

THE

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

# UNION POST

NEWS YOU CAN USE

DECEMBER 2010

Picture: MANDATE



# SHAMEFUL

CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has called the December 10 Dail vote to cut the minimum wage "a day of shame".

It follows a week of shame as the Fianna Fail-led government effectively ceded financial sovereignty to the IMF and the

European Central Bank, agreeing to a humiliating €85bn bailout.

Describing it as a "contemptible" move, Mr Begg said the wage cut took €40 a week from the working poor "in the full knowledge that there is no economic, political, social or moral justification for it".

And what's worse, IMF delegation chief Ajaj Chopra confirmed the cut was **NOT** tied in with the loan agreement.

Rather, Mr Begg claimed it was an "early Christmas present" for the "worst gombeen elements" in Irish business and brought only "misery" to the low paid.



Axe man: Lenihan

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# ASSAULT ON

## Unions slam bloodbath

**CONGRESS** has labelled Budget 2011 as "utterly lacking in any sense of the common good" as it prioritised banks over the working poor.

General secretary David Begg claimed it showed no evidence of any sustainable plan for growth and jobs, but had focused instead on hammering low and middle income earners.

He said: "There is no sense of the common good, no sense of the vision that should underpin any society. Instead, we have an assault on the weakest."

"There is no vision on jobs, no vision on job creation, no sense or evidence of a sustainable plan for growth."

Predicting the cuts would push Ireland deeper into recession, Mr Begg said the government was pushing through the "biggest budgetary adjustment seen in the developed world, in the last 70 years."

He added: "It is an incredibly dangerous and hazardous policy, extracting some €6bn from the economy. And to what end, for what purpose? To bail out a busted banking system."

"They will pump €50 billion into the banks and take €15 billion out of the pockets of the working poor. That is unacceptable and completely unsustainable."

Congress president Jack O'Connor accused the government of insulating the rich while targeting low and middle income earners.

He poured scorn on Finance Minister Brian Lenihan's assertion in his budget speech that growth would average 2.75% between now and 2014.

"Nothing in his presentation supports these figures. There is no provision, of any substance, for investment or job creation."

Mr O'Connor, who is also general president of **SIPTU**, added: "Where is the growth to come from?"

He also claimed that "those at the top of the pyramid" would be relieved by the contents of the budget speech with no provision for wealth tax or a tax on asset wealth.

Mr O'Connor contrasted this with heavy burden placed on low and middle income earners, compounded by across-the-board cuts to child and maternity benefits.

**MANDATE** accused the government of "scapegoating" workers on lower and middle incomes and described its tax strategy as totally regressive.

General secretary John Douglas warned that cutting wages of the lowest paid would "only degrade working conditions", damages productivity and hits consumer spending.

He claimed that Ireland's minimum wage had been "consistently misrepresented as disproportionately high" and insisted that the real issue was wage disparity and social inequality.

Calling for a general election "at the earliest possible date", Mr Douglas added it was clear the present government's days were numbered and that it was time a new administration ad-

ressed Ireland's problems "through creating jobs and growing the economy".

**NUJ** Irish secretary Seamus Dooley has strongly condemned the cut in the minimum wage and warned the move would impact heavily on many sections of the Irish media.

He said this was because the minimum wage was used as a base for salaries by a number of companies in the sector.

Mr Dooley added: "A budget is not just a book keeping statement but a statement of priorities. The targeting of the poor and vulnerable is an eloquent expression of the place of the low paid and the unemployed in Irish society today."

The **Teachers Union of Ireland** has warned the most disadvantaged in society will be primarily impacted by education cuts.

Referring to reports that the government is looking at reducing teacher numbers "by a combination of measures", general secretary Peter MacMenamin pointed out that many schools were already struggling to remain operational.

He said: "Any examination of expenditure must look at funding that is directed at privilege rather than seeking to further disadvantage the already disadvantaged."

"The maintenance of privilege in any sphere, particularly in education, cannot be allowed to continue."

**UNITE** slammed the budget "as undemocratic a piece of legislation [ever] brought forward in the history of the state".

Irish regional secretary Jimmy Kelly said: "We have been told for two years, over four budgets, that cutting back would save us - €14bn later and we are staring down the barrel of a decade of desolation."

He claimed the government had sought to right the wrongs of the banks "criminal misadventure" by taking €40 a week off workers on the minimum wage.

Mr Kelly warned: "The government today has damned the Irish people to a generation of penury and emigration."

He added: "Now is the time for this government to let go of the reins of power and allow the people to elect a new administration. If they refuse to step down, they must be shown the door with a series of national strikes and a wave of civil disobedience."

Pat King, general secretary of **ASTI**, warned that Budget 2011 was "storing up problems for the future".

He claimed the future of teaching would be seriously damaged by the 10% pay cut and the loss of two salary increments for new entrants to the profession.

Mr King pointed out that second-level schools were now "at breaking point" because of previous education cuts and that "serious concerns" were being reported because of larger classes and less pastoral care support and fewer staff.

The cost of bailing out the banks has been spread "from the cradle to the grave", **INTO**



**Sheila Nunan:**  
'Recipe for disaster'



**Blair Horan:**  
'Grossly unfair'



**Jack O'Connor:**  
'Where's the growth?'

# THE WEAKEST

## budget as axe falls on poor



Words of wisdom at the November 27 protest

Picture: Tom Clancy

general secretary Sheila Nunan claimed.

She said the budget was "neither fair nor equitable" and left ordinary tax payers bearing the brunt of "another significant loss of income" while property investors continue to benefit until 2014.

Describing the budget as "a recipe for economic disaster", Ms Nunan added: "Taking even more money from the pay of ordinary workers will kill any prospect of growth, the key ingredient of national recovery."

CPSU chief Blair Horan claimed the budget had failed "the test of fairness" because it had "impacted disproportionately on the lower paid and those dependant on state transfers".

He said the government had made a choice by opting for a new universal social charge and reductions in tax credits rather than increasing tax rates or introducing a new rate for higher earners.

Mr Horan described the attempt to engineer an "internal devaluation" by pushing down wages

and cutting benefits as "grossly unfair".

"It has not been accompanied by any offsetting measures to ensure those who made – and still possess – significant riches during the 10-year boom pay their fair share towards the adjustment now under way."

IMPACT described the Budget 2011 as a recipe for continued economic failure.

General secretary Shay Cody said growth had to be at the centre of any initiative to drag the country out of recession.

Pledging to campaign to resist cuts to the minimum wage and social welfare, he added: "By taking yet more money from those on low and middle incomes – be they workers, welfare recipients or OAPs – the government is guaranteeing that we won't grow out of the financial crisis."

"Instead, the government's vicious circle of economic decline will continue as consumer demand falls further, creating more unemployment and further declines in tax revenue."



## Minimum wage cut beneath contempt

CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has accused government TDs of "moral bankruptcy and political cowardice" after the Dail voted in favour of cutting the minimum wage.

Describing the measure as "contemptible" and Ireland's "day of shame", he warned this would result in a "de facto legalisation of a form of slavery in 21st century Ireland".

"They are taking €40 per week from working poor in the full knowledge that there is no economic, political, social or moral justification for it."

Referring to a radio interview with Ajaj Chopra, who had led the IMF delegation to Dublin, he added: "Even the IMF has publicly confirmed that they did not seek or propose a cut in the minimum wage."

Mr Begg, above, said the move showed the government was pandering to the "worst gommeen elements in the Irish business class".

"Be very certain, that extra €40 per week that will be taken from the pockets of the working poor will just disappear back into the pockets of those employers."

"It's Christmas come early for them and misery for the low paid."

He claimed the undue haste with which the legislation was rushed through amounted to a "clear corruption of democratic norms" and asked why ministers and TDs were so afraid of having an open debate on the issue.

"The reason they want to stifle debate is that they know full well that the measure cannot be justified."

Mr Begg also revealed the legislation envisaged a much deeper cut than one euro per hour, as the new rate allows for the inclusion of "an allowance in respect board and lodgings".

He warned this could mean an even lower rate than €7.65 per hour.

# UNITE PROPOSE AN ALTERNATIVE POLL STRATEGY

UNITE has urged unions and progressive organisations in the Republic to come together to press for a radical change in economic policy under any new government.

The proposal, which was tabled at a meeting of Congress' Executive Committee on December 15, will now form the basis to discuss the forging of a new political strategy in the run-up to the next General Election.

This approach will involve increasing taxes on higher income groups, putting a stop to public spending cuts as well as a multi-year, multi-billion euro programme of investment from our own resources.

It will also reject the view that bank debt should be shouldered by the people of Ireland.

Regional secretary Jimmy Kelly said: "We need to make sure that

membership is mobilised to ensure that the new government adopts a radically different approach.

"We need to be at the centre of a social and community base of common interest that rejects the idea that bankers and the political elite know best.

"Unite is convinced that we need to exercise our power through our members voicing a collective alternative opinion and through the possible use of industrial action to prove the strength of our commitment to a better future for Ireland than is possible under the current approach.

He added: "This will now be considered by our colleagues in the union movement, and the detail of a short, medium and longer term strategy will emerge early in the New Year."

UNITE PEOPLE'S BUDGET - PAGE 12

## Cutting school funding & staffing risks everyone's future

## Make your voice heard – oppose education cuts



# 'How **NOT** to do it' advice to UK unions

CONGRESS has given a 'how **NOT** to do it' analysis of the Irish government's shambolic economic policy at two major conferences in Britain.

Congress assistant general secretary Peter Bunting, speaking to delegates at the Wales TUC conference in Cardiff, said: "For the past two years, Fianna Fail, their cronies in business and finance and most of the press colluded in a massive exercise in shifting the blame from the banks onto the public sector."

Warning that the same process was now under way in the UK, he added: "The Republic of Ireland is, at present, a warning from recent history about how not to do it – how not to attack the weakest, while cosseting the richest, all in the name of 'fairness'."

Mr Bunting later delivered a similar message to thousands of demonstrators at a rally organised by Merseyside Public Sector Alliance in Liverpool.

He said: "There have been massive rallies of working people, unemployed people, carers, nurses, students and teachers in London,

Manchester, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Cardiff, Derry, Belfast and all around the UK – all with the same message of resistance."

Referring to recent demos in Dublin, he added: "Those of us who have hosted rallies against the actions of the Irish government – and 100,000 citizens braved the freezing weather in Dublin two weeks ago – can tell you that more and more voters and citizens across these islands are willing to support radical challenges to the orthodoxy of the market.

"After months of talk about our broken economy and our broken society and our broken politics, change may be at hand at last.

"We could be close to the birth of a Second Republic. We can be spectators or we can be midwives."

"The real lesson for us in the UK from the Irish crisis is this – We do not need to have the IMF's commissars walking into Government Buildings to import their ideas.

"We need, more than ever, stronger and better ideas to keep them out."



'We could be close to the birth of a Second Republic. We can be spectators or we can be midwives'

– Peter Bunting

UNIONS across Northern Ireland are holding a series of events to support the ETUC's call for a day of action against the cuts on December 17.

Public sector unions UNISON, NIPSA and PCS are planning to stage a number of lunchtime protests outside workplaces.

Teaching unions UTU and INTO, the Fire Brigades Union as well as Belfast and Derry trade councils have encouraged members to show their support in joining the Friday demos.

## INTO welcomes equality ruling

THE Irish National Teachers' Organisation has welcomed the outcome of the equality tribunal on enrolment policies in schools.

General secretary Sheila Nunan claimed the decision would now have implications well beyond the Traveller community.

She said: "Enrolment policies at primary level often use older siblings in the school as a criteria for enrolment.

"But the thinking behind it was not to exclude children but to ensure parents with more than one child didn't end up with children

in several different schools with different drop-off places."

But now that practice has been deemed to be indirect discrimination.

In the light of the judgment, enrolment policies in general would have to be examined, Ms Nunan added.

The union said there was a clear role for the Department to advise schools on the outcome of this judgement rather than having all 4,000 schools having to review policies individually.



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NOV 27 NATIONAL DEMO

# 100,000 ON THE STREETS ... A MANDATE FOR CHANGE

MORE THAN 100,000 people marched to the GPO in Dublin on November 27 to demonstrate their opposition to the Irish government's ruinous economic policies.

Despite freezing temperatures, huge numbers gathered in O'Connell Street to hear trade union leaders and others warn of the dire consequences of acceding to the terms of the €85bn EU-IMF bailout package.

Addressing the crowd, Congress general secretary David Begg drew parallels between the deal and the Treaty of Versailles after World War One.

He said: "Does anybody in this country or in the Dáil think we can as a people afford to pay 5.8% on money that we did not ask for in the first place and that is being forced upon us to bail out the banking system in Europe which is in hock to this country for €509 billion? We can't pay that money and we won't pay that money."

Noting that the 1916 Proclamation – first read from the same spot in front of the GPO – had referred to help from "gallant allies in Europe", he added: "Well, our gallant allies in Europe have arrived 95 years too late and uninvited and instead of guns to help the revolution, they have brought economic weapons of mass destruction."

Slamming the government's "arrogance", Congress president Jack O'Connor told the crowd: "We are here to object to their insistence of going ahead without a mandate to draw up a plan and sign a deal in our name which will decide the future of one or two generations of our people in flagrant contempt of the will of the people."

Leading commentator Fintan O'Toole, who acted as rally MC, described the government's four-year cuts programme as "a plan to save

the Irish elite" rather than a means to save the country. He predicted a "savage assault" on the minimum wage as well as further welfare cuts while at the same time "the elite" moved to protect its own interest.

"Under the government's plan a single person earning €40,000 per year will pay exactly the same amount of extra tax as someone earning €300,000 per year."

Addressing the crowd, Laura Ashley worker Mary Fleming, on strike for five weeks, claimed her employers were following a pattern set by many other firms during the slump. She said: "Companies are making vast

## Half to laugh

**THE GARDA have put out an All Points Bulletin in a bid to locate 50,000 marchers who went missing from the centre of Dublin on November 27.**

**Congress officials had been told by Garda sources earlier in the day that more than 100,000 people had marched to the GPO.**

**However, the Garda later revealed that half of these were now unaccounted for and as a result downsized demo numbers to 50,000...**

amounts of money and are using the opportunity presented by the current crisis to drive down people's income."

Marie Doyle, who spoke on behalf of retired workers, said older people had worked their whole lives, paying their taxes and doing what was asked of them. Now they had reached a stage where "they had nothing left to give".

Keith O'Driscoll, an unemployed apprentice plumber and TEEU member, spoke passionately of the difficulties facing young workers and youth in general in particular raising the spectre of emigration as well as the lack of training and work opportunities.

Siobhan O'Donoghue let rip when she showed what she thought of the National Recovery Plan by tearing a copy of the document to pieces to cheers from the crowd.

She asked: "Do you think the four-year recovery plan will make a better place?"

The crowd roared back "No!" Then Ms O'Donoghue asked the crowd if they were ready for change and were prepared to do something about it. "Yes!" came the resounding reply.





Picture: Tom Clancy

# NOV 27 NATIONAL DEMO



**Eamon McLoughlin, Dublin**

'It's important for all the people to be here to protest and show the government we're not happy with this and we want a general election'  
**- Dev Boyjonauth, Kerry**

**Esther Holden, Leitrim**



**Tony Neville, Clondalkin**



Picture: MANDATE



'We felt the voice of workers in Ireland needed to be heard. We needed to come out and tell the government it's unjust... it's just not right.'  
**- Dearbhla Cussan, Lillian Fogarty, Ian Curran from Carlow**



**PICTURES: TOM CLANCY & PAULA GERAGHTY**



**TEEU general secretary Eamon Devoy**



**'We're here to support the people because everyone needs to do something.'  
- Ashley Kavanagh with her mum Gerry from Darndale**



**TRADE UNION TV COVERAGE OF MARCH AND RALLY [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtTw\\_gM2TvE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtTw_gM2TvE)**

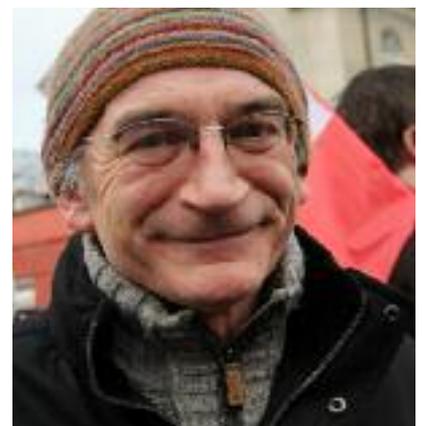
# NOV 27 NATIONAL DEMO



'We're going to lose our sovereignty and be enslaved to the bankers.'  
 – **Phil Johnson, Kilshealin, Co Tipperary**



'They got us into this mess and we want them out.'  
 – **Cork OAP Tina Busted**



'I'm here to get this government out and to effect some kind of change.'  
 – **Joe Healy, Bandon, Co Cork**



'I'm here to protest because we all need to protest to save the country.'  
 – Linda Cully, Blanchardstown



'I'm protesting against the bankers and the developers and the other fat cats sitting on their butts. They sold us out and they haven't got the guts to share the pain.'  
 – Brendan Larkin, Dublin



**PICTURES: TOM CLANCY & PAULA GERAGHTY**



'We just can't afford any more cuts.' – UCD student Nina Anderson from Denmark



Vincent Walter, Celbridge, Co Kildare



'I'm disgusted & angry. They're taking everything we've got.'  
 – Monica Duff, Swords



Michael Doyle, Raheny



Geraldine Dennis, Drimnagh

**TRADE UNION TV COVERAGE OF MARCH AND RALLY [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtTw\\_gM2TvE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtTw_gM2TvE)**



Picture: Unite

**New vision: Unite's Jimmy Kelly & Walter Cullen hold copies of People's Budget outside Dail**

# UNITE PUBLISHES PEOPLE'S BUDGET

UNITE has published an alternative People's Budget based on investment, job creation and a growth-led approach to reducing the deficit. The document also outlines a range of alternative strategies, including:

- The rebuilding of communications, water and waste infrastructure,
- Preventative health initiatives and improvements to the built environment, and
- A loan guarantee scheme for business as well as action to prevent long-term unemployment.

According to the report's authors, an investment of €1bn would create up to 12,000 jobs in areas of lasting benefit to the country.

The document also calls for an investment of €15bn from current cash assets over four years from an estimated €35bn still held by the nation – even after bank recapitalisations.

A combination of clamping down on regressive tax incentives, initial tax hikes on high-earning groups and the reinvestment of public service efficiencies into the economy would allow for improved communications infrastructure, support for new hi-tech firms, the

upgrading of water and waste networks and job creation. Regional secretary Jimmy Kelly said: "The reality for many hundreds of thousands of families is that their living standards are in freefall, their children are faced with no choice but to emigrate and those who are cursed by unemployment have little prospect of securing work."

"It was not meant to be like this. The government asked for the trust of the Irish people as they cut €14bn out of the economy in the past two years. They said it was necessary to share the pain in order that the public finances could be brought back under control. They misled the nation."

"Now they say a further €15bn cuts are needed in order to make the same broken promise. They are selling our future."

Describing the People's Budget as a "viable alternative" to the slash and burn strategy adopted by the government, he added: "This approach will reduce the deficit through encouraging growth. It will get people back to work. It will use the assets which we have built as a nation to help us in this dark hour."

<http://www.unitetheunion.org/pdf/045-Peoples%20Budget%20-%20Final%20Draft.pdf>

## Budget & CSR cuts hit NI poor the most

RESEARCH commissioned by the Law Centre (NI) has revealed tax and benefit changes will hit Northern Ireland more than any other region in the UK, apart from London.

The findings, published by the Institute for Fiscal Studies on December 10, examined the impact both the coalition government's June budget and October's Comprehensive Spending Review will have on local incomes through to 2014/2015.

According to researchers, the figures for London reflect the larger numbers of extremely wealthy people who live there and the effect of Housing Benefit changes on high rents in the capital.

Northern Ireland, on the other hand, has far smaller number of very wealthy people with a larger proportion of households containing Disability Living Allowance claimants.

Law Centre (NI) director Les Allamby claimed the findings illustrate the devastating impact tax and benefit changes will have on people living on lower incomes in Northern Ireland.

He said: "On top of the distributional effect, there is the likelihood of a slower economic recovery, higher rates of mental and physical health problems and poorer childcare provision which will make things even tougher for people trying to get into work in Northern Ireland."

"We need to develop changes to social security that take account of our conditions and which will actually work in Northern Ireland."

## TUC plans massive demo in the spring

THE TUC is planning to hold a massive national demo against the cuts in central London next spring.

The protest – which organisers hope will be "the biggest, boldest and best event in our history" – is to take place in Hyde Park on Saturday, March 26.

A TUC spokesperson said: "Unions are now at the heart of a powerful, progressive coalition against the cuts, bringing together service users, charities and community groups."

"The union movement and the country face the sternest test in a generation."

"Not only is the economy on its knees, not only is the law tilted against us, but we have a government in power that is making spending cuts of a speed, scale and savagery never before seen."

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# WOMEN HIT MORE BY BUDGET CUTS

## EDUCATION

### Only 0.3% earn more than €150k

LEADING women trade unionists from across the UK and Ireland have joined together to slam national governments and regional administrations for pushing through a wave of austerity measures that will impact disproportionately on women.

In a joint statement issued following a conference in Derry last month, the women's committees of ICTU, TUC, STUC and WTUC claimed these cuts would have dire consequences both for the economy and for society.

Sarah Veale, of the TUC, pointed out that cuts will primarily hit women and families, especially those on low incomes, and in particular lone parent families who will lose 18.5% of their net income.

Ms Veale added: "Not only will women be worse off as a result of benefit cuts, but women are likely to also be the biggest losers when it comes to public sector pay freezes and jobs cuts.

"The main reason for this is the fact that women make up 65% of the public sector workforce.

"Just under 40% of women's jobs nationally are in the public sector,



Sarah Veale Taryn Trainor

compared to around 15 per cent of men's jobs."

Julie Cook, of the Welsh TUC, flagged up a recent poll showing that a majority of Welsh people felt the cuts were being implemented unfairly with nearly half believing they would be bad for the economy.

She said: "A total of 42,000 public sector jobs are now at risk in Wales and two-thirds of public sector workers are women."

The Scottish TUC's Elaine Dougal insisted that women trade unionists in Scotland and across the UK and Ireland were not prepared "to sit

back and let the cuts happen" and called for a united trade union voice to challenge governments' short-sighted austerity measures and to promote an agenda that focused on economic growth, jobs, services and equality for all.

Taryn Trainor, joint chair of ICTU's women's committee, underlined how of the £8bn to be raised through budget changes in Northern Ireland, a total of £5.8bn would be paid by women.

She said women would suffer more through attacks on benefits and tax credits, adding, "This is intolerant and intolerable – it must be resisted."

Joint committee chair Carol O'Brien added: "Congress advocates that any budgetary decisions must be taken in a manner which is sensitive to its differential impact on women and men and must be examined from a gender perspective.

"It is critical that budgetary decisions seek to alleviate the worst consequences of the recession on women by protecting the most vulnerable women and ensuring that progress that has been made towards equality for women is not reversed."

THE Irish Federation of University Teachers has responded to an Irish Times report listing the top 100 earners in third-level education.

The union pointed that of the more than 20,000 people working in the sector, fewer than one third of one per cent (0.3%) earn more than €150,000.

General secretary Mike Jennings said: "Looking at the list, one cannot help but be struck by the almost total absence of frontline educators. The list is almost exclusively made up of administrators, bureaucrats and managers.

"Imagine the frustration that will be felt by assistant lecturers (starting salary €33,623) or college lecturers (€48,306) at the allegation that they are 'high-fliers'. Such staff have already taken earnings cuts of approximately 20% while the numbers of students they teach has reached the highest levels in Irish history."

He added: "Anyone who aspires to be rich should not be looking for a job in education."

## Something fishy going on at the Dail...



THOSE big fish in the Dail sometimes seem to have the recall capacity of goldfish... at least when it comes to climate change, which is why these brave souls from Oxfam stood out in the December chill outside Leinster House to give our fine representatives a small reminder of the importance of tackling the problem. An Oxfam source said: "We wanted to let TDs know there is no bailout for the climate, which is why reaching an agreement at the conference in Cancun is so vitally important."

Picture: Leon Farrell/Photocall Ireland

## Dismantled 'bit by bit'

UK education secretary Michael Gove is "dismantling bit by bit" the landmark 1944 Education Act – and its vision of a fair and balanced education for all – with his schools white paper, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers has claimed.

General secretary Dr Mary Boustead said: "His plans risk leaving every school an island divorced from the help and support of their local authorities.

"We are also deeply worried by the total confusion, incoherence and blatant contradictions which run throughout the government's education policy."

## SubSearch launched

THE INTO has set up a new service aimed at helping unemployed teaching graduates find substitute work in the Republic's primary schools.

SubSearch allows a qualified primary teacher, available for substitute work, to register on the site and confirm their availability in up to three locations throughout the country.

The union has urged principals to register and avail of the service. Principals who register will be able to search and receive a list of available substitutes.

They will also be able to define the distance from the location they wish to search.

<http://subsearch.intio.ie>

## RESIDENCY TAX LOOPHOLE

# TUC: CLIP WINGS OF THESE HIGH-FLYING CITY BOYS

CITY high-fliers who commute by jet to London so they can avoid paying tax could have their wings clipped if current UK tax residence rules are tightened.

A new TUC report claims that tougher residency rules would raise billions every year for the UK exchequer.

The briefing cites the 'Monaco boys' as an example of how some high-earners are using the ordinary residence rule – usually created when a person has been in the UK for 91 days – to avoid paying their fair share of tax.

The 'boys' fly into the UK on Monday morning and return to the Mediterranean principality on Thursday afternoon, thereby claiming they never establish residency in the UK.

HM Revenue and Customs have recently challenged the practice but the report authors claim it continues.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "This is a glaring loophole in tax law that allows thousands of very rich people to avoid paying



their fair share of tax. A big proportion work in the banking and finance sectors that drove the crash, but can now escape paying a proper contribution to putting right the damage they caused, while the rest of us face cuts in vital services and a VAT hike."

The rules on tax residency are further complicated by the domicile rule, which offers

further opportunities for avoiding tax on UK-based income. Non-domicile status, which can be inherited or acquired if you are born outside the UK, can be used to avoid paying tax on UK income even if someone has long-term interests in the UK.

The TUC briefing proposes a new passport-based tax residency law – already enforced successfully in the US – to simplify the legislation and end the exploitation of residency rules by a super-rich minority.

Under the TUC proposals, anyone with a UK passport would be assumed by default to be tax resident in the UK.

However, to allow for the high levels of migration, the TUC proposes an exception to passport-based residency whereby UK subjects living in countries that enjoy full double tax arrangements with the UK can transfer their tax status abroad.

[www.tuc.org.uk/extras/taxresidence.pdf](http://www.tuc.org.uk/extras/taxresidence.pdf)



## Embassy demo at 'no show'

MEMBERS of the Domestic Workers Action Group demonstrated outside the Philippines Embassy in Dublin last month in protest at a 'no-show' at an employment complaints hearing. The DWAG took the action on November 28 after the group

claimed embassy chiefs failed to attend a hearing brought by a former employee – a Philippines national – at the Labour Relations Commission.

Hilda Regaspi, of the DWAG, said: "It takes a lot of courage for a do-

mestic worker to stand up for their rights. Domestic workers, like all other workers, deserve the right to a fair hearing and due process regarding grievances, including those employed by foreign diplomats."

Picture: Lar Boland/MRCI



Picture: MANDATE

## Budget double whammy blasted

MANDATE has joined Migrant Rights Centre Ireland in attacking the €1 cut to the minimum wage and the inclusion of low paid workers in the tax net.

They described the changes as "a double whammy" that will do nothing to solve Ireland's economic woes.

MANDATE general secretary John Douglas, left, said: "Every person in Ireland knows they will be punished for the greed of a few, and the mismanagement of our economic affairs.

"It is clear that this government's days are numbered and that they only enjoy minimal electoral support.

"Despite having no mandate left they

seem determined to press ahead with making swingeing cuts to the minimum wage and to welfare which will devastate the lives of the people on the margins of our society."

MRCI director Siobhan O'Donoghue said: "Cutting the wages of the lowest-paid workers will only degrade working conditions and lead to a decrease in productivity, damage consumer spending, and will place those with the lowest incomes, including migrant workers, in an impossible situation.

She added: "This is all the more pointless when we know that it is the lower-wage earners who spend proportionately more."

UNITE has blasted the Irish government for "betraying" the nation by putting in place a policy of "forced emigration".

Regional secretary Jimmy Kelly claimed the government was using emigration as a cornerstone of its economic policy.

He pointed out the Department of Finance had made a reference to net emigration being needed to restrain the pace of growth in labour supply in its pre-budget statement last month. Mr Kelly said: "In the 1980s, Brian Lenihan snr was infamously quoted as saying emigration was a good thing.

"For others though, forced to see the departure of their children and to connect with families through telephones, letters and then the internet rather than in person, emigration was a curse."

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THINK BEYOND  
THE PRESENT



# WHY EQUALITY IS GOOD FOR ALL OF US...

TOP inequalities researcher Richard Wilkinson, above, gave the keynote address at a Congress-organised equality conference last month.

The best selling co-author of *The Spirit Level* outlined how inequality damages societies as a whole – not just the poor – to an audience of trade unionists gathered at the Clarion Hotel, Dublin Airport, on November 24.

“It’s no longer absolute income levels that matter, it is the differences between us.”

Mr Wilkinson presented an impressive body of information to back up this view.

A raft of indicators – from numbers of homicides to teenage pregnancy rates – showed how these problems were two to 10 times more common in less equal rich societies (UK, Portugal, US) than in more equal rich societies (Japan, Finland, Sweden and Norway).

Mr Wilkinson said: “It’s not bad housing itself that gives you heart



Picture: John Chaney/Congress

### Jack O'Connor: Look north

disease or cancer. It’s not the physical surroundings, it’s what you feel about your circumstances.

“It’s to do with the scales of social hierarchy – whether a society is a steep pyramid or a shallow pyramid.” While admitting that economic growth had transformed lives in the west over the last 200 years, he

noted these benefits were now tailing off.

“We’re the first generation to have got to the end of the benefits of economic growth.”

Mr Wilkinson flagged up what he saw as a “real paradox”: how income and living standards were important – in terms of health and well being outcomes – within societies but did not seem to matter at all when rich, developed countries were compared with each other.

Rather the evidence points to how equal each society is that matters.

He added: “The data shows there is no relationship to national income. Health and social problems are not related to average income in rich countries.”

Mr Wilkinson insisted there was a vital need to push an equality with sustainability agenda, adding “our societies have to change”. Speaking before the publication of the Irish

government’s National Recovery Plan, Congress president Jack O’Connor made the case for adopting the approach of Nordic countries that had placed equality at the centre of their development strategies.

He claimed the key lesson to be drawn from their success was that equality was not just a moral or idealistic choice but had been proven to be better for society as well as being economically superior.

Independent equality consultant Niall Crowley underlined the need for unions and civic society groups to unite around the Claiming Our Future policy agenda which placed equality at the top of its five agreed values.

Other speakers included Equality Authority chief Renee Dempsey, UK Feminista director Kat Banyard, academics Terry McDonough, Kathy Monks and Sile Larkin of the Equality Tribunal.

<http://www.ictu.ie/equality/equalityconfere.html>



Barber: ‘Painfully slow’  
Picture: TUC

## Gender gap progress hit

PUBLIC sector job losses and welfare cuts will disproportionately hit women’s income and set progress on closing the gender pay gap back years in the UK, the TUC has warned in a new report.

The research, titled *The Gender Impact of the Cuts*, highlighted the importance of public sector employment in raising women’s wages – on average women working in the public sector earn almost 40% more per hour than their private sector counterparts.

As women make up 65% of the public sector workforce, they will bear the brunt of an estimated 400,000 job losses over the next four years.

Women comprise 68% of employees working in local authorities – the sector

expected to take the biggest employment hit.

The report cites research carried out by economists Howard Reed and Tim Horton.

According to their findings, lone parents, 90% of whom are female, will be hit hardest by the spending cuts, losing 18.5% of their net household income, or £3,121.

Single female pensioners are next hardest hit, losing 11.7% of their net income, or £1,326.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber warned: “Progress in closing the pay gap has been painfully slow and could now be set back decades by the government’s austerity programme.”

[www.tuc.org.uk/genderimpactofcuts](http://www.tuc.org.uk/genderimpactofcuts)

■ MORE than 500 delegates attended the Fourth European Equality Summit in Brussels last month.

Representatives from governments, employers, unions, NGOs and equality bodies, including Congress’ David Joyce and Anne Speed of SIPTU, took part in discussions centred on promoting equality and combating discrimination in employment.

The important role played by public procurement policies and diversity charters was identified as was the need for a new anti-discrimination directive outside the labour market.

European Trade Union Confederation and European Public Service Union representatives emphasised the need to progress the equality equality particularly in the context of the economic crisis.

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## Devo warning of 'civil unrest' over govt policy

TEEU chief Eamon Devo has warned of "significant civil unrest" as a result of government's ruinous economic strategy.

He told delegates at the union's biennial conference in Galway last month that draconian cuts would make life "unbearable" in Ireland.

"What we are witnessing is a dismantling of social welfare provision and pensions for older people and the unemployed, health services for the sick and open access to higher education for our young, while creating immunity from pain for the builders, property speculators and hierarchy of the banking system who are entirely responsible for the mess we find ourselves in."

Mr Devo, left, also accused the government of "floundering blindly through this crisis and dragging us all towards the precipice with it."

# TEEU votes for campaign of disobedience

DELEGATES at the TEEU conference voted overwhelmingly for a call to set up a campaign of civil disobedience to force a general election.

The emergency motion condemned the government for "criminal negligence" in the running of the economy and for "colluding" with the

banks in "misleading" the Irish public. The drafters of the motion further claimed the administration had, by putting in place the September 2008 guarantee to the banks, "forfeited" the confidence of the Irish people. It continued: "If the government persists in clinging to power we call on

the ICTU and other civil society organisations to launch a campaign of civil disobedience to force an election on a regime that has no principles and no objective beyond staying in office for as long as possible, even at the price of destroying what is left of our economy and our society."



David Begg said plan needed to restructure 'unsustainable' debt

## Begg: 'Citizens count'

CONGRESS chief David Begg said history would record just how terrible a mistake the government made when it gave guarantees to bond holders.

He told delegates: "What Ireland needs more than anything is a plan to restructure its banks' unsustainable debt, convincing creditors to take a discount and finally bear part of its own financial losses.

"If we can get policy makers in Dublin, Brussels, Frankfurt and Washington to realise that citizens count as much as bond markets, then perhaps we will again be able to start imagining the future in more positive terms.

He added: "But that's a lot of 'ifs'..."



Jacqueline King of Aussie union ETU spoke at conference

## CWU launches organise drive among mobile retail workers

THE Communications Workers' Union has started an organising drive among workers in the mobile retail outlet sector.

The campaign – which involves visiting all the major retailers such as Vodafone, Meteor, O2, 3 and Carphone Warehouse – started early last month in Dublin but will spread throughout the rest of the country.

Sources at the CWU said many employees in the sector had contacted the union with queries on a whole range of issues such as changes to employment contracts, increases in targets and the introduction of performance management systems.

A spokesperson said: "In this time of economic uncertainty, workers are often the victims of cut-backs, including redundancy or reductions in their working week or salary. Employees in the mobile retail sector are no exception."

CWU organisers want to focus on addressing the lack of knowledge of trade unionism and its role in the workplace among young workers.

In many cases there is a general misunderstanding of an individual's entitlement to join a union and organisers plan to raise awareness among these workers and to inform them of their employment rights and of the benefits of joining a union.

The spokesperson added: "While work arrangements in the majority of retail stores are similar, working conditions can differ enormously.

"Some firms provide good conditions for their staff while others leave room for improvement."

Difficulties employees have reported to the CWU include unrealistic targets, health and safety issues, excessive performance management, stress, inadequate training, contract issues and a general lack of control over the decisions that affect them in their work.

The union has so far negotiated collective agreements for members in Vodafone and Meteor and is currently pursuing other mobile companies for collective bargaining rights.

For more information on this and other campaigns, visit [www.cwu.ie](http://www.cwu.ie)

## NUJ activist puts world to writes!

BELFAST-based NUJ chapel officer Tony Bailie has just released a new novel ecopunks which he hopes will hit the best-seller lists

Billed as part-thriller, part-adventure story with a healthy dollop of new age philosophy thrown in for good measure, ecopunks has been described as "an environmental parable for the 21st century".

Tony is membership secretary at The Irish News and is proud of having 80% of editorial staff signed up with the union.

He already has a novel, The Lost Chord – published in 2006 – and two collections of poetry under this belt.

Ecopunks is available from all good bookshops and on Amazon. Visit [www.tonybailie.com](http://www.tonybailie.com).



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Picture: TUC

**VIEWPOINT** SIPTU Vice President **Patricia King**

# Stop this race to the bottom

THE race to the bottom began long before the bust, and long before the government's recent decision to cut the minimum wage of €8.65 by €1 and review Employment Regulation Orders (EROs) and Registered Employment Agreements (REAs).

Even when businesses were making record profits, they were trying to drive down wage rates, and in labour intensive sectors such as hotels and catering, legal challenges were brought in the hope that the Joint Labour Committees (JLC) could be dismantled.

In the electrical industry, there has been a sustained campaign over a number of years to break the REA.

Now that the economy is in crisis, the 'cuts campaign' has gone into overdrive and only the trade union movement stands between the axe-wielders and working people.

The legislation promised by government in 2008 and yet to be enacted, would reinforce the stability of the JLC/REA system – which is vital for those working in low paid sectors.

While the pay rate determined within the JLC system is often just 50c to 60c per hour above the minimum wage, the Employment Regulation Order also determines rates for overtime/weekend working etc and many also include disciplinary and grievance procedures.

These are very valuable tools for both employees and employers in creating better work practices.

Work in low-paid sectors is typically labour intensive and involves long hours and low job satisfaction levels. It is surely shameful to hear public representatives such as Fine Gael's Lucinda Creighton demand a cut in the mini-

mum wage, while other commentators call for the JLC system to be dismantled.

No other area of the labour market is subject to such relentless scrutiny and demands for wage reduction.

Contrast this with the 'light touch' regulation of the financial sector over the past decade which has destroyed our economy.

Had those in the 'know' spent more time scrutinising behaviour in this sector, rather than pursuing vulnerable, low-paid and hard-working people, the dividend to the state would have been very valuable.

Thousands more workers within these sectors are likely to lose their jobs over the coming months as the government proceeds with its plan to take a further €6bn from the economy and the burden falls primarily on those at the bottom.

The construction industry will contract further with a reduction in the capital budget spend.

And if government continues to pursue its deflationary policy consumer activity will continue to fall and employment levels in the retail and hotels/catering sector will suffer accordingly.

Government, employer groups and others who have called for the reduction in the minimum wage are automatically advocating a cut in jobseeker's allowance on the basis of earnings being greater than welfare.

This suits the 'cuts' agenda and further underpins their policy – work as long and as hard as you can, for as little as you can. The campaign against the cut to the minimum wage must start now.

**CSO FIGURES**

# Irish govt's approach to poverty inadequate

THE Irish government's approach to tackling poverty is "wholly inadequate", the Community Workers' Co-operative has claimed.

It follows the release of statistics revealing that 'consistent poverty rates' had risen from 4.2% to 5.5% between 2008 and 2009.

According to the EU Survey on Income and Living Conditions data, the 'deprivation rate' also rose significantly from 13.8% in 2008 to 17.3% in 2009.

Children remained the most exposed group with a consistent poverty rate of 8.7% in 2009, compared to 6.3% in 2008, while lone parent households accounted for the highest percentage among household types – with 17% falling into this category.

The CWC has described the figures as "particularly appalling" as 2010 – the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion – draws to a close, and came as the organisation slammed the government's Plan for National Recovery for focusing cuts on the most disadvantaged with "potentially devastating consequences".

CWC national co-ordinator Ann Irwin claimed the Celtic Tiger era described the cut to the minimum wage and the threat to withdraw benefits if claimants do not engage in welfare-to-work schemes as "a recipe for disaster" and "an open invitation to exploitation".

## Policy set to drive more to the edge

EUROPEAN Anti-Poverty Network Ireland has claimed cuts contained in the four-year plan shows the Irish government is only paying "lip service" to a commitment to protect the most vulnerable in society.

Paul Ginnell, a policy and support worker with the EAPN, described the level of poverty in the Republic as "completely unacceptable".

He said: "It is clear that in this European Year Against Poverty and Social Exclusion, the government has no commitment to its own target of eliminating consistent poverty by 2016." Mr Ginnell made his comments as new CSO figures revealed how the current crisis has driven more people into extreme poverty, with almost one in four households in arrears with household bills at some time during 2009, and one in 10 households falling into debt in the same period.

In the light of government plans to cut welfare payments, the minimum wage and to draft in tax changes for the low paid, the EAPN warned that without "social transfers" in the form of welfare benefits, the percentage of those at risk of poverty would treble to around 43%.

Mr Ginnell added: "While the goal of most people is to have a decent job, large numbers are dependent on social welfare payments and these people must be able live with dignity. "However, current social welfare payments are well below this level and further reductions will drive more people deeper into poverty."



Picture: EAPN

**Paul Ginnell**

# Tribunal awards Polish worker £52k

A POLISH worker, represented by the ICTU Migrant Workers Unit, has been awarded more than £50,000 by an industrial tribunal after it ruled she had suffered racial and sexual discrimination.

Marzena Urnbanska-Kopowska worked at Mac's Quality Foods, Dunmurry, from September 2006 until July 2008.

The tribunal found she had been unfairly dismissed, as well as being sexually harassed by a Polish co-

worker. It also found she had been racially discriminated against by a local employee of the firm, causing her "feelings of violation, degradation, humiliation and contempt".

John McShane, an employment law specialist with McCartan Turkington Breen solicitors represented Mrs Urnbanska-Kopowska at the tribunal in Belfast, after she brought her case to Kevin Doherty and Kasia Garbal at the ICTU unit.

The unit – funded by EU Peace III

through Belfast City Council – was set up two years ago to provide representation to non-unionised migrant workers.

Mrs Urnbanska-Kopowska received a total of £52,382 in compensation – £31,049 for unfair dismissal, £20,000 for racial discrimination and sexual harassment and £1,332 in interest.

Describing it as a "particularly horrific" case, Kevin Doherty said: "She had very little English and suf-

fered an ongoing period of verbal abuse and some touching. We had no choice but to take legal action."

Expressing disappointment at the findings and the amount of compensation awarded, Mac's Quality Foods said the company had never before been accused of racial or sexual discrimination in over 30 years of operation.

The statement added: "We respect all our employees and treat them equal."

## INMO in tighten care rules call

THE Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation has underlined its long-standing policy that all direct care provided to people in their homes or in hospitals must be provided by trained and regulated staff.

It follows the screening of the Prime Time 'Home Care Scandal' investigation screened on December 13.

The union's Executive Council also claimed the revelations were an inevitable consequence of introducing profits into the healthcare system.

General secretary Liam Doran said: "The Prime Time revelations simply confirmed what will always happen when you de-skill the health service workforce to save money and increase providers' profits.

"All health professionals are regulated



and this is the best safeguard to ensuring safe practice.

"We now call upon the Minister, the government and the HSE to immediately change their current policy and introduce regulations which will ensure that all care must be provided through the skill mix identified above, involving the appropriate mix of registered nurses and trained healthcare assistants."

He added: "No patient or individual, either in hospital or in their own home, deserves less."



INMO's Liam Doran slams profit motive in healthcare

Picture: INMO

## NIPSA in jobs warning after Stormont budget proposals

NIPSA has hit out at the Northern Ireland Executive's draft budget proposals.

Warning that tens of thousands of public and private sector jobs would be lost, general secretary Brian Campfield said NIPSA did not accept the Executive had "done its best for the public and its public service employees".

He insisted local ministers needed to challenge the West-

minster government "more vigorously" in opposing the cuts.

NIPSA assistant general secretary Bumper Graham added: "The people of Northern Ireland don't want the Executive delivering the Cameron/Clegg/Osborne Christmas present of cuts and attacks on jobs.

"What is needed instead is a robust campaign of joint opposition to these cuts."

## Probe rip-off Ireland call

CONGRESS president Jack O'Connor has called on the Irish government to appoint an independent expert from overseas to probe profiteering across the economy.

It follows the latest Eurostat survey which found prices charged to consumers for almost all goods and services were significantly higher in the Republic than in the rest of the EU.

Mr O'Connor, who is also SIPTU general president, said: "These consumer prices are remaining persistently high against a background of falling incomes and a deliberate policy of allowing unemployment to fester in order to drive down wages.

"It is impossible to understand why home-produced items such

as bread, meat, milk or eggs are costing between 20% and 40% more here than in other EU member states, including our nearest neighbour and biggest trading partner Britain.

"It is quite clear that profit taking is continuing on a massive scale. While working people are being crucified with falling incomes and rising taxation, certain elements in business are continuing to cream it.

"The government must appoint an independent expert from abroad – who has no connections with business interests here – to undertake an objective study of the situation and make recommendations to combat profiteering as soon as possible."

## NHS 'BROUGHT TO THE BRINK'

UNISON has accused UK health secretary Andrew Lansley of dragging the NHS "to the brink" for forging ahead with the plan to hand over two-thirds of the entire NHS budget – £80bn – to GPs.

Karen Jennings, UNISON head of health, said: "Andrew Lansley is stubbornly refusing to listen to the growing outcry from health professionals about the damaging impact his proposals have on the future of our NHS.

"Private health companies have been circling round GPs to pick up commissioning contracts, waiting to make a killing.

"Lansley is dragging the NHS to the brink. Waiting lists are going up and the last thing patients need now is for more disruption and chaos because of Lansley's ill-devised White Paper."

Meanwhile, Unite has claimed the pay freeze imposed on NHS staff by the UK government "rides roughshod" over the independence of the health sector's pay review

body (PRB). The union made the claim in evidence put before the NHS PRB last month, insisting it amounted to an attack on the living standards of hard-working employees already hit by increasing workloads and worsening morale.

The freeze applies to all NHS employees earning more than £21,000 a year and is part of government attempts to squeeze £20bn in so-called efficiency savings over the next four years.

Those who earn less than that figure can expect pay rises of at least £250 a year.

Unite's national health officer Karen Reay said: "With the government's blanket public sector pay freeze, there is little room for the NHS PRB, an independent organisation, to manoeuvre.

"However, the problems of poor morale and high workloads for NHS staff won't go away and will have to be addressed very soon, if the NHS is to retain the high calibre staff it already has."



Andrew Lansley: Stubborn refusal

## WELL BEING 1

# IMO warns cuts will hit health of the nation

THE Irish Medical Organisation has warned of the impact further budget cuts will have on the healthcare system as well as on the long-term health of the nation.

IMO president Prof Sean Tierney said: "As incomes decline, people eat cheaper and less healthy meals, drop sports activities, delay visiting their GP and are less likely to afford preventative care."

Pointing out that lower income groups were more likely to develop diseases linked to lifestyle factors, he added: "Research shows that 38% of those at risk of poverty and 47% of those living in consistent poverty report having a chronic illness compared to 23% of the general population."

He claimed the recession also had a profound effect on mental health, which cost the economy more than €3bn in lost output and healthcare costs.

Noting that just 5.2% of the health budget had been allocated to mental health services in 2010, down from 7% in 2008, Prof Tierney added: "Due to the moratorium on recruitment over 700 staff have left mental health services, of which just 65 were replaced, compromising quality of care."

"Suicide rates in 2009 increased by 24% with incidents of self-harm increasing by 5% with higher rates among young males, yet the budget for mental health services has fallen disproportionately."

He called on the government to double the carer's allowance and claimed the Republic's estimated 161,000 carers saved the exchequer €2.5bn a year through their efforts.

"Because of their social and economic circumstances carers are at an increased risk of mental health problems."

"Adequate support and respite must be provided to enable them to care for someone as long as they wish and can, without jeopardising their own health and well-being."

## Cam's happiness index 'a gimmick'

TRADE unions have derided UK government plans for a 'happiness index' as a "gimmick" and an attempt to hoodwink the public.

Unite general secretary elect Len McCluskey predicted David Cameron's well being index "will be just another attempt by the coalition to pull the wool over people's eyes".

He said: "No doubt Cameron will use the index to claim that despite rising unemployment, home repossession, longer NHS waiting lists and unaffordable education, the people of this country are happier under Tory rule. The reality is a gathering gloom."

Mr McCluskey pointed out all the essentials for a happy life were "fair game for the chop" by the government.

"People need a secure job, a healthy family, a good and affordable education and a roof over their heads. The coalition government's cuts are targeting these fundamental rights for millions of people."

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber branded the initiative "little more than a gimmick".

He said: "What we want is a government that is actually going to do something about improving our health and well-being by reducing inequality, injustice and poverty."

"Instead, under the current government, working people face growing job insecurity, rising prices, less protection in the workplace and far greater uncertainty."

## FINANCE POLICY

# ROAD MAP TO A DEEP SLUMP

SIPTU president Jack O'Connor has claimed the government's National Recovery Plan should have been announced in Lourdes rather than Dublin because "short of a miracle, it is doomed to failure".

Mr O'Connor, who is also president of Congress, made the comments following the unveiling of the government's four-year plan which he claimed protected senior bank bond holders while "crucifying" the lowest paid and the most vulnerable in society.

He continued: "The agreement is a shameful indictment of the right-wing policies which have informed the government's approach for the last 13 years and which now dominate thinking in the EU institutions as well."

Congress chief David Begg predicted the National Recovery Plan rather than leading the country out of the slump would instead prove to be "a roadmap into deep recession".

Claiming the proposed cuts would further dampen consumer demand, he added: "The economy is already very fragile and some

€14bn has already been extracted. Taking out another €15bn will likely push us over the edge."

"The projections for growth contained in this plan are a fiction and bordering on the delusional."

INMO general secretary Liam Doran warned the four-year plan carried a "very real risk" of turning the recession into a prolonged depression.

He called on the government to "think again" and put in place an investment strategy to grow our way out of the recession rather than meet "the insatiable demands of external forces and money markets".

Meanwhile, IMPACT general secretary Shay Cody hit out at the government's "obsession" with "bailing out zombie banks" rather than putting together a stimulus strategy to pull Ireland out of recession.

He also slammed the decision to cut the minimum wage and predicted it would "impoverish thousands".



Picture: MANDATE

## Bailout deal 'worse than we could ever imagine'

UNITE regional secretary Jimmy Kelly described the bailout agreement as "worse than we could have imagined an Irish government could ever have signed up to".

He added: "If it is allowed to form the basis of our future, there will be no prospect of recovery, a level of debt that is unmanageable and the throwing away of the very assets which

represent our only chance of recovery." Meanwhile, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber slammed the conditions attached to the EU-IMF bailout and warned they risked "setting the Irish economy back decades and forcing hundreds of thousands into poverty". He added: "Ireland shows what happens when you put all the emphasis on cuts and fail to reform finance."



Kelly: scathing



Eichengreen: 'debt deflation'

## Economics prof blasts bailout as 'a disaster'

A TOP American economist has called the EU-IMF bailout to Ireland "a disaster".

Prof Barry Eichengreen, writing in German business newspaper Handelsblatt, claimed the so-called rescue package "solved nothing" but "simply kicks the can down the road".

The University of Berkeley academic – who describes himself in the article as "the most pro-euro economist" in the US – warned Irish public debt will now top 130% of GDP.

"The interest payments that the Irish sovereign will have to make have not been reduced by a single cent, given the rate of 5.8% on the international loan.

"After a couple of years, not just interest but also principal is supposed to begin to be repaid.

"Ireland will be transferring nearly 10% of its national income as reparations to the bondholders, year after painful year."

Echoing recent comments made by Congress general secretary David Begg likening the deal to the 1919 Versailles Treaty that punished Germany, Prof Eichengreen claimed a "populist backlash" was "inevitable".

"This is not politically sustainable, as anyone who remembers Germany's own experience with World War One reparations should know."

Prof Eichengreen pointed out that because Ireland had to resort to "internal devaluation" because it has no national currency of its own, it would lead to a spiralling "debt deflation" sparking yet further internal devaluation and in so doing deepening the debt burden.

He was scathing of major EU governments' response to the crisis – "in Europe... leadership is in short supply" – and insisted the solution lay not in "piling yet more debt" on Ireland but in capitalising their own banking systems to withstand "the inevitable Irish restructuring".



# One in four NI shopworkers assaulted in the past year

SHOCK new research has revealed that one in four retail employees in Northern Ireland – 26% – has been physically assaulted in the past year.

The telephone survey of 700 shopworkers carried out by Usdaw last month also found 29% had been threatened and 43% verbally abused.

More than a quarter of all incidents resulted from shopworkers asking customers for proof-of-age ID or came after a sale of alcohol or cigarettes was refused.

Describing the survey findings as "extremely disturbing", general secretary John Hannett said: "This shows there is an urgent need to take decisive action to stamp out the shocking level of violence and abuse being meted out to Northern Ireland's shopworkers. "Shopworkers should never have to fear going to work or face violence, threats or abuse for simply doing their job when they are there." Michala Lafferty, the union's

organiser in Belfast, added: "These figures are extremely worrying but unfortunately do not come as a shock to me. Incidents of violence and abuse are all too common in Northern Ireland and there is a real personal cost.

"Two-thirds of our reps know of someone who is taking sickness absence because of an incident and a third know of someone who has actually left their job because of violence, threats and abuse from customers."

● Meanwhile, Usdaw has managed to secure cross-party backing from Stormont MLAs for its Freedom From Fear drive against violence, threats and abuse directed against shopworkers.

The Assembly's Employment and Learning Committee unanimously agreed to adopt the union's campaign following a presentation by union officials last month and to promote it within the Assembly and across Northern Ireland.



Hannett: disturbing

Pictures: Usdaw

## WELL BEING 2

# Stress is top worry in the UK workplace

STRESS is UK workers' top safety worry, new research has revealed.

The latest survey of safety reps carried out by the TUC has found it is by far the most common workplace health and safety problem and the problem is being exacerbated by the recession.

Also featuring high up the list of problems were bullying and harassment, back strains, slips, trips and falls as well as over-work.

Interestingly, researchers found that stress is most often found in the public sector with 68% of public sector union reps claiming it is a problem compared to 54% of their counterparts in the private sector.

General secretary Brendan Barber said: "Stress can be caused by heavy workloads, cuts in staffing, long hours and bullying.

"The economic crisis and redundancies have created more anxiety about job security, and as the spending cuts begin to bite and even more jobs start to go, stress at work is bound to increase."

## NI Rights Bill backed

MORE than 20 members of the US House of Representatives have signed a letter to David Cameron calling on the UK government to deliver a Northern Ireland Bill of Rights.

New York Congressman Joseph Crowley, who co-chairs the Ad-Hoc Committee on Irish Affairs at the House of Representatives, spearheaded the initiative and was involved in drafting the letter.

The letter called on the PM to support an "inclusive" and "strong" Bill of Rights as proposed in both the Good Friday and St Andrew's agreements.

Such a bill would both "protect against the abuses of the past" and provide for "the hopes of the future" and thereby become a "healing, unifying and inspirational document for everyone in Northern Ireland".



## TUC in Give As You Earn drive

THE TUC has linked up with the Charities Aid Foundation to encourage trade unions to promote the Give As You Earn scheme to members. The scheme allows workers to make tax-free donations to charities direct from their pay.

<http://www.cafonline.org/default.aspx?page=7026>



Noel Griffin: Public resource

## NIPSA fells 'sell-off the forests' call

NIPSA has slammed calls to sell off some of Northern Ireland's publicly-owned forests to the private sector.

Pointing out that forests provided employment, as well as supporting the timber trade and tourism industries, union official Noel Griffin said they also played a key role in tackling climate change.

He added: "Every public forest in Northern Ireland is used and appreciated by the public. It is their forest and in some areas the only place that people can walk freely and enjoy the countryside."

Currently, the Forest Service manages many special areas of conservation, nature reserves and open habitats and is also responsible for restoring a number of ancient woodland sites.

Northern Ireland has the lowest forest cover in Europe with only six per cent of land forested. In contrast, Scotland has 12% cover.

Mr Griffin added: "NIPSA will campaign strongly against any sell-off of public property, all for short-term gain. By protecting and retaining forests within the public sector, we will ensure future generations can benefit and enjoy a wonderful public resource."



Picture: Amnesty International

## Guatemalan trade unionist shot

HUNDREDS of Amnesty supporters have appealed to authorities in Guatemala to carry out an independent and thorough probe following the shooting of trade unionist Mateo López, above right.

Mateo – who is secretary general of the local branch of the Health Trade Union and a member of the the FNL, the National Front for the Struggle coalition – was targeted as he prepared to travel to a meeting in Guatemala City early on October 28.

He left his house at 2am to take a bus to the capital to attend a general assembly of the Health Trade Union.

High up on the agenda was a talk on a corruption case against which he campaigned.

While Mateo walked to his local bus stop, two men on a motorbike approached.

The passenger shot him five times – once in the stomach, twice in the right shoulder with another two shots grazing his knees.

Mateo fell to the ground. The gunmen were about to shoot him once more, but people in neighbouring houses started to turn on their lights and make noise. The attackers were forced to make

their escape. Eight days before the attempted assassination, Mateo had taken part in a public event to commemorate the murder in Malacatán last year of FNL activist Víctor Gálvez.

Mr Gálvez was shot 10 times on October 24, 2009, as he left the offices of the consumer rights organisation Resistance Front for the Defence of Natural Resources and People's Rights.

He had just spoken at a public meeting about the alleged poor quality and high charges of the regional electricity company.

Mateo López has been active over the past year in denouncing corruption in Guatemala's health service.

The Health Trade Union campaigns for access to public health services, while the FNL focuses on issues such as better standards of public services at affordable costs, including campaigns against the high cost of electricity.

Eight FNL trade unionists have been killed over the past year.

No one has yet been brought to justice for these crimes.

For more information visit [www.amnesty.org.uk/tradeunions](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/tradeunions)



# Trade Union TV

▶ **TRADE UNIONS - ARE YOU GETTING A FAIR HEARING IN THE MEDIA?**  
▶ **WORKERS - ARE YOU FED UP WITH TAKING A BATTERING IN THE PRESS?**  
**FIGHT BACK with TRADE UNION TV**

*Create media content that showcases members' issues for your union website.  
Let trade union members know what their union is doing for them*

Check out previous Trade Union TV shows  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/TradeUnionTVIreland>

Contact [mSPgeraghty@yahoo.ie](mailto:mSPgeraghty@yahoo.ie)  
or call +0353 (0) 876101340  
to discuss your media needs



# Nov 21... The day the music died



Picture: INMO

## VIEWPOINT

INMO deputy general secretary  
**Dave Hughes**

IN spite of denials over the previous weekend, the announcement by Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan at 1pm on Sunday, November 21, that he would recommend acceptance of the IMF and ECB loan heralded the demise of Irish sovereignty.

Everyone of Irish descent recognised the enormity of this except our government, who attempted to portray it as an attempt by Ireland to save the euro.

To put it in context, the only equivalent in these islands was the supplication by a Scottish ruling class of the Scottish economy to the English Parliament through the 1707 Act of Union.

In that case, the reckless greed of their elite, through the Darien Scheme, had broken the economy and the politicians, bankers and businessmen, in a bid to save themselves, ceded control of the Scottish economy to England, rebranded as the UK.

Robbie Burns in his 'A Parcel of Rogues in a Nation' wrote "We were bought and sold for English Gold".

The richness of this comparison cannot have been lost on the British chancellor when he offered to join the IMF and ECB in the Irish bailout.

Those who caused this great shame to all who take pride in our nation must be banished from politics and business in this country.

Their guilt extends beyond this latest incompetence and is manifest in the closure of hospital beds, increasing overcrowding in emergency departments and the return of two-year waiting lists for basic medical investigations.

Deposits in Ireland were already guaranteed up to €100,000, which protected the majority of ordinary depositors, when on September 29, 2008, the decision – contrary to expensive advice – was made to underwrite all the activities of Irish banks, including Anglo Irish. That



Picture: MANDATE

decision locked the future of Ireland's economy to that of the banks. It's hard to view it as anything other than a 'smart Alec' tactic designed to cause an inflow into Anglo and other Irish banks at the expense of the rest of European banks.

Indeed it had that effect for a day until other governments were forced to follow suit and thus the euro was put up for grabs and the seeds were sown for a succession of country bailouts.

Any new government must vow to extract us from this powerless position and restore our right to self-determination. Our Offences Against the State Act must be expanded to include financial treason with powers of sequestration on those who put the economy or our

banks in peril. A Charter of Rights guaranteeing equal access to health and education and an honest acceptance that we all must pay in proportion to our means for public services must be at the heart of our new politics.

The music died on November 21. Ireland is now marching to the beat of a different drum – that of international bankers.

Our freedom to protest and our right to vote are the only weapons required to restore power to ordinary people.

Can we as a people be brave enough to stand up before we are deafened by the vulgar sound of money men, whose national interest is self-interest, and restore our democracy with politicians who act for us and not the markets? *And we'll be singing... Bye, Bye...*



# KEEPING YOU POSTED

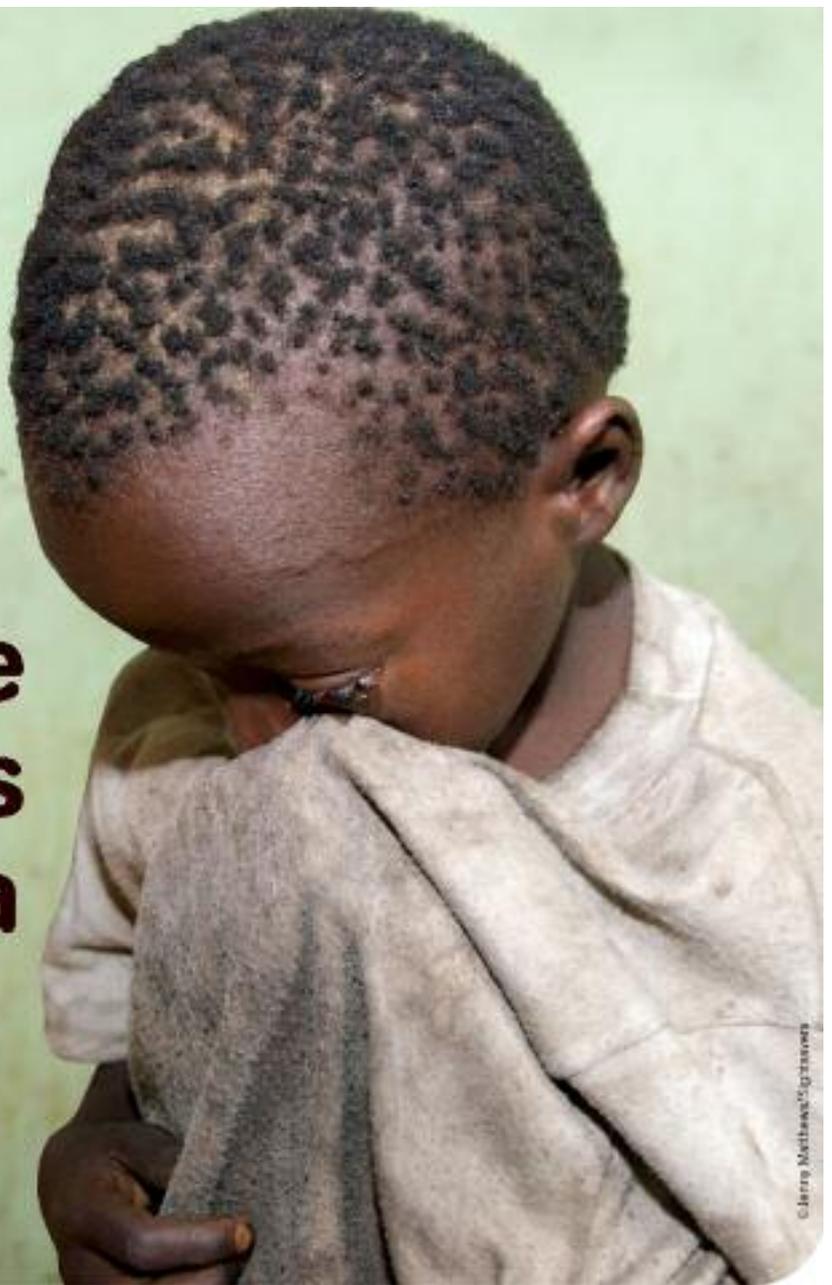
## IRELAND'S TRADE UNION MONTHLY





Sightsavers

**Every wipe  
of his eyes  
takes Talla  
closer to  
blindness**

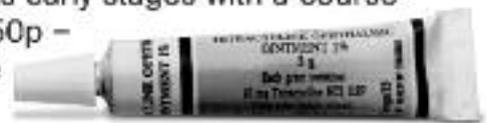


© Jerry Matthews/Sightsavers



© Jerry Matthews/Sightsavers

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.



If, like Sightsavers, you believe that nobody should go blind needlessly from trachoma, river blindness or cataract, please make a donation today to support our eye care work in some of the most deprived communities in the world.

**Euro donations, please call 1850 50 20 20 or visit [www.sightsavers.ie](http://www.sightsavers.ie)**

**Sterling donations, please call 0800 089 20 20 or visit [www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org)**

**Please quote ICTU. Thank you!**