a shop steward I was supported by the union in educating myself while carrying out my normal work duties:

- Diploma in Learning and Development

- HETAC Certificate in Law and Practice of Industrial Relations
- ICTU Leadership Initiative for Females in Trade Unions (LIFT)
- Masters Degree in Human Resource Management
- Bachelor of Business Studies and Industrial Relations
- Diploma in Business Studies and Industrial Relations
- Certificate Education and Training
- Certificate in Equality Studies
- Certificate in Trade Union Studies
- Diploma in Quality Management
- Certificate in Quality Management
- City and Guilds in Quality Assurance, Limerick Institute of Technology

As well as describing my suitability, capacity and qualifications to take up the position of General Officer, I also believe that strong consideration should be given to the style of leadership the members want for our organisation. My style of leadership is direct and strong, but also collaborative. I work well and in an open and transparent way with members, staff, other unions and stakeholder organisations, often taking a leadership role to ensure that external collaborations work for our members.

Adrian Kane

I am standing for the position of Deputy General Secretary in the Private Sector because I want to grow our union and make it vibrant and central to Irish economic, political, and public life again. My goal is to increase SIPTU membership to 200,000 by 2030. This is ambitious, but within our control.

We all have our part to play. We all need to work together to grow our union. To do this, we need to meet workers where they are, not where we wish them to be. The world of work has changed. We need to listen to younger workers and convince them why working life is better when you have a union card in your pocket.

The three core pillars of my campaign are:

- Empowering our members
- Modernising our union
- Strengthening our voice

I have been a union activist all my life. I first joined the ITGWU when I began working for Bord na Móna in 1988 as a teenager. I was elected shop steward in my early twenties and quickly became immersed in



the work of the union's Kildare/Leixlip branch. I became a full-time SIPTU official in 1995.

During my 28 years working for our union, I have represented workers in every sector of our economy. When the union was restructured in 2010, I took up the position of Sector Organiser in the Insurance, Finance, Print and Media

Sector. In 2014, I was appointed to the Energy sector and four years later, I became a Divisional Organiser with responsibility for the PAC Division. Earlier this year, I was appointed as Divisional Organiser over the TEAC Division.

All my life, my goal has been to organise the unorganised. I have a proven record of organising

thousands of new members into our union. I have won union recognition campaigns in hostile anti-union workplaces. During my tenure as head of the PAC Division, our membership grew by 10%. This growth was primarily achieved through the work of our Strategic Organising Department.

Under my leadership, as TEAC Divisional Organiser, our membership has begun to recover steadily after significant losses during the pandemic. I have led many successful campaigns - including campaigning for a Just Transition for Bord na Móna workers and spearheading nationwide industrial action across the Community Sector which resulted in badly needed pay increases for thousands of workers. I am currently working with our members in Tara Mines campaigning to strengthen the social protection safety net for all workers.

In order for SIPTU to grow we need to examine our structures and modernise our union through an inclusive, participative member-led process, thereby empowering our members. The DGS position is an important platform and has the potential to increase the union's

visibility. It is imperative that SIPTU be at the cutting edge of the core political and economic issues of the day and that we strengthen our voice. If you elect me, I will not be silent. You have my word.

I believe that trade unionism is about fighting injustice not only in the workplace, but wherever it exists. I am a founding member of the SIPTU Global Solidarity Committee. I have consistently fought to highlight the injustice perpetrated on the Palestinian people. I am a strong believer in lifelong learning. I am a graduate of the National College of Industrial Relations and undertook postgraduate courses in UCD and Keele University, where I studied Employment Law and European Industrial Relations. I have written a book on trade union renewal, Trade Unions, which has recently been published by Cork University Press.

We have a great Union, the best of members, activists, and staff. We need to draw on our collective talents to renew and transform SIPTU. I believe I have the experience, track record and determination to play a leading role in our Union and that's why I am asking for your No. 1 vote. I look forward to meeting you at conference.

Deputy General Secretary

Greg Ennis

It is critically important to build an even stronger and more vibrant Private Sector within SIPTU, which in turn supports our Public Sector membership's rightful aspirations and expectations. I believe I can deliver that continuity and growth. One Big Union (OBU) is as important now, as when the phrase first came to prominence in Ireland in 1908.

My union activity began thirty-eight years ago as a member of the Meath Branch of ITGWU (SIPTU). I was elected to the positions of shop steward, E.W.C. representative, health and safety representative and pension trustee, while working for thirteen years at NEC Semiconductors in County Meath. I subsequently joined the staff of SIPTU as a full-time official in 1998, after which I was appointed to the Kildare/Leixlip Branch.

I represented SIPTU members in the Mullingar/Longford branch, FÁS branch, Offaly branch, Peat Industries branch and was appointed to the position of secretary to the Bord na Móna Group of Unions. Upon the



restructuring of SIPTU in 2010, I was appointed to the Energy Sector as Sector Organiser. In 2012, I simultaneously held responsibility for our RTÉ membership and, on the completion of this additional assignment, I was appointed as Aviation Sector Organiser. Following three years in aviation, I was appointed to the position of

Divisional Organiser for the TEAC Division. In 2019, I took up responsibility for the Manufacturing Division and currently retain that portfolio with responsibility for 35,000 members.

I believe that my experience gained from being both an activist and full-time official in SIPTU, totalling thirty-eight years, suitably

qualifies me for election to the position of Deputy General Secretary for the Private Sector. Throughout my twenty-five years of full-time service in SIPTU, I have strategically led SIPTU members in the achievement of significant victories such as those recorded in the proposed decentralisation of FÁS, the restructuring of Bord na Móna, Coillte and RTÉ, DAA and Apple pay restoration, the achievement of the first Sectoral Employment Order (Construction), Construction Inter-Union Crane dispute and in the CIÉ Group of Companies.

Throughout my employment in SIPTU, I have been unflinching in my support for our members in multiple successful industrial disputes, where strike action was absolutely justified and necessary. This included the national nurses strike 1999; FÁS decentralisation strike 2006; Bus Éireann strike 2017; the Irish Rail strike 2017; SK Biotek strike 2019, the Bausch & Lomb strike 2022; Lisk Ireland strike 2022; and Kyte Powertech strike 2022.

In the Manufacturing Division, my colleagues and I have managed to largely maintain membership levels, despite the combined and

unprecedented challenges posed by Brexit, the pandemic and supply chain issues, which coincided with my four-year term within the Division. My exposure of the horrendous conditions that prevailed in the Irish meat processing industry during the pandemic and the bringing about of Statutory Occupational Sick Pay for the first time in Ireland, following my advocacy for same in the Houses of the Oireachtas, is something of which I am particularly proud.

I believe that such future levels of political engagement will be fundamental to empowering our union to restore its community connectiveness and the rebuilding of our membership base, alongside the full implementation of the recently adopted 'Future of SIPTU' agreement, which I helped negotiate as part of the three-person management team in conjunction with the SRC.

I was born in Athboy, County Meath and I live there with my family. I am heavily involved in my local hurling and football club. I have raised significant funds for charities over many years by way of long-distance cycling exploits including Mizen to Malin Head, Meath to Mayo and the Ring of Kerry.

Teresa Hannick

I have been an activist in our union for nearly forty years. Before becoming a full-time official, I was elected as a shop steward in my teens and was then elected to the Dublin 6 & 8 branch committee (later the Apparel & Allied Trades branch) of the ITGWU/SIPTU. I served in a number of roles on the branch, including Vice President.

I became a full-time official in 2003 and served as assistant branch secretary and later branch secretary of the Aer Lingus branch. Seven years later, when our union restructured in 2010, I was appointed as a Sector Organiser with the responsibility for two Sectors in the Manufacturing Division: the Agriculture, Food and Drink Sector, and the Industrial Production Sector. In 2011, I was appointed as Sector Organiser for the Aviation Sector in the TEAC Division followed by my appointment as Sector Organiser for the Wholesale Retail Distribution Sector in the Services Division in 2013.

I became the Manufacturing Divisional Organiser in 2018 and in



2019 I was appointed to my current position as Divisional Organiser for the Services Division, in late 2022 I also held temporary responsibility for the TEAC Division. I believe my work as an industrial official and Divisional Organiser working in the three Private Sector Divisions of our union, and the experience I have gained representing

members at both a national level and local level in semi-state and private sections, has given me the required competencies and places me in a unique position to be considered for the role of Deputy General Secretary for the Private Sector.

Throughout my time as a full-time official, I have represented

and organised SIPTU members in many different industries, large and small, private and semi state, and members in precarious low-paid employments. During this time, I have amassed extensive experience in conducting industrial disputes and reaching agreements to the benefit of our members. This included representing SIPTU members in major negotiation processes such as the many dramatic change agendas in Aer Lingus, restructuring in Shannon Aerospace, the Shannon Airport separation from the DAA, industrial action in RAP Gweedore, Tim Hastings Westport, and Tesco Ireland.

Campaigning has a pivotal role in identifying issues affecting workers. Over the years I have been involved in numerous campaigns but probably the one I am most proud of is the Justice for Clerys Workers campaign. The Services Division has had a significant win recently in our campaign for the Pandemic Special Recognition Payment for contract services workers. The support and assistance we received from the members and officials in the Health Division

helped in the success of our campaign. This cooperation underpins my belief in how critical it is that our union has strong Private and Public Sectors coming together in collaboration to advance and protect the interests of all our members across our union.

For me, being a trade unionist means putting equality at work and justice in society front and centre and fighting for an end to inequality in wages and power. Organising members and building trade union density creates strength at a local as well as a national level, and also aids in mobilising around a wider range of political issues from campaigning against austerity to taking action to protect workers' pensions. The heart of any trade union is its shop stewards and activists organising in the workplace. I strongly believe the development and empowerment of our shop stewards and members is key to revitalising our union and growing our membership.

I would appreciate your support for the position of Deputy General Secretary.



More than 10,000 people march through the streets of Dublin on Saturday, 21st October to protest the brutal Israeli assault on Gaza. The demonstration was organised by the Ireland-Palestine Solidarity Campaign (IPSC) and featured a delegation from SIPTU. Photo: Rollingnews.

Genocide in Gaza must end



By
Omar
Barghouti

Yesterday, I saw an image of mass destruction in the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza, and I heard the cries of a child from under the rubble while survivors were trying to dig them up with their bare hands. Those cries have haunted me since.

Well before 7th October, and for over 16 years, Israel imposed a near-total siege, designed "to put the Palestinians on a diet, but not to make them die of hunger," as one of its architects admitted. Gaza was turned into an "unliveable" zone, according to the United Nations, where the healthcare system was near collapse; 96% of the water was undrinkable; around 60% of children were anemic. Gaza had become a modern-day ghetto, where 2.3 million Palestinians were trapped in the world's largest open-air "prison camp."

Since 7th October, the Israeli occupation forces have murdered over 10,000 Palestinians in Gaza, including more than 4,000 children. It has systematically employed indiscriminate bombing of civilians and civilian infrastructure, including with illegal explosive weapons and white phosphorus; ethnic cleansing; denial of water, food, fuel and medicine; planned forced displacement; and "starvation as a weapon of war," as stated by Oxfam and Palestinian human rights organisations.

On 25th October, the Israeli media revealed a plan, produced by the Israeli Minister of Intelligence, calling for using the current offensive to ethnically cleanse



Palestinians from Gaza to Egypt.

All this has prompted prominent Israeli genocide scholar Raz Segal and senior UN official Craig Mokhiber to warn of "a textbook case of genocide." Over 880 international scholars, the US-based Center for Constitutional Rights, UN experts, as well as Palestinian human rights organisations have also warned of

an unfolding Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Contextualising the current unfolding genocide in Israel's 75-year regime of settler-colonialism and apartheid, Craig Mokhiber wrote, before resigning, "The European, ethno-nationalist, settler colonial project in Palestine has entered its final phase, toward

the expedited destruction of the last remnants of indigenous Palestinian life in Palestine."

Israel's impunity, afforded by the unconditional funding, arming and shielding from accountability by the US and powerful European states, is also entrenched through a hegemonic propaganda campaign, enlisting the US president himself, that dehumanises Palestinians to make genocide more palatable to western publics. Key in this propaganda is the claim that the attack on 7th October by Palestinian armed resistance groups against Israeli military bases and settlements around Gaza was "unprovoked." Here are five ethically consistent points on this.

First, as the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, wrote: "With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun. Never in history has violence been initiated by the oppressed. ... Violence is initiated by those who oppress, who exploit, who fail to recognise others as persons – not by those who are oppressed, exploited, and unrecognised." Understanding the context and causes of resistance

does not entail accepting its tactics, legally or morally speaking.

Second, Israel's far-right government, its most racist, fundamentalist, sexist, and homophobic ever, has been ruthlessly escalating its ethnic cleansing, pogroms and daily humiliation of millions of Palestinians across the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, in the Naqab, and elsewhere, thinking that unmasked brutality could force Palestinians to surrender and accept oppression as fate.

Third, international law recognises the right of all peoples resisting foreign occupation and colonisation to resort to armed struggle. However, the use of force against civilians is strictly prohibited, whether from the coloniser or the colonised side – despite the massive power imbalance and the just as massive moral asymmetry between the two.

Fourth, condemning the illegal or immoral acts of violence that the oppressed may commit in resisting oppression is acceptable only if the condemning party has earned the moral standing to do so by being already on record condemning the system of colonial oppression and apartheid that has been for decades the root cause of all violence.

Fifth, since oppression is the root cause of violence, those of us who sincerely care about ending all violence must act to end oppression. As the struggle that ended apartheid in South Africa has shown, it means confronting state, corporate and institutional complicity in Israel's system of oppression, especially through the nonviolent tactics of boycott, divestment and sanctions.

The BDS movement was launched in 2005 by the absolute majority in Palestinian society. It

calls for ending Israel's 1967 occupation; dismantling its apartheid system; and recognising the right of Palestinian refugees to return home. Anchored in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the BDS movement categorically opposes all forms of racism, including Islamophobia and antisemitism. BDS targets complicity, not identity.

Over the last 18 years, BDS has won global support from trade unions, farmers' coalitions, as well as racial, social, gender and climate justice movements, together representing tens of millions. It has compelled multinationals and large investment funds to end their complicity in Israel's human rights violations.

Strategic, context-sensitive BDS pressure is more needed than ever to end business-as-usual with apartheid Israel to impose an immediate ceasefire, lifting the siege, and allowing life-saving humanitarian aid into Gaza unimpeded. An urgent demand is to end military and security ties with Israel and all transit of weapons to it.

We need more pressure on the Irish government to end trade with illegal settlements and divest from companies involved in them. Many inspiring solidarity actions are taking place worldwide, including trade union action, peaceful sit-ins, and massive demonstrations.

We need pressure on city councils, universities, and other public institutions to adopt procurement and investment policies that exclude companies involved in grave violations of international law anywhere.

We also need to escalate strategic, context sensitive, BDS campaigns in all fields and to convince businesses, cultural and academic organisations to declare themselves Apartheid Free Zones.

If you love peace, work for justice. If you hate violence, help us end oppression. For now, we need your utmost support to help stop the genocide. I cannot tell whether that child under the rubble survived the massacre or not, but I know that we must do everything possible to save all the rest.

Omar Barghouti is a co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign.



President Higgins calls for immediate ceasefire

"The ongoing horrific loss of civilian life in Gaza and Israel has to be addressed. It should concern us all. Violence by non-State as well as State actors must be described for what it is – breaches of international law. If international law is to be respected, it is important that hostages be released and an immediate humanitarian ceasefire be put in place."

In this terrible ongoing loss of civilian life, that is having such a devastating impact on families on all sides, with the large proportion of those killed being women and children, it is important that there be a verification of figures, that the lives lost are not reduced to competing press releases.

The enlistment of civilians for military purposes on any side has



President Michael D Higgins made statement calling for a ceasefire by Israel.

to be recognised and addressed; collective punishment is not something we can accept and claim to be advocates of international law. It is simply unacceptable that hospitals and those being cared for within them are threatened by the basic lack of resources, damaged or indeed threatened with destruction, or

those within them forced to be evacuated.

Those in the international community who are anxious to support international law, see it vindicated in its fullest sense, including the Geneva Convention, must press for an independent verification of the facts.

International bodies, including the European Union and members of the broader international community, who remain silent or allow their messages to have ambiguous construction have a responsibility to commit to vindicating international law. This is needed to give credibility to what is a much-invoked multilateralism. Not to do so is to accede to little less than the granting of impunity to those involved in a conflict.

When it comes to the protection of children, no other issues should

stand in the way for even a minute. Friendships, alliances and partnerships are tested by what cannot be avoided if diplomacy is to return and replace war.

I am proud of the Irish NGOs who are responding to the present horror that is unfolding in Gaza, great acts of courage and humanity are taking place in the worst of circumstances. One can only admire the extraordinary courage and commitment of the medical personnel who, while enduring unimaginable difficulties, are staying with those for whom they care, putting their own lives at risk. That so many members of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), including teachers, have already lost their lives in that task illustrates the terrible price that threatening civilians with terror, war and its response delivers. What they are facing are the experiences of this suffering.

If we are to move past the present events, we need the capacity to verify what are the facts on the ground and to respond to them, removing all blocks to humanitarian relief, indicating how a space for diplomacy can be found, and out of all of this how a consistent diverse body of proposals might come forward. Ones that can deliver a reasonable security to citizens of Israel, and at the same time achieve the delivery of the long-neglected rights of the Palestinian people; offering the prospect of peace to future generations who must share space and life together as neighbours."

*Áras an Uachtaráin,
2nd November 2023.*



Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign seeks political solution

"The Irish Anti-Apartheid Campaign for Palestine (IAAC-P) is a coalition of 23 Irish civil society organisations including SIPTU, representing a collective membership of over one million people across the island."

We mourn, without reservation, the taking of all civilian life, in Gaza, in Israel and across the occupied Palestinian territory; and we condemn all unlawful acts which deliberately target or recklessly endanger civilians, including all acts of collective punishment against a population under siege.

We also make an urgent call for an immediate ceasefire by all parties in the occupied Gaza Strip and Israel to prevent further loss of civilian lives and to ensure access to life-saving aid for people in Gaza amidst an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe.

Drawing on evidence gathered

over decades by the United Nations and international and local human rights organisations, it is recognised that Israel imposes an institutionalised regime of oppression, discrimination and domination over Palestinians across all the territory under its effective control, between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea, and among Palestinian refugees. This is apartheid, and it is a crime against humanity in international law.

Since 1948 millions of Palestinians have been forcibly removed and transferred; they have had their lands confiscated and their homes demolished; they have been imprisoned without trial, and forced to live in isolated and fragmented enclaves with limited freedom of movement.

Successive Israeli governments have transferred more than 700,000 settlers onto occupied Palestinian territory in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and have created separate legal and

administrative systems for Palestinians and Israelis. They have also denied nationality and citizenship to millions of Palestinians.

Gaza is the most extreme manifestation of Israel's apartheid regime of racial domination, territorial fragmentation, forcible transfer, segregation and exclusion.

The international community, particularly the United States and the European Union, has failed over decades to provide the Palestinian people with a genuine path to justice and equality.

The near-total support for Israel and its policies has been disastrous for Palestinians, and indeed for Israelis. It is time for honesty: we must no longer enable the dispossession and suffering of the Palestinian people. Those with the power to do so must, instead, and as a matter of urgency, create a political process leading to an end to decades of injustice and violence which has been imposed on the Palestinian people.

In the current crisis, we call on

the Government to redouble its efforts to bring an end to war in Gaza. We call on our representatives to stand by the Secretary General of the United Nations in his recognition of the root causes of the current conflict; we call on them to ensure the International Criminal Court investigates as a matter of urgency all potential war crimes arising from the current hostilities; and more immediately to facilitate the urgent delivery of life-saving humanitarian aid to the besieged population of Gaza.

Beyond this, every effort must be made to seek a long-term political solution for Palestinians and Israelis. Anything less will only lead to constant war and the ongoing destabilisation of an entire region. The Palestinian people have endured decades of suffering. We must not continue to fail them.

Peace, for Palestinians and Israelis, is only possible through justice for the Palestinian people."

29th October, 2023.

SIPTU members in Apple accept pay deal

SIPTU members in Apple, Cork have voted to accept a jointly negotiated pay agreement between SIPTU and their employer.

Talks have been ongoing since

early August and a final document to be recommended to SIPTU members was agreed on 29th September. Balloting commenced on 11th October and concluded on 12th with members' acceptance of the proposal. The Union

Committee with the assistance of their Officials Martin O'Rourke and Joe Kelly were commended for the hard work and strength of character shown throughout this process.

The terms of the agreement are a

pay increase of:

4.25% from 1st October 2023 to 30th September 2024.

4% from 1st October 2024 to 30th September 2025.

A revised schedule for the bridging of the current gap

between the LTF and Permanent rate of pay, so that this process will be completed effective from 1st October 2023, one year earlier than as per the previous agreement in this regard.

Jim Moynihan receives 50-year badge



Joe Kelly, Industrial Organiser, SIPTU Manufacturing Division (let) presenting Jim with his 50-year scroll and badge.

Long standing SIPTU member and Shop Steward, Jim Moynihan and his wife Janette were welcomed to Connolly Hall, Cork on Thursday 12th October to receive a badge and scroll in honour of Jim's 50 years as a SIPTU member which were presented by Industrial Organiser Joe Kelly.

Jim began working in the "True Temper" foundry in 1973 and immediately joined the ITGWU and has carried his Union membership proudly ever since. Jim progressed to becoming a Shop Steward in 2001 having sat on the committee for a number of years and has worked tirelessly to protect and enhance his colleagues Terms and Conditions. After receiving his 50-year award, Jim regaled all present with stories of his memories of his working time in True Temper and the many

friendships he has formed with his work colleagues and fellow members of the old Cork No. 6 Branch Committee.

In 2009, Jim was instrumental in securing a favourable redundancy settlement for his colleagues who were affected by a major downsizing of the Cork operation. He recalled the arduous negotiations held at that time and the weight of responsibility carried by the Union delegation. On a lighter note, Jim also recalled the many spontaneous dances that took place around the furnaces when a stray spark would find its way into somebody's shoe.

We would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Janette and Jim's family for the support they have given him down through the years as they look forward to seeing a lot more of him in his well-earned retirement.

Long service presentation



SIPTU Kerry Group Chairman Pat Carroll, SIPTU Organiser, Sharon Ryan and John Mortell AGRI Sector committee member presenting David McCarthy with a long-service award on his retirement.



Launch of Jobseekers Pay related Campaign: Tara Mines union officials, shop stewards, Meath TDs, councillors and Justice minister, Helen McEntee.

Emergency Jobseeker's scheme needed for Tara Mines workers, meeting hears

At a well-attended meeting of Tara Mines workers in SIPTU's Dan Shaw Centre in Navan, public representatives – including councillors, Oireachtas members and Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee – heard about the hardship faced by many workers and their families since the lay-offs began.

At the event, the union launched a video calling for a pay-related model of social protection to prevent workers from falling into

poverty. This model, which is the norm in most EU countries, would guarantee a percentage of average earnings for laid-off workers for defined periods of time.

"In Ireland, you are paid below the poverty line from day one no matter how long you have been paying PRSI," said SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Adrian Kane. "It is simply wrong, and it must be rectified."

"We welcome the commitment by the Government in its recent Budget to introduce a pay-related model in December 2024," he

continued, "but there is no reason why a temporary scheme could not be put in place now similar to how the PUP payment was introduced during the Covid-19 crisis."

The union is seeking a commitment from all public representatives to support the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) proposal for Jobseeker's Benefit to be increased to 70% of average earnings capped at €550 for a minimum of nine months.

INVITATION

SIPTU Waterford District Council invites you to the unveiling of a new Waterford Council of Trade Unions commemorative plaque in Dungarvan, Co Waterford. The plaque will commemorate the Great Waterford Farm Labourers Strike of 1923. The ITGWU strike lasted 7 months and involved 1,500 agricultural workers, their families and communities.

**Saturday 25th November at 2.30p.m.
Davitts Quay, Dungarvan**

*Refreshments will be served afterwards in Lawlors Hotel,
Bridge Street, Dungarvan*



IRISH ARTISTS FOR PALESTINE



SAW DOCTORS (ACOUSTIC) / THE STUNNING / MARY BLACK /
FRANCES BLACK / MARY COUGHLAN / FIACHNA O BRAONAIN &
TOM DUNNE / MUNDY / MC ABDUL (PALESTINE) / CORMAC
BREATHNACH & BAND / ROISIN EL CHERIF (PALESTINE/IRELAND) /
DEE ARMSTRONG (KILA) AND THE FREE SPEAKING MONKEYS /
BERNADETTE MC ALISKEY /
EOIN DILLON & BAND / AOIFE SCOTT / CATHERINE YOUNG DANCE /
SKY ATLAS / STEO WALL / ULTAN CONLON /
HONOR HEFFERNAN & TREVOR KNIGHT / WISE WOLF (PALESTINE)

In attendance will be the Palestinian ambassador to Ireland, Dr Jilan Wahba Abdalmajid

TICKET €30



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JINX LENNON
STEO WALL ROÍSÍN EL CHERIF
NIALL MCCABE
LEO MORAN & PÁDRAIG STEVENS
NIAMH LANGAN
HALA JABER COUSIN TABLET
CAOIMHE BUTTERLY
AILISH LAFFEY & FABIAN JOYCE
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IRISH
ARTISTS
FOR
PALESTINE



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JOHN SPILLANE LANDLESS
PAULINE SCANLON
BARRY KERR BEOGA
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RÓIS

Féile Comhairle
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TICKETS: £20 • TICKETMASTER ADMIN FEE



IRISH
ARTISTS
FOR
PALESTINE



Bus Éireann launches Heavy Vehicle Mechanic campaign

Bus Éireann Heavy Vehicle Mechanic campaign launched 16th August 2023. The campaign aim is to get the best possible Heavy Vehicle Mechanic candidates to aspire to be part of the Bus Éireann journey, moving up -to an ambitious, forward-looking company that is committed to new, greener technology, a company building a more sustainable transport system for Ireland.

As a Heavy Vehicle Mechanic, it's where you should be.

The move in public transport and engineering is towards sustainability and clean technology - and in Ireland, Bus Éireann are playing their part. As a mechanic, that is the team you need to be part of - for your own career and to be part of the bigger movement to green technology. movement to green technology.

In 2022, the NTA ordered 20 new double-deck battery electric buses for our Limerick fleet for deployment in 2023.

Our maintenance teams keep our fleet running smoothly and we are justifiably proud of our safety



record. They look after our fleet of buses and coaches, making a real difference to our customer experience. With a fleet of 1099, buses and coaches based at 16 depots, operating across c.225 routes, our me-

chanics put their pride and perseverance into the job ensuring our vehicles always run efficiently, look their best and are well maintained and presented. We offer regular hours in well-equipped garages.

The main responsibilities are;

- Utilise specialised skills to conduct maintenance, inspection, diagnostics, and repairs on all fleet types to the company standard and

within safety regulations.

- Take the initiative to complete all tasks as necessary.
- Complete fault finding and problem solving on complex mechanical and electrical vehicle issues.
- Mentor apprentice staff as required.
- Identify and utilise resources effectively.
- Liaise with garage supervisors, technical engineering and vehicle suppliers on vehicle issues when required.
- Manage time and progress repairs and inspections to consistently meet deadlines.

SIPTU Organiser, Andrew Quigley said: "SIPTU welcomes Bus Éireann's recruitment initiatives for female mechanics as it promotes diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

The apprenticeship schemes provide training and mentorship programs to support the development of Bus Éireann mechanics.

Qualified mechanics join an ever-expanding fleet offering equal pay and benefits regardless of gender.

By joining Bus Éireann, they become part of an inclusive workplace culture, recognising the contribution of all employees."

**Have Ireland's future at your fingertips.
Join our Heavy Vehicle Mechanic team.
Help us shape a greener Ireland.**

 **Apply today at
careers.buseireann.ie**

 **Bus Éireann**

**Bí i do bhall d'ár bhfoireann Meicneoirí Feithiclí Troma.
Bíodh baint agat i dtodhchaí na hÉireann.**

Más Meicneoir Feithiclí Troma thú atá ag iarraidh fiordhífríocht a dhéanamh, tá Bus Éireann do do lorg. An bhfuil QQI leibhéal 6 trí phrintíseacht 4-bliana agat? Mar sin bí linn ar ár n-aistear chuig Éirinn atá níos glaise.

 **Déan iarratas inniu ag
careers.buseireann.ie**

 **Bus Éireann**



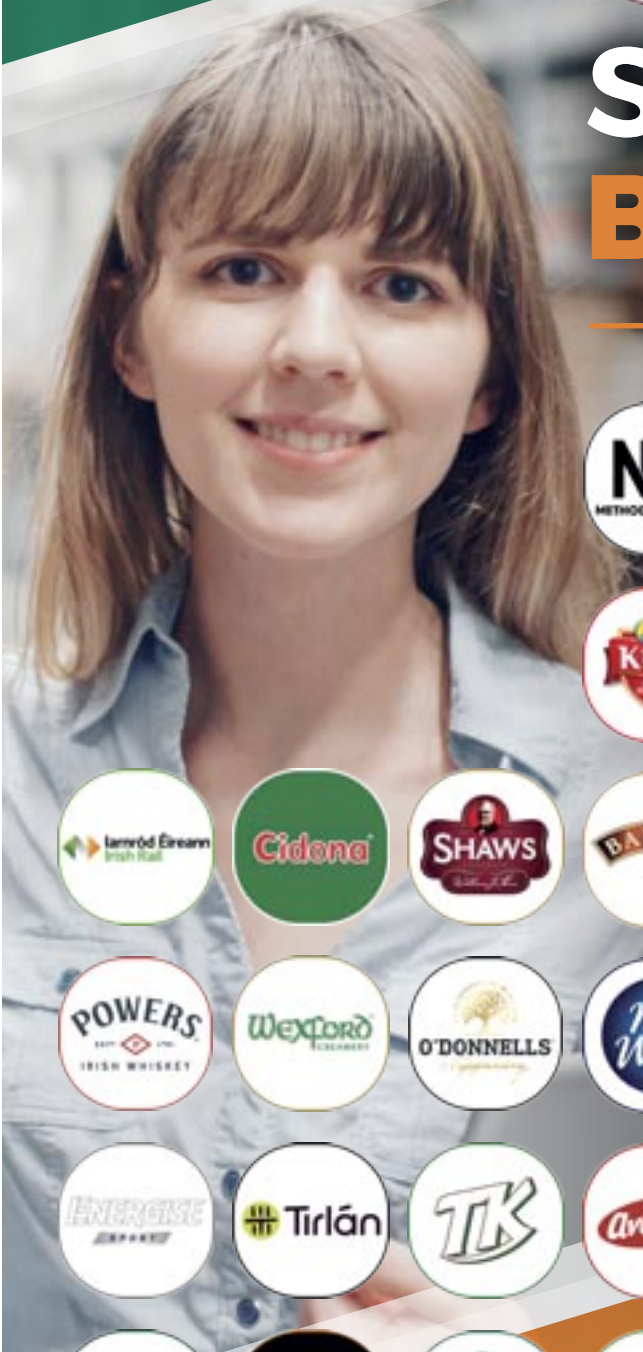
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Ireland is not full, it's a myth



By
Vic Duggan

Ireland is not full. We don't have an immigration problem. We have a capacity problem. And that's because of a decade of enforced austerity and low public investment after our financial crisis. We have chronic housing shortages, critical infrastructure gaps and public services near breaking point.

Rightly, Ireland has acted in solidarity with Ukrainians fleeing war. In addition, the number of people seeking asylum in Ireland hit a record in 2022. Arrivals from both sources have slowed in 2023, but together amount to a 2% jump in our population in just 18 months. Yes, this exacerbates our capacity problem. But, Ireland is not full. We have one of the lowest population densities in Europe.

If anything, Ireland needs more immigration, not less. Right now, the labour market is near what economists call 'full employment'. The good news is that workers have more bargaining power, and wage growth is starting to claw back some of the cost-of-living losses of recent years. In the short term, the bad news is that there are not enough construction workers to build anything like the number of homes we need, never mind deliver on our ambitious retrofitting targets. In the longer term,



People take part in a rally in Dun Laoghaire Dublin in July 2023 in support of refugees after a wave of anti-migrant protest in the area. Photo Leon Farrell/Rollingnews.ie

like most advanced economies, we are going to need more workers than natural population growth is likely to generate if we are going to support our welfare state, such as it is, as our population continues to age.

Workers and their representatives can be forgiven for wanting a tight labour market if it means higher wages and more job security. Understandably, this motive has given rise to a degree of reticence

about permissive immigration policies in labour movements over the years. But, the economic evidence doesn't stack up. It is not at all clear that immigration leads to lower wages or less job security for indigenous workers. Just look at recent Irish history: 2007 and 2022 are the two years in which the highest numbers of immigrants entered Ireland. In both years, unemployment was less than 5% and near 'full employment'. Wages

kept growing. Immigrants added to economic demand as well as to labour supply.

Turning to solutions, there is an argument for expanding the range of occupations eligible for the critical skills employment permit to attract workers in construction and related sectors. In the longer term, we will likely need more workers than we produce in care sectors. These measures can help address our shortage in skilled migration.

Of course, without investment in housing and critical infrastructure, an increased population would make other capacity problems worse. We need more of everything. More houses, more schools, more hospitals, more public transport, and more public servants to run it all. Ireland still has a relatively small public sector by international standards, and it hasn't kept pace with population growth.

Despite what one might think from the broad media coverage of a narrow minority of malcontents in recent times, Ireland has been, and continues to be, a welcoming place for migrants. For this to continue, we need sustained investment to address our very real capacity constraints.

But, we also need to reform our asylum system to make it fairer on applicants and less open to abuse. Waiting times – through final appeal – can and should be slashed. Deportation is not realistic if an application has taken many years before reaching a negative conclusion, the applicant having meanwhile built a life in Ireland.

Of course, the corollary is that reaching rapid decisions could result in more deportations. This would be the upshot of a system working properly. As set out above, channels for legitimate economic migration should be widened in parallel. Another upshot would be an immigration system that is fairer, more humane, and that can win broad support among those who are already here. This is how to neutralise the small minority of far-right malcontents.

Cuban solidarity medical aid appeal

Cuban Solidarity Forum Ireland (CSFI) is a voluntary group of people drawn from all walks of life here in Ireland, who are committed to helping the Cuban people, in their quest to have the 63 years old illegal U.S. blockade lifted and their country removed from a list of state sponsors of terrorism, to which Cuba was included in the twilight era of the Trump administration.

Aside from the genocidal blockade and the sanctions which the U.S. keep adding ad nauseum in their attempt to asphyxiate the country's sovereignty and its people, Cuba has also suffered their own share of natural disasters recently from tornados, the most



recent one in Pinar del Río, to a gas explosion at Hotel Saratoga in the heart of Habana and a further fire disaster in the Matanzas harbour. As a result, their hospitals are bereft of the most basic of medical supplies.

In the interim CSFI have been

sending out supplies via the kindness of Irish individuals and groups travelling to Cuba. They volunteer to deliver them, in our by now, infamous fold up "red bags" to a Consultant colleague of our own Dr. David Hickey here in Dublin, who has linked us up with consultant Dr. Copo in Hospital Hermanos. Almeijeiras in Habana.

However, recently we got an urgent request for cannulas, which are used in the administering of chemotherapy, blood transfusions, peg feeds, and a myriad of other intravenous interventions. One of our members in Belfast has luckily sourced a considerable amount of them, which we will need to ship to Cuba as soon as possible.

It is for this reason, as you have probably guessed, that I am writing to you on behalf of CSFI, appealing for much needed urgent contributions from the various trade union members of the ICTU Global Solidarity Group to help us

to ship the consignment with the minimum possible delay. The size of the container will depend on how much we raise through the running of fundraising events and the generosity of the contributions we receive. Details are as follows:

Account: Caribbean Solidarity Forum Ireland
National Sort Code: 931012
Account No.: 61399012
IBAN: IE96 AIBK 93101261399012
BIK/Swift: AIBKIE2D

All contributions will be hugely appreciated and acknowledged. Thank you all so much in advance.

Kindest regards,
Marie Barry, CSFI Co-Ordinator, (Retired ex-ICTU Global Solidarity Member)

Re-elected Spanish government promises “second wave of workers’ rights”

■ By Eoghan Gilmartin

This summer’s Spanish general election was widely expected to deliver a right-wing government, with some even fearing that the far-right Vox party would find itself in power. However, after a strong campaign which saw the left-wing coalition’s record on workers’ rights come to the fore, the PSOE and Sumar look set to form another progressive government.

After many months of negotiations, the two parties signed a programme for government on 24th October. At the signing, left-wing deputy prime minister Yolanda Díaz promised “a second wave of workers’ rights, which, like [those won] over the last four years, [would] be delivered through social dialogue”. The document contained a raft of commitments on workers’ issues, such as reducing the maximum working week from 40 to 37.5 hours, raising the minimum wage to 60 percent of the median salary, increased paid parental leave, and reinforcing protections and rights around redundancies.

With a series of conservative and far-right administrations elected across Europe over the last year, and the polls showing an outright majority for the Right, the prospects heading into the contest seemed ominous. Far-right Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni even framed the Spanish election as one that would “change the direction of European politics,” fundamentally altering the balance of power on the continent. “The time for patriots [had] arrived,” Meloni insisted in a speech in support of her far-right ally Vox in Valencia days before the vote.

Yet against the Right’s aggressive nationalism and culture war tactics, the parties of the broad-left produced a late progressive surge with a campaign that combined anti-fascist messaging with a discourse focused on bread-and-butter issues. Voters were mobilised both through the fear of a far-right administration and in defence of the gains made by workers across Spain in the past four years of progressive government.

In particular, PSOE’s decisive electoral lead among the lowest 20 percent of income earners has to be seen in the context of a 47



Spain’s Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Labor and Social Economy Yolanda Díaz Pérez.

percent increase in Spain’s minimum wage since Sánchez took office in 2018, as well as the coalition’s record on improved employment rights and the introduction of a guaranteed minimum income scheme, which is currently received by 661,000 vulnerable households.

Faced with the onslaught from reactionary forces within the

judiciary, media and political establishment, the coalition forged a close working relationship with organised labour — not least because the trade unions’ legislative agenda dovetailed with that of Yolanda Díaz in her role as labour minister. A former labour lawyer, Díaz negotiated a series of tripartite agreements between employers and unions around high-profile policies, including the state’s pandemic furlough scheme, the minimum wage rises, legislation cracking down on bogus self-employment, and, in 2022, the coalition’s flagship reform of the Spain’s labour laws.

The latter reform represented a break with the decades-long trajectory of downward pressure on labour protections, with the leader of Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) trade union Unai Sordo insisting that this was “the first time in 30 years” that a major reform “recovers and improves workers’ rights.” The most immediate impact of the new law

has been a historic drop in the use of precarious work contracts, with the percentage of fixed-term contracts in the employment market going from 26 percent in 2021 (then the highest in Europe) down to 13.7 percent this June.

It is estimated that nearly 3 million workers saw greater security in their employment as a result of those changes. The reform also re-established the primacy of sectoral wage agreements over company-level ones. This ensured unions’ ability to collectively bargain for a standardised level of pay across a sector, including for workers in subcontractors.

The coming months are unlikely to be plain sailing for the PSOE-Sumar administration, which finds itself operating in a complex balance of forces. Its parliamentary majority today is less progressive than that of the last four years. To pass legislation, it will have to rely on the support not just of the centre-left, pro-independence

Catalan party Esquerra Republicana but now also the centre-right formation of the exiled former Catalan premier Carles Puigdemont.

Puigdemont’s renewed centrality six years after the failed independence push has ensured the negotiation of an amnesty law that will cover hundreds of Catalan politicians, activists and protesters involved in the 2017 independence referendum. This is a necessary corrective to the punitive response from the Spanish state to those events. Beyond that, however, additional pro-market influences on the government will make passing workers’ rights measures more challenging.

However, in an increasingly bleak European landscape, Spain continues to stand out as an example worth following. It shows how the far-right can be contained: not by progressive gestures, but by meaningful reforms that improve the living standards of working-class people.

“This was the first time in 30 years that a major reform recovers and improves workers’ rights.”

- CCOO leader Unai Sordo

One foot in a Spanish grave

“One Foot in a Spanish Grave- Eugene Downing’s Memoir of the International Brigades in Spain” (UCD Press) 2023 with dedication by his nephew, former SIPTU Official the late Brendan Byrne, who died earlier this year.

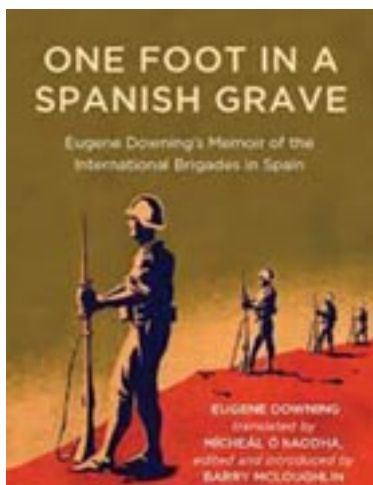


By Michael Halpenny

Eugene Downing (Eoghan O Duinnin) was 20 when he went to war and this is his story.

As historian of the Spanish Civil War, Barry McLoughlin, notes in his introduction, memoirs of Irish International Brigade veterans are rare. Moreover, he goes on to point out that Eugene Downing’s account is rarer still being told from the standpoint of a “rank and file” volunteer who committed “to fight and not to be preached at”.

Raised in Cuffe Street in Dublin’s inner city during the Irish War of Independence and Civil War, the author’s ‘s political awakening came when he read Karl Marx’s “Communist Manifesto” and James Connolly’s “Labour in Irish History”, being also impressed by Marx’s collaborator, Friedrich Engels’ sympathy for the cause of Ireland. Impelled towards left wing activism he also joined the Revolutionary Workers Groups



Eugene Downing



Battle of Ebro River

(precursor of the Irish Communist Party) in 1932.

The first International Brigade volunteers from Ireland left for Spain in December 1936 and took heavy casualties. Thereafter, a steady stream of volunteers from Ireland made their way clandestinely on the circuitous route via Liverpool, London, Paris, Bezier in the South of France and then by foot over the Pyrenees. The author joined them in March 1937 to be trained on arrival for what

turned out to be the critical Battle of Ebro a few months later in July 1937.

Based first in Fuegeras, not far from the French border, he was posted on to the Catalan capital, Barcelona, and then further into Catalonia itself. His observations are detailed and often humorous, describing the life of ordinary volunteers, the casual hardships and a perennial lack of food which becomes almost obsessional. He also records their interactions with

the ordinary Catalan people themselves.

When he finally sees action in late July it is at the Ebro River near Gandesa where he is hit by enemy fire, sustaining a serious leg wound than eventually requires part amputation – hence the title of this rare, fascinating and compelling memoir which should be read by anyone with an interest in the Spanish Civil and these volunteers’ historic role in defending the Spanish Republic.

Days of hope

(Film Review –
“The Old Oak” Directed
by Ken Loach 2023)

At an age when most are well tucked into retirement, film director Ken Loach, best known in Ireland for his 2006 work, “The Wind That Shakes the Barley”, has given us a third film tracking the lives of working class communities in the North East of England. The first two dealt with impact of the social welfare benefits system (“I Daniel Blake”-2016) and the gig economy (“Sorry We Missed You”-2019).

This, his latest and possibly last film, “The Old Oak”, is set in 2016,

the year of the Brexit Referendum, and deals with the impact of the refugee crisis on a former mining town near Durham. The town itself has its own crisis and has been in inexorable decline since the closures of coal mines after the Miners’ Strike in 1984 it is also prey to vulture funds buying up the stock of cheap housing and to a myriad of social problems. Many in the community are in a form of post-traumatic stress, struggling to come to terms with the new normal of this now marginalised society.

Then one day a bus arrives bringing Syrian refugees, fleeing war in their own country. There are the immediate confrontations with locals giving voice to predictable responses such as “We can’t look after our own...”, “This is



A still from the ‘Old Oak’.

a dumping ground...” and “We don’t even know them...”

However, there are islands of hope and despite the fact that it is barely hanging in itself, “The Old Oak” pub and its landlord, T J (Tommy) Ballantyne (Dave Turner), comprise one of them. T J

intervenes to plea for understanding for the Syrians who “have lost everything and have left a war zone” and strikes up a friendship with a young Syrian photographer Yara (Ebla Mari).

He tells her the story of the community’s own war zone

through the photographs in the back room of The Old Oak depicting the 1984 Strike and between them they set about doing what they can to rebuild a sense of community for locals and refugees alike, days of hope for all.

MEET LANDLADY ANNIE ALONG WITH HER REGULARS
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 ASA MURPHY
AS LANDLADY ANNIE

 RICKY TOMLINSON
AS HENRI

 CATHERINE RICE
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NOV 10 MANCHESTER NEW CENTURY HALL
NOV 16 SOUTHAMPTON MAST STUDIO
NOV 25 NORTHAMPTON ROYAL & DERWATE
NOV 29 DUBLIN LIBERTY HALL
NOV 30 WELFARE LINDSAY
DEC 3 BRIGHTON CORN EXCHANGE

Rhys James
Special Guest

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

Irish Distillers awarded Diversity Gold Award

Irish Distillers, producer of some of the world's most well-known and successful Irish whiskeys, has been awarded the Investors in Diversity Gold Award by the Irish Centre for Diversity.

The Investors in Diversity Awards measure success over three levels – Bronze, Silver and Gold – with the Gold Standard awarded to organisations who demonstrate excellence in ensuring Equality, Diversity and Inclusion form an integral part of their business.

Irish Distillers is one of only 14 organisations in Ireland to be accredited with the Investors in Diversity Gold Award.

Over the last two years, the business has built on its learnings and experiences advancing from Bronze to Silver to Gold as it further embedded Equality, Diversity and Inclusion within the business's culture and processes and through its external impact.

This accreditation recognises Irish Distillers' commitment to ensuring team members feel they are treated fairly, with respect and



are valued equally. The company has demonstrated that its leaders support the D&I agenda in practical ways, including by providing the appropriate

resources and leading by example. Nodjame Fouad, Chairman and CEO, Irish Distillers said: "This is an outstanding achievement and recognition of our commitment to



supporting a diverse and inclusive workplace where everyone can bring their whole selves to work and feel confident that they can share who they are with their colleagues.

The tremendous progress we have made in advancing from Bronze, to Silver, to Gold is a testament to our colleagues' commitment to embedding and supporting a culture that drives diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

The Gold Award report will help us to understand what else we need to do to ensure colleagues feel they are treated fairly, with respect, and are valued for their differences and we will continue to work with the Irish Centre of Diversity to ensure we are aligned with D&I best practice."

Caroline Cummins, Managing Director of Irish Centre for Diversity said: "Irish Distillers has made an excellent progression to Investors in Diversity Gold. This accreditation affirms that D&I is embedded across everything the business does and it is extending these values externally. Irish Distillers Investors in Diversity



journey has seen the business advance from the Bronze tier, which established a firm foundation to build on, through Silver level which verified a workplace culture where everyone is valued and shares a sense of belonging, and now on to the top tier of Gold with leadership embracing progressive values and leading by example. We look forward to sharing more of their journey of continuous improvement."

ZIP it...

In recent years, Ireland has taken significant steps towards a more sustainable future latest Ireland's love affair with peat has deep roots, that's why we have come up with a sustainable alternative.

Heatlogs are an increasingly important segment and account for 17% share of Total Fuel Units vs just 11% 2 years ago that means share has gone up +60% share vs 2 years ago*. That's why our new ZIP 100% Natural Heatlogs are an innovative and clean burning solution made from waste sugar cane that's set to replace traditional peat logs while preserving the warmth and

tradition you cherish.

With this addition strengthening our natural range we have also looked at our existing range of firelighters. We've refreshed our firelighter packaging for a simpler, more user-friendly experience. The ZIP firelighter range is set for a fresh winter season launch, featuring vibrant new packaging and sizes while maintaining its exceptional performance.

The ZIP winter fuels range, comprising of ZIP Kiln Dried Firewood, ZIP Irish Kiln Dried Kindling, ZIP Smokeless Coal, and the new edition to the 2024 range, the ZIP 100% Natural Heat Logs. ZIP's winter fuels range has seen a substantial growth in

recent years. The market has experienced a notable surge in the utilization of timber as an eco-friendly fuel source. ZIP Smokeless Coal 10kg bag has become a popular choice for customers to include in their weekly shopping. As peat exits the market in 2024, our new ZIP 100% Natural Heat log will be the perfect alternative for consumers. ZIP winter fuels will continue to offer sustainable alternatives to our valued customers.

Standard Brands, the manufacturer of ZIP, supports quality jobs in Castlebellingham, Co Louth and is a proud member of the Supporting Quality Campaign.



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Introducing
ZIP'S PERFECT ALTERNATIVE TO PEAT

Why Choose ZIP® 100% Natural Heatlogs

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- 🔥 Made from waste sugarcane
- 🔥 Uniform size for easy storage

Why not try our 100% Natural Twisted Firestarters & Irish Kiln Dried Kindling

Perfect when combined with our 100% Natural Heatlogs to light your fire

#startofagoodtime www.zipfires.com

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Bride Rosney, an appreciation

Bride Rosney – who died recently – was an incredible force of nature who helped shape modern Ireland for the better in so many different ways, but she was very much a person who flew under the radar. And that is exactly the way she wanted it – she never saw herself as the cause, but an instrument of the cause who helped and encouraged so many others to build the more open, diverse and progressive country that we have become over the last 40 years.

The Presidency

The most visible aspect of Bride's legacy was her transformation of the Office of President in conjunction with her close friend, Mary Robinson. When Mary Robinson was nominated by the Labour Party in early 1990, Bride devised and drove the strategy that elected Mary – creating a coalition of progressives and trade unionists that truly rocked the system by electing the first woman to the Áras.

Bride became Mary Robinson's Special Adviser and was instrumental in ensuring that the campaign promises of a transformed presidency were delivered upon. The big house in

the Phoenix Park went from being 'sleepy hollow' to becoming a focal point in encouraging and affirming the social change taking place in Ireland. Bride Rosney was also critical in shaping the interventions that played a key role in encouraging and supporting the Peace Process in the North.

Progressive Agenda

The Mary Robinson Presidency was only one of many of Bride Rosney's contributions to creating a more progressive Ireland.

The ecological agenda was always close to Bride's heart and this was very clearly manifest in her role as secretary of the Save Wood Quay campaign in the late 1970s. While that campaign was unsuccessful in stopping the destruction of a crucial part of Viking Dublin, it did lay the foundation stones for a stronger public consciousness about 'green' issues in Ireland.

Bride played a key role – behind the scenes as always – in the highly successful Marriage Equality campaign, helping to devise and drive the successful strategy and providing a steady hand in the background when things occasionally became fraught. She did so on many other fronts too, sitting on numerous boards of campaign groups such as the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and cultural organisations such as the Druid Theatre Company.

Public Servant

Public service was a key part of Bride Rosney's DNA and apart from a short sojourn in the private sector – working with Bill O'Herlihy Communications and then her own consultancy – she spent her whole career in this sector, mainly as a teacher.

After her stint in the private sector, Bride became Director of Communications in RTÉ and played an important role – in conjunction with former Director General, Cáthál Goan – in forging and driving a coherent strategy for the organisation in the new diverse



media landscape. She had been looking on with some disappointment at some of the recently revealed developments at the national broadcaster before her passing.

Educator and Mentor

At heart, Bride Rosney was an educator – and in the widest sense of the word.

Bride had always wanted to be a teacher. Science was her field and she taught those subjects and also contributed to curricular development in these fields. Her clear leadership skills led her to become principal in Rosmini Community School in Drumcondra. Bride also played a key role in the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), serving for a number of years on its executive. It was through her involvement in the TUI that she met and ultimately fell in love with her long-term partner, Peter MacMenamin.

Bride's view of education expanded well beyond the formal educational sphere and included

involvement in progressive media outlets such as O'Brien Press and Village Magazine. She saw the promotion of critical voices as being key to properly informed public discourse.

Mentorship was also an important component of Bride Rosney's portfolio whether through formal organisations like Ahsoka or through taking many family members, friends and progressives under her wing and being their 'critical friend' – telling them what they needed to hear not what they wanted to hear.

All of us who benefitted from her mentorship will miss her but, in her memory, we will carry on the campaigns to help realise our shared ambition of a more equal and socially just Ireland.

Pat Montague.

Bride became Mary Robinson's Special Adviser. The big house in the Phoenix Park went from being 'sleepy hollow' to becoming a focal point in encouraging and affirming the social change taking place in Ireland

Principal in Rosmini Community School in Drumcondra and Bride also played a key role in the Teachers' Union of Ireland (TUI), serving for a number of years on its Executive



League of Ireland on the rise as attendances break records

■ By Ronan Burtenshaw

As the League of Ireland draws to its conclusion with the fourth title in a row for Shamrock Rovers, attendance figures show a men's domestic football scene on the rise for the first time in decades.

Numbers published this summer from the SSE Airtricity Premier Division revealed a 23 percent increase in attendances at games year-on-year, with 349,867 attending games by June 2023 compared to 283,941 by the same time in 2022.

The highest attendances have been at Dublin clubs Shamrock Rovers, St. Pat's and Bohemians, with Rovers' Dublin Derby against Shelbourne attracting 7,879 fans in September. Champions Shamrock Rovers lead the league with an average attendance of almost 6,000 per game.

The average attendance at Bohemians is now almost capacity for the dilapidated Dalymount Park. Bohs will face St. Pat's, who have also seen a 24 percent rise in attendances at Richmond Park, in

this year's FAI Cup Final where, once again, a record attendance is anticipated.

But the growth in interest hasn't been limited to the capital. Cork City, newly promoted back to the Premier Division this season, have seen attendance rise by 19 percent to over 4,000 per game at Turners Cross, while Sligo Rovers have seen numbers rise by 34 percent at The Showgrounds.

The SSE Airtricity First Division has also experienced a growth in attendances, with league champions Galway United and playoff contenders Waterford both averaging over 2,000 per game and attendances at third-placed Cobh Ramblers also rising by 31 percent.

It has also been a landmark year for the women's game in the Republic, as the national team built on their first-ever World Cup with a record-breaking attendance of 35,994 against Northern Ireland. In the SSE Airtricity League of Ireland Women's Premier Division, the attendance record was also broken

when Peamount United defeated Shamrock Rovers in Tallaght in June.

FAI CEO Jonathan Hill recently said he believes there's a "chance" that this year's men's cup final at Lansdowne Road on November 12th might be a sellout. The previous meeting between Bohs and St. Pat's in 2021 attracted 37,126, but more than 35,000 tickets had been sold

for this year's final with three weeks still to go.

The all-time record attendance for an FAI Cup Final was the 1945 decider between Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians, which drew 41,238 to Dalymount Park. It now seems highly possible that record will be broken in 2023, although whether the final will reach Lansdowne's capacity of 51,700 remains doubtful.

To put the rise in attendances in context, as recently as 2012 the FAI Cup Final between Derry City and St. Pat's drew only 16,117 to Lansdowne Road. Attendances at the final only broke 30,000 once between 1969 and 2017, but have now crossed that threshold in every year since 2018 except for the pandemic-impacted final of 2020.

Without doubt, domestic football is now in its strongest position since the emergence of Sky Sports and the Premiership in England in the early 1990s. Brexit terms and the rise of a global scouting network has meant fewer Irish players being

recruited by English clubs, which contributes to a renewed focus on the domestic game.

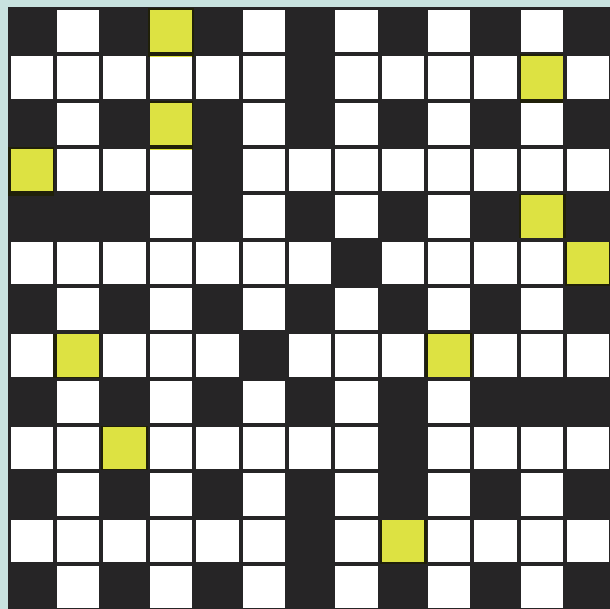
Unfortunately, the success of Irish clubs has not been matched by the preparation of the FAI, with facilities across the country remaining in a largely shambolic state. It is likely that the derisory state of stadiums, many of which will struggle to contain additional crowds, will place an artificial cap on the rising attendances in coming years.

However, the wider picture remains optimistic for association football in Ireland. More people are interested in the domestic game and attending matches than at any point in modern history.

Now the challenge is to turn the interest into the basis for a league that can compete with those in similar sized countries across Europe – with better facilities, improved performances on the pitch and a sustainable model for clubs which remain rooted in their local communities.

"It now seems highly possible that the all-time attendance record for the FAI Cup Final will be broken in 2023"

Liberty Crossword



ACROSS

- 7 Fleet (6)
- 8 Deceive (4,2)
- 9 Jumping Insect (4)
- 10 The third Gaelic game (8)
- 11 Not original (7)
- 13 Famous white cliffs (5)
- 15 Famous for singing and rugby (5)
- 16 Official language of Mexico (7)
- 18 Dublin footballer (8)
- 19 A simple instrument (4)
- 21 Gone (4,2)
- 22 No longer looks over Dublin (6)

DOWN

- 1 Spoken (4)
- 2 Part of Spain near Africa (6,7)
- 3 A city which the US invaded in 2003 (7)
- 4 Families who dominated the Scottish Highlands (5)
- 5 Essential piece of militray kit celebrated in song (3,6,4)
- 6 Irish girls (8)
- 12 A form of mining (8)
- 14 Ensuring an animal will not have offspring (7)
- 17 Hitchcock had 39 (5)
- 20 Weaving machine (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 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 hamper to the value of €200**. The winner of the crossword quiz will be published in the next edition of Liberty.

**Terms and conditions apply.*

The winner of the crossword competition in the July/August issue was Christophe Lombardi
The answer was Organisation.

Lecture on Nixie Boran

a former member of ITGWU, nationalist and miners leader in Castlecomer

Eblana Club, Dun Laoghaire at 7.30 p.m.
on Thursday, 23rd November

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Paddy Brock, email: paddybrock@gmail.com



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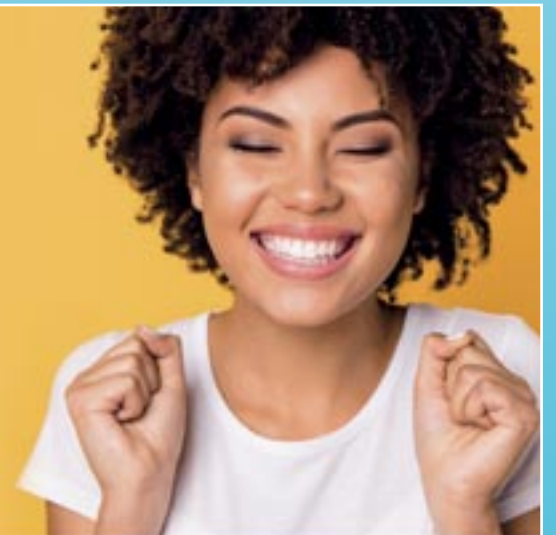
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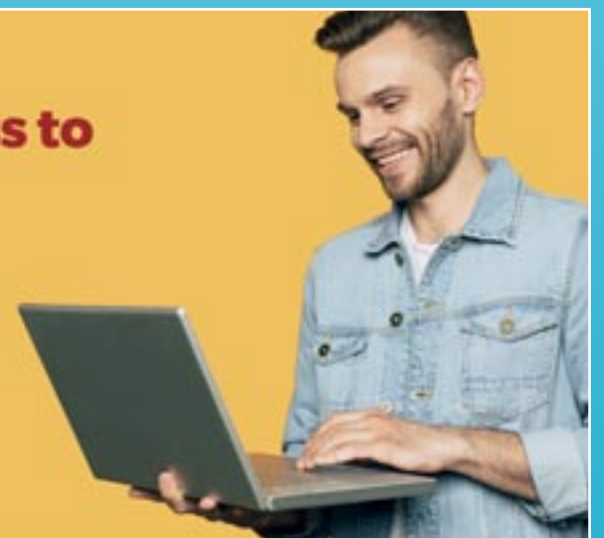
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