

THE

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

UNION POST

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JANUARY 2010



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NO TO CUTS CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED



Picture: Paula Carroughy

- ▶ No engagement with Govt on plans to reform public services
- ▶ Selective stoppages, work to rule, possible full-scale strike
- ▶ Legal action over pensions & salaries, lobbying and protests

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UNION POST was produced by Brazier Media for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Irish Congress of Trade Unions
31/32 Parnell Square
Dublin 1
Ireland
Tel: +353 1 8897777
Fax: +353 1 8872012
Email: congress@ictu.ie
www.ictu.ie

Northern Ireland Committee
Irish Congress of Trades Unions
4-6 Donegall Street Place
Belfast BT1 2FN
Northern Ireland
Tel: 02890 247940
Fax: 02890 246898
Email: info@ictuni.org
Web: www.ictuni.org

DESIGNED & EDITED BY BRAZIER MEDIA
Email: braziermedia@btinternet.com



Picture: Caritas International

UNIONS MOBILISE AFTER HAITI QUAKE

TRADE unions across the world have mobilised to help the Haitian people in the wake of the January 12 quake that may have claimed hundreds of thousands of lives.

In response to the disaster, Congress has asked its affiliates to support an appeal organised by the International Trade Union Confederation.

In the first phase, the ITUC is focusing on providing emergency aid and is sending funds to its affiliated organisations based in the Dominican Republic, which borders Haiti.

Those affiliates joined forces in the first few hours after the earthquake and have sent teams to Haiti and opened up union offices to collect funds, food, clothes and various other materials.

The ITUC also plans to contribute to an account opened by the International Red Cross www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/No_05_-_Haiti_EN.pdf

ITUC general secretary Guy Ryder said: "A major international effort is urgently needed to deal with the immediate consequences, along with support for building and rebuilding key services and facilities given the widespread destruction of the country's existing but inadequate infrastructure."

In the UK, the TUC has set up an emergency Haiti appeal at www.justgiving/tucaid

Proceeds will be used by the trade union movement in Haiti for emergency relief and long-term rehabilitation of victims in collaboration with the ITUC.

Meanwhile, America's AFL-CIO called on its government, the international community and the global union movement to "do our utmost to aid our Haitian sisters and brothers in their moment of extraordinary need".

The trade union body also set up a dedicated relief fund and its Solidarity Center sent a delegation of Haitian labour activists living in the Dominican Republic to access the situation on the ground.

In a statement, AFL-CIO urged "the union family" in the States to provide in-kind assistance to the relief effort.

And those calls are being answered.

In south Florida, local union activists col-

lected donations of water, nonperishable food items, cleaning supplies and over-the-counter medications for Haiti. The labour council in Miami secured a ship and trade union volunteers loaded containers of the donated goods for shipment.

The Canadian Labour Congress joined with Canadian Red Cross to set up an online donation facility for union members so they could contribute to a special relief fund. A CLC statement said: "Union members in Canada have a proud tradition of helping those in need. Workers in Haiti, their families and their communities need our solidarity and our help."

Because it has no projects or staff on the ground in Haiti, Australia's Union Aid Abroad - APHEDA is channelling donations through Canadian Auto Workers and other Canadian unions with a presence in Port au Prince.

The US National Nurses United union announced it had set up a command centre in Miami to prepare teams of nurse volunteers for deployment to the region. California Nurses Association members were among the first wave of 40 nurses to be sent out on January 15. CNA member Debbie Cuaresma said: "I have to go. I have to help these people because that's what nurses are for."

The International Federation of Journalists and its member organisations in the Americas are also putting together an assistance programme for media workers and journalists in the region. IFJ general secretary Aidan White said: "Haitians are enduring a nightmare of suffering and grief. And among the many victims are media workers and journalists."

"We will do what we can to help them as a part of the effort to build solidarity with the Haitian people."

Irish aid agency Trócaire, which has worked in Haiti for 20 years, said 100% of cash raised for its appeal would go to Haiti. A spokesperson said: "It is not only in this time of emergency that Trócaire will be assisting the poorest, but it will continue to support the Haitian people in the medium and long term in an effort to rebuild their lives, their dignity and their human rights."

www.ictu.ie/globalsolidarity/newsevents/news/2010/01/18/trade-unions-responding-to-haiti-emergency/

PUBLIC SERVICES COMMITTEE VOWS SUSTAINED CAMPAIGN



Geraghty: No choice

CONGRESS' Public Services Committee has initiated a rolling campaign of "strong and sustained" resistance in a bid to reverse public sector pay cuts.

The campaign involving Congress public sector unions is being driven initially by a refusal to co-operate with management reforms across all sectors.

Unions insist they have no alternative and have been forced to take this action after the Government hit their members' pensions, threatened compulsory redundancies as well as imposing a second pay cut on public servants in little under a year.

It also follows the Government's deliberate collapsing of talks in December under pressure from business and the

political Right. Unions blame the Government for the failure to reach agreement then. The committee claims the move to cut public sector pay was part of an overall strategy to drive down ALL wages across the economy, as confirmed on page 7 of the Budget 2010 speech.

Committee secretary Tom Geraghty said public servant had no wish to inconvenience the general public.

He added: "However, the Government has ensured there is now no alternative. The consequences of that situation rest firmly at the Government's door."

"The committee is determined to ensure public servants are treated with

fairness and respect and is resolved to take action necessary to protect public servants' pay, pensions and tenure."

The committee's strategy includes:

- Selective strikes teamed with a work-to-rule campaign,
- Possibility of a full-scale strike,
- Possible legal action over pension changes and salary reductions,
- A refusal to engage with Government plans to reshape public sector,
- Protests and political lobbying, and
- Industrial action over threats of compulsory redundancies or where disciplinary action is taken against members because of the non-co-operation element of the campaign.

Unions blast UK local govt freeze on pay

A NUMBER of unions have called on UK local government employers to think again after a pay freeze was imposed on their members for 2010/2011.

UNITE, UNISON, NIPSA and the GMB – representing more than 1.6 million workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland – claimed the pay freeze was effectively a pay cut, with inflation running at nearly three per cent.

Unions had originally tabled a claim of 2.5% or £500, whichever was greater, in October last year – but employers acted without negotiation citing "a perfect storm" of falling revenues and rising demand.

NIPSA assistant general secretary Bumper Graham said: "The pay claim is a modest one and in reality would have done little to have lifted tens of thousands of low-paid workers out of the poverty trap, even if it had been met in full.

"For the NJC employers to impose a pay freeze shows that they are prepared to make the lowest paid workers pay for failures of the Government, the banks and their inability to fund essential public services."

UNISON's head of local government Heather Wakefield described the move as "a slap in the face for hard-working council employees who have kept local communities together through the crisis".

She pointed out that as 75 per cent of the workforce are female, this was an "outright attack on women's pay".

Peter Allenson, a national officer for UNITE, said: "There has been absolutely no negotiation with the employers. We have had a position put to us that will effectively reduce our members' living standards.

"There is no justification for what I would call a pay freeze, and our members would be angry and outraged to say the least."

GMB national secretary Brian Strutton added: "Council workers will be absolutely furious about this and I'm personally appalled at the arrogance of the employers."



Picture: hmd.org.uk

Holocaust Memorial Day on January 27 is being commemorated with a series of lectures, exhibitions and other events across Ireland North and South. For details check out Holocaust Educational Trust of Ireland www.hetireland.org and www.hmd.org.uk. January 27 is marked every year because that was the date in 1945 when Soviet troops finally liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau where more than a million men, women and children had been slaughtered.

Mills dispute sides agree to LRC talks

BOTH sides involved in the dispute at Blarney Woollen Mills have accepted a Labour Relations Commission invite to conciliation talks on January 25.

Welcoming the move, Mandate's divisional organiser for the mid-West Brian Higgins said: "We are hopeful the company will be willing to see sense on this issue and we will be able to find an amicable solution to the problem in the immediate future through the LRC.

"Until then the workers will be continuing their strike action which has been very effective given the public and local support for the stoppage."

Workers have in dispute since January 11 when two employees were made redundant.

The company had only offered the pair statutory redundancy and was not prepared to negotiate on an enhanced package.

IALPA pilots vote to accept LRC deal

AER LINGUS members of IALPA have voted 65% in favour of accepting a €30 million cost-savings package brokered through the Labour Relations Commission.

Following the January 14 vote, IALPA issued a statement expressing the need to enter into discussions with airline bosses over the details of the agreement.

IALPA gave its membership an assurance that any final proposed agreement would be subject to ratification by secret ballot.

In a statement, IALPA said: "Separate to proposals for €30m in pilot cost savings, there are some aspects of the report that have given rise to concern and we have been given specific legal advice on these matters.

"Unfortunately, our legal advice precludes us from recommending acceptance of these elements of the report."

**HAITI DONATIONS UNICEF Ireland www.unicef.ie/Default.aspx#slide1 Red Cross www.redcross.ie
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 Christian Aid www.christianaid.ie/emergencies/current/haiti-earthquake-appeal/index.aspx
 Trocaire www.trocaire.org/whatwedo/emergencies/haiti-earthquake-appeal**

CAMPAIGN

SIPTU COMMUNITY SECTOR RACHETS UP CUTS PROTEST

SIPTU members in the community and voluntary sector have vowed to escalate their campaign of resistance to pay cuts and reduced Government funding.

Gene Mealy, SIPTU's divisional organiser in the public sector and community sector, attacked the "savage cuts" imposed by the Government which he said would have a "seriously detrimental effect on workers and the communities they serve".

Claiming the slashing of programmes and budgets would impact on the most vulnerable, he added: "The withdrawal of training and material grants, in addition to wage cuts in Community Employment and Job Initiative schemes, will act as a barrier to the unemployed accessing these training and employment programmes

in addition to the effect the reductions will have on those currently employed."

Mr Mealy said the union would be meeting with members and activists in the sector to work out the best means of opposing the cuts.

He added: "This campaign is not simply about wages. It is about securing funding for vital services on which many vulnerable communities depend. Community Development Programmes, local partnerships, drug rehabilitation projects and youth services are all facing substantial cuts in funding, leading to reduced services.

"SIPTU is also calling on Government and the relevant departments to begin a process of engagement so that these real and substantial issues can be addressed."



Picture: Evelina Saduikyte

ICTU WARNING

STAFF DEMORALISED

THE Northern Ireland Committee of Congress last month warned Stormont Education Minister Catriona Ruane of a growing demoralisation among staff working in education.

It came as Ms Ruane admitted the new Education and Skills Authority, set to replace Education and Library Boards and other education bodies, would not be up and running by January 1.

ICTU assistant general secretary Peter Bunting pointed out Ms Ruane had been warned several times by trade

unions that the deadline could not be met. He said: "We have an education system which is segregated by religion, geography and, with the existing scandal of academic selection, social class.

"We were prepared to work with the minister and the Executive on the proposed new single ESA so that we could establish an equal and integrated education workforce.

"The trade unions had warned the minister a number of times that it would be impossible to set up the single ESA on January 1.

"She needs to listen to the views of education workers. Education workers across the sector are demoralised even more by the minister and Executive's handling of the proposed structure changes.

"Education and Library Board staff have been placed in an impossible position for the last five years and more.

"The minister and the Executive needs to take control so that we can secure once and for all in an education system which is fully integrated, co-educational and caters for all abilities."

A LEADING teachers' union has warned the Government it "must live with the consequences" of targeting the public sector and claimed a "strong and sustained" campaign of opposition was inevitable.

Last month, it was revealed at a meeting of ASTI's Central Executive Council, that the union would be drawing up a programme of action, which could include rolling half-day strikes, in tandem with the other teaching unions.

ASTI has also said it will vigorously implement directives on parent/teacher meetings and staff meetings outside school hours, class size, posts of responsibility, school development planning meetings, and WSE and subject inspections.

General secretary John White added: "The Government has clearly indicated it does not believe that quality, effective public services are important to ordinary members of the public including parents, children, young people, pensioners and workers. The Government must live with the consequences of this."

Revised ACAS rules for reps

THE revised UK Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service code of practice on time off for trade union duties and activities came into effect on January 1.

Significant revisions include guidance on ensuring union reps do not suffer any detriment to their pay as a result of time taken for union duties, and a statement that employers should provide cover or workload reductions for reps when time off is required.

In addition reps are entitled to expect to be able to communicate with members "without intrusion in the form of monitoring by their employer".

'Flawed logic' exposed

IMPACT has claimed information in the most recent Mercer report on private sector pay has exposed the "flawed logic" behind Finance Minister Brian Lenihan's move to slash public sector wages again.

The report found that while 70% of companies reduced payroll costs by an average of 11%, last year, only nine per cent of firms actually cut wages.

Another 12% introduced unpaid leave as a payroll reduction measure.

Deputy general secretary Shay Cody said: "This shows that the approach taken in the private sector to reducing payroll costs is more varied, and that employers do not favour the blunt instrument of across-the-board pay cuts.

"Individual employers looked at making reductions with a range of measures, including unpaid leave, but only nine per cent introduced actual pay cuts." Mr Cody added that this was broadly similar

to the approach taken by the public sector trade unions in the recent negotiations with Government.

However, the Government rejected union proposals in favour of a second permanent pay cut for all public servants in less than a year.

He added: "Private sector employers are clearly facing up to the economic challenge in a way that that is designed to sustain their businesses during a time of crisis.

"This Government has abandoned that approach, favouring the political short-term goal of hanging on to their seats instead.

"Sadly, it demonstrates the poverty of imagination that has framed the latest budget, and these figures serve as an interesting contrast to the Government's approach."

The Mercer report claimed a third of firms introduced salary freezes in 2008 and 2009, while half plan to implement salary freezes this year.



IFJ president Jim Boumelha: 'A year of terrible bloodshed' Picture: Amnesty International

2009: Another year of death for journalists

THE International Federation of Journalists has called on governments and the UN to take robust action to help protect under-threat media workers, following a year of "terrible bloodshed".

A total of 137 journalists and media personnel were killed over the last 12 months – well up on the deadly tally of 109 in 2008.

According to data compiled by the International News Safety Institute, the number of targeted killings – at 113 – was one of the highest ever recorded.

The other 24 deaths were the result of accidents while at work.

Figures showed the Philippines, Mexico and Somalia were particularly dangerous work zones for journalists.

IFJ president Jim Boumelha said: "2008's drop in the murder rate of journalists has

been short lived. The devastating massacre of 31 journalists and media staff in the Philippines in one incident in November and fresh violence against colleagues in Mexico and Somalia have made this a year of terrible bloodshed for media workers."

The IFJ – which represents 600,000 journalists worldwide – claims the continued violence against media workers is a challenge to governments which were told by the UN Security Council in 2006 to take steps to protect journalists and media in conflict zones.

IFJ general secretary Aidan White added: "The question is whether governments are listening or ready to take their responsibilities seriously.

"There is no room for complacency and indifference. The crisis facing media threatens innocent lives and democracy itself."

MEDIA FATALITIES WORLDWIDE

Targeted killings	113
Accidental deaths	24
Overall killed	137

Asia Pacific was the deadliest region for the second year running with 52 journalists and media personnel killed. The Philippines have the region's highest death toll, following the November 23 massacre in Maguindano province which claimed 31 lives of media victims.

Other countries with high numbers of media fatalities are: Mexico (13), Somaliam (9), Pakistan (7), Russia (6).

In 2008, Iraq, India and Mexico were the most dangerous countries in the world. Russia has this year broken into the top five most dangerous countries.

The IFJ is supporting a campaign against the targeting of journalists in Russia and has launched an online database on cases of journalists' murders in collaboration with two leading Russian monitors of abuses against journalists, the Glasnost Defence Foundation and the Centre for Journalism in Extreme Conditions.



'Birth' of a union but in name only!

THE Irish Nurses Organisation has changed its name to the Irish Nurses & Midwives Organisation. Along with the name change – which came into effect from January 1 – the union has adopted a new motto "Working together".

The INMO said the new motto reflects the core goals of the organisation – bringing together separate but complementary professions to:

- Protect and enhance the socio-economic welfare of its members,
- Protect and enhance the education and professional development of its members, and
- Protect and enhance the quality of care provided to patients and clients.

The name change was prompted by the introduction this year of new legislation, the Nurses and Midwives Act, that replaces the existing Nurses Act, giving for the first time full legal recognition of the two separate professions of nursing and midwifery.

It also reflects the fact that 2010 will see the graduation of the first class of direct entry midwives – in effect meaning that there will in clinical practice trained registered midwives who are not registered nurses.

INMO president Sheila Dickson said: "This is a historic development which continues to build on the 90 year history of this great organisation, first formed in 1919 as the Irish Nurses Union.

"This name change reflects the changing legislation of the clinical environment, and demonstrates our ongoing commitment to evolve in order to reflect the changing nature of health care systems."

INMO general secretary Liam Doran added: "The INMO, which will represent four out of every five nurses and midwives in this country, is our new name for a new era, in a new decade and we will remain the voice of the Irish nurses and midwives at home and abroad – both now and in the future."

Prospect in Connect-ion

PROSPECT has claimed it is UK's fastest growing union and follows its third merger in 12 months.

It now represents 122,000 members – up 20,000 on a year ago.

The merger by communications professionals union Connect on January 1 came after the Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers and the Jersey Civil Service Association also joined with Prospect in November last year.

Prospect represents engineers, scientists, managers and other specialists in more than 300 private and public sector organisations.

General secretary Paul Noon claimed that effective representation has been the guiding principle behind the union's growth.

He said: "Almost 1,000 skilled workers sign up to join Prospect every month. They need individual and collective representation with their employer and Prospect provides it.

"All the evidence shows that our no-nonsense negotiating model is proving to be increasingly attractive to professionals working in every sector of the economy."

DO THE RIGHTS THING



Bunting: Legacy

CONGRESS has called on Northern Ireland Secretary of State Shaun Woodward to secure his political legacy and put in place a comprehensive Bill of Rights for all of the people of Northern Ireland.

It follows the publication of a consultation document, A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland: Next Steps, by the Secretary of State's office in November.

Trade unionists expressed their disappointment at the content and claimed it was not a genuine attempt at engagement or consultation on what should be included in a Bill of Rights.

Congress said it fell "substantially short of what is required" and suggested

it amounted to a breach of the spirit of the Belfast Agreement.

The two substantive rights outlined in the document – the right to vote/be elected and the right to identify oneself as British, Irish or both – though welcome, were "in no way reflective of the extent of the rights that the people of Northern Ireland wish to see in their Bill of Rights".

Congress pointed to numerous consultation submissions, surveys and opinion polls, that had flagged up demands for the Bill of Rights to "strong and inclusive" and have "enforceable social and economic rights at its core".

ICTU assistant general secretary Peter Bunting said: "The new year means that there could be limited time for this Labour government to make a real mark on economic and social progress in Northern Ireland.

"A meaningful and comprehensive Bill of Rights would be a real and lasting legacy from this government to the people of Northern Ireland .

"The Secretary of State should ignore the nay-sayers and those who try to sectarianise something as vital as human rights, and live up to the ambition of his predecessors who confronted injustice, not conspired with it."

Unions renew drive against water charges

A TRADE union group that has campaigned for years against water charges in the North is promising to renew its opposition in the run-up to the next election.

It follows suggestions that the charges could form part of the forthcoming budget being put together by Stormont Finance Minister Sammy Wilson.

Coalition Against Water Charges plans to call on political parties to resist any attempts by the next UK government to impose separate household water charges or force through the privatisation of Northern Ireland Water.

The Coalition, led by NIC-ICTU chairperson John Corey, has also promised to fight any plans by Executive ministers to use budget deficits to justify any u-turn on the issue.

The group insists the cost of delivering domestic water and sewerage must continue to be met through a fairer rates system. It is totally opposed to householders being forced to pay twice for this most basic of government services.

Mr Corey said: "The trade unions' last campaign was instrumental in stopping water charges being implemented in April 2007. We will not be standing by and allowing separate household water bills to be imposed on the people of Northern Ireland on a pretext of budget deficits.

"The facts are that the people are already paying for their water through their regional rates and that must continue.

"If the Northern Ireland Executive needs to raise more funding, ministers should instead be addressing the current domestic rate cap and freeze on rate increases which are benefiting the better off."

www.waterchargesnonpayment.com



Use Nov 24 strike cash for those hit by flood

THE Teachers' Union of Ireland has called on the Government to use the money saved by November 24 day of action to assist those worst affected by the recent flooding.

General secretary Peter MacMenamin said: "TUI will be writing to the Department of Education and Science seeking that money taken out of the pay packets of TUI members as a result of the strike action be used to assist those worst affected by the flooding that recently devastated many communities around the country."

The proposal, brought by the union's Dublin Community and Comprehensive Schools branch, was unanimously adopted by the TUI Executive Committee at its last meeting.

A source added: "The strike was a clear signal to Government of the feeling among members.

"Now they want to see the money deducted from salary benefitting those worst affected around the country by the recent flooding.

"The money could be given to the Red Cross for distribution to the worst cases as they see fit."



Christy's SIPTU gig raises €10,000 for flood victims P10

BWI bid to stamp out worksite blacklists

CONSTRUCTION unions from across the world agreed last month to work together to stamp out blacklisting wherever it occurs.

The decision, taken at the Building and Wood workers International conference in Lille, France, in December, followed an emergency motion by UCATT.

The motion, which was overwhelmingly carried, called on BWI chiefs to "monitor any de-

velopments on blacklisting discovered in BWI affiliate countries" and to "assist unions in taking action where there are suspicions of a blacklist or where blacklisting practices have been confirmed".

Welcoming the move UCATT general secretary Alan Ritchie said: "I am delighted that the BWI are committed to stamping out blacklisting wherever it exists. Blacklisting is a disgraceful,

deceitful practice which ruins the lives of workers."

Out-going BWI chief Anita Normark added: "Blacklisting is an obscene anti-union practice used by unscrupulous companies all over the world to deprive workers of their rights and to rob trade unionists of their livelihood.

"We condemn blacklisting and believe that it should be punishable by law."

ESTHER LYNCH looks at how Spain's leader José Zapatero has tackled the jobs crisis in his homeland as his country takes over the EU presidency

Picture: eu2010.es



'When I see a worker, I see a citizen...'

SPAIN has taken on the rotating presidency of the EU at a defining moment in European history.

Europe desperately needs an unemployment exit strategy.

Spain, like Ireland, has been hit hard by the crisis, with four million jobless.

But the Spanish government has taken decisive action to stem job losses and create employment by setting up a \$15 billion infrastructure plan.

This is the type of vision and action that Europe – and Ireland – needs to tackle the crisis caused by mass unemployment.

Spain's President Zapatero believes Europe should "learn the lesson of the Great Depression – when an economy enters a deep recession, the only way we can come out of it is from a big push from the public sector".

He elaborated on this approach in a newspaper interview last year.

Mr Zapatero told the *New York Times*: "Some people will say that a social welfare state and a competitive economy are incompatible, that innovation is incompatible with workers' rights.

"They want to deregulate workers' rights, deregulate social rights.

"That is exactly the same tune as people who say we have to deregulate the financial markets,



Picture: European Commission

and I do not dance to that tune."

Instead he suggested the solution lay in "making companies more competitive and more innovative".

Mr Zapatero said Spain should diversify its economy to sectors in which it excels and which are showing growth, including renewable energy, biotechnology, civil engineering and high-speed railroads.

He also resisted calls to make for businesses to lay off workers, adding: "21st century democratic Spain is not a country that is going to take a single step back in terms of rights that we have conquered.

"When I see a worker, I see a citizen."

The Spanish presidency will shortly unveil its priorities during its EU tenure.

But in the meantime they have announced two main principles – innovation, not only technological, but also economic, institutional and political, and equality – used in the broadest sense of the term, to include equal opportunities, gender equality and solidarity between social groups, regions and states.

Again Zapatero, has a good track record in these areas, he legalised gay marriage, brought in laws to promote gender equality and tackle domestic violence and he introduced an amnesty for undocumented workers.

Find out more about the Spanish presidency of the EU at www.eu2010.es/en/documentos/noticias/noticias/balance.html

Read the *New York Times* interview with Zapatero in full at www.nytimes.com/2009/08/01/world/europe/01zapatero.html?_r=1

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Need for exit strategy from jobs crisis



Esther Lynch: Decisive action

IRELAND needs to put together an "exit strategy from unemployment if we are to halt growing social exclusion and deeper poverty," Congress has claimed.

Speaking as the European Year for Combating Poverty & Social Exclusion was launched in Madrid on January 21, Congress legislation and social affairs officer Esther Lynch called on the Government to tackle the jobs crisis.

She said: "Europe and Ireland desperately need an exit strategy from unemployment in order to combat social exclusion and poverty."

"In Ireland we need to see convincing Government action on jobs

in the form of a coherent jobs strategy.

"We are probably the only EU state that has not intervened directly to either save or create jobs and we now have one of the highest unemployment rates in the EU.

"Last year the number of unemployed increased by 133,577, compared to 2008, which saw an increase of 119,642.

"The human stories behind the numbers must not be airbrushed over or ignored – people are in fear of not being able to pay their bills, they worry about losing their homes, about being unable to provide for their families and despair

for their children's future.

"Long-term unemployment is especially corrosive and the long-term unemployed are at a particular disadvantage when trying to find work.

"We need decisive action to stem the job losses and create employment."

Ms Lynch pointed out that Congress had repeatedly advanced proposals for a coherent, official jobs strategy, which the Government had failed to take on board.

For more details on Congress Job Proposals, visit: www.ictu.ie/publications/fuillist/congress-10-point-plan-for-national-recovery/

Barber attacks Goldman Sachs bonus payouts

TUC has slammed international finance giant Goldman Sachs after it was revealed it plans to award staff \$16 billion in pay and bonuses for 2009.

Querying claims by the leading bank that the bonus payouts were modest, general secretary Brendan Barber, right, said: "The truth is that we have set up an international welfare state for super-rich bankers.



"They pay themselves mega bonuses when times are good and expect the rest of us to bail them out when times are tough – even though it was the finance sector that has thrown the world into recession.

"It's time these welfare scroungers paid back through a financial transaction tax that can help fund public services and undo the damage caused by the slump both here and in the developing world."



Picture: © European Union

Labour Court talks take off in air traffic controllers dispute

FOLLOWING interventions by Congress and employers body IBEC in the dispute between air traffic controllers and the Irish Aviation Authority, the Labour Court has invited both parties to open discussions.

In a statement welcoming the move the ATCs branch committee and IMPACT said: "It provides an opportunity to address all of the matters in dispute between both parties, including the issue of suspended

staff, who IMPACT believes should be restored to the payroll as soon as possible.

"The ATCs branch committee of IMPACT has accepted the invitation from the court to attend. The committee has put no pre-conditions on accepting the invitation.

"In light of the invitation to attend the Labour Court, the branch committee has deferred any consideration of further industrial action."



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WE'RE HERE TO KEEP YOU

POSTED

NEWSBRIEFS

NIPSA civil servants vote to accept Stormont deal

NIPSA members working in the civil service have overwhelmingly voted to accept a pay deal put forward by Northern Ireland Executive.

Results showed that 95% of members backed the deal tabled in November.

Stormont Finance Minister Sammy Wilson agreed a £150m payout to settle cases before industrial tribunals as well as providing a £25m boost to increase overall pay.

According to the union, wages for administrative officers in the NICS will rise by nearly 30%.

Administrative assistants' salaries will also go up by 21% while executive officers will see a 10% increase in their pay packets.

NIPSA's John Corey said: "This overwhelming vote in favour clears the way for the union to proceed to settle these long outstanding equal pay claims for the lowest paid civil servants.

"Our task now is to ensure that we complete the settlement and get the money into the pockets of these staff who provide public services day and daily."

■ THE CPSU is to hold a special conference on pay later this month. Delegates at the January 26 meeting at Dublin's Gresham Hotel will hear a report from general secretary Blair Horan. Issues surrounding industrial action will form the bulk of the discussions in a closed morning session.

Workers Uniting launch NHS privatisation probe

GLOBAL union Workers Uniting is to launch a probe into private healthcare providers in the NHS.

The investigation by the union, a partnership between Unite and United Steelworkers in North America, follows last month's passage of President Obama's healthcare bill through the US Senate.

Workers Uniting has expressed dismay at what it calls "creeping privatisation" in the NHS and wants to probe the role of US-based firms in bidding for work in the UK public health sector.

Unite assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail said: "Just as Workers Uniting is fighting to win healthcare for all in the US, we are also working to prevent the profits-over-people privatisation of the UK health system.

"Union activists from primary care trusts all over the UK are worried about the creeping privatisation of NHS services."

■ MEMBERS of the INMO and SIPTU at the Mater Private Hospital in Dublin have voted overwhelmingly to go on strike on February 1. It follows the imposition of pay cuts of between five per cent and 7.5 per cent in basic pay and a five per cent reduction in allowances.

INMO industrial relations officer Albert Murphy said: "These pay cuts are totally unnecessary and we will continue to seek their removal as we believe that this is an example of cheap opportunism, where an employer seeks to exploit the long standing goodwill of employees."

IBEC withdraws from transitional agreement

EMPLOYERS group IBEC has officially withdrawn from the national agreement brokered along with the Government and the social partners.

Director general Danny McCoy advised member firms that they should prepare for local enterprise level bargaining on pay in unionised workplaces.

Under the terms of the transitional agreement, agreed in September 2008, workers were to receive increases of six per cent phased over 21 months.

Some or all of the increases have been paid in more than 100 companies across the country. Other firms have imposed pay freezes or cut wages.



Tanker Agate in flames following explosion that claimed eight lives Pictures: NLC

8 WORKERS DIE IN SHIPYARD HORROR



'When I came to I was in hospital. You can see my face is burned. Allah saved me from death. I will never work in a shipbreaking yard again'

Noor Alam

EIGHT Bangladeshi workers were burnt to death in a horrific shipyard accident last month after an oil tanker they were working on exploded.

According to a report issued by the US-based National Labor Committee, the blast at the Rahim Steel and Shipbreaking Yard occurred when a works team started to cut into an oil storage tank using blow torches on December 26.

It is thought their cutting equipment ignited flammable gas that had built up in one of the ship's 40ft long sumps.

The workers, who the NLC claim had been told the tanks on the massive oil tanker Agate had been cleaned out, were engulfed in flames.

Eight died in the inferno and more than a dozen others suffered serious burns.

Noor Alam, an experienced cutter, who was injured in the accident, said: "We were cutting the ship for one month. It was in the lower part of the ship.

"We had no idea that flammable gas and oil were still inside the tanks. We thought the tanks had been cleaned.

"It was the main gas tank in the ship. Its size was huge. I was to cut one side of the tank. Other workers also started cutting the tank.

"After some time the tank exploded with a tremendous bang and the tank burst into

flames. I was knocked out and don't know what happened afterward.

"When I came to, I was in the hospital. You can see my face is burned. Allah has saved me from death. I will never work in a shipbreaking yard again."

Another worker told the NLC: "The ship was engulfed in flames in no time. Everyone was terrified.

"We saw the fire and the workers were jumping from the ship. Some workers who had relatives or friends on the ship ran to try to save those injured.

"We are terrified now, because workers died in front of us. It is very frightening."

The Rahim works is thought to be the largest industrial steel complex in Bangladesh and employs 350 workers.

Shipbreaking yards in the country are notoriously dangerous places to work and a total of 25 shipbreakers were killed in accidents last year.

Shifts at the plant average between 11 to 12 hours. Employees, some of whom are only 14 or 15 years of age, are paid less than 30 cents an hour.

One said: "We work 30 days a month. We aren't millionaires. We have to pay house rent, to spend money purchasing food, to send money home to our families..."

www.nlcnet.org

EDUCATION

Careers advice plan for 7 yr olds

A TOP Northern Ireland education-
alist has commented on UK Gov-
ernment proposals to give careers
advice to children as young as
seven.

Under the plan, primary schools
will offer career-related learning,
as well as opportunities to experience
university life and the world of
work.

While welcoming any initiative
that encourages children to think
about their future, Ulster Teachers
Union general secretary Avril Hall
Callaghan pointed out that fewer
pupils were using careers services
at secondary level.

She said: "However, what's per-
haps more interesting is the situa-
tion which has triggered this – the
fact that the numbers of secondary
school children using careers serv-
ices has plummeted in the last 10
years or so.

"I wonder if this scheme is actu-
ally being aimed at the correct age
group within our school population.

"It would be easy to be cynical
about talking to a seven-year-old
about careers at an age when many
still want to be pop stars or astro-
nauts, yet a scheme like this is to
be welcomed if it encourages children
from more vulnerable backgrounds
to aspire to a better future.

"Perhaps a more realistic time to



Picture: UTU

Comments: Avril Hall Callaghan

tackle careers advice would be at
the start of secondary school
rather than leaving it to the second
half as has largely been the case
until now.

"It's important too that any ca-
reers advice should not narrow a
child's aspirations or dissuade them
from a potential career choice
which at seven they don't yet even
know exists."

'Brain drain' warning

THE University and College Union has warned new proposals to
change the way research is funded at UK universities risks caus-
ing a "brain drain" of top professors.

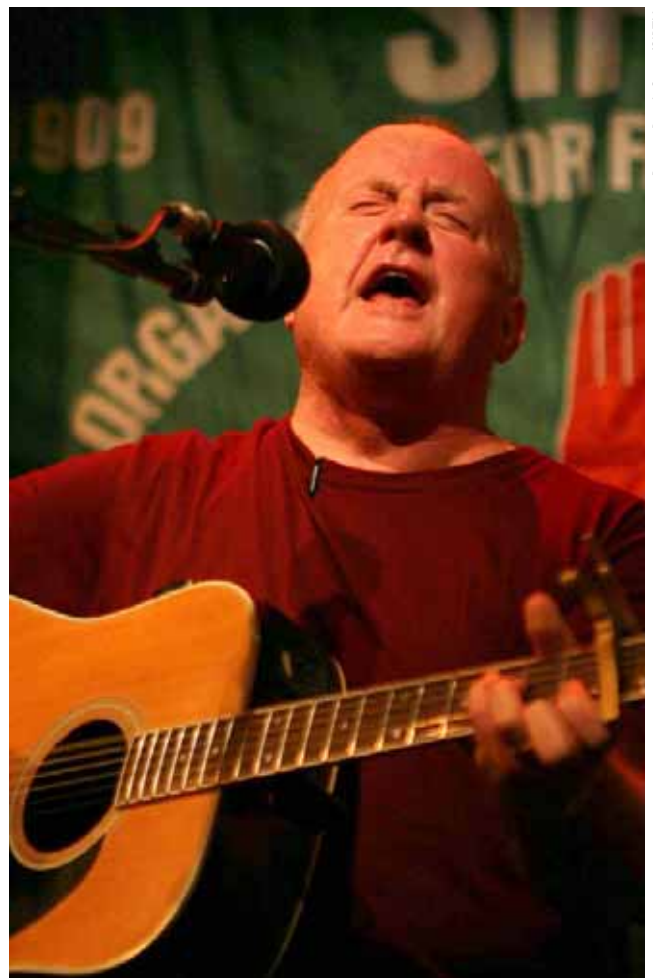
A survey carried out by the union, which represents lecturers,
trainers and researchers in further and education, more than a
third of the 600 UK profs polled – 35% – would consider pursu-
ing their academic careers abroad if the plans were introduced.

The results, released on January 7, revealed that one in five
academics already knew a colleague who was also consider
leaving over the proposals which will see a curbing for funding
for "curiosity-driven research".

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt said: 'We should be working
hard to attract the finest minds, not implementing new rules that
will drive them away.

"History has taught us that some of the biggest breakthroughs
have come from speculative research and it is wrong to try and
measure projects purely on their economic potential.

"We believe the new system would strangle talent and destroy
initiative."



Picture: Derek Spiers/SIPTU

'Christy' pressie for flood victims

PROCEEDS from the SIPTU centenary celebration concert
held last month in Liberty Hall have been handed over to
members of the union's Ballinasloe branch committee at a
function in the town just before Christmas.

The €10,000 raised will be dispersed to hard pressed victims
of recent floods in the area including former SIPTU members.

A fund was raised at the December 7 concert where per-
formers included singers and musicians Christy Moore,
above, Karan Casey and Niall Vallely, Jinx Lennon and Paula
Flynn, Brendan Devereux and Eric Fleming.

Poets Paula Meehan and Theo Dorgan also entertained the
capacity crowd.

Presentations were made at the concert by SIPTU president
Jack O'Connor to retired members Jimmy Quinn, Esther
Cowen and Ross Connolly, who each received specially
crafted sterling silver SIPTU centenary medals to mark their
contribution to the union over many decades.

**Balinasloe branch
committee mem-
bers Justina Mu-
nitich, Maura
Darcy, Willie
Nevin,
Seamus Dillon,
Ann Burke and
Pat Mulvihill are
handed the
€10,000 cheque by
Galway SIPTU
organiser Diane
Jackson, third
from right, at
December 22
function**



TRÓCAIRE EMERGENCY APPEAL

HAITI: OVER 50,000 PEOPLE HAVE DIED AND THOUSANDS MORE ARE HOMELESS



Picture: Reuters / Alan Tan

Urgent help is needed to support the millions of people affected by the recent earthquake in Haiti. We are working with international and local partners to provide food, shelter, clean water and other basic needs. We will also continue to fund long-term development projects throughout the region.



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TRIBUTE

INMO salute to frontline staff during cold snap

THE Executive Council of the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation has paid tribute to the courageous work done by frontline staff in maintaining health and public services despite the worst weather in nearly half a century.

In a motion saluting their efforts, the Council noted how nurses and midwives across the country had shown the utmost dedication in getting to work despite sometimes treacherous road conditions to ensure patient care was not compromised.

Often nurses and midwives stayed overnight, close to their work and away from their families, so that they could be guaranteed to relieve colleagues on night duty.

The Executive Council also acknowledged the efforts of colleagues in other frontline services, including gardai, ambulance crew and firefighters.

INMO general secretary Liam Doran said: "Once again, in recent weeks, we have seen the real value of frontline staff in action, striving to deal with, in the interests of their communities, the crisis arising from the sustained period of very bad weather.

"At all hours of the day and night, consistent with their 24/7 commitment, these public servants went to work in order to ensure the country could keep on the move and that essential public services were available."

He added: "It was done without fear or favour and the INMO wishes to record our appreciation and admiration for their heroic efforts over the past number of weeks."



Liam Doran

NASUWT join history drive

TEACHERS union NASUWT has linked up with the American Federation of Teachers to help in a "civic exchange" project for secondary level teachers and students.

Over the next three years, the Civic Voices programme, funded by the US Department of Education, will seek to collect and record oral histories from activists and rights campaigners in the US, Poland, Northern Ireland, Philippines, South Africa, Mongolia, Colombia and Georgia.

The stories will be uploaded to an online democracy memory bank, where they will be catalogued and available for analysis by students, historians and researchers at www.civicvoices.org

The NASUWT in Northern Ireland will focus on recording the testimonies of those involved in the peace process at local level.

One teacher involved in the project said: "I am so happy this scheme was formulated and conceived.

"The complexion of the interviews featuring key figures and unsung/uncovered characters in Northern Ireland history – in conjunction with similar projects around the world – will have a huge impact for years to come."



Finger pointing: David Begg attack ideologically-driven Budget 2010

Picture: Congress

SAVAGE ATTACK ON WORKING PEOPLE

CONGRESS Executive Council has condemned Budget 2010 as "a savage and brutal attack on working people and the most vulnerable – the single worst budget in the history of the state".

The Executive Council, unanimously adopting a motion denouncing measures contained in the budget, described it as "a profoundly ideological exercise that attacks working people, the unemployed – particularly jobless youth – and families.

"Its aim is to drive down the wages and living standards of working people across the entire economy."

General secretary David Begg said: "Last January we pointed out that the official strategy was to drive down wages to compensate for our inability to devalue the currency and we have campaigned against that foolish plan.

"It is now a reality and if anyone still doubts it all they need do is turn to page seven of Minis-

ter Lenihan's budget speech, where he lays it out in black and white". Mr Begg added: "Budget 2010 offers no hope and no vision.

"It takes huge sums of money out the economy the only thing it will stimulate is unemployment.

"And it is characterised by a harshness that is quiet breathtaking – some €70 million in extra taxes on the wealthy but €760 million is taken off social welfare recipients.

"It is neither an exaggeration nor an over reaction to say that Budget 2010 marks a watershed in how the trade union movement deals with Government."

*The exact quote is: "But membership of monetary union also means devaluation is not an option. Therefore the adjustment process must be made by way of reductions in wages, prices, profits and rents." To date, Government has taken action on just one of those issues, wages.

Tánaiste 'grasping at straws'

CONGRESS economic advisor Paul Sweeney has claimed Tánaiste Mary Coughlan is "grasping at flimsy straws" after she attempted to put a positive spin on the latest National Income figures.

Central Statistics Office data released last month showed that the output of goods and services, or GDP, grew by 0.3% in the three months to September 2009.

It followed three such periods of falling output – two successive quarters of decline are the usual definition of recession.

But Mr Sweeney warned that the deflationary impact of Budget 2010 would mean the economy would continue to decline in 2010.

He said: "Ms Coughlan seems to take comfort from the decline in Q3 over Q1 & Q2 figures and the fact that GDP showed a small increase in the quarter.

"One quarter is no indicator and 'short-termism' is at a root cause of this recession. The minister is grasping at flimsy straws.

"With a fall in National Income in the year to September of a massive 11.3% in GDP, there is only ice-cold comfort in hoping that because it is fractionally less than the decline of over 12% in the previous two quarters, the recession may be bottoming out.

"As Q4 includes Christmas, the next Quarter also be below the 12% decline, but the impact of the sav-

age Budget will depress domestic consumption further, deep into 2010."

Mr Sweeney claimed it was wrong to take GDP as the marker simply because it was more favourable than GNP, as GNP is what is commonly used in Ireland.

The collapse in Irish GDP was a still huge fall of 7.4%, compared to the even bigger fall of 11.3% in GNP for year to Q3, 2009.

Mr Sweeney added: "Ireland's economic collapse in GDP was almost the worst in the world in 2009.

"After Budget 2010, Ireland will again be a leader of the laggards. And unemployment will rise in 2010, greatly assisted by the deflationary Budget."

ICTU to study EU police unions



CONGRESS is to study the relationship between trade unions and police associations across the European Union.

The undertaking was given in a January 19 meeting between Congress chiefs David Begg and Jack O'Connor and representatives of the Association of

Garda Sergeants and Inspectors. Government has so far refused AGSI permission to affiliate with ICTU.

AGSI general secretary Joe Dirwan said: "We discussed the deplorable treatment of public sector people, including gardai, by the Government and also in-

formed ICTU of the intense frustration of our members at the lack of trade union status for AGSI."

He added the Congress delegation was aware of the unique position of gardai and the legal prohibition regarding the taking of industrial action. AGSI has

asked Congress to study police representation in Europe on legal and industrial relations grounds. Mr Dirwan said: "We are extremely hopeful there is a European precedent for police associations which would enable us to represent our members as effectively as possible."



Picture: USDAW (Picture posed)

Scots to get tough on shopworker assaults

THUGS who assault shopworkers in Scotland could get tougher penalties if a new bill is successful.

The USDAW-supported bill is being brought before the Scottish Parliament by Hugh Henry MSP.

He said: "While progress has been made in strengthening criminal penalties for assaults against some shopworkers, too many still lack sufficient protection at work.

"The Emergency Workers Act 2005 sought to provide additional protection to certain groups by introducing tougher penalties for those found guilty of assaulting, hindering or obstructing those workers. This proposed leg-

islation seeks to apply the protections contained within the Emergency Workers Act to any worker who provides a face to face service to the public."

USDAW general secretary John Hannett said: "Shopworkers provide a vital service to the public, but they are all too often seen as an easy target for violence and abuse.

"Our latest survey showed that one in 10 shopworkers has been assaulted while at work.

"USDAW is supporting Hugh Henry's bill through the Scottish parliament and we have started campaigning for a similar law in England and Wales."

Ad promos not suitable for schools

PRIMARY school teachers should not support advertising projects by commercial companies which target children or their families in the classroom, the INTO has said.

It follows the recent launch of a €1.5 million joint promotion by the Irish Independent and Bank of Ireland as well as a second promotional drive by the Irish Daily Mail.

INTO president Maire Ni Chuiinneagain claimed "the reckless activities of Irish banks" had led as a consequence to the crisis over funding in education, cuts in the number of teachers and the slashing of teachers' pay.

She said: "It takes some brass neck to expect teachers to co-operate with an advertising scheme."

The INTO also lashed Independent Newspapers which the union claimed had been consistent in its support for reductions in public servants pay.

Pointing out that the Irish Daily Mail had also called for wage cuts, Ms Ni Chuiinneagain added: "It beggars belief that following these editorial lines, companies would now expect teachers to collect tokens to promote sales of its newspaper."

The INTO has an established policy over the promotion of commercial products through schools.

It aims to prevent the exploitation of pupils for commercial ends in the classroom and particularly urges schools not to support proof of purchase schemes.

But the union insisted it did not oppose all links between businesses and schools.

Ms Ni Chuiinneagain said: "Many schools could not survive without the support of local businesses that regularly support local fundraising efforts. However, this is done in ways that do not seek to exploit children for financial or commercial gain in schools."

DERRY-based car parts firm Arntz Belt-ing is set to close with the loss of 115 jobs.

The company, which makes timing belts for vehicles and machinery, has entered a 90-day consultation with unions and employees.

Arntz has been gradually reducing its workforce in Derry – down from a peak of 240 employees in 2005.

UNITE representative Phil Oakes said bosses had indicated that there was "virtually no hope" of the Pennyburn Pass facility surviving.

NIPSA: Build fairer society

NIPSA has called on the Stormont Executive to resist pressure from Westminster to cut public spending and slash services and do its utmost to build a fairer and better Northern Ireland.

In a New Year message, incoming General Secretary Brian Campfield also slammed both Labour and Conservative parties for seeking to make the public shoulder the burden caused by the bailing out of the banks through pushing through public service cutbacks.

He said: "While the banking sector is starting to recover profitability, we are again witnessing the obscenity of bankers' bonuses and astronomical financial awards for the few while ordinary working people suffer job losses, wage depression as

well as cutbacks in public services.

"Our local politicians should be making the case to Westminster – irrespective of which party forms the next government – that there has to be a fundamental redistribution of wealth, not on the basis of one-off taxes on bonuses or windfall taxes, but as a central feature of a new progressive tax system.

"Such a system would ensure the wealthy pay their fair share and that the vast bulk of the population are not subject to unacceptable cut backs in important public services upon which they rely."

He added: "NIPSA is calling for the maximum amount of opposition from the community to resist public service cuts planned by the next UK government."

STAFF at the National Asset Management Agency will not have to bear the brunt of the public service pay cut, it has been confirmed.

Department of Finance officials said the new body was set up under the National Treasury Management Agency which traditionally has set its own pay rates for staff.

This stipulation was put in place so that the NTMA – and thus NAMA – could compete with the private sector for "high calibre" employees.

NEW FIGURES CONFIRM PAY RATES NOT FALLING



Sweeney: Data claims

ECONOMICS advisor Paul Sweeney has pointed out new earnings figures back up Congress claims about general wage trends.

The data, released last month by the Central Statistics Office, show that core hourly wages and salaries in the private sector remained stable and even grew slightly in the second quarter of last year.

Mr Sweeney said: "While there are some reductions in weekly earnings, they are not in basic pay rates for most workers in the private sector, but in hours worked, bonuses and other irregular payments."

Pointing that these reductions would reverse when the economic climate improved, he added: "The real hit

on pay is in the public sector and in the sectors which contributed most to the collapse of the Irish economy – finance, construction and real estate"

Public sector pay cuts averaged 6.9 per cent from March 2009 and are not factored into the data.

Mr Sweeney said: "The CSO figures show that pay grew most in larger firms which are generally more efficient."

"Substantial rises of more than four per cent were in industry and education in the second quarter though pay in public sector education would be down in reality."

He claimed the fall in employment from 1.77 million to 1.66 million in the year posed the greatest challenge and

the impact of the deflationary Budget will be felt in greater job losses.

Pointing out Ireland was still performing well on productivity and unit labour costs, Mr Sweeney added: "It is worth noting that Ireland still has one of the highest levels of productivity in the world."

"However, the last three quarters saw the biggest fall in unit labour costs in the 30-state OECD occurring in Ireland."

"This is in contrast to substantial increases in unit labour costs in the Eurozone area according to OECD."

"This again undermines Minister Lenihan's claim that Irish unit labour costs are the highest in the Eurozone."

Striking Fujitsu staff take protest to the high street

STRIKING Fujitsu workers have adopted "shop tactics" to publicise their dispute with the Japanese electronics giant.

More than 30 UNITE members and supporters took their grievances over job cuts, pension changes and the imposition of a pay freeze to Belfast city centre earlier this month.

Standing outside Marks & Spencer's flagship store in Donegall Place, they leafleted passing shoppers and city centre workers over lunchtime on January 13.

Fujitsu, which provides IT services to the high street chain, employs 400 staff in Belfast and another 100 in Derry.

UNITE representative Roger Dane claimed Fujitsu was pushing through the changes despite doing reasonably well under present market conditions.

He said: "The company is not doing badly at the moment as well, it's aiming at a profit of £100m for this year. It's not in the red, but very much in



On your Marks: Fujitsu employees at M&S leaflet protest

the black." He claimed that only half the total UK workforce of 11,500 had been included in a trawl for voluntary redundancies, adding: "If they opened up the voluntary trawl to the whole workforce then there probably wouldn't be a need for compulsory redundancies."

Picture: UNITE

US-style bank probe call

IBOA The Finance Union has backed calls by Central Bank governor Dr Patrick Honohan for an Oireachtas probe into what went wrong with the Irish banking system.

General secretary Larry Broderick has already written to Finance Minister Brian Lenihan to hammer home the importance of setting up a comprehensive inquiry into the crisis.

He said: "Not only does the general public deserve a thorough explanation but thousands of ordinary bank employees also deserve to know how a substantial failure of leadership in the financial services sector has placed their jobs and livelihoods in jeopardy." Mr Broderick welcomed Dr Honohan's suggestion that

such an inquiry should be conducted like a US Congressional hearing availing of expert witnesses as well as examining the key participants in the events leading up to the crisis.

He added: "The banking crisis has resulted from a widespread systemic failure – involving not just the financial institutions, themselves, but also the public agencies charged with their supervision and regulation – and indeed the political framework within which those supervisory agencies were established."

"So, rather than simply engaging in an exercise in finger-pointing, an inquiry of this kind should also identify the important wider lessons that must be learned to prevent a recurrence

of these events."

Mr Broderick claimed the IBOA had repeatedly called for a review into how the banking system operated and pointed out the union had proposed the setting up of a Commission on Banking to focus on the future development of the financial services sector as long ago as 2004.

He added: "In view of the Governor's remarks, perhaps it is now a proposal whose time has finally come – so that we can bring together all of the stakeholders in the financial services sector to learn from the recent past so as to ensure that our industry works far more effectively in the public interest in the future."



Picture: IBOA

Broderick: Hearing needed



AFL-CIO members at a recent picket in Georgia call on their local senator to help workers and not Wall Street bankers and corporate CEOs

DOING HARD LABOUR

THE UNITED States, the world's richest economy, lags far behind other successful economies in adopting policies that support workers and their families, it has been revealed.

Researchers from Harvard and McGill Universities looked at labour laws in 190 countries worldwide.

Of the 15 most competitive economies, including the US, it found that 14 provided paid sick leave, 13 guaranteed paid leave for new mothers, 12 provided paid leave for new fathers, 11 provided paid leave to care for children's health needs, eight provided paid leave to care for adult family members, and seven guaranteed breastfeeding breaks to nursing mothers on the job.

Shockingly, at a federal level, the US offered none of these supports. The findings are contained in a new book *Raising the Global Floor* written by Jody Hey-

mann and Alison Earle. Ms Heymann claimed the most successful and competitive nations were able to provide these social supports without harming their competitiveness.

She said: "Globally, we found that none of these working conditions are linked with lower levels of economic competitiveness or employment.

"There simply is no negative relationship at all between decent working conditions and competitiveness or job creation.

"In fact, we found that a number of these guarantees are associated with increased competitiveness.

"Ensuring a floor of decent working conditions is crucial for the majority of Americans. The US lags far behind most of the 190 countries whose labour laws we examined."

Picture: AFL-CIO

COMPENSATION

£340,000 paid out to NI Unison members

UNISON won more than £340,000 in personal injury compensation for its members in Northern Ireland and their families last year, new figures have revealed.

And across the UK, the public sector union won £28m in claims ranging from road accidents to assaults.

But general secretary Dave Prentis claimed a huge amount of pain and suffering lay behind the huge total.

He said: "Our members work in many different areas — nurses, social workers, care workers, dinner ladies, teaching assistants and librarians — but what they all have in common is that their jobs are never considered to be dangerous.



Dave Prentis

"These statistics show that in the worst cases, members are left severely disabled and others are forced to give up work through injury.

"Sadly, many of these accidents could and should have been prevented by employers.

"Too often we hear health and safety directives being ridiculed.

"However, it is clear that some employers are still not taking the necessary steps to safeguard their staff.

"It is disgraceful that in 2009 so many UNISON members have suffered crippling back injuries when, given the proper training or equipment, these could be prevented."

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SIPTU V.P. GETS LABOUR COURT ROLE



Brendan Hayes

SIPTU vice president Brendan Hayes has been appointed as deputy chairman of the Labour Court.

Announcing the Government appointment Dara Calleary, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, said Brendan Hayes would bring a "wealth of experience" to the position.

His appointment has been welcomed by SIPTU general president Jack O'Connor, who is also president of Congress, and by SIPTU general secretary Joe O'Flynn.

Jack O'Connor said: "Since the Labour Court was established in 1946 the practice which has been observed is that chairpersons of the Court are appointed by the Minister on the nomination of the trade union and the employer organisations in rotation."

He claimed the custom had been set aside by then Enterprise Minister Mary Harney who cited the need for open public

competition for not appointing the trade union nominee. Mr O'Connor added: "The established practice has now been restored and the executive of Congress was invited to submit nominations.

"Four names were submitted including the SIPTU vice president Brendan Hayes, and his name was selected from the list for appointment. I warmly welcome his appointment as he is most suited for the position."

Joe O'Flynn said Mr Hayes' strengths would be greatly missed at SIPTU.

He added: "Apart from his extensive industrial relations experience Brendan also has many years of experience in the workings of the public service and the private sector.

"While we wish him every success in his appointment as deputy chair of the Labour Court he will be greatly missed for his intellect and experience by SIPTU and the broader trade union movement."



Picture: SIPTU

Joe O'Flynn



Picture: European Commission

Street level: Homelessness in Dublin

Anti-poverty group blasts Government move on CDPs

THE EUROPEAN Anti-Poverty Network Ireland has lashed the decision to abolish nearly 30 community development projects across the country.

Director Anna Visser predicted the move would "seriously and permanently" hamper local initiatives to tackle poverty and would raise questions about the Government's commitment "to facilitating active participation in European Affairs at local and community level".

She pointed out that community development projects had been "invaluable advocates" for raising awareness about the importance of Europe at local and community level.

Ms Visser said: "The decision to cut funding for projects is short-sighted and will have serious implications for hard-pressed communities."

Following the budget, nearly 30 community development projects were deemed "non-viable" by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs.

Ms Visser was also strongly critical of the manner in which the news was communicated to those projects affected by the move.

She added: "The projects were told of their abolition two weeks before Christmas, in some cases without an adequate explanation as to why they are no longer considered viable."

"The CPDs affected by the cuts were then given just four days to appeal the decision."

"The rushed and opaque nature of the process is deeply inappropriate and represents an insult to individuals and groups working in some of the most disadvantaged communities across Ireland."

SALARIES

£27.4 BILLION in unpaid overtime

MORE than five million UK workers gave away £27.4 billion in unpaid overtime last year, new figures have revealed.

According to the TUC analysis of official figures, 60,000 Northern Ireland employees subsidised their employers in both public and private sectors with an average of £5,110 unpaid work each in 2009.

The statistical breakdown showed that 46,399 employees did between one and 10 hours unpaid overtime per week in the North.

And amazingly another 14,000 Northern Ireland workers did MORE than 10 hours extra each week for no recompense.

The TUC study showed that staff that did unpaid overtime worked an average of seven hours 12 minutes a week.

Across the UK this averages out at £5,402 each a year – the highest amount since records began in the late 1990s – and an increase of £263 since 2008.

According to the figures, workers in Northern Ireland (23.1 per cent of those who worked unpaid overtime), the England's East Midlands (21.3 per cent) and London (20.6 per cent) were the most likely to do more than 10 hours of unpaid overtime a week.

According to the TUC if everyone who worked unpaid overtime did it from the start of the year, they would actually start getting

paid on Friday, February 26. The TUC has declared this day Work Your Proper Hours Day and will call on bosses to thank staff for the extra work they are putting in to help businesses through the recession.

General secretary Brendan Barber said: "The recession has forced many employees to do less hours in an effort to save jobs and this has also had an effect on the amount of unpaid overtime worked."

"This flexibility and the sacrifices made by staff has saved jobs and kept companies afloat. Bosses should use Work Your Proper Hours Day to thank staff for the extra effort they are putting in to help their business through the recession."

"But millions of people are still working far too many hours and often they are not even being paid for it. This long hours culture causes stress and damages people's health."

"Most employers are understandably focused on fighting their way through the recession."

"But they shouldn't forget that working cultures such as pointless presenteeism – which keeps people at their desks for no good reason – is not just bad for staff but for business too."

www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/tuc-17393-f0.cfm

www.tuc.org.uk/em_research/tuc-17394-f0.cfm



THE number of people working paid overtime in the UK has fallen by nearly half a million in the last year to just under four million, a TUC analysis of new figures has revealed.

Official data shows that last summer, 15.8 per cent of UK employees earned paid overtime, a fall of 1.5 percentage points on the summer before.

Workers earned a total of

£10 billion in paid overtime last year, £1 billion less than 2008.

The TUC claims the fall in paid overtime and the average hours worked since the recession reflect sacrifices employees, unions and employers have made to prevent further job losses. General secretary Brendan Barber said: "These workers are the hidden victims of the recession. Job security

remains the number one concern for workers but the sharp drop in paid overtime shows that many people in work are also suffering financially."

"While many in the City look to their stocks and bonuses as a barometer of the health of the economy, having enough hours of work and overtime pay matter far more to millions of workers and their families."

59% have finance fears



MORE than half to the Republic's population was worried about debt and money issues over the past year, according to a new survey carried out by the Samaritans.

The YouGov poll, published before Christmas, found that issues surrounding finances topped respondents' list of anxieties with 59% admitting they were fearful about the impact of the faltering economy on their lives.

Almost a third – 29% – of the 1,000 people who took part in the survey described 2009 as a bad year or the worst ever.

Samaritans' Ireland Director Suzanne Costello said: "In the last year, Samaritans received more than 375,000 calls in the Republic of Ireland – with approximately one in every 10 calls linked to financial stress."

"If people don't talk about their problems, they can build up over time and spiral into more serious emotional distress."

"Sharing your troubles can be a huge relief and is often the first step to finding a way of coping with the challenges that life throws at all of us."

Picture: Samaritans

NEWSBRIEFS

Work-life balance policies 'are a win-win strategy'

EMPLOYEES experience enhanced levels of job satisfaction when working in family friendly environments, a new report by the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has found.

The study, titled *Family Structure and Work Satisfaction: Can Work-Life Balance Policies Foster Happiness in the Workplace?*, suggests that both male and female employees with dependent children who work in family-friendly workplaces show higher levels of job satisfaction than those who do not.

Report author Alvaro Martinex Perez of the University of Essex said: "This report suggests that work-life balance policies are a win-win strategy both from the point of view of policy makers and for those involved in day-to-day industrial relations.

"WLB policies help workers find a better balance between their family and professional duties.

"As a result higher satisfied workers are likely to be more involved and productive than those with lower levels of satisfaction."

www.berr.gov.uk/files/file53551.pdf

THE NUJ's Belfast & District branch has donated £200 to the TUC Aid Haiti Earthquake Appeal. Belfast journalists responded to TUC Aid's special appeal launched in the aftermath of the devastating January 12 quake that turned the Haitian capital Port au Prince to rubble.

Proceeds of the appeal will be used by the trade union movement in Haiti for emergency relief and long-term rehabilitation of victims. Donate online at www.justgiving.com/tucaid

Jobs not necessarily route out of poverty, charity says

RESEARCH carried out by UK charity the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has revealed that getting a job does not guarantee an escape from poverty.

The report, titled *Work and Worklessness in Deprived Neighbourhoods*, looked at the experiences and perceptions of work among residents in six deprived areas across the UK.

Though respondents acknowledged the value of increased self-esteem and reduced isolation brought about by a return to work, most gained little financially.

According to the charity, poverty-level wages can mean those who have jobs work long hours, impacting on the quality of their family life.

Equally for those still out of work, low wages can act as a disincentive to leave benefits.



UNITE has expressed fears over US food company Kraft's £11.5bn takeover of chocolate maker Cadbury.

Jenny Formby, the union's national officer for the food and drinks sector in the UK, told the BBC: "We believe there was no necessity whatsoever for Cadbury – which is a very profitable, growing stand alone

company – to be sold to anybody."

Expressing concern at the levels of debt held by Kraft, she added: "In our experience, and in the experience of our sister unions elsewhere, particularly in the States and Europe, the way Kraft has been dealing with debt to date is to make people redundant and to close sites." *Picture: Cadbury*

ICTU: Protect workers who blow the whistle

CONGRESS has called for beefed up protection for whistleblowers in the Irish Republic.

It follows the publication of a report by campaign group Transparency International, titled *An Alternative to Silence – Protecting Whistleblowers in Ireland*.

Unlike most other countries in Europe and the US, the Republic has been dragging its heels when it comes to putting in place comprehensive legal protection for whistleblowers.

Whether it's corruption in local planning or illegality and malpractice in our financial institutions, workers are consistently afraid to come forward because they fear negative legal consequences and reprisals from their employers.

What legal protection there is can be hit and miss with provisions tucked away into obscure sections of specific legislation.

Civil liability laws also mean that some people may actually

be penalised and held personally liable if they come forward.

Welcoming the report, Congress legislation and social affairs officer Esther Lynch said: "Without legal protection whistleblowers can be subject to intense victimisation at work, demoted, dismissed, or pressured to resign; their positions abolished or transferred.

"Workers report that they are isolated, physically and personally; and often subjected to 'white walling' where they are put into an office with no work at all, others are subjected to constant scrutiny and given impossible tasks to perform.

"Others face threats and disciplinary actions, are subject to internal inquiries, adverse reports and all sorts of other legal threats.

It is not uncommon for whistleblowers is to resign due to ill health caused by the victimisation.

It is also understandable that many employees often decide to keep quiet about their con-

cerns rather than report them.

The Government has promised to introduce protection for whistleblowers on a number of occasions but it is believed vested interests keep stalling its introduction.

According to Congress, workers' calls for protection must not be ignored any longer.

Ms Lynch said: "Secrecy is a breeding ground for corruption and sunlight is the best disinfectant.

"We are calling on the Government to introduce a robust set of legal rights, to protect workers in the public or private sector, so that they can disclose and report matters such as malpractice, misconduct, the violation of laws, rules, regulations, damage to health, safety or environment concerns, corruption and fraud and the 'cover up' of these."

She added: "Employees who report wrongful conduct by their employers must be protected from reprisals."

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BRAZIER MEDIA
TRADE UNION NEWS SPECIALISTS

braziermedia@btinternet.com Bob Miller 07894305173 Joe Mitchell 07703055302