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UNION POST

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AUGUST 2012

Guess who Michael D. had over for tea? FIND OUT INSIDE



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STIMULUS PLAN 'IS GOOD NEWS FOR WORKERS'

CONGRESS has claimed the state-led Stimulus Plan announced last month was "good news for Irish workers" and predicted it would, if implemented, boost both growth and private sector confidence.

Chief economist Paul Sweeney pointed out that Congress had been a long-time advocate of such a plan and described it as "an important step in Ireland's recovery".

Mr Sweeney said the 'synchronised recession' in Europe and the US was being compounded by deflationary policies.

"Overall, the level of austerity is failing, choking growth and jobs. The best solution is to change policy, not to try harder. This antidote of investment could greatly aid recovery.

"The package is, of course, in response to the growing recognition,

even by the advocates of austerity, of the need for a change in medicine, for the injection of growth measures. Even at our last two meetings with the Troika, there was recognition of the need for some form of domestic stimulus."

Congress has proposed a targeted, frontloaded, strategic investment of at least €3bn each year over the next three years on

top of a committed public capital programme. Mr Sweeney said: "This annual boost would be worth almost 2% as a share of GDP to the Irish economy. Our objective is to deliver much needed strategic infrastructure at a fair cost that, where possible, would be kept off the state's balance sheet. This would expect to generate in the order of 30,000 jobs per annum. **CONTINUED PAGE 2**



...but don't flog off those key state assets

CONGRESS chief economist Paul Sweeney, left, has again queried why "good viable Irish companies" should be sold off during the downturn as a means of paying off private banks' debts or even as a way of part-funding the stimulus package.

He told *The Union Post*: "Our alternative is to sell bonds in the New Era State Holding Company – not flog off fine companies to predators who will shift the management and technical functions abroad. In the context of our debts, the capital to be

raised is puny, especially in a deep recession."

Mr Sweeney admitted that Congress' plan was "much more ambitious" but did reiterate that the Stimulus Plan, announced on July 17 was a "big step in the right direction".

Stimulus package 'good news'

FROM PAGE 1

It would begin to offset the deflationary impact of fiscal austerity, which has already taken €24.4bn out of the economy over the past four years.

"For this to work well, it must be implemented with care. Public procurement must be clever. It must deny fly-by-night companies from inside or outside the state the opportunity to maximise profits by importing cheap labour and undercutting good local employers.

"It must be used to maximise opportunities for Irish companies and workers in order to reduce the social welfare bill, to help employment and revenue-generation in Ireland.

"The stimulus should also provide an opportunity for new apprentices and those who have been unable to finish their training because of the downturn."

Extend adjustment period, Troika told

CONGRESS has outlined to Troika officials why rising unemployment, "flatlining growth" and a 26% collapse in domestic demand meant the pace of the adjustment programme had to be slowed to prevent further damage being done to the economy.

General secretary David Begg insisted the key objective was to do "no further harm" and then to invest "to offset some of the damage already done" to create jobs and boost domestic demand. This, he added, meant that the Republic's "adjustment period" had to be extended to 2017. Speaking before meeting with the Troika on

July 9, Mr Begg said: "If we stay on the planned trajectory it is almost certain that greater damage will be done.

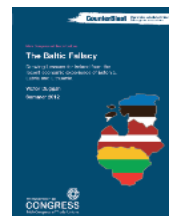
"By slowing the pace of adjustment we could avoid deepening the slump, while a major investment programme could offset some of the damage, in terms of job losses and collapsed domestic demand."

The Congress chief also slammed those who were calling for even tougher austerity policies and warned this approach would "prove catastrophic". He said: "Some claim that we need to follow the example of the Baltic

states and adopt a hyper-austerity programme.

"But a new Congress study *The Baltic Fallacy*, right, shows clearly that Ireland would not benefit from adopting this model and that there is little in common between Ireland and those states.

"As the publication says, the idea that we have anything to learn from that hyper-austerity model is a complete and total fallacy."



READ THE BALTIC FALLACY AT... http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/baltic_fallacy_june_2012.pdf

Begg warns Barroso on jobs

David Begg at Social Compact launch in Brussels
Pictures: ETUC, European Parliament



CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has warned EU Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso that current economic policies were "stunting growth" in Ireland and damaging prospects of a recovery.

He was part of a delegation of union leaders, headed by ETUC General Secretary Bernadette Ségol, that met with powerbrokers in Brussels in June.

Mr Begg told Barroso, right, that recovery in Ireland would be "impossible" while "unemployment remained at record levels and the taxpayer was forced to foot the bill for failed private banks."

He said it was "imperative that measures are taken to stimulate domestic demand and create jobs, as has already been proposed by Congress." Mr Begg also met with Employment Commissioner László Andor, European Council President Herman Van Rompuy and Martin Schulz, the President of the European Parliament.



Unions launch Social Compact for Europe to escape trap of austerity

EUROPE can only "move forward" from the "spiral of crises" impacting it by strengthening "cohesion and solidarity", the European Trade Union Confederation has claimed.

ETUC general secretary Bernadette Ségol, right, made the comments after European trade union leaders met in June to back a new Social Compact for Europe.

The compact is based on three elements – social democracy – in particular, respect for collective bargaining; economic

governance serving sustainable growth and quality employment; economic and social justice, through redistribution policies, taxation and social protection.

Ms Ségol said: "Europe today is caught in the austerity trap. Budget cuts are deepening the recession and, in turn, creating bigger deficits. This deterioration in public finances is prompting governments – under pressure from Europe – to strengthen austerity measures. The vicious circle is com-

plete and the trap is snapping shut." She pointed out that three years of pursuing an austerity agenda across Europe had only led to rocketing unemployment, economic stagnation, rising inequality, the emergence of a new class of 'precarious' workers and, ultimately, social despair.

Europe had to radically change course, Ms Ségol warned, to implement policies that promote growth to meet the "challenges of sustainable prosperity".



THE UNION POST

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FINANCE

'Our banking infrastructure is being taken apart' – IBOA

IBOA chief Larry Broderick has warned of the "piecemeal dismantling" of Ireland's banking infrastructure, which he claimed was being done in the name of "narrow institutional interest" rather than in the interest of the general public.

He made his claim in reaction to the July 27 announcement by AIB Group that 67 branches in the Republic were earmarked for closure, affecting 340 bank officials.

The AIB also identified a further five branches of First Trust Bank for closure north of the border.

Mr Broderick said: "This has been a traumatic announcement for many of these staff – who are facing the prospect of redundancy or relocation.

"It will also come as a major shock to customers in these areas – who have come to rely on the service from their local branch

"Apart from the impact of these closures on the 72 locations on the island of Ireland, there is also a wider issue of public policy that must be considered – and with it the urgent need for an integrated strategic approach to Irish banking."

He continued: "What we are witnessing at the present time is the piecemeal dismantling of Ireland's banking infrastructure.

"Our major banks are taking decisions based on their own narrow institutional interest – rather than any wider public interest – which could result in large areas becoming banking no-go areas as far as any physical presence is concerned.

"Far from being 'over-banked,' we could soon arrive at a position where many towns around Ireland have an ATM and little else."

REPORT

NI wages near bottom of table

FULL-time workers in the North have the second lowest gross average earnings in the UK, a GMB report published last month has revealed.

The report used data from the 2011 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings compiled by the Office of National Statistics.

It showed that employees working full time north of the border earned just 83.4% of the UK average of £32,569 in 2011.

Workers in Wales earned marginally less at 83.2%.

Reacting to the report, general secretary Paul Kenny said: "This GMB survey comes at the time when the government is considering regionalising public sector pay which will lower earnings as many people work in the public sector.

"Local economies will suffer as everyone's pay is dumbed down to the lowest common denominator.

"The impact of regionalising public sector pay would be to reduce the amount of disposable income in each local community and drive them further into recession. Indeed it would make the recession worse."

Patricia Poots minister on the spot over benefit cuts

UNISON regional secretary Patricia McKeown button-holed Stormont health minister Edwin Poots as he rushed back to work during the June 25 protest.

And photographer Kevin Cooper was on hand to capture the moment. Ms McKeown explained to *The Union Post*: "I asked him if he was there to sup-

port the trade union position in opposition to welfare benefit cuts but he replied that his party had made its position clear at Westminster."

She then challenged the minister about whether he understood that his own health budget would be severely stretched by any sharp rise in physical and mental health

problems as a result of the cuts.

Ms McKeown added: "When the picture was taken, I was asking Mr Poots if he would conduct an equality impact assessment.

"But he refused to answer and refused to engage any further with us... his parting shot was a remark about unions being 'oppositional-ist!'"

Benefits campaign stepped up at Stormont

THE Northern Ireland Committee of Congress recently brought the contentious issue of welfare reform to the very steps of Stormont.

Trade unionists from across the North took part in the June 25 protest outside Parliament Buildings.

Currently the Westminster government is pressing ahead with the most radical shake-up to the UK's social welfare system in a generation.

One high-profile measure is the new benefit known as Universal Credit set to be introduced next year. It replaces six existing means-tested benefits and tax credits for working age people.

Other changes include replacing Disability Living Allowance with a Personal Independence Allowance with the intention of reducing expenditure by 20% and introducing what amounts to a 'bedroom tax' for social housing tenants claiming Housing Benefit.



The changes will also see increased conditionality and beefed-up sanctions for jobseekers.

It is understood the Northern Ireland variant of the Welfare Reform Bill will undergo full parliamentary scrutiny before the Assembly.

A Congress spokesperson told *The Union Post*: "The welfare reform agenda represents an assault on the core principles on which

the benefits system had been based. The challenge posed by these proposed reforms provides the Northern Ireland Assembly with a unique opportunity to impact on the formation of social security policy here for the next generation.

"We hope that this opportunity is seized and maximised and we look forward to working with the Assembly on this important task."



Picture: ETUC

Romney got no invite from us - Solidarnosc

POLISH union Solidarnosc made it clear US presidential hopeful Mitt Romney got no welcome from them during his recent visit to the famous Gdansk shipyards where he met former union leader Lech Walesa.

The union, which represents 700,000 workers, insisted it had nothing to do with inviting the Michigan-born multi-millionaire to the place where the Soviet-era strikes were played out during the 1980s.

It highlighted Romney's anti-union stance and aligned itself squarely with the American labour movement.

Andrzej Adamczyk, who heads up Solidarnosc's international department, said: "Regretfully, we have learned from our friends in the American trade union central AFL-CIO about Mitt Romney's support for the attacks against trade unions and labour rights."

"In this respect, I wish to express... our solidarity with American workers and trade unions. Solidarity will always support the AFL-CIO in their struggle for the right of workers to organise and bargain collectively."

Meet with Mitt

THE AFL-CIO has launched a "meet Romney" website to introduce US voters to the man who would be President. Recently dubbed "Mitt the twit" by *The Sun*, the Republican Party hopeful is put through the AFL-CIO wringer at:

<http://www.aflcio.org/meetromney>



An estimated 1.6bn barrels of oil have been found at a site off the Co Cork coast

12.5% levy call on Ireland's oil & gas

CONGRESS has called for the re-introduction of a 12.5% levy on Irish oil and gas resources.

It comes after it was announced in July that Irish oil exploration company Providence Resources had found up to 1.6bn barrels of oil at a site off the coast of Co Cork.

The discovery was described by Tony O'Reilly jnr, the firm's chief executive, as "large and significant" and much bigger than had been expected.

Providence Resources is also exploring a further five sites off the Irish coast, including an area close to Rathlin Island.

Congress chief economist Paul Sweeney wants the levy to be in

addition to the existing Corporation Tax regime in the Republic which he described as "progressive but inadequate" in dealing with a major oil or gas strike. He told *The Union Post*: "What is taxed today is only the 'profits' on the business of extraction."

"All developmental losses from other exploration costs can be offset against these taxable profits, reducing them dramatically, sometimes to zero."

Mr Sweeney warned: "There are too many exemptions under the current CT regime which can and are manipulated by the accounting profession to reduce this tax to negligible rates."

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BIG PICTURE



Picture: www.president.ie

A welcome in the Áras for sit-in heroes

PRESIDENT Michael D Higgins has paid special tribute to the “resilience and dignity” of former Vita Cortex workers following the end of their long drawn out dispute on May 24.

He made the comments after receiving the workers, who were accompanied by SIPTU vice president Patricia King and SIPTU general secretary Joe O’Flynn, at Áras an Uachtaráin on July 17.

The President told them: “The resilience and dignity that you showed during a difficult and protracted dispute was a great exercise in solidarity with each other.

“The ultimate resolution of the



Vita Cortex workers end their sit-in on May 24
Picture: TV3

dispute that was achieved by people of goodwill and good sense working together through the processes of the Labour Relations Commission and achieving an outcome that could be accepted as fair and reasonable, is to your great credit, your union and all those who helped you.”

President Higgins said he was “very conscious” of the “heavy personal toll” exacted by the 161-day dispute but also emphasised the “broader solidarity” shown by the public “at a time of great stress and need”.

He added: “May I wish you and all the workers, every good wish for the future.”

SIPTU chief in pensions warning

SIPTU general president Jack O’Connor has warned that tens of thousands of private sector workers in the Republic could lose their pensions unless the government acts decisively.

He claimed the Minimum Funding Standard rules to be enforced from the end of the year threaten the viability of schemes covering the pensions of 310,000 workers.

Mr O’Connor explained: “Under the rules, trustees of a scheme must buy annuities to cover the future costs of the pensions based on it winding up at current rates.

“However, there has been a dramatic increase in annuity rates which is crippling the pension schemes while the regulator is also insisting on a requirement that they hold a reserve of 15% to cover future costs.”

The SIPTU chief pointed out that other governments, including the US, Denmark and Sweden, had acted to ease the pressure on schemes so they could comply with MFS rules.

He said: “Here, the opposite is the case with schemes required to meet a standard based on the currently high annuity

rates. This is supposed to be designed to ensure that funds are sufficiently robust to meet their liabilities.

“In reality, it will more likely result in schemes – in which hundreds of thousands of workers have invested their retirement savings – being forced to wind up.

“This is blatant sabotage of the defined benefit pension schemes in which 310,000 private sector workers have invested their retirement savings. The government must act immediately to avert this wholly unnecessary disaster.”



O’Connor: ‘Sabotage’
Picture: Congress

INMO breast screening drive



Liam Doran and Claire Mahon at scheme launch
Picture: INMO

THE Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation has launched 'Pink Power' – a free breast health assessment initiative for members of its income protection scheme.

And, according to the INMO, it's the first of its kind in the Irish trade union movement. President Claire Mahon said: "Latest statistics show that breast cancer is the most common cancer and the leading cause of cancer death among women in Ireland."

"Around 650 women die from the disease annually. The good news is that while the incidence of breast cancer is rising, mortality rates are decreasing."

"This new initiative is about health promotion, early detection and swift treatment, if necessary, and it is hoped that it will make a real difference to the health and well being of our members."

The assessment – which takes approximately 15 minutes – involves clinical breast examination by a physician and an education session on breast

health awareness. Should there be a need for a referral for further investigation, such as a mammogram or ultrasound, this will be carried out in the Mater Private Specialist Breast Centre.

Speaking at the June 25 launch, INMO general secretary Liam Doran said: "We are delighted to be in a position to offer members of our income protection scheme a free breast health assessment. Everyone knows someone who has been touched by this disease."

"We are proud to be the first trade union in the country to offer our members this free service."

"We are particularly happy to be giving some care back to the carers, our members, who are working on the frontline, with all the associated stresses, at this difficult time for our health service."

A prostate and testicular cancer assessment is also available for male members of the scheme.



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Sincere: Harry Kelber

Harry, 98, going for top job at AFL-CIO!

A VETERAN American labour activist has thrown his hat in the ring in the contest to head up the powerful AFL-CIO... at 98 years of age!

And New Yorker Harry Kelber, who announced his candidacy in June, will have turned 99 by the time he formally challenges current president Richard L Trumka at the union's convention next September.

Mr Kelber – who edited two weekly labour newspapers in the 1930s – insisted going forward for the big job was "not a frivolous decision".

He said: "I'm a sincere old guy, and I can't in the final years of my life give up..."

The former print worker played a role in a famous strike that shut down New York's top newspapers for 114 days in 1962/63.

Mr Kelber added: "My candidacy guarantees that there will be an actual election, with a printed ballot and serious debates on the issues confronting American workers and their unions at 2013 convention in Los Angeles."



Picture: DAA

Ballot green-light for IASS pensions action

UNIONS representing staff at Aer Lingus and the Dublin Airport Authority have voted overwhelmingly in favour of taking industrial action over pensions.

The ballot, announced on August 1, mandates six unions – SIPTU, Impact, Mandate, TEEU, Unite and UCATT – to take industrial action if either or both companies allow changes to be made to the Irish Aviation Superannuation Scheme without agreement with staff.

Congress industrial officer Liam Berney said: "The result of this ballot

should send a clear message to both companies that staff are determined to secure their pension entitlements and are prepared to act to ensure this is the case.

"It is now up to both companies to come forward with proposals that meet the expectations of members of the IASS."

He pointed out that unions were available for "meaningful negotiations", adding that the time had come for both firms to table "realistic proposals... capable of being given serious consideration".

DAA outsourcing lashed

MANDATE has slammed the decision by Dublin Airport Authorities to outsource its distribution operation to third party provider Master-link later this year.

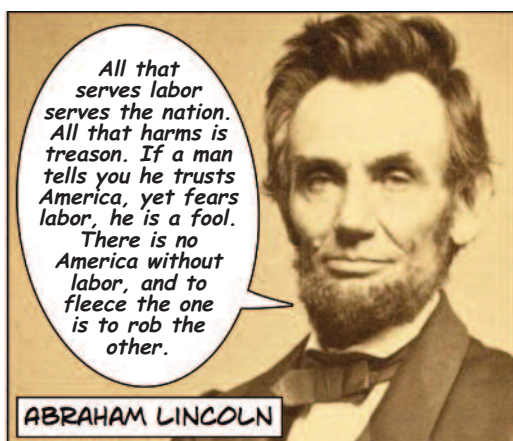
According to the union, the DAA has indicated that staff will transfer under the TUPE directive 2003 in and around September.

Divisional organiser Brendan O'Hanlon described the

treatment of workers as "nothing short of disgraceful".

He said: "It is an absolute insult to workers who as part of an agreement reached in 2009 had pay cuts, massive reductions in staffing levels, and greater productivity as a result of Terminal 2 opening, not to mention the handling of both Cork and Shannon logistics."

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Picture: TUC

Next general secretary of TUC is upbeat over building alternative

THE NEXT general secretary of the TUC has claimed there is the "best opportunity in a generation" to build a fairer economy that works for ordinary people.

Frances O'Grady, left, is set to take over the reins at the TUC when Brendan Barber retires at the end of the year.

The Oxford-born trade unionist received nominations from 32

unions – representing 96% of total TUC membership – and will become general secretary designate at the organisation's 144th Congress in Brighton next month.

Ms O'Grady said: "This is a great honour. Never has a strong responsible trade union movement been so needed.

"With austerity policies biting hard and with no evidence that

they are working, people at work need the TUC to speak up for them. We must be the advocates of the growth and jobs alternative.

"And with the policy prescriptions of the last 30 years increasingly discredited, we have the best opportunity in a generation to help build a fair, productive and green economy that works for ordinary people."



IndustriALL formed as 'new union family'

MORE than a thousand trade unionists from across the world gathered in Copenhagen in June for the setting up of a new global union federation that represents 50 million workers in the mining, energy and manufacturing sectors.

IndustriALL Global Union brings together affiliates from three former bodies, the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) and International Textiles Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF).

A key aim of the new organisation is to build union power and con-

front global capital.

General secretary Jyrki Raina, left, said: "We have formed a new union family of heroes, with strong bonds, ready to stick together through thick and thin – a new force in global solidarity taking up the fight for better working conditions and trade union rights around the world."

He vowed to challenge the power of multinationals such as Rio Tinto and BHP.

"We hope to negotiate on a global level with the global giants. IndustriALL will fight for a new model of globalisation, a new economic and social model that puts people first, based on democracy and social justice."

Pictures: IndustriALL



Need more be said? Speaker at the IndustriALL's inaugural conference with a back to basics message for delegates in Copenhagen

NUJ chief calls for review of RoI Broadcasting Act



THE NUJ has called on the Republic's communications minister Pat Rabbitte to urgently review what it called the "deeply flawed" Broadcasting Act.

It follows last month's determination by the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland that media mogul Denis O'Brien – who already owns a string of radio stations – did not control Independent News & Media.

Irish secretary Séamus Dooley claimed the current legislation drew a distinction between "control" and "substantial interest" which he argued was "meaningless in the context of national broadcasting policy".

He said: "Mr O'Brien's 'substantial interest' in INM is acknowledged by the Board of the BAI. 'Substantial interest' is defined as having 'suffi-

cient proprietary, financial and voting strength' in a company 'to be able to influence directly or indirectly to an appreciable extent the strategic direction or policy' of the company."

Mr Dooley, above, pointed out that the BAI Board was "powerless to take any action" other than "to note this on-going undermining of media diversity".

Repeating the NUJ's call for the setting up of a Media Commission to probe all aspects of media ownership, he added: "There is a need for new legislation and the replacement of the current Broadcast Act, which we view as deeply flawed."

"What we need is a broadcasting policy which prevents media dominance and which enables diverse media to flourish."

DID YOU KNOW?



According to economist Emmanuel Saez, 93% of all income gains in the US since 2009 have gone to the top 1%

Barber: UK govt totally wiped out the recovery

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber has claimed the Tory-Lib Dem strategy is "failing spectacularly" after GDP estimates for the second quarter of this year had shown the UK economy had contracted by 0.7%.

He warned that government policies had "wiped out the recovery completely" and pointed out the economy was now smaller than when the Cameron and Clegg took office two years ago.

"The recent GDP fall is as bad as anything we saw following the 2008 financial

crash. The UK is on course for a longer depression than the 30s, the tightest squeeze in living standards since the 20s and more than a million young people are currently out of work.

"Ministers cannot just repeat the same old excuses – Europe, bank holidays and the previous government – for the economic mess they are presiding over."

"They need to change course as their policies are causing permanent damage to our economy."

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Picture: ASTI

Priorities: Gerry Breslin

We must invest in our young people

ASTI's new president Gerry Breslin has outlined his key priorities for the coming year – protecting the education service from further cuts and improving the pay and conditions of recently qualified second-level teachers.

Mr Breslin, a business and maths teacher at Colaiste Cholmille, Ballyshannon, Co Donegal, told *The Union Post*: "I will work to convince politicians that the cuts approach is not working.

"Cuts have failed to deliver economic recovery, but have deepened the recession and accompanying social crisis.

"We have the capacity to turn this country around through sound investment including investment in our young people's education.

"Young people are our greatest natural resource and investing in them is vital not only because we must protect their futures, but because it is the only enduring solution to our economic problems."

Noting the "extremely difficult time" being faced by young teachers, he added: "After qualifying to teach, the majority of second-level teachers spend up to 10 years trying to secure a permanent full-time position.

"The ASTI has up to 3,000 teachers in precarious employment and many are going from job to job and school to school.

"This is a terrible way to begin a career in teaching. It affects the morale of young teachers and impacts on their students' education."

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Leading UK trade unionists and supporters gathered at the Houses of Parliament in London last September to protest the controversial Health and Social Care Bill. Picture: www.tuc.org.uk/nhs

US healthcare doesn't hold a candle to NHS!

Report shows only Republic had better health outcomes

A NEW comparative study of health systems has exploded the myth of a "wasteful" and "inefficient" NHS.

The report, published in the *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, claimed the UK's health system saves more lives as a proportion of national wealth than 17 other countries included in the study... apart from the Irish Republic.

Those behind the study wanted to test the hypothesis – often put forward by pundits on the right – that US healthcare is superior to the NHS and 17 other western countries in lowering death rates.

Researchers from Bournemouth University examined 25 years of data, comparing mortality rates from 1979 to 2005, to rubbish the view

that the NHS is less efficient and less effective.

The results show that in cost-effective terms – economic input versus clinical output – the American system was one of the least cost-effective in reducing mortality rates while the UK was one of the most cost-effective over the same period.

Prof Colin Pritchard, one of the authors of the study, claimed the findings contradicted assertions by UK health secretary Andrew Lansley that the NHS needed more competition and choice in order to become more efficient.

He told *The Guardian*: "The results question why we need a big set of health reform proposals... The system works well. Look at the US

and you see where choice and competition gets you. Pretty dismal results."

Overall, researchers found that death rates had fallen and longevity increased across all the countries included in the study – and claimed that 170,000 people in the UK and half a million in the US are alive today "that would not have been 25 years ago".

The report's authors concluded: "It is hoped these results might be a boost to patients and their families in every western country but especially those using the NHS, and that some recognition goes to UK frontline staff, who over the past 25 years, have achieved more with relatively less."

READ FULL REPORT AT... <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2011/08/07/JRSMpaperPritWall.pdf>



Philip Mullen: 'Huge difference'

IMPACT hails redeployment breakthrough move on SNAs

THE Labour Court in the Republic has recommended that special needs assistants who become redundant should be placed on a panel for redeployment to alternative posts as they arise.

It is understood the education department is considering the June 25 recommendation, described by IMPACT official Philip Mullen as a "breakthrough".

If implemented, it means improved job security and career prospects for SNAs and follows a six-year campaign by the union.

The court recommended that the SNA panel should be arranged on the basis of seniority, with redeployed SNAs carrying forward their prior service.

Until now, SNAs have not had the same job security as other public servants.

Under existing arrangements they are simply made redundant when a school no longer needs them.

Several hundred SNAs face redundancy every year as the summer term ends, with many facing uncertainty over their position over the summer break.

Mr Mullen said: "What it means is that expensive training given to SNAs is kept in the system.

"When a job is created and there is a need for an SNA in a school, then there will be somebody available who is no longer needed in another school, they will then be put in the [new] position.

"This will make a huge difference. It is good for the children and good for employees."

GENERAL STRIKE

**JULY
19
ACTION**



Pictures: ETUC

Spanish govt's austerity drive 'plays with fire'

TENS of thousands of Spanish trade unionists took part in a July 19 day of action in protest at new austerity policies being spearheaded by centre-right prime minister Mariano Rajoy.

The general strike, called by trade union confederations CCOO and UGT, saw large demos in Barcelona and Bilbao, while an estimated 100,000 people gathered in Madrid's central Puerta del Sol square and in the streets surrounding the parliament buildings.

In a statement, the CCOO warned the Spanish government that the new round of cuts "would not go unanswered" and that it was "playing with fire".

ETUC general secretary Bernadette Segol, who was at the Madrid protest, said: "The announced cuts in public

spending are increasing social anxiety in a country already deeply scarred by austerity policies.

"Austerity measures have shown that they make the employment situation worse and have impoverished a large part of the population.

"Often unfair, they solve nothing and open up no prospects for the future."

Speaking in advance of the day of action, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber also pledged his support.

He said: "When governments are dismantling the welfare state, collective bargaining and social dialogue, and while money is found to bail out the banks, workers have no choice but to unite and protest against the injustice, for however long it will take to make those in power change their course."



ETUC general secretary Bernadette Segol with CCOO and UGT chiefs Ignacio Fernández Toxo y Cándido Méndez at the Madrid demo Pictures: ETUC

Italy court ruling body blow to privateers

ITALY'S Constitutional Court last month delivered a blow to a bid to privatise public services when it struck down part of a law enacted by the former Berlusconi-led government.

The court decided that Article 4 of the Decree Law 138 – that sought to explore "the feasibility of a competitive management of local public services" and push for the liberalisation of "economic activities" – was unconstitutional.

The decree, passed in August 2011, was deeply controversial as it was pushed through in the face of widespread popular opposition. Just months earlier, millions of Italians had voted massively against the privatisation of water services in a nation-wide referendum.

A total of 95% voted against the move in the June 2011 poll. The Italian Water Forum, which has co-ordinated the campaign against privatisation, described the ruling as a "warning" to the current administration headed by Mario Monti.

It declared: "Today it has been made clear, once and for all, that there must be respect for the decision of 27 million Italians: water and public services must be publicly owned."

PHOTOLINE

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COMMUNITY SECTOR

Unions back DSP funding move over CE schemes

UNIONS have welcomed the decision of the Department of Social Protection to partially restore material and training funding to Community Employment schemes in the Republic.

It follows an intensive lobbying campaign on behalf of the more than 22,000 people who work in the sector.

DSP officials confirmed the move to a union delegation at a meeting on July 13. It means the total material and training budget for 2012 will be €20.5m – an increase of €9.5m over the allocation announced in the December 2011 budget.

SIPTU sector organiser Darragh O'Connor claimed the move "will ensure no CE scheme will close in 2012". He told *The Union Post*: "The DSP decision to review its allocation follows an intensive seven month trade union-led 'Save Our Schemes' campaign."

"SIPTU members and activists brought their message about the importance of CE schemes to politicians across the country with delegation visits, mass meetings and open days."

"There was also a key engagement with Minister for Social Protection Joan Burton at an early stage of the campaign."

Paddy Quinn, secretary of IMPACT's Community Employment Supervisors' branch added: "This lessens the risk of any CE scheme closing this year, which is a great outcome. – but I'd be happier if I knew we were not going to be in the same situation following the next budget in December."

"The campaign to maintain CE schemes, which are a vital value-for-money service both to unemployed people and the communities in which the live, will continue."



O'Connor: Extra funds welcomed

Iconic activist: Mother Jones



Picture: CC Library of Congress

Rebel City honour for Mother Jones

MOTHER Jones – one the greats of the American trade union movement – was honoured in her native city of Cork earlier this month.

A three-day festival of events was held to mark the 175th anniversary of her birth in the city's northside.

The emotional heart of the festival was a moving unveiling of a plaque on her birthday – August 1 – in the Rebel City's Shandon district.

The festival also featured a lecture by biographer Prof Elliot J Gorn and the showing of a documentary by filmmaker Rosemary Feurer as well as a concert by folk musician Andy Irvine.

Born Mary Harris in 1837, she survived the Famine and emigrated to the US, later marrying George Jones with whom

she had four children.

But she was no stranger to tragedy and in 1867 her whole family was wiped out in a yellow fever epidemic.

She later involved herself in the US labour movement and became a famous organiser for the United Mine Workers of America.

Now dubbed "Mother Jones", she was described as "the most dangerous woman in America" and took part in numerous disputes, including the "march of the mill children" to the home of Teddy Roosevelt in 1903 and the 1912 – 1914 mid-Western "coal wars".

Mary's activism stretched into her ninth decade, and tens of thousands of workers attended her funeral at the Union Miners Cemetery at Mount Olive, Macoupin County, Illinois in 1930.



Councillor Ted Tynan and Jim Nolan unveil commemorative plaque in John Redmond Street Picture: CC Cork Mother Jones Festival

ECONOMY

UK National Investment Bank will create jobs

UNITE has called for the setting up of UK National Investment Bank as a top priority to "short-circuit" existing banks that fail to provide credit to businesses seeking to employ more workers.

The latest data for July revealed the worst manufacturing figures in three years.

General secretary Len McCluskey said: "It shows that there is a lack of demand at the heart of the crisis facing the UK."

"We need a National Investment Bank that supports small businesses and focuses investment on infrastructure projects, such as a massive house construction programme and supporting a joined-up manufacturing strategy."

Mr McCluskey pointed out that the problem with the government's new Funding for Lending initiative was that previous attempts to encourage banks to funnel cash to businesses had failed.

He added: "This is because the banks are keener on the health of their balance sheets and appeasing their shareholders, rather than acting in the national interest."

"That's why a National Investment Bank should be a priority as it would short-circuit the self-interest of the existing banking structure that has so badly served this country over the last four years."



McCluskey: 'Joined up strategy'

Lab Court proposes Lagan Brick resolution

THE Republic's Labour Court has recommended that workers involved in the long-running Lagan Brick dispute should be given improved redundancy packages.

The 25 employees have been in dispute over severance payments since the firm ceased operations at its Kingscourt plant in Co Cavan on December 15. Their trade union, SIPTU, referred the issue to the

Labour Court under Section 20 (1) of the Industrial Relations Act (1969) after Lagan Brick refused to jointly refer the matter.

Lagan Brick workers and their union representatives were at the Labour Court hearing on July 17, but the company declined to attend.

SIPTU organiser John Regan admitted the firm's failure to attend had disappointed the workers but

that they were pleased to get the opportunity to put their side of the story. He added: "When the Labour Court issues its recommendation there will be for the first time an evaluation by an independent body of the monetary sum which is at the centre of the dispute."

The Labour Court issued its recommendation on July 25 and said the workers should be paid their

statutory entitlements as well as an extra week's pay per year of service.

This extra payment should be capped at €700 per week for day workers, €800 for craft workers, and €1,000 for those who had worked on the night-shift.

Mr Regan said SIPTU had since written to Lagan Brick management seeking a meeting to discuss implementing the recommendation.



NNU use big red bus in Medicare for All drive!

MEMBERS of campaigning US union National Nurses United took to California's highways in June and July to drive home their Medicare for All message. The three-week tour included town hall meetings and free health screenings at 12 cities across the state. Co-president Karen Higgins said: "Nurses experience the crisis our patients continue to endure every day. That's the reason we will continue to work for reform that is universal, that doesn't bankrupt families or leave patients in the often cruel hands of merciless insurance companies."



Pictures: NNU



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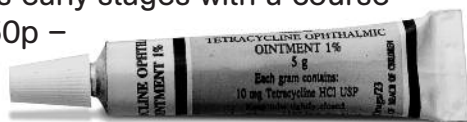


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Talla is just five. He has trachoma, a painful eye disease which can lead to a lifetime of blindness. Repeated infections cause the eyelashes to turn inwards and slowly and painfully every blink damages the eye and leads to blindness. Trachoma can be treated effectively in its early stages with a course of ointment costing just 50p – but for millions of people this is still too much.



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