

THE

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

# UNION POST

NEWS YOU CAN USE

JANUARY 2012

## CONGRESS TELLS TROIKA:

# AUSTERITY HAS FAILED, WE NEED A GROWTH AND JOBS STRATEGY

A CONGRESS delegation has warned the Troika there will be no economic recovery without ditching austerity and switching to a programme based on growth.

General Secretary David Begg made his comments ahead of a January 16 meeting with officials from the IMF, ECB and European Commission.

He said: "The key to recovery is growth and a real jobs programme, not the pursuit of austerity policies which even international ratings agencies now characterise as self-defeating."

Mr Begg said evidence of the failure of the Troika policies in Ireland was now clear and irrefutable.

"Domestic demand has collapsed, falling by 25% in four years. That translates directly into thousands of job losses in local communities across the country. Retail sales are down, tax revenue has decreased and the numbers at work continue to decline.

"The terms of the 'bailout' deal are far too onerous and, quite simply, unrealistic. Our 1.8 million people at work – of whom a quarter work part time – cannot be expected to pay the debts of gambling, speculative bankers.

"That debt needs to be seriously renegotiated, as does the repayment period for our sovereign debt."

He claimed the failure of the European Commission and the ECB to resolve the wider European crisis presented Ireland with the opportunity to renegotiate. "We've met our commitments. They haven't."

Mr Begg said there was a widespread belief in Ireland that the motivation behind the original bailout was the preservation of major European banks, as opposed to an act of solidarity.

He added: "Short-term and minority financial interests cannot be allowed to dominate over solidarity and the original common purpose of the EU. It is a union of peoples, not markets."



FULL BRIEFING PAPER AT: <http://www.ictu.ie/publications/>

# Sit-in workers at Dail demo

FOURTEEN Vita Cortex workers travelled to Dublin to take part in a lunchtime demo outside Dáil Eireann on January 12, while 18 of their colleagues continued the sit-in at the company's Kinsale Road premises in Cork.

They joined more than 300 supporters backing the campaign to win redundancy payments management had agreed to in negotiations last year.

The Vita Cortex employees – who spent Christmas and New Year at the plant – have maintained the sit-in since December 16.

Catherine McCabe, one of those taking part in the action, said: "We're all just overwhelmed at the support we've received. It's been hard over recent weeks but the support has been amazing and kept us going."

Also at the demo were Vita Cortex veterans Seanie Kelleher



Pictures: CWU



**CWU, Unite, Mandate & TEEU members joined SIPTU-organised demo**

and Alan Walsh who have worked for the company for 47 and 43 years respectively.

Addressing the protest, SIPTU organiser Anne Egar said: "This fight is going to go on. These workers are not going anywhere until they get what they are owed."

"No worker wants to spend

Christmas Day sitting in a dark cold empty factory, sleeping on the floor without being sure they are not going away until they get what the owners of the factory owe them and promised them."

SIPTU vice president Patricia King said it was "desperately important" workers made it clear they would

not tolerate being an employer's "lowest priority" when companies failed.

"Not only is it happening with the Vita Cortex workers. It's happening with Lagan Bricks workers, the La Senza workers.

"It used to be that when employers went bust it was important that they did right by the people who had worked for them.

"There has been a change. Judgments are being made in boardrooms that the workers, who have invested their lives in some cases in these companies, are not important. The message must go out that workers will not tolerate it."

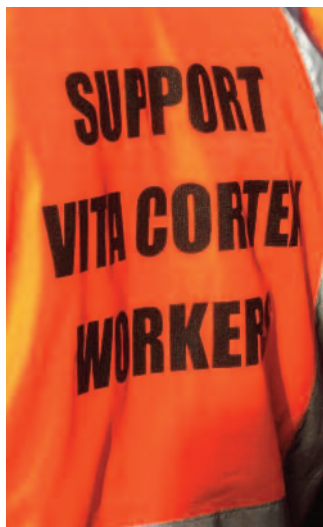
The demo was organised by the SIPTU Manufacturing Division and supported by other unions including Unite, Mandate, the Communications Workers Union and the TEEU.



## 'A growing culture of solidarity'

SIPTU general president Jack O'Connor, left, paid a Christmas Eve visit to workers taking part in the sit-in at Vita Cortex. He spoke of sensing a "growing culture of solidarity" across Ireland, demonstrated in the level of public support for workers standing up for their rights. Mr O'Connor claimed last year's landslide vote for Michael D Higgins as president showed the majority of people were "in favour of social solidarity and in favour of fairness and believe that people should be treated fairly". *Picture: SIPTU*

## Begg: Sit-in 'struck a chord'



CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has paid tribute to the "great courage and determination" shown by the Vita Cortex workers "in very difficult circumstances".

Pledging the support of Congress, he said their campaign had "rightfully won widespread support among trade unions and the wider community".

Mr Begg added: "It has struck a chord because they are refusing to accept the imposition of a very obvious wrong."

"The government can-

not simply stand by and wring its hands in despair.

"Like it or not, they are involved because of the role played by NAMA. Citing legal niceties and technicalities just won't cut it.

"Remember NAMA is the same body that sees no difficulty in paying hundreds of thousands of euro annually to speculators who were central to crashing the economy, while 32 workers are denied what they are legally and morally entitled to."

Meanwhile, Unite

regional secretary Jimmy Kelly has blasted what he claims is a growing trend for companies and finance houses to leave workers who have been made redundant "out in the cold".

He added: "Working people will not stand for being treated as chattels by wealthy individuals whose lifestyle has barely been touched by the crisis yet who seem happy to walk away from any responsibility to those who helped build their fortunes."



**David Begg saluted workers' 'courage and determination'**

# La SENZA

## deal on unpaid wages brings sit-in to an end

LA SENZA workers expressed delight after their union Mandate secured agreement with administrators KPMG on January 13 bringing to an end a week-long sit-in at the lingerie chain's Liffey Valley Centre store in Dublin.

A total of 114 workers at eight outlets and concession stores across the Republic were made redundant after

the chain went into administration earlier this month.

It is understood workers – who had not been paid for work and overtime over the busy Christmas period – were told they might have to wait for up to a year for statutory redundancy payouts. Welcoming the dispute's resolution, Mandate divisional organiser

Michael Meegan said it showed in "a very clear way" how important it was for workers "to join a union and work together to achieve a just outcome for themselves and their families".

Details of the deal have not been released, but La Senza workers said they were "absolutely thrilled" by the outcome.

### CONGRESS CALL

## Coherent plan needed to deal with crisis in finance sector

CONGRESS has called for "urgent government engagement" on the problems facing the financial sector.

General secretary David Begg claimed setting up a Financial Sector Forum would help all parties "collaborate in developing a coherent plan for the future".

He said: "Given the importance of this sector, it would be wrong to allow the issue to develop in an ad hoc manner. This requires a strategic and urgent engagement on the part of government."

Mr Begg also pointed out any involvement by Richard Bruton, Minister for Jobs, Enterprise & Innovation, would be "desirable and very helpful" in focussing on future levels in the finance industry.

He said: "The call from Congress comes in the wake of Ulster Bank's announcement of plans to cut 950 jobs, coupled with the serious job losses already suffered across the sector."

"To date, we have seen more than 6,000 jobs lost in financial institutions. Unfortunately, without the means to engage on the future, the message those losses send out is that it is staff who will carry the can for decades of disgraceful management and reckless behaviour."

Mr Begg added: "That is neither fair, nor sustainable."

Meanwhile, IBOA general secretary Larry Broderick expressed shock at the scale of job losses at the Ulster Bank.

He said that though the Union, which represents most staff at the bank, had anticipated "some

restructuring of its operations", the "sheer magnitude" of what management was proposing was "breath-taking".

A total of 600 jobs are slated to go in the Republic and another 350 north of the border.

Mr Broderick said this was on top of 1,000 redundancies negotiated in 2009 which, he claimed, had a "major impact" on the bank's day to day operations.

He added: "While we will ask the bank to consider alternatives to redundancy, we will also seek clarification as to how its new business plan will meet its declared commitment on enhanced services to customers – made in extensive publicity campaigns in recent months – if employee numbers are reduced to this extent."

Mr Broderick also backed calls for a task force to be set up to look at "practical measures" to generate "alternative employment opportunities" for the thousands of financial sector workers who have lost their jobs over the last three years.

SIPTU, which represents more than 200 Ulster Bank workers in the Republic, also expressed shock at the scale of the job losses.

Union organiser Adrian Kane slammed the number of redundancies as "unacceptably high".

He said: "SIPTU members will not accept compulsory redundancies, nor will we accept any out-sourcing of jobs."

"Redundancies must only be on a voluntary basis and severance terms must reflect industry norms."



## 26,000 jobs to go... now Stormont MUST act

CONGRESS has called on the Northern Ireland Executive to defend the local economy from the "wasteful and arrogant" policies of the Tory/Lib Dem coalition government.

It follows the release of a new region-by-region analysis by the TUC that shows a total of 25,992 public sector jobs are to be axed in the North.

Across the UK, a total of 710,000 jobs will go in the public sector. Northern Ireland, followed by the English North East, will be worst affected.

Congress assistant general secretary Peter Bunting said the draft Stormont Programme for Government had pledged to "promote" 25,000 new jobs but pointed out that the TUC figures had "proved the inadequacy of that modest ambition".

He said: "Even if achieved, the PfG target will run a thousand jobs short of the expected cull in public sector jobs." And Mr Bunting warned thou-

sands more jobs in the private sector would go if "so much demand is sucked out of the market".

He said: "It is time for the Northern Ireland Executive to take serious political action, aligning itself clearly alongside other opponents of the wasteful and arrogant policies of the Tories and their Lib Dem collaborators."

Mr Bunting said the analysis of the trade union movement had been proved right "time and again".

"There is no growth in the economy and the private sector is not capable of reproducing jobs sacrificed in an ideological assault on the public sector."

"The Executive and Assembly must by now recognise the reality of the threat facing the living standards of every citizen of Northern Ireland, and start to counter-attack."

He added: "This is not a time for half-measures."



Bunting: 'No time for half measures'





Picture: UFCV

## Top Dutch pensions fund divests at Walmart

ONE of the world's largest pension funds has announced it is divesting from retail combine Walmart.

Dutch investors Algemeen Burgerlijk Pensioenfonds, who have had a responsible investment policy in place since 2007, hold to the UN's Global Compact principles covering a set of core values dealing with human rights, labour standards and the environment.

UNI Global Union general secretary Philip Jennings described the move as "a black eye for Walmart".

Dan Schaldeman, director of pressure group Making Change at Walmart, added: "This should send a clear message to Walmart and its shareholders: treating workers poorly is bad for business."



Belgium's Ministry of Pensions gets a soaking during protest

## In a lather over pension reform

**STRIKING** firefighters in Brussels showed their contempt for austerity measures being introduced by the new Belgium government during last month's public sector general strike.

They turned their hoses on the Ministry of Pensions during the December 22 action directing a heady torrent of cat-calls, water and foam at government bosses inside the 19th century building.

Across the country, thousands of public transport employees joined with education workers, postal and hospital staff as well as civil servants in an impres-

sive 24-hour country-wide stoppage. The administration is trying to increase the age at which workers can claim an early pension and is part of its 2012 budget plan to cut the public sector deficit to below the EU limit of 3% of GDP.

The European Federation of Public Service Unions sent a message of solidarity to its Belgian affiliates.

The EPSU also blasted the Belgian government for repeating "the arrogant attitudes of other European governments" in kow-towing to the markets while failing to "listen" to workers and their representatives.

## Guantanamo protest marks grim anniversary



Picture: Amnesty

Campaigner in orange jumpsuit outside US Consulate in Belfast

AMNESTY International protested outside the US Consulate in Belfast earlier this month over the failure of the Obama administration to shut down its detention facility at Guantanamo Bay.

Campaigners claimed the January 11 protest – staged on the 10th anniversary of the first detainees being transferred there – highlighted its "toxic" legacy for the rule of law.

An Amnesty International delegation handed a 64-page report, titled *Guantanamo: A Decade of Damage to Human Rights*, to US Consul General Kevin Roland.

Patrick Corrigan, Amnesty's Northern Ireland programme director, said: "Our message to the US Consul General is that Guantanamo has come to symbolise 10 years of a systematic failure by the US to respect human rights in its response to the 9/11 attacks.

"The US government disregarded human rights from day one of the Guantanamo detentions. As we move into year 11 in the life of the detention facility, this failure continues."

# Slump in UK paid overtime

A NEW analysis has shown that the amount of paid overtime has declined by a quarter in the UK since its pre-recession peak.

The research, carried out by the TUC and published last month, revealed that the total number of people working paid overtime declined from a peak of 5.6 million in 2001 to just 3.9 million today – a fall of 25%.

According to the analysis, this is due to both a fall in the number of workers doing paid overtime – 825,000 fewer employees regularly worked paid overtime in 2011 – and a decrease in the average amount of paid overtime, down from 11.2 hours per week to 10.6 hours this year. The availability of paid overtime

## 2bn hours worked for nowt!

**THE two billion hours of unpaid overtime worked last year by UK employees is enough to create more than a MILLION full-time jobs, according to the TUC. This work is worth a record £29.2 billion to the UK economy.**

The TUC calculates that if those employees who regularly put in extra unpaid overtime worked all these hour from the start of the year, the first day they would actually be paid would be Friday, February 24.

This day has now been designated **Work Your Proper Hours Day**. For more information on WYPHD 2012, check out: <http://www.worksmart.org.uk/workyourproperhoursday/>

obviously has a major impact on the take home pay of workers, so big falls in paid extra hours will substantially reduce the income of many

workers and their families.

But TUC general secretary Brendan Barber cautioned against any over-reliance on irregular and ex-

cessive overtime and pointed out that this can mean "long hours" and "wage packets that can flip from feast to famine depending on the availability of work".

He added: "We must find a way to improve the organisation of working life so that we can move away from some people working excessive overtime while others remain unemployed.

"A greater focus on improving productivity and earnings from core hours could deliver both better pay and greater profitability.

"But to achieve this we need better management working with employees and their unions to change our culture of long hours and increasingly insecure work."



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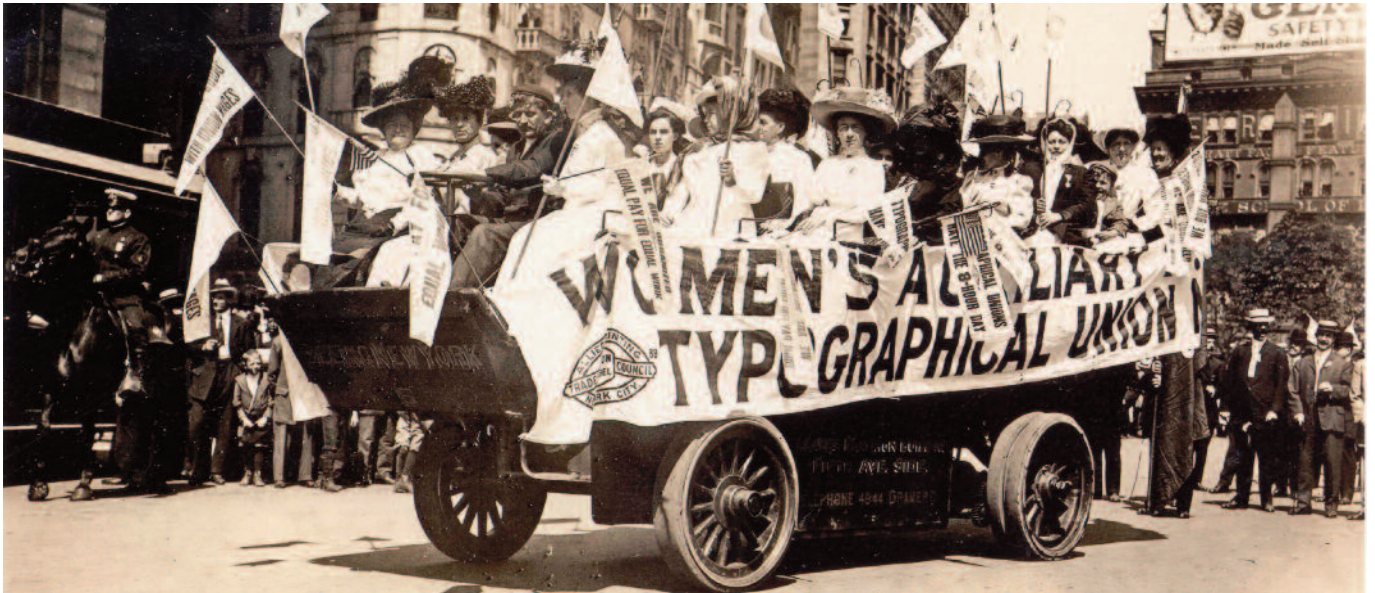
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**TIMELINE TRIBUTE TO TEAMSTERS WOMEN**

US and Canadian union the Teamsters have put together a “visual timeline” dedicated to women members. The visual history features Teamster women at work as bakers, airplane mechanics, truck drivers, railway workers and more. Pictured is a delegation from the Women’s Auxilliary Typographical Union at the Labor Day parade in New York in 1909. Check out more historic images at <http://www.teamster.org/content/teamster-women-history-visual-timeline>

Picture: International Brotherhood of Teamsters



**MANDATE**  
TRADE UNION



**ESB Building Society staff set to stage 2nd stoppage**

STAFF at ESB Building Society are to stage another one-day strike on January 26 over what Unite dubbed a “cruel” withholding of a “13th month payment” due in December.

Following a general meeting of members on January 13, Unite announced that pickets would also be placed at the offices of parent company AIB.

Describing the decision not to pay out as “wrong”, regional officer Colm Quinlan claimed members were now in “no mood to back down”.

According to the union, the decision to withhold the wages only applied to staff at or below assistant manager grades.

Mr Quinlan said: “To have announced it two weeks before Christmas, having previously confirmed the payment would be made was cruel. It has generated a level of anger that is rarely seen in any workforce, let alone the banking sector.

“This [move]... crossed a line and there is a determination that it will not be accepted.”

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## DOMESTIC WORKERS

# Rights drive calls for sweeping reforms...

A NEW trade union-led initiative to end the exploitation of domestic workers was launched last month with a "symbolic sweep" of the square outside the European Parliament in Brussels.

Domestic workers dressed in aprons and brandishing brushes took to the task with gusto – all part of the international "12 by 12" campaign supported by a number of trade union confederations as well as by women's and migrants' rights NGOs.

ETUC chief Bernadette Ségol

joined hundreds of workers at the December 19 protest.

It is thought there are more than 100 million workers employed in domestic settings across world – and they constitute a significant part of the so-called grey economy.

The campaign is aiming to get the first 12 countries to pass legislation safeguarding the rights of domestic workers in 2012 and ratify the C 189 Domestic Workers Convention.

Domestic workers want one day off a week, a minimum wage, an

eight-hour day, the right to join a union, protection from exploitation and abuse, social protection and the regulation of employment agencies.

Bernadette Segol said: "The European Union should be a driver in promoting the rights of domestic workers who are heavily under-protected and victims of harassment everywhere in Europe.

"We call on member states and the EU to provide these workers with adequate legislative and contractual protection, in line with the spirit of ILO Convention C189."



Domestic workers take part in a 'symbolic sweep' of the square in front of the European Parliament

## More fiscal pain 'just won't work'

ETUC general secretary Bernadette Ségol has said she has "serious doubts" the new intergovernmental treaty put in place last month at the European Council will have "positive effects" for the economy – or for workers.

The deal, signed on December 9, mandates greater fiscal co-ordination and budget discipline as a means of quelling market volatility over the euro.

According to the ETUC, the objective seems to be to impose even stricter austerity measures across the EU without offering any prospects for growth.

Ms Ségol said: "This agreement offers no long-term prospects for restoring employment and sustainable growth. Its sole objective is to tighten fiscal discipline and to have such discipline written into national constitutions or legislations.

"Europe must not become synonymous with sanctions and rigid fiscal policies. It must be identified with prosperity and must offer prospects for the future."

She added: "Austerity does not work...The latest employment figures from Eurostat are damning. Jobs are the priority for Europeans, who want to be able to live in dignity and plan their future.

"European trade unions consider that the social sphere cannot be the poor relation of the European treaties."



ETUC chief Bernadette Ségol at 12 by 12 protest. She has also slammed plans for further austerity measures contained in last month's EC agreement

Pictures: ETUC

## DEL carve up is chance to consolidate NI education

THE scrapping of the Department of Employment and Learning – a move designed to consolidate the Department of Justice within the Northern Ireland government – has been welcomed by Congress' Education Trade Union Group.

Chairperson Seamus Searson said: "This provides a real opportunity to put right the nonsense where our education service has been split between two government departments.

"It makes sense to have all education under the Department of Education where policy, planning and delivery can be co-ordinated.

"In every other jurisdiction in these islands, central and devolved governments have found the most effective way is to have joined-up thinking in terms of policy and delivery of education across all sectors, is to have a single government department.

"The carve up which produced DEL has resulted in business oriented models of delivery that have done nothing to improve the quality of delivery or the range of courses available across Northern Ireland or in delivering skills to increase economic activity."



YouTube clip: Newt Gingrich

## US public sector union pokes fun at GOP hopefuls

THE American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union have launched an interactive game to highlight the anti-worker sentiments of top Republican presidential hopefuls.

Using YouTube clips with embedded links, the fun "Match Game" features recent comments by GOP candidates Newt Gingrich, Ron Paul, Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum

An AFSCME spokesperson said: "We've seen all the outrageous comments, one-liners and sniping between candidates. Now you can see where they stand on issues like public employee union, child labor and social security."

<http://www.afscme.org/matchgame>



Pictures: UNI Global Union, CC/WEF



Pointed warning: UNI chief Philip Jennings is to attend G20 meeting in Davos this month

# UNI chief's 'downfall' warning to G20

UNI general secretary Philip Jennings has warned income inequality is "sowing the seeds of our own downfall".

He made the comments in response to a study by the World Economic Forum.

The WEF's *Global Risks 2012* report warned deep resentment caused by the financial crisis could spark widespread social unrest, creating a "dystopian future".

The study was published in advance of the WEF's annual meeting in Davos later this month, at which a number of union leaders, including Jennings, will be present.

An ILO jobs study published last year also found there was a high risk of unrest in 40% of nations surveyed.

Mr Jennings said: "These reports give a stark

warning. If we do not close the gap between rich and poor, we are sowing the seeds for our own downfall.

"There has to be fairer distribution of wealth and we must rebuild the social contract.

"The one per cent cannot be allowed to own the combined wealth of the rest.

"We still have the financial resources but they have to be used to invest in a sustainable future.

"In the US business is sitting on a cash mountain of two trillion dollars which should be ploughed back into growing the economy and not just in share buy backs and financial speculation."

He claimed social unrest and economic chaos would continue to worsen unless world leaders acted on the jobs crisis.

"The labour movement has been given a seat at

the G20 table through the creation of the L20 but it is not enough that we are being listened to.

"My message for the participants at Davos is simple – time is running out and concerted action on job creation and bridging inequality is vital.

"Jobs have to be the global priority. We need to put the money back into people's pockets to get the global economy working again.

"It's time the 99% were given back what has been taken from them.

"In the global economy much more attention must be given to building a strong workforce.

"The financialisation of our economies has taken policy-makers eye off the ball.

"We need to focus on creating millions of good quality jobs. It can be done."

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## Crusading MP speaks to CWU youth



Picture: CWU

# BATTLING TOM TELLS IT LIKE IT IS

TOM Watson – the Labour MP who has played a key role in exposing the British tabloid phone hacking scandal – gave a keynote address at the CWU's youth conference in Birmingham on January 17.

In a wide-ranging speech, he spoke about his own dealings with Rupert Murdoch's News International as well as the need to return power to the grassroots in his own party.

Mr Watson, who represents West Bromwich, claimed the Labour movement had much to learn from the phone hacking scandal and characterised it as a failure of political leadership.

And he noted: "Over the last 25 years the only challenge to Murdoch has come from the judges and the trade union movement."

The whole affair also underlined the need for media plurality and accountability, but he predicted



**Murdoch's News of the World: Folded over hacking scandal**

the government would duck out of any regulation or substantial changes in media ownership.

Mr Watson outlined his desire to revolutionise the way the Labour Party campaigns and called for greater synchronisation of

union branches with Labour Party branches.

Recalling how the party had centralised during the 1980s and 90s, he said: "Members on the ground feel disenfranchised. Ed Miliband understands that and wants to hand power back."

Reacting to the news that shadow chancellor Ed Balls had moved to support a pay freeze for public sector workers until the end of this parliament and support the government cuts agenda, Mr Watson declared he was one member of the shadow cabinet who did not agree with this position.

Calling it "unacceptable" he added: "The public sector workers cannot carry the can for the banking industry."

"I won't be on TV picking a fight with Ed Balls but will do [so] in private."

## MEDIA

# New online magazine for community & voluntary sector in NI

A NEW online magazine – billed as the Independent Voice for the Community and Voluntary Sector in Northern Ireland – is to launch later this month.

VIEW will offer online, independent, quality journalism for the 27,000 staff and 88,000 volunteers that work in the sector.

And, just like *The Union Post*, it's also free to subscribe – email: [viewssubscribe@gmail.com](mailto:viewssubscribe@gmail.com).

Editor Brian Pelan told *The Union Post*: "VIEW will be sent out each month from January 2012 in Flash Flip format – so it is just like reading a newspaper on your computer."

"VIEW is about 'must read' news stories, so we want to hear news from those at the 'coal face' in the sector. So please do email us at [view.editorial@gmail.com](mailto:view.editorial@gmail.com)."

"You can also follow VIEW on Twitter @viewforni and look out for the new Facebook page"

VIEW is produced by MEDIA ASSOCIATES – a new media business.

## POST FEEDBACK

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## PUBLIC SECTOR

# Regional pay plan would gut local economies

THE PCS has warned any attempt at introducing regional pay across the UK would drive down wages and further depress local economies.

The union described the proposal – put forward by chancellor George Osborne earlier this month – as "economically incoherent" as it would undermine the government's stated aim of helping to drive growth and development in the regions.

General secretary Mark Serwotka said: "Regional public sector pay is the exact opposite of what our local economies need."

"Instead of allowing pay to be driven down to the lowest level, ministers should be looking to increase pay and living standards of everyone, to put money in people's pockets to help our economy to grow."

# GMB gives Osborne some stick!

THE GMB has accused chancellor George Osborne of having the "economic literacy" of "a stick of rhubarb".

It follows a union analysis of official data that showed the living standards of full-time workers in 277 out of 322 occupations in the UK had fallen by 5.9% between April 2007 and April 2011.

There are 11 occupations [including energy plant operatives, opticians, print compositors] where the fall has been more than 25%, 10 occupations [including public relations officers, company secretaries, theme park attendants] where the fall has been between 20% - 25% and 16 occupations [including hotel porters, glass makers, bricklayers]

where the fall has been between 15% - 20%. The GMB looked at the figure for annual average gross earnings of full-time workers in each occupation group from official ASHE data for April 2007 before the recession kicked in.

This was then compared with data for annual average gross earnings for the same occupation group from April 2011.

GMB general secretary Paul Kenny said: "These figures show that the government's strategy for an economic recovery is in tatters as living standards in the UK drop by 5.9%."

"George Osborne has the economic literacy of a stick of rhubarb. "Two thirds of the economy is

consumer driven and Osborne must be the only person who does not get it. Squeezing wages, pay freezes and cutting jobs will not restart the economy."

"Using the IMF measures, his cuts will reduce real private consumption by 4% and GDP by 3.4% over the next few years."

"I doubt if the electorate had any notion that a change of government would lead to a loss of 376,000 jobs across the UK in the public sector in the short time since the general election."

"When the 'same old Tories' were returned to power, they brought with them the same old philosophy of 'if it's not hurting, it's not working.'"



## CUBAN FIVE NEW YEAR GREETINGS



IN A New Year message with a difference, Gerardo Hernandez Nordelo, one of the Cuban Five, has thanked supporters across the world for campaigning to secure his freedom and that of his comrades Fernando Gonzalez Llort, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero Rodriguez



and Rene Gonzalez Sehwerert.

The gifted 46-year-old, who has been imprisoned in the US since his arrest in 1998 on espionage charges, is a noted caricaturist.

His comrades also added their greetings for 2012 - but left the artwork to Gerardo.



Underlining that the Five had spent "13 years of unjust imprisonment" in US penitentiaries, Ramón Labañino hoped well-wishers had a year of "peace, love, health and victories" ahead.

In his message, Rene Gonzalez Sehwerert - freed in November but under the

terms of his release forced to remain in Florida - said: "We have no doubt that we all will continue together on this struggle until we can be victorious, and that it will be thanks to the actions of people like you that in the end the reunification of our families will be achieved."

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# Fourth year of cuts will hit frontline hard



Liam Doran: 'Unprecedented'

THE INMO has warned that the HSE's National Service Plan – involving a €750m cut in health spending – will inevitably result in a further severe contraction of frontline services.

According to the union, the plan – signed off by the minister on January 16 – will lead to increased overcrowding in emergency departments and the closure of acute beds in many hospitals.

It will also negatively impact on the development of clinical care programmes and will severely hamper the transfer of services from the acute to the primary care sector.

INMO general secretary Liam Doran said: "This is the fourth con-

secutive year that the Irish public health system has suffered a significant reduction in health spend and uncontrolled down-sizing of its workforce.

"This is unprecedented, throughout the OECD countries, and is, undoubtedly, causing severe hardship to patients/clients and excessive workloads on frontline staff."

He added: "It is for the community at large to respond to this dismantling, of our public health service, and the INMO looks forward to participating in a community-wide campaign aimed at forcing the political system, and the government in particular, to review its current policies of contraction and cuts."

## Govt must learn from implants scandal

UNISON has called on the UK government to learn lessons from the implant replacement disaster, and stop its plan to hand over large swathes of the NHS to private companies.

It claims the moves – outlined in the Health and Social Care Bill – will see profits put before patients.

The union also noted the refusal of some private sector health providers to remove potentially dangerous implants from patients.

UNISON head of health Christina McAnea said: "The Secretary of State is handing over large parts of our NHS to the private sector and he will be unable to control them.

"Appealing to these companies to do the right thing will not be enough.

When will Andrew Lansley realise that his own Bill will render him increasingly impotent in intervening in such cases in future? It is time to drop the Bill to protect patients."

## SIPTU slams 'cruel' home help cut

SIPTU has claimed the 4.5% cut in home help hours proposed in the Health Service Executive Service Plan published yesterday flies in the face of the Irish government's stated commitment to primary care.

Following the announcement, SIPTU sector organiser Louise O'Reilly said: "Home helps are central to any primary care strategy. Our elderly people deserve better

than this. Home helps are essential if elderly people are to remain in their own homes and are key frontline workers in any HSE Hospital Avoidance Strategy.

"Those who depend on home help services cannot afford this cut.

"The HSE has not engaged with SIPTU to discuss any contingency plans to manage this latest change in work arrangements for home helps

whose hours have already been cut dramatically in the past two years.

"This will mean loss of earnings for our members, some of whom have had their hours cut to as little as two hours per week.

"It is these low paid workers and the elderly who depend on their services that will bear the brunt of this cruel cut."

### PHOTOLINE

Experienced photographer specialises in campaigning photography for trade unions and NGOs. For conferences, campaign launches, street demos, May Day parades, magazine and PR photography. Shared commission rates for ICTU conferences.

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## Wapping exhibit

AS the Leveson Inquiry continues its scrutiny of the culture, practice and ethics of today's press in the UK, an exhibition is looking back 25 years to the 1986 Wapping dispute.

The exhibition – which runs at the Bishopsgate Institute Library, 230 Bishopsgate, London, until February 29 – charts the epic 13-month struggle that pitted print unions against the might and resources of Rupert Murdoch's News International.

The dispute was sparked after Murdoch sacked thousands of workers following an overnight move to new printing presses at Wapping in East London.

It occurred at a time of unrelenting attacks on jobs, union rights and communities and the exhibition brings together images, photographs and accounts of those troubled times. The multi-media exhibition is organised by Unite, the NUJ, Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom and the Marx Memorial Library.

The exhibition is open Monday to Thursday and Saturday 10am - 5.30pm and on Friday from 10am to 2pm.



Picture: TUI

# Investment 'wholly inadequate'

TUI general secretary John MacGabhann has claimed the level of investment in Irish education is "wholly inadequate" to meet the "ongoing needs of children, society and the economy".

He was reacting to comments by education minister Ruairi Quinn following his announcement of a review into the decision to cut DEIS

scheme funding.

Mr MacGabhann said: "TUI notes the minister's comments that any reversal of particular cuts will have an impact on other areas of education.

"If, as is suggested, money has to be found elsewhere within the education budget, it cannot be at the expense of those non-DEIS, non-fee paying schools already targeted

for swingeing cuts on numerous occasions in recent years and now struggling to provide a basic frontline service to students."

He pointed out that teachers and principals had already shown huge flexibility in helping "to paper over some of the cracks" but warned that the service could "sustain no further damage".

MacGabhann: Flexibility

# Quinn: 'I was wrong on DEIS cuts'

Picture: INTO

EDUCATION minister Ruairi Quinn has admitted he made a "mistake" over the announcement of cuts in teaching numbers to schools in advantaged areas.

It was outlined in last month's budget that a total of 428 posts under the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools scheme (DEIS) were to go.

But new research has flagged up just how beneficial the scheme has been, adding to the outcry over the cut.

Data gathered by the Inspectorate of

the Department of Education and the Educational Research Centre charted improvements from 2007 to 2010 in reading and maths.

INTO general secretary Sheila Nunan claimed the research had clearly shown that the extra resources provided to DEIS schools had been well used. She also claimed it showed up the folly of the original budget decision.

Ms Nunan added: "It's not broken; don't try and fix it, should have been

the advice to the minister before the budget."

Speaking on RTÉ's Morning Ireland, Mr Quinn – who had described the research findings as "encouraging" – said: "We make mistakes, we get things wrong, all of us. And I think the first thing to do is to put your hand up and say, 'Yes, perhaps let's look at that again'. That is what we're doing."

The government has now indicated there will be a review of the budget decision.



Nunan: 'Not broken'



Picture: NASUWT

# Gove plan will devastate morale

NASUWT general secretary Chris Keates has slammed UK government proposals that will make it easier for schools to sack teachers.

Education secretary Michael Gove is changing rules to enable heads to dismiss teachers they deem incompetent in just one term.

Ms Keates said the move,

announced earlier this month, was "totally unnecessary" and claimed it would "devastate teacher morale" and endanger both future recruitment to the profession as well as the need to retain staff.

"Our teachers deserve better than to have their professionalism constantly denigrated and called into

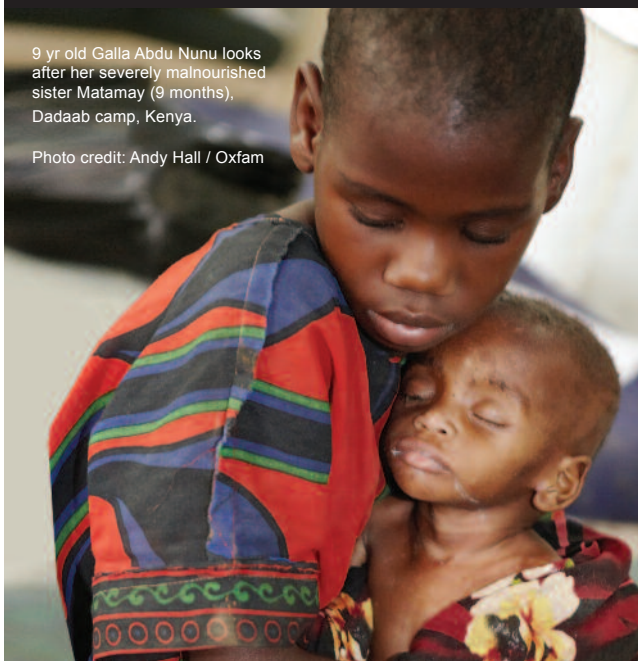
question by policies pursued by a government which has an ideologically-driven contempt for public services and the workforce which delivers them."

Meanwhile, NUT chief Christine Blower dubbed the changes "a bully's charter" that will anger and depress teachers.

Keates: 'Totally unnecessary'



**Oxfam**  
Ireland



9 yr old Galla Abdu Nunu looks after her severely malnourished sister Matamay (9 months), Dadaab camp, Kenya.

Photo credit: Andy Hall / Oxfam

## EAST AFRICA EMERGENCY

### YOU CAN SAVE LIVES

Parts of Somalia are now in famine. Over 12 million people in East Africa face starvation. Children are most in danger of dying as malnutrition rates soar. **Oxfam is there** but we urgently need your help

Donate online at [oxfamireland.org](http://oxfamireland.org), your local Oxfam shop, call ROI 1850 30 40 55 or NI 0800 0 30 40 55. Thank you.





## Out of the shadows as undocumented bravely stage candlelit demo at the Dáil

**HUNDREDS** of undocumented migrants, their families and supporters took part in a candlelit march to the Dáil on December 17.

The march – led by a giant banner emblazoned with the slogan ‘Justice for Undocumented’ in Christmas lights – was staged to highlight the estimated 30,000 undocumented migrants living in Ireland. Organisers

have called on the Irish government to introduce an Earned Regularisation Scheme which would give undocumented migrants an opportunity to legalise their status.

Speaking during the march, MRCI campaign co-ordinator Edel McGinley said: “Undocumented people live under tremendous fear of deportation and have taken a great risk to be

here today. We are calling on the government to provide a solution similar to the one it has been advocating for the Irish undocumented in the US.

“It’s time the government put its money where its mouth is and showed the same commitment in solving the undocumented crisis here.”



*Pictures: MRCI*

**TRADE UNION TV** LATEST REPORTS FROM FRONT LINE AND THE SHOP FLOOR...  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/TradeUnionTVIreland#p/u/0/ATDACnrVrqg>

## WORKPLACE SAFETY

# 15% hike in workplace deaths in Republic last year

THERE were 55 workplace deaths in the Republic last year, according to figures released by the Health and Safety Authority earlier this month.

This represents a 15% increase on 2010 when 48 deaths were logged. More than a third of these – 22 – occurred in the agriculture sector.

Eight workers involved in transport and storage died in

workplace accidents along with six construction workers and five employed in the fishing industry.

HSA chief Martin O'Halloran said the statistics reflected "human tragedies, lives lost and families ruined."

He added: "Everyone has the right to go to work without danger to their safety or health."



Toll: 22 died in agriculture



Australian workers protest over workplace health and safety during demo last year Picture:ACTU

## Oz safety drive

AUSTRALIAN unions have launched a new "Speak Up" drive to raise workplace health and safety awareness among workers.

It follows the enactment of new harmonised health and safety legislation across most Australian states and territories from January 1.

Workers now have a right under law to elect their own health and safety reps.

ACTU assistant secretary Michael Borowick said: "Workers need to know that when they are confronted by a health or safety issue in their workplace, they don't have to deal with it alone.

"Health and safety reps act as watchdogs within the workplace, making employers comply with the law well before regulators have to become involved."

He added: "It is no coincidence that workplaces with a union presence are far more likely to be safer than those without unions."

# Cam canned over H&S comments

THE TUC has attacked prime minister David Cameron over comments he made earlier this month about "killing off" the "health and safety culture for good".

General secretary Brendan Barber claimed the PM's January 5 speech to a audience of business people in Maidenhead underlined just how "out of touch with the reality of working life Number 10 is".

He said: "Every government report on the UK's supposed compensation culture has shown it to



Cameron: Speech to business people



Barber: 'No 10 so out of touch'

be a myth. Despite this, the government seems hell-bent on trying to stop workers injured by their employers' negligence being able to claim compensation."

Mr Barber expressed astonishment at Cameron's assertion that there was an "excessive health and safety culture" that had become "an albatross around the neck of British businesses".

He said: "The truth is that there are two million people in the UK who have an illness or injury

caused by their work – the vast majority of which could have been prevented had their employer taken the correct safety precautions."

Mr Barber added: "It is clear Downing Street does not have a clue about what life is like for the millions of ordinary people.

"Instead it is making policy in response to grumbles from elements of the small business lobby and the risible rantings of right-wing commentators."

INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR COMMUNITY/VOLUNTARY SECTOR

# VIEW

FIRST ISSUE OF ONLINE NEWS PUBLICATION OUT SOON. WE GIVE YOU THE STORIES THAT MATTER ABOUT THIRD SECTOR IN NORTHERN IRELAND



# VW & Brazilians act on off-shift work-related emails

**VOLKSWAGEN** last month put the brakes on emailing its Germany-based workers on union contracts when they were off shift.

The move – brokered between management and the firm’s works council – was in reaction to complaints that the home and work lives of employees were becoming blurred. It is understood

other German firms, including Deutsche Telekom and Henkel, have also curbed after-hours emails in recent months.

Now it seems, the Brazilians are going further and plan to introduce legislation that will mean employees answering work emails on smartphones after they clock off can qualify for

overtime. But the TUC has cautioned against UK employers following VW’s example without first consulting with unions.

Acknowledging that the growth in out of hours, work-related communication needed to be addressed, general secretary Brendan Barber pointed that different organisations

needed “different solutions”.

He said: “By working in partnership with their union, Volkswagen’s policy will have the support of all their employees.

“Where employers simply introduce policies on their own, however well-meaning they may be, they are unlikely to be successful.”

## Health & Wellbeing ICTU Disability and Retired Members Committees **PROJECT**

# 16 weeks to a new you!

Here’s a great opportunity to improve your health and wellbeing AND learn more about a range of issues.

The project will run for 16 weeks and will be held at the UNISON head offices in Galway House, York Street, Belfast.

Fourteen sessions will be run as participative ‘classroom sessions’ exploring a series of diverse issues such as:

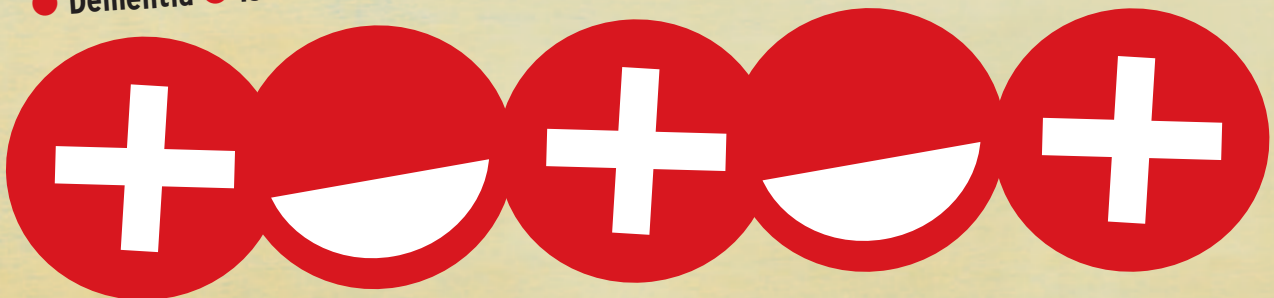
- Pensions
- Welfare ● Healthy Heart ● Diabetes
- Disability and Age Discrimination
- Dementia ● Issues for Carers

Another two sessions will be organised all-day bus outings. The project will be facilitated by trade union tutor Brian McAnoy and a personal trainer will attend at each session and go through a series of gentle exercises. Each classroom session will run from 12 noon to 3pm and a healthy lunch will be provided.

NOTE: Places will be limited!

The project begins Monday, 30th January.

To secure your place email Pauline Buchanan at [pauline.buchanan@ictuni.org](mailto:pauline.buchanan@ictuni.org) or if you have other queries telephone 028 90247940



Monday 30 Jan **Introduction**  
 Monday 6 Feb **Healthy Heart**  
 Monday 13 Feb **Tutor/Personal Trainer**  
 Monday 20 Feb **Looking at Diabetes**  
 Monday 27 Feb **Tutor/Personal Trainer**  
 Monday 5 Mar **Issues for Carers**  
 Monday 12 Mar **Tutor/Personal Trainer**

Monday 19 Mar **Dementia**  
 Monday 26 Mar **Tutor/Personal Trainer**  
 Monday 2 Apr **Pensions**  
 Monday 16 Apr **Tutor/Personal Trainer**  
 Monday 23 Apr **Welfare**  
 Monday 30 Apr **Tutor/Personal Trainer**

Monday 14 May **Disability and Age Discrimination**  
 Monday 21 May **Bus Run to Ballymena and Antrim Coast**  
 Monday 28 May **Bus run to Ballymun Community Facilities, Dublin**



**EDUCATE YOURSELF IN 2012**



Sightsavers

Every wipe  
of his eyes  
takes Talla  
closer to  
blindness

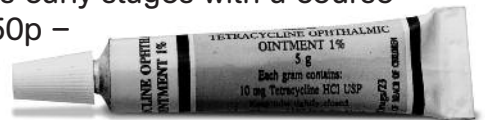


© Jenny Matthews/Sightsavers



© Jenny 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.

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**Sterling donations, please call 0800 089 20 20 or visit [www.sightsavers.org](http://www.sightsavers.org)**  
**Please quote ICTU. Thank you!**