

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

# THE UNION POST

NEWS YOU CAN USE

JULY 2009

CONGRESS BDC  
CONFERENCE  
SPECIAL  
TRALEE 2009

13 PAGES OF REPORTS &  
PICTURES FROM TRALEE



## STRAIGHT TALKING BEGG TELLS COWEN



# CUTS CAN'T BEAT SLUMP

FULL  
STORY  
P2/3

Subscribe **FREE** at [braziermedia@btinternet.com](mailto:braziermedia@btinternet.com)



**Time for unions to seize the moment 4**



**Attack on every Irish worker 9**



**Why Breen ruling is a crucial victory 14**



**INTO blasts Batt's classroom cutbacks 25**



**Proud to wear the Red Hand badge 33**

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

# CUTS AGENDA

## BDC 09 BUILDING SOLIDARITY

CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has warned the Taoiseach there is "only a certain distance" the trade union movement can go with government in dealing with the economic crisis. In responding to Brian Cowen's address to the Biennial Delegate Conference on July 10, he said the trade union movement did not believe savage public spending cuts and wage deflation was the way to beat the recession.

He told him, "no country in history has deflated its way out of a crisis".

Mr Begg also described as "disturbing" a recent proposal by top IDA official Barry O'Leary for a 15 per cent wage cut for employees working for multinationals, and dubbed it a "nonsensical proposition".

He claimed such views were being put forward "at every hand's turn" as solutions to the problem of competitiveness, but pointed out you would not "get a dead cat's bounce" from cutting wages against the backdrop of a global trading collapse.

Mr Begg added: "Most economists if they're honest about it would recognise that wages are a small part of the competitive position of the country."

And he insisted: "We are not going to sign up for a deflationary policy – that would be irresponsible."

Mr Cowen had earlier addressed 800 delegates and observers at BDC 09 in Tralee, the first time he has done so.

Some protestors raised placards in opposition to education and health cuts, but did not disrupt the Taoiseach's speech.

In his wide-ranging response, Mr Begg noted the 150-year sentence handed down to US fraudster Bernie Madoff and asked whether the Taoiseach could organise the sentencing for "even 150 weeks" of those "who have wrecked our financial system".

He reminded Mr Cowen of what he called the "the threshold of decency" and listed the minimum wage, social insurance contributions, pensions and support for children with special educational needs as areas that "shouldn't be interfered with".

Mr Begg also attacked the "cutbacks commentary" whose only solution to the crisis was to slash public service provision, pointing out that "those people must have ice in their veins".

Rather he insisted the way ahead lay in "distrib-



Protestors outside BDC 09 as Peter Bunting bids farewell to Taoiseach

## CONFERENCE PICTURES KEVIN COOPER photoline@supanet.com

utional justice" and putting in place a "progressive taxation system".

Mr Begg said: "What we need is a comprehensive system of taxation which will supply the revenue necessary to keep the country running."

He added that cuts in the public service were attacking the wrong target, given that "our problem is not the size of our public service, but the collapse of our tax base".

Mr Begg referred to comments made by the Minister of Finance earlier this year that if any other country had attempted such cuts in the public service, "there would be a revolution".

He told the Taoiseach: "We must know from the events of this week that a revolution is a bit of political overstatement but certainly a breakdown of stability in industrial relations is entirely possible if this gets out of control."

He criticised the composition of the so-called Bord Snip Nua and observed: "Nobody on that committee will suffer as a result of the cutbacks they propose" noting some on the committee had a "long history of antipathy to the public service". Mr Begg defended the striking electri-

# WON'T SOLVE CRISIS



General secretary David Begg turns to Brian Cowen and gives his considered response to Taoiseach's address

## Cowen's vision for recovery

cians saying they had taken action only at the end of a long process and in defence of their union, following a concerted campaign against accepted industrial relations' structures by some employers.

Welcoming the publication of new legislation on agency workers, Mr Begg urged quick passage of the long-delayed Employment Rights' Compliance Bill.

He said its provisions – if they had been enacted when promised – would have addressed some of the key issues in the electricians' dispute and claimed it would have prevented "renegade employers" dragging the TEEU through the courts.

In conclusion, Mr Begg drew parallels between the situation faced by Mr Cowen and former Taoiseach Sean Lemass when the latter saw his efforts to reform the state's industrial relations machinery frustrated by an aggressive local capitalist class and the heavy hand of the Department of Finance.

He told him: "If you are a disciple of Lemass – and I believe you are – my advice to you is follow your instincts and you'll get the support of the people and we will have a more sustainable and just society at the end of your tenure as Taoiseach."

IN HIS address to conference, Taoiseach Brian Cowen told delegates he had "great respect for and belief in the trade union movement in Ireland".

He said the economy had been hit by "some of the most seismic events in our living history" and needed "all of our focus, determination and continued co-operation" to pull out of the recession.

Talking of the government's "vision for economic recovery", he claimed its goal was to develop "a critical mass" of innovative firms to provide well-paid jobs "for this and future generations".

The Taoiseach told delegates he believed jobs were central to economic recovery and "supporting jobs was at the very heart of the government's approach".

He confirmed that further resources were to be applied from "less urgent spending" to the jobs agenda.

Mr Cowen added: "There should be no doubt of the scale and depth of my commitment and that of the government to the jobs crisis."

Emphasising the government's commitment to protect employment standards, he said: "As further clear evidence of this and of ongoing delivery with the Towards 2016 framework, I am

happy to announce that the government has published today the Employment Agency Regulation Bill, 2009 which addresses a significant legislative commitment under Towards 2016.

"This Bill will modernise the legislative provisions in this area, providing an appropriate regulatory framework with effective redress mechanisms."

On public services, he said: "This unprecedented crisis calls for an unprecedented and imaginative response" and asked delegates to "reflect on the need for change in that context".

Turning to Europe, he claimed it was the government's view that the Lisbon Treaty was "good for workers" especially with the coming into force of the Charter for Fundamental Rights if the referendum is passed.

Mr Cowen added: "At the European Council last month and in response to Irish pressure, our European partners adopted a Solemn Declaration on the importance the EU attaches to workers' rights."

"That declaration sets out in a single, simple text the importance the European Union attaches to a Social Europe – and makes clear that growth and competition are not ends in themselves."

THE **UNION POST** Get it in A4

THE WEB EDITION OF THE UNION POST IS SAVED IN A3 LANDSCAPE FORMAT  
IF YOU WANT A4 EMAIL YOUR REQUEST TO [braziermedia@btinternet.com](mailto:braziermedia@btinternet.com)



Outgoing ICTU president Patricia McKeown received a standing ovation from podium and floor after addressing conference

# Now is time to seize moment and change world for better

TRADE unions have reached a defining point in their history and must now "seize the moment".

The call came in a rousing speech from outgoing ICTU President Patricia McKeown at the Tuesday morning session in Tralee.

She told delegates the financial crisis had meant "old certainties" and old ways of doing business had been "swept aside".

"More than ever people in and out of work need their unions. They look to us for leadership."

Claiming it was time to "set the path" for Irish trade unionism for the rest of the century, she added: "We have before us the chance to shape a more just and equal society but only if we seize the moment."

Turning to the thousands across Ireland who had lost their jobs in recent months, Ms McKeown said: "In the Republic, one quarter of a million people are unemployed and almost half a million people are on the live register."

"For them, prosperity is over. For many of them it never started. In the North, almost one-third of the population is classed as economically inactive."

"They are ignored by government and left to subsist at the margins of our society. No peace dividend for them. There is no one else to stand up with them but us, the trade union movement."

Ms McKeown claimed these people were facing the consequences of a "capitalist system bereft of

moral standards". Though acknowledging social partnership had brought some benefits, she pointed out the current government was wedded to the neo-liberal model and were in thrall to what radical thinker Noam Chomsky called the "virtual senate".

These were the lenders and investors who, pushing for increased privatisation across all sectors, reduced people to "the status of consumer, rather than active citizens".

Ms McKeown said it was time to go on the offensive and paid particular tribute to the Visteon workers who had "refused to be put out".

She also pledged the full support of the conference to the TEEU and its members and dismissed "with contempt" claims their action would damage the economy.

Turning to equality, Ms McKeown highlighted the role women within the trade union movement played in moving key issues up the agenda and how that should be used as a template to tackle the growing challenges – economic, social and political – that lay ahead.

She said: "The Irish government embraced with fervour an economic and financial system which is predicated on the absence of rights."

"No coincidence then that when times got tough it made its first brutal spending cuts in the equality and human rights agenda."

"Its hostility to socio-economic rights in partic-

ular now leaves this society on the edge of the abyss." Flagging up how Irish unions had often risen above "rightful self-interest" to focus on the needs of others, Ms McKeown spoke of that other crisis - the food crisis - sweeping the globe.

She told delegates: "As we meet here this week over one billion people on the planet are living in extreme poverty and are facing starvation, malnutrition and early death."

Underlining how links had been forged with the trade union movement internationally, she added: "Now we must build solidarity with the oppressed."

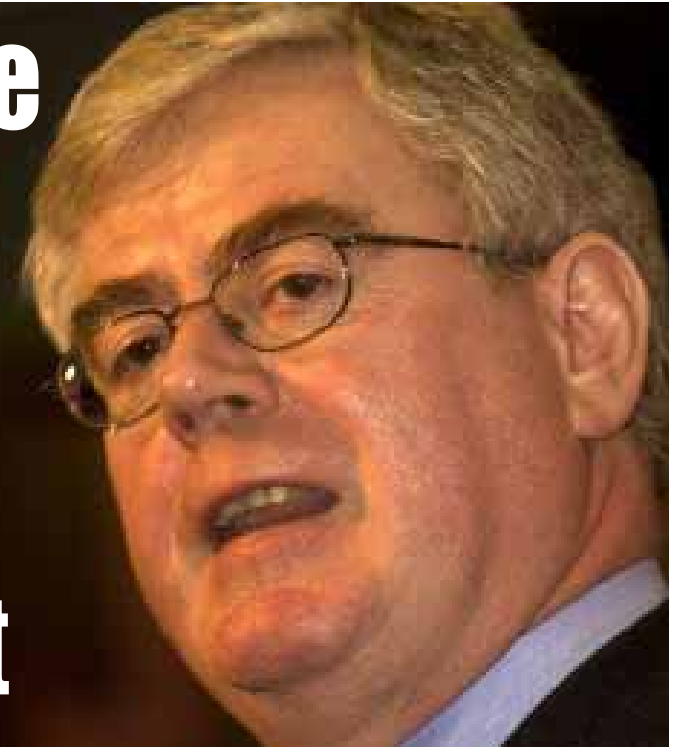
Referring specifically to oppression in the Occupied Territories, Ms McKeown claimed the issue had "engaged people on this island in a way which no other has done since our involvement in the anti apartheid struggle in South Africa".

In particular she highlighted Congress's humanitarian appeal for Gaza and the €100,000 donated through Irish Medical Aid to Palestine.

Addressing delegates, Ms McKeown acknowledged an uncertain future lay ahead but added she was confident that through "your generosity of spirit and the determination of our members we can change this world for the better".

When she had finished her speech, there was spontaneous applause from the conference floor and a standing ovation.

# Gilmore pledge to enshrine in law protection of workers as priority in govt



LABOUR leader Eamon Gilmore has pledged to introduce a legal right to collective bargaining for workers when his party returns to government.

Speaking on the first day of the Biennial Delegate Conference in Tralee, he vowed to:

- Protect the rights of agency workers
- Ensure the Posting of Workers Directive does not undermine existing workers' rights in Ireland
- Ensure the legal right to adequate representation of employees in their place of work
- Make it illegal to discriminate against an employee because they are a member of a union, and
- Pass the Industrial Relations Bill to protect vulnerable workers in the hotel, catering and construction industries.

He told delegates: "The Labour Party in government will also commit to giving domestic effect to the principles, including collective bargaining enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights, which will become European law if the Lisbon Treaty is passed."

Mr Gilmore pointed out a three-fold crisis now faced the country and slammed the government

for concentrating on only one aspect – banking.

He said: "There is the banking crisis, the fiscal crisis, and the jobs crisis. Each of them is linked. How each is dealt with, affects the others."

"Mishandling of any will, make the others even more difficult to address. So they must be dealt with simultaneously."

Mr Gilmore pointed that for a solution to be "economically, socially or politically credible", it could not be inflicted on any one group "at the expense of others".

He added: "In particular, we cannot allow those who created the problem to impose the burden on those who can least afford to bear it. Yet already those mistakes are being made."

Mr Gilmore claimed that to date the government had been primarily concerned with problems in the banking sector and public finances but had neglected what he called "real economy... of jobs lost and businesses closing".

He told the conference that already attempts were being made to impose the burden "where it should not be laid". Mr Gilmore said the instinctive approach from the Labour Party and trade

union movement was that jobs should be at the centre of any strategy to deal with the slump.

He voiced support for Congress attempts to agree a job protection and creation plan with government as it made absolute sense to prioritise the retention of jobs and not to "throw in the towel" on this crucial issue.

"We have shared the analysis – the common sense – that if we are to deal with the banking crisis and the fiscal crisis, we must also deal with the jobs crisis."

Addressing the question of links between Labour and trade unions, he pointed out that only six out of 55 unions affiliated to ICTU had formal affiliation to the party.

Mr Gilmore added: "But our most important bond is not what is written in the rule book. It is the common ideals and principles that we share."

Stressing to delegates that areas of tensions between Labour and union was "inevitable", nevertheless he added "only a government with Labour at its heart can drive the kind of reforms that Ireland needs".

# Ryan Report challenges us all

DELEGATES have overwhelmingly endorsed an emergency motion on the Ryan Report into institutional abuse.

Conference heard the findings described as "a very powerful testimony to the deliberate denial and failure" of church and state to protect children.

INTO's Sheila Nunan, moving

the motion on the second day of the conference, warned a lack of adequate teacher training – as recommended by report's authors – would put children in jeopardy.

She said: "Those of us working in sectors with children want to ensure we are equipped to carry out those roles but we need regular and

appropriate training." Ms Nunan claimed the report had "thrown down a challenge to us in Irish society to guarantee on our watch we will learn from it and use it to benchmark the worst of our failures to protect children and drive us to seek highest standard of childcare and protection that must be the hallmark of a civilised society."



Backing: Sheila Nunan

# Kids made crisis 'scapegoats'

TUI President Don Ryan told delegates that opposition to cuts in education was not about "teachers' pay and conditions" but was "about our society and our future".

He warned: "The Irish education system is already underfunded and sits in 27th place out of 29 OECD countries."

Mr Ryan told conference the cuts showed the government

was using children as scapegoats and added: "Students at school did not cause this crisis... those who did had their snouts stuck in the trough of the nation's wealth."

Meanwhile, Susie Hall, of the ASTI, said it was a myth that teachers would not lose, or had not lost their jobs due to cuts, and warned against a two-tier education system. Impact's

Johnny Fox condemned the treatment of Special Needs assistants and school secretaries and claimed many of them felt their role was undervalued.

He told delegates: "Leaky taps and holes in the roof get a greater priority."

Mike Jennings, of IFUT, said the reintroduction of fees would add a cent to Third Level funding.



# We need new economic model to deal with crisis

OPENING the economic debate, Congress general secretary David Begg referred to "the catalogue of disasters that has fallen upon us" since delegates last met in Bundoran in 2007.

He told conference: "The haemorrhage of jobs seems set to continue into next year with the IMF forecast published last week predicting an unemployment rate of 15.5 per cent by the end of 2010. By that time we will have lost 13.5 per cent of our GDP too. In short it will take us until 2017 to get back to where we were in 2007."

Mr Begg said this had been made worse in Ireland by "domestic policy errors and a downright irresponsible, perhaps even criminal behaviour, in the business, banking and developer nexus."

Referring to the unsustainable housing and construction boom, he pointed out that Irish banks' nett indebtedness to the rest of the world had jumped from 10 per cent of GDP in 2003 to 60 per cent by early last year.

Describing it as "an outrage", he added: "The cost of unwinding the consequences of this will be borne by Irish people for generations to come."

Mr Begg said those economists advocating wage and job cuts as well as slashing the minimum wage had "ice water running through their veins" and seemed "indifferent" to the consequences of their solutions.

He added: "It seems to me too that there is a certain threshold of decency that we should not cross no matter how bad things are. Cutting the minimum wage and basic welfare rates crosses that threshold."

Mr Begg said the proposal to cut wage rates was based on an argument that it would improve competitiveness and boost exports but asked how this will "give even a dead cat bounce" in an international market where trade is down by 25 per cent.

He added that wage cuts would also have a big adverse effect on domestic demand.

Claiming the only effective way of "achieving



David Begg told conference the neo-liberal consensus of last 30 years was gone

distributional justice" was through a "progressive tax system", Mr Begg spoke of the "protracted negotiations" with government on brokering a social solidarity pact.

He told delegates of the "disappointing response" from government that conveyed "a poverty of ambition", adding: "People expect unemployment, pensions and home repossession to be given the same priority as the banking system. A sequential response aimed at first fixing the banking crisis is not the way to go."

Mr Begg said: "Our hope is that the deficiencies in the government's position can be corrected because if we want to influence policy on employment, pensions, repossessions and the other elements of the 10-point plan, the only way to do so is in dialogue with government. By the same

token that is only true if government is willing to act."

Acknowledging that all of us "were trying to grapple with a problem beyond our life's experience", he told delegates: "One thing is certain, there can be no return to business as usual after this recession – however long it lasts. Neo-liberalism has failed."

"Even if domestic commentators won't accept that fact people like Alan Greenspan, Martin Wolf, Jack Welch and Warren Buffet have. The world of the last three decades has gone. What will replace it is for us to seek to determine."

"As Dorothy said to her dog Toto after a tornado dropped them in the Land of Oz, 'I've a feeling we're not in Kansas any more'."

## 'Commentariat' slammed in Thursday debates

DEBATE at BDC 09 on Thursday was dominated by a series of strong and spirited speeches in defence of public services and public sector workers.

A number of speakers condemned concerted attacks on the public service from sections of the "commentariat" and proclaimed themselves proud of the work they did and proud of the vital social services they delivered.

Motions on the public health service (41),

protecting frontline health services (46) and supporting the provision of public services (44) were passed by delegates.

Delegates also passed a motion calling on Congress to press governments North and South to introduce a "moratorium on the future use of Public Private Partnerships/Private Finance Initiatives to deliver any public service infrastructure or functions."

The motion (42) also called for a review of

all PPP/PFI projects to ensure all such functions are "undertaken again by accountable public service staff".

An Executive Council request to remit the motion was defeated.

Conference also heard condemnation of Performance Management Systems and the shabby regulatory regime that existed in the financial services sector, both of which played a significant role in collapsing the financial system.



Jack O'Connor attacks rewriting of history to blame crisis on working people

## An alternative to blind greed of failed system

SIPTU general president Jack O'Connor has claimed hundreds of thousands of Irish workers suffer the consequences each day of the failed neo-liberal model of economic development imposed almost 30 years ago by Reagan and Thatcher.

Speaking on the opening day of the conference in Tralee, he said: "This condemned human society to the vagaries of the unseen hand and with the passage of time it has become the dominant and all pervasive - almost religious - mantra of capitalism."

"It has been dogmatically applied and slavishly followed in both jurisdictions on this island with disastrous effect."

"Despite the current re-writing of history which attributes blame for the economic meltdown on working people and, in particular, those who work in the public service, the current crisis is actually due to the reckless incentivisation of speculators coupled with light touch regulation which was preferred over the promotion of a sustainable model of capitalism - much less socialism."

"Over recent decades those in power have dismantled the tax base, ludicrously sold off key elements of our social infrastructure such as Eircom, which could have provided the catalyst for a new generation of economic growth, and grossly mismanaged the public services. One would imagine that a good place to start to remedy the consequences of this disastrous and failed approach would be to abandon it and seek an alternative."

"But no - instead our policy makers are now seeking to apply the same principles and outlook that caused the problem in the first place as they desperately scramble to find a light at the end of the crisis tunnel."

"As the market ruthlessly adjusts itself the powerful and decision makers make a savage assault on living standards dis-

carding jobs and scarring the quality of life for hundreds of thousands of workers and their families for possibly decades to come."

Mr O'Connor told delegates this "blind adherence" to the law of the market was applied differently to flawed banking and financial institutions.

He said: "There could be no greater illustration of this than the proposal to pour up to €70 billion (and perhaps multiples of this figure) of taxpayers' money to socialise the liabilities in our banking system - including the toxic debts arising from reckless banking practices - with no clear or guaranteed outcome for ordinary people. Tragically, the economic model employed in recent decades has been ruthlessly pursued at the expense of the great majority of working people who were led to believe that it would provide prosperity for all."

"We now know the lie at the heart of this promise and the brutal consequences of this blind pursuit."

"Our urgent task now is to arm working people with a coherent and alternative model that prioritises society again and that can form the basis for sustainable investment and economic development as opposed to the accumulation of the 'quick buck' mentality."

"We must press the case - not only because it is morally correct one - for reintegrating the hundreds of thousands who have lost their jobs into productive economic activity while protecting those who are vulnerable and exposed in relation to jobs, pensions and the protection of their homes."

"This means we must establish the superiority of an economic outlook and model which places human welfare as its starting point instead of the race to the bottom policies which are now condemning our society to years of stagnation, depression and human misery."

## Kinahan: IDA chief's proposal on wages is 'utter nonsense'

CONGRESS assistant general secretary Sally Anne Kinahan has branded as "utter nonsense" claims by a senior IDA official that swingeing wage cuts were needed to restore Ireland's competitiveness.

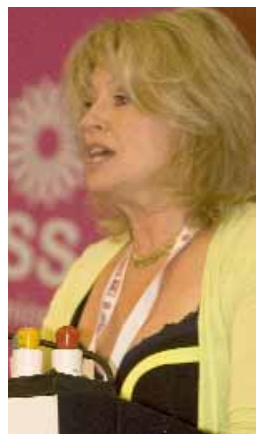
She was responding to comments made by IDA chief Barry O'Leary that between 5,000 and 6,000 Irish workers employed by top multinationals may have to consider having their pay packets slashed by 15 per cent.

Ms Kinahan told conference: "Even far right economists concede that competitiveness is far more complex, complicated and about much more than wage levels."

"He has clearly adopted a simplistic ideological position and not one that is informed by the facts. Cutting wages will not get us out of this recession, instead you will simply depress demand and kill consumption, a dangerous step in an economy where domestic demand comprises almost 50 per cent of all activity."

"The best way to address competitiveness and end the recession is through serious investment in upskilling and learning, starting at pre-school and continuing through all levels and all ages."

Mr O'Leary's pay cut suggestion was specifically targeted at companies supported by the government or grant aided by IDA, and comes as it emerged that 6,000 jobs in the sector have already been lost this year.



Hits back: Kinahan

MORE BDC 09 NEWS 8,9,10 & 11

# Roosevelt New Deal invoked as a model for future action

A FREE market system that once seemed solid and immutable has melted in air, assistant general secretary Peter Bunting declared as he opened his speech to delegates on Wednesday.

He reminded conference that Roosevelt's New Deal was a public sector-led fightback against the last great depression caused by "a politically sanctioned culture of greed and consumerism".

Mr Bunting said: "It was an inspiration for the Congress 10-point plan for recovery in the Republic and ought to act as the guiding principle behind any strategy to protect and nourish the economy of Northern Ireland."

He underlined that the banking collapse was caused by the politically-sanctioned "criminal irresponsibility and greed" of top bankers who he dubbed a "neoliberal cargo cult".

These were supported by a economists and commentators "hired by media corporations with huge material interests in sustaining the mythology of the free market".

Mr Bunting asked delegates: "Remember how they were telling us all to buy, buy, buy? Remember their solution to all public sector problems? Downsize and privatise?"

"They were wrong then, and it is also worth remembering that we in the trade union movement were lone voices pointing out the madness of their prescriptions.

"What are these discredited hacks saying now? Well, it is apparently all the fault of the public sector, and if we cut enough we can return to the good old days."

He added: "As the other Marx, Groucho, once said, 'The good old days are good, because they're

gone.'" Looking to the future, Mr Bunting urged delegates to "prepare for the fightback" against those who would slash public services to preserve a banking system "whose bosses still behave like selfish brats".

Mr Bunting contrasted their selfishness with the "generosity of spirit" shown by the Visteon workers. He told conference: "The workers in Visteon were models of efficiency and innovation. Their technological innovations are now being made in South Africa, their pensions are in cold storage and their futures shattered by corporate greed.

"Their bosses have fled, with their pensions intact, their questionable reputations protected, their share options guaranteed."

Mr Bunting listed the mass layoffs – at FG Wilson, Nortel, Shorts and Seagate – that had hit manufacturing hard in the North.

He said: "Without manufacturing at its heart, the timid private sector will never fully develop. But while the recession grinds on, Congress is pushing hard for the creation of a Workers' Protection Fund, which will ensure that those facing redundancy get their moral and financial entitlement ahead of the receivers."

Mr Bunting pledged that ICTU would work with politicians "and help them make the right decisions" on transport, support for manufacturing and developing our skills base. Congress would

also take principled stands on vital domestic issues such as water charges, the Bill of Rights, representing and integrating ethnic minorities, on PFIs and on academic selection.

Turning to the dissident attacks earlier this year, he praised the leadership shown by the political class and attacked the "micro groups" involved in the murders at Massereene and Craigavon.

In response to those attacks thousands of working people had shown their revulsion at a series of trade union and trade councils rallies across the North.

Mr Bunting then listed the work that lay ahead for the trade union movement. He said: "We need to fix the gaps in social housing, to repair the social infrastructure which marginalises and alienates those who feel disenfranchised and lend support to anti-democratic elements whose solutions are based on hatred.

"There is work to be planned, for a vibrant and sustainable and fairer economy after the downturn, an economy that rewards skilled workers and innovative industry. An economy that cherishes people, and does not see them as collateral damage in the rush to reward shareholders.

"A politically relevant union movement is one that promotes the understanding of the system we have and harvesting the skill of the mind necessary to fix and make fair that system, one room at a time."



Vision: Peter Bunting

## This is an attack on every worker

TEEU general secretary designate Eamon Devoy, right, told conference his union was engaged in a struggle on pay and conditions on behalf of every Irish worker.

Speaking before the July 11 Labour Court recommendation on the dispute, he said: "This is not just an attack on the electricians – it is an attack on all the workers in Ireland.

"There is a policy by government, the property speculators, the banks, the builders and the contractors to drive down wages in this country as some sort of solution to the economic woes of this country and keep the eye off the government whose responsibility it is to address this in a fair way."

He claimed the dispute was being misrepresented as a pay claim and told delegates contractors had already secured payment from clients under contracts "but have withheld that money from our members".

Mr Devoy added: "If we win this dispute – and we have to win this dispute – it is our belief that we will win it for every worker in Ireland."

Thanking Congress president Patricia McKeown for pledging the full support of conference for the electricians' union, he added: "Hopefully it will help make CIF chief executive Tom Parlon realise that his attempts to isolate us by gratuitous insults are counterproductive and simply show he has nothing but contempt for the people employed by his members."



## Right to choose motion remitted

DELEGATES voted by 222 to 109 to remit back to the Executive Council a motion on a woman's right to choose.

The move to remit back was agreed by the proposers of the motion – Belfast & District Trades' Council – following a request from the Executive, represented by Anne Speed of SIPTU.

Motion 30 had called for Congress to support and campaign with other pro-choice groups to achieve rights to terminate a pregnancy "similar to those provided in the UK by the 1967 Abortion Act... and other EU member countries."

When an initial show of hands failed to clarify the matter, a card vote was called for and showed

a majority of 222 to 109 in favour of remission.

On day two, delegates also debated and approved motions on the rights of people with disabilities (Motion 31), quality of life for older people (29), equality (26 & 28), the pay gap (27) and equal opportunities for same sex couples (32).

## McGuinness: Unions have key role

DEPUTY First Minister Martin McGuinness has thanked the trade union movement for its role in fighting sectarianism, racism and hate crime in the North.

Speaking on Wednesday morning in Tralee, he cast delegates' minds back to 2007 when he last addressed conference.

He said: "We were just a few short weeks into the fledgling new institutions and the new partnership between our various cultures and traditions, but since then the fragile flower has continued to grow and taken ever firmer root."

Mr McGuinness attacked those who sought a return to violence and predicted they would fail "because the vast majority of our people are in favour of joint working, in favour of partnership, in favour of building a prosperous and inclusive society for the benefit of all". He also praised the "posi-

tive role" played by trade unions in standing up to sectarianism, racism and hate crime.

Turning to the recession, Mr McGuinness told delegates the severity of the crisis had underlined the risks faced by small open economies.

He said: "Two years ago you could not have imagined that when you came together again so many of your members would have lost their jobs."

Mr McGuinness referred to the "endless lists of predictions and projections" about falling economic output.

But he claimed he was more concerned about the effects of the downturn on the lives of ordinary people than "cold facts and figures".

Mr McGuinness said the recession cannot be used as an excuse to drive down terms and conditions of employment for employ-

ees. He added: "Ordinary workers cannot be asked to pay the heaviest price for a crisis that is not of their making."

The Deputy First Minister also outlined a series of measures the Stormont Executive was taking to protect people from the worst effects of the recession, and added: "They are designed to target resources to those most affected by the current recession."

He also called for "proactive measures" to deal with the crisis which he characterised as "man-made".

Mr McGuinness told delegates: "We are not facing a natural disaster, our economy has not been brought to its knees by a force of nature. This economic disaster has been global and man-made. And our small island, our families and communities, are bearing the brunt."

He said that a fairer and more equal soci-

## building 'better future'

ety had to be built and efforts made to develop the best educated workforce in Europe "even when faced with the current financial constraints".

Mr McGuinness claimed this required partnership between government, business, trade unions and the voluntary sector which was "fundamental", adding "I am convinced that if we work together we can emerge from this present crisis more quickly and stronger".

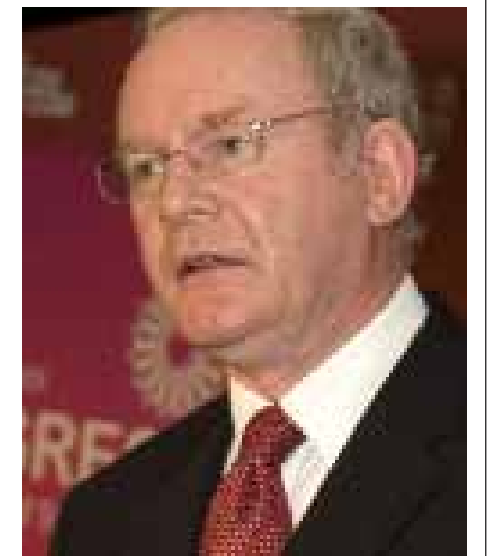
He acknowledged that "accelerated productivity growth" was key to increased competitiveness and sustainability but said this must be based on innovation, creativity and improved work skills "and not on creating a low wage economy".

The Deputy First Minister called for cross-border co-operation to deal with the

downturn. He said: "Where the border creates impediments to faster economic growth, where public goods such as infrastructure and public services could be more efficiently provided on a co-ordinated basis then we need to collaborate and work to mutual advantage."

Mr McGuinness, in closing, told delegates that he understood it was a time of great concern for trade union members but expressed confidence that with the right steps in place "we can start to get the economy back on track and promote sustainable economic growth in the longer term as we eventually emerge from the current downturn".

He added: "The trade union movement has a key role to play in building that better future."



McGuinness: Workers can't pay heaviest price for crisis they didn't make

# Education cuts make no sense

IMPACT national secretary Peter Nolan has warned gratuitous attacks on education budgets are sending society backwards. He told delegates that if Ireland is to emerge from recession with strong foundations for economic recovery, education needs to be insulated. Mr Nolan argued the proposed reintroduction of Third Level fees would freeze out students from low income backgrounds. He said: "We don't want to arrive at a situation where, post-recession, the education system has to be rebuilt from a 'low base'. "We have already seen how devastating that can be as our health sector has never truly recovered from the cuts of the 1980s, despite the intervening years of prosperity.

If you destroy the foundations, you have nothing left to build on." Proposing a motion opposing government cuts in the sector, Mr Nolan said education played a key role in addressing inequality in society. He added: "Cutting investment in education does not make any sense. In the long term, it will exacerbate the degree of economic disadvantage for families from low income backgrounds. "It will annihilate opportunities for adult education which are vital for those workers who have lost their jobs in their thousands. "If you take apart our education system by starving it of resources, any hope of future economic competitiveness will be crushed."



**DIFFERENT BEAT**  
Taoiseach Brian Cowen bids to drum up support for his government at the BDC 09 in Tralee. One onlooker remarked: "He'll have to change his tune - and his policies - first!"

# Barack election gave us all hope

PENNY Shantz, a representative of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, spoke to conference of the great hope working people in the US have with the election of Barack Obama. She said: "Against all odds, we elected a compassionate, intellectual community organiser who ran on one of the most progressive agendas since the

Great Depression. Against all odds we elected the first African American as President." She told delegates the AFL-CIO had clearly made a difference to the campaign, having mobilised more than 250,000 of its members to work as volunteers in the run-up to the poll. Ms Shantz said: "The ALF-CIO reminded our members how racism is used to divide workers.

Rich Trumka, our secretary treasurer, went from factory to factory telling members, "There is not a single good reason for a worker, and especially a union member, to vote against Barack Obama. And there's only one really bad one - and that's because he's not white." She added: "I've never been more proud of our movement."

# Connolly is in our blood...



Links: Grahame Smith

STUC general secretary Grahame Smith quipped he had yet to meet a Scottish trade unionist of Irish decent "who hasn't claimed to be related to James Connolly". In fact, he said he also met many Scottish trade unionists with NO Irish links "who also claim Connolly as a relative", adding that the two countries' connections were "many, varied and deep-seated". On the economic crisis, Mr Smith told conference that the trade union movement on both sides of the Irish Sea had challenged the "economic orthodoxy" of neoliberalism and had been proven right. He continued: "It's the human face of the banking crisis

and the recession that matters - the impact on our members' jobs, their homes, their families and their futures - threatened by corporate greed and irresponsibility." Mr Smith warned there was a danger that anger over the recklessness in which the economy had been managed could turn "to despair and disillusionment" driving many "to seek irrational and extreme solutions". Referring to the expenses row at Westminster, he traced its roots to the ideology that valued "individual over collective responsibility" and shunned "the pursuit of equality as a political objective".



Connolly: Relative values

# Time to ditch 'dead weight' FF

FIANNA Fail has been called a "dead weight" when it comes to the European social market. Unite's Irish regional secretary Jimmy Kelly claimed the party had obstructed progress on a range of issues including agency workers protection, the Social Chapter and pensions.

He told delegates: "The government now calls upon workers to support the Lisbon Treaty with the Charter of Fundamental Rights. "And yet the government point blank refuses to implement those same rights into Irish law." Mr Kelly claimed it was now time for the trade union move-

ment to get "off the sidelines" and work with parties "that share our values and principles". He said what was needed was a progressive government that works with the trade union movement "not against it", adding, "It's time we stop negotiating with this government and start to change it".



Jimmy Kelly: Time for change

# Labour links: Don't ignore 'the elephant in the room'

SOCIAL partnership has only had a limited use in influencing government policy, Jack O'Connor told delegates in Tralee. Moving Motion 22, the SIPTU general president said: "In the overall scheme of things we have to be frank and recognise we have not been able to influence in any significant way the direction of

history sufficiently to prevent the reckless pursuit of public policies entailing blind adherence to unbridled free marketeering." He claimed this was because government had been dominated by parties of the centre right and relations with unions could have been characterised as "a surplus of access but a paucity of in-

fluence". Mr O'Connor told conference while it was right to make use of these contacts, it was wrong to think the process offered "a meaningful alternative to the task of building an effective political force to articulate the interests of ordinary people". He continued: "The tragedy is that lesson was learnt long before - generations ago - when the Irish Trade Union Congress embarked on the task of building a Labour Party on the proposal of Jim Larkin, seconded by James Connolly." But he claimed the trade union movement had "tragically abandoned the task" opting instead for what he called "a lowest common denominator kind of unity, which ignored the elephant in the room". The motion called for the raising of political awareness among unions' rank and file and the need to address "the critically important issue" of Labour Party affiliation "so as to assist in shifting the fulcrum of influence in the corridors of power" towards values of social solidarity and "the primacy of the common good".

CPSU chief Blair Horan, right, speaking on the economy, claimed the "plain and simple truth" was that government policy advisers had been "asleep at the wheel" for the past decade. He told delegates: "It is a truly appalling indictment of domestic economic policy. It was neo-liberal economics in its purest form that makes no distinction between export and domestic led growth." Slamming the folly of the finance sector, Mr Horan said unregulated hedge funds and private equity funds had loaded solid companies with debt before they were milked dry. But he vowed: "What I can tell you here and now is that lower paid workers and those on social welfare payments will not bear the brunt of the adjustments that are now necessary to clean up the mess."



# No going back to casino capitalism

ETUC chief John Monks has called for an "exit strategy" from casino capitalism. He told delegates in his address to the BDC on Friday that the economic system "expressly designed to make rich people richer, welfare states cheaper and inequality greater" had had a "heart attack". But he pointed out that workers were paying the price "with our taxes, with our wages and pensions, and worst of all, as unemployment soars, with our jobs". Mr Monks told delegates the banks must not be allowed to return to business as usual "resisting tooth and nail modest proposals

for regulation". He said: "Europe needs to be bold. And not just on banks but on the real economy too. "We want a plan which keeps up wages, not bonuses. And a plan which leads to better balanced, more sustainable, greener economies. "Less short term speculation, more serious investment in real, sustainable goods and services." Turning to the Lisbon Treaty, he said he hoped the Irish people would approve it. Mr Monks admitted it had not delivered all that was necessary "by a long chalk" and had missed opportunities to reinforce social Eu-

rope. But he added: "We also said it was a step forward compared to existing provisions, for example in relation to the legal enforcement of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, commitments to full employment, the social market economy and public services." Mr Monks flagged up recent successes on agency workers and in the beefing up of European Works councils. However, he told delegates: "We want more and want Europe to move forward, not remain bogged down in institutional wrangling, particularly in these perilous economic times."



Wanting more: John Monks

# New ICTU president in call for intelligent fightback

NEW Congress president Jack O'Connor has called for an "intelligent" fightback by workers and their families in the face of a relentless attack on living standards.

Referring to the calling off of the March 30 day of action, he reminded delegates that "this is a marathon not a sprint" and that the challenges that lay ahead would not be met by "walking around town for a few hours".

He said: "What we decided to do at the Congress meeting of February 24 was to urge unions to conduct ballots to secure mandates for a sustained campaign of action in pursuit of collectively negotiated agreement."

"And in the absence of that I am not going to threaten the Minister for Finance with the riots that seem to pre-occupy his imagination."

"But I believe we can offer instead the prospect of a sustained and relentless industrial campaign conducted workplace by workplace."

"I believe we can promise him and those who believe that working people should carry the burden of this crisis a response that will not end in one day with a walk about town – or a riot for that matter – but which will go on and on, workplace after workplace, and that will be there to meet them every morning they wake up."

Mr O'Connor said that while he hoped this did not have to happen, he was determined not to allow any group of workers "to be isolated or have their agreements torn up".

This battle he claimed would be conducted in an "intelligent way" that

would not expose union members, their families or ordinary citizens "to unnecessary hardship or potential danger" through "blind adventurism".

He said the government had failed to honour nine separate pieces of employment protection legislation and described their attempt to persuade European Council heads of government to adopt the Solemn Declaration on workers' rights "monumental hypocrisy" when they were not prepared to apply it at home.

Mr O'Connor added: "Indeed, this is graphically illustrated by the plight of 10 contract cleaner members of my own union who are today picketing John Gormley's office at the Customs House having been dismissed for no other reason than that they are members of a trade union."

He claimed that effective organisation was vital and flagged up the decision by conference to set up a commission into the issue.

Mr O'Connor said: "Let's be frank. We are not nearly as well equipped as we should be to address the challenge facing the people we represent."

"Unless and until we do the content of our resolutions will remain little more than aspirational."

He concluded: "My fundamental objective is to achieve the maximum unity in our trade union and labour movement because it is not just about unity between organisations and institutions but, more profoundly, between the working men and women of this island."



**STAMP OF APPROVAL**

**OUTGOING** Congress president Patricia McKeown is presented with a framed First Day Cover of the recent An Post issue marking SIPTU's centenary by her successor Jack O'Connor. He will be joined by fellow EC officers, below from left, vice presidents Eugene McGlone, Patricia King and treasurer Joe O'Flynn



## EXECUTIVE COUNCIL 2009-2011

### Officers:

**President**  
**Vice President**  
**Vice President**  
**Treasurer**

Jack O'Connor SIPTU  
Patricia King SIPTU  
Eugene McGlone UNITE  
Joe O'Flynn SIPTU

### Ordinary Members:

Larry Broderick IBOA  
Brian Campfield NIPSA  
Shay Cody IMPACT  
Eamon Devoy TEEU  
Pamela Dooley UNISON  
Seamus Dooley NUJ  
Liam Doran INO  
John Douglas MANDATE  
Steve Fitzpatrick CWU  
Tom Geraghty PSEU  
Norin Greene UNITE  
Arthur Hall TEEU  
Brendan Hayes SIPTU  
Blair Horan CPSU  
Mike Jennings IFUT  
Jimmy Kelly UNITE

Peter MacMenamin TUI  
Patricia McKeown UNISON  
Peter McLoone IMPACT  
Jim Moore UCATT  
Maire Morgan NIPSA  
Louise O'Donnell IMPACT  
Paddy O'Shaughnessy BATU  
Shelia Numan INTO  
Marie NiChuinneagain INTO  
Jerry Shanahan UNITE  
Anne Speed SIPTU  
Linda Tanham MANDATE  
Clare Tracey INO  
John White ASTI  
Eric Fleming SIPTU



Get the message: Protestors during Brian Cowen's speech



Top table huddle: Discussions before one of week's sessions



Good cause: Trocaire's Alice Mary Higgins and Congress equality officer David Joyce at conference stall



Going online: Laptops put to effective use in conference hall

# DEFENDING LOWER PAID WORKERS



**CIVIL PUBLIC & SERVICES UNION**

# WORKING WITH YOU

**JOIN US**  
[www.cpsu.ie](http://www.cpsu.ie)



# CRUCIAL VICTORY

THE recent victory of Suzanne Breen and the Sunday Tribune is not just a cause for celebration among journalists but should be welcomed by all who care about civil liberties.

For those who recognise the importance of journalism in society the decision of Judge Thomas Burgess in Belfast Recorder's Court was a landmark judgment.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) had sought a court order forcing Suzanne Breen, the Northern Ireland editor of the Sunday Tribune and long-standing NUJ member, to hand over her mobile telephone, computer records and notes about the Real IRA following publication of stories relating to the vicious murder of two soldiers in the attack on Massereene Barracks in Antrim.

Had the court order being granted the PSNI would have been not one step closer to securing convictions for the Massereene attack – but for journalism such an outcome would have had grave consequences.

Ms Breen had received a phone call from a caller who supplied a recognised code word claiming responsibility for what Judge Thomas Burgess described as "a cold-blooded and ruthless attack carried out with the use of considerable firepower".

Throughout the Troubles many journalists in Northern Ireland would have received similar calls. The practice of claiming responsibility for atrocities by means of a recognised code word is an established convention.

Breen was on her way to Sainsburys when she received the call. She duly reported the chilling words of the spokesman in the Sunday Tribune: "We make no apology for killing British soldiers while they continue to occupy Ireland. Nor do we apologise for shooting the pizza delivery men who were collaborating with the British military personnel by servicing them."

In demanding that Breen hand over her notes the PSNI was fully aware that had she done so Breen would have placed her own life and the life of her partner and 14-month old child at risk. As she told the recorder's court last week a paramilitary organisation which viewed Polish pizza delivery men as legitimate targets would certainly view a

journalist turned informer as also being a legitimate and desirable target.

Yet counsel for the PSNI claimed there was no verifiable threat to Breen's life. The journalist accepted that there was no risk as long as she abided by the NUJ code of conduct, as any journalist faced with a demand to breach professional confidentiality would be expected to do. Giving in to the demand of the police that she cross the Rubicon would place her at permanent risk.

The judge accepted that to grant the order would be a breach of Breen's rights under the European Convention. He also acknowledged that the material held by the journalist was exempt under the Terrorism Act 2000, upholding an important principle in relation to journalistic material. This was a useful acknowledgement but should not be seen as recognising the absolute right of journalists to protect sources in all situations.

The judge accepted Breen's claim that her life would be at risk, noting that the PSNI had not accepted his invitation to place evidence to counter any of her evidence.

Breen and her legal team fought and won the case with their hands tied behind their back. The PSNI gave evidence at a private hearing and offered no public evidence in support of the application, a cynical use of the Terrorism Act, which served no public interest.

Breen and her editor Noirin Hegarty made it clear that any evidence relevant to the police investigation was already in the public domain. It is hard not to conclude that what the PSNI were engaged in was a fishing expedition aimed at securing access to all of Breen's journalistic material

and not just in respect to one story.

A more productive use of resources would be to focus attention on those responsible for the Massereene murders.

We've also asked legitimate questions about the motivation of the PSNI.

Initially they sought to pursue Ms Breen in connection with a story, which stated that the Real IRA were about to claim responsibility for the Donaldson murder in Donegal. In publishing the story the Tribune effectively served notice on the PSNI that a statement would be made at an Easter commemoration in a Derry cemetery.

Suzanne Breen turned up and witnessed a man in paramilitary uniform read a statement. This was a public event, published in advance yet there was no police presence.

Afterwards the PSNI sought a statement from Suzanne Breen. This did not form part of the eventual application, presumably because it would have highlighted an inconsistency at the heart of the PSNI's use of the 2000 Act.

Some commentators have been critical of the stance taken by Suzanne Breen and her union, suggesting that it gave succour to the Real IRA campaign.

The NUJ has a proud record of support for anti-sectarian campaigns and our support for the principles involved in this case in no way compromises that stand. The support of the wider trade union movement, across the ICTU and TUC, was vital to the NUJ campaign. So too was the support of parliamentarians in Dublin, Stormont and Westminster. More than 6,000 people signed the NUJ/Sunday Tribune petition, including victims of violence, former prisoners, retired RUC/PSNI personnel at the most senior level, community activists and media workers from all sectors.

At a rally outside the Laganside Court Peter Bunting, assistant general secretary of Congress, stressed the importance of the right to protect sources in a democratic society.

Journalists play a crucial function in democracy. They must be allowed to carry out their professional duties without intimidation – either from paramilitaries or from agents of the state. And those agents must never needlessly place the life of citizens, including journalists, at risk.



Suzanne Breen and ICTU's Peter Bunting outside court



Shoulder to shoulder: Suzanne Breen and, left, Seamus Dooley

## NEWSBRIEFS

### One in five shareholders back Unite Tesco motion

ONE in five Tesco shareholders has refused to support a bid by company chiefs to scupper a Unite resolution at a shareholders AGM in Glasgow earlier this month.

The motion called for an end to discrimination against agency workers employed by firms supplying meat to the grocery combine and was the first time a UK union has used such a tactic.

Some 18 per cent of shareholders did not back Tesco's recommendation to vote against the resolution while another 11.21 per cent voted in favour – more than double the expectation. A further 6.96 per cent abstained.

Unite deputy general secretary Jack Dromey said: "An unmistakable message has been sent to the board. Tesco must hear the voice of workers in the meat industry and now a growing number of its own shareholders."

He added: "Today, [Tesco's chief] Sir Terry Leahy said he was prepared to talk to Unite, he should now personally lead his team to the table. Sir Terry should also hear first hand from agency workers what life is like at firms that supply meat to Tesco."

SIPTU has described the decision by Aer Lingus chiefs to axe three transatlantic routes over the winter months as "madness". The union slammed the removal of flights from Shannon to Chicago and Dublin to San Francisco and Washington as devastating news for the economy and claimed it showed the national carrier should never have been privatised in the first place.

### Fas rethink on cuts to community job schemes

TRAINING and employment agency Fas has rowed back on planned funding cuts to community employment schemes.

The original proposals, announced in May, were slammed by community workers and employers who warned that many projects in deprived areas could go to the wall.

Welcoming last month's U-turn, SIPTU community sector organiser Gerry Flanagan claimed had the cutbacks – estimated to be in the region of €10 million – gone ahead, they would have "undermined the work of up to 1,000 community employment schemes and inevitably led to the closure of some".

He added: "They all are based in disadvantaged areas and often the only outlet for employment."

### Bombardier deal to have no impact on lay-offs

CANADIAN aircraft maker Bombardier has secured a deal to sell 15 of its aircraft to Spanish airline Air Nostrum.

But it's thought the \$793 million sale of the CRJ1000 planes will have no impact on its Belfast operation.

In April, 1,000 workers were made redundant and last month a spokesman for the company confirmed the announcement would have "no impact on the reduction in manpower announced earlier this year".

But he added the move would "help maintain current manpower levels" which were "under constant review".



# Week long strike is suspended by TEEU

THE executive of the Technical Engineering and Electrical Union has unanimously decided to accept the Labour Court recommendation aimed at resolving the union's dispute with employers over the implementation of the Registered Employment Agreement and outstanding pay increases.

Following the meeting, general secretary designate Eamon Devoy, said: "We also decided to suspend our week long strike to await the response of the employer organi-

sations. However, we reserve the right to reactivate our industrial action and pursue our all-out picket application to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions vigorously if required."

The Labour Court Recommendation provides for all parties to adhere to the REA, pay increases of 2.5 per cent from September 1 and a further 2.4 per cent from January 1, 2010, as well as a review of the REA within four months



## MONDAY, JULY 6

The strike is resounding success from the onset. The media announced hundreds of sites closed and 10,500 electricians out on strike. By 7pm CEF director general Tom Parlan conceded the strike had met its objective and that 5,000 electricians employed by ECA companies were out on strike and every major construction site was closed.

## TUESDAY, JULY 7

An emergency debate is held in the Dail at the end of which the Tánaiste Mary Coughlan announces her intention, under appropriate legislation, to instruct the Labour Relations Commission to intervene in the dispute. The employers and TEEU are called to bilateral talks scheduled for next day.

## WEDNESDAY, JULY 8

Fourteen hours of talks sees no progress with employers continuing to pursue a 10pc pay cut and diminished conditions of employment for electricians and apprentices. NECI

## DISPUTE TIMELINE

protested on steps of Tom Johnson House, where the LRC and Labour Court are located. Solicitors' letters from both NECI and the non-aligned contractors were served on Kieran Mulvey, CEO of the LRC, threatening legal proceedings to halt the process.

## THURSDAY, JULY 9

A further 14 hours of discussions were frustrated by disagreement between ECA and the AECl on a potential solution. If a pay rise was agreed, it would be a voluntary collective agreement not registered with the Labour Court as a variation to the REA, at least in the short term. The AECl was concerned there would be a haemorrhage of

their members to NECI if they agreed to rise.

## FRIDAY, JULY 10

All non-pay issues agreed at the LRC, including a full commitment to the REA by all the parties, a review of the agreement, a joint approach to compliance and related matters, an investigation into the difficulties surrounding the resolution of the dispute and a 'no victimisation' clause. The pay issue was not agreed and was jointly referred by all the parties to the Labour Court.

## SATURDAY, JULY 11

The Labour Court hears case and subsequently issues a recommendation.

The president, general secretary and the general secretary designate are strongly recommending the following to the EMC:

- That the union accepts the Labour Court recommendation, which also encompasses the LRC settlement proposals.
  - That the dispute be deferred in good faith, pickets lifted and the members return to work pending confirmation of the employers accepting of the Labour Court recommendation.
  - That the matter be reviewed at our scheduled meeting on Thursday, July 16.
  - Should either or both of the employers bodies refuse to accept the Labour Court recommendation then the dispute will be reactivated, subsequent to the builders holidays, and the ICTU all-out picket will be vigorously pursued.
- SUNDAY, JULY 12**  
TEEU Executive agrees to accept Labour Court recommendation and suspend action while the union awaits responses from the employer bodies.

## HEALTH



INO chief Liam Doran said if society was to survive it needed decent health service

# INO launches web initiative on cuts

THE Irish Nurses Organisation has launched a new drive to highlight the effects of cutbacks on staff and patients and to encourage more public involvement in health services locally.

Cutbacks Watch is a web-based initiative allowing members, patients, families and the public to post comments online recording their own experiences of cuts and their impact on patient care as well as finding out their views about how services can be improved.

The service can be accessed through [www.ino.ie](http://www.ino.ie) or by going directly to [www.stophealthcuts.ie](http://www.stophealthcuts.ie).

An INO source said: "We want to highlight closed beds, staff shortages, specific areas where patients are suffering, such as when services are cut and treatment delayed

"As well as leaving comments there is a facility to send photographs and video clips of, for example, a closed ward, ambulances held up outside EDs.

"We will share this campaign on other sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter among others, where we hope to reach the maximum number of people.

"Comments, photos, video clips will all be vetted before going live on our site and patient confidentiality will be upheld at all times."

To complement the new site, the INO have also produced a FREEPOST postcard for those who do not wish to go online but who do want to make a comment.

It is hoped completed postcards will be delivered in bulk to the Minister for Health. These will

be available nationally over the next few weeks.

INO president Sheila Dickson said: "This web-based initiative was never more relevant in the light of the statement by HSE chief Prof Brendan Drumm openly acknowledging the need to cut €70 million and his admission that this would negatively impact upon frontline services."

General secretary, Liam Doran added: "This is undoubtedly a struggle to protect and maintain any vestige of a public health service worthy of the name.

"It is simply impossible to reduce health expenditure without there being a serious, damaging and long-term impact upon patients, clients and the staff who work in the health service."

He claimed that every citizen knew that the country was in a "most difficult economic situation", but that the government must understand that if society "is simply to survive" it needed a decent public health service "to maintain the common good".

Mr Doran said: "We are a society and a community, first of all, and if we have to delay spending, on infrastructural projects so that we maintain essential public services, then so be it.

"The INO is absolutely committed to protecting the interests of our members, both in terms of delivering safe care and in the context of their terms and conditions of employment.

"At this time one can only see difficulties ahead so we must be united, consistent and determined knowing that preserving a public health service is absolutely the right thing to do even in these historically difficult economic times."

## NEWSBRIEFS

### Put public services back at the heart of Europe

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis has warned trade unionists they must redouble their efforts to press for "a vision of a social Europe" in the face of centre right gains at last month's EU parliamentary polls.

Speaking at the ESPU congress in Brussels on June 8, he claimed neoliberals in the European Commission and national capitals were at one in attacking public services.

Mr Prentis said their agenda was "liberalisation of public services, 'competition' as a solution to all problems, equating quality with 'cheapness' and wage restraint only for those at the bottom."

He claimed this agenda has been "utterly wrong - wrong in an economic sense, wrong in a social sense and wrong in a moral sense", and underlined how the current crisis had showed "these neoliberal policies to be both figuratively and literally bankrupt".

Mr Prentis added: "It was now up to the unions over the next five years, not just to promote public services, but to strive to place the principles upon which these essential services are based back at the heart of the European project."

### DHL staff vote to accept redundancy package

SIPTU members at DHL have voted by 93 per cent to accept redundancy terms.

The package, negotiated by branch organiser Pat Ward, involves six weeks pay per year of service with some additional regular allowances incorporated in the calculations.

It is inclusive of statutory entitlements.

Employees also have the option of becoming service partners with DHL in locations where depots are closing, such as Athlone, Cavan, Enniscorthy, Galway, Sligo, Tralee and Waterford.

Mr Ward said: "Besides ensuring a continuing stream of income for staff being let go, the service partner model will allow former DHL employees to work with other businesses and industries in the towns where depots are closing.

"The Ideas Institute will be involved in providing the training and upskilling that former employees will require to operate on a self-employed basis.

"We are also managing to preserve a significant number of jobs at the three central hubs in Dublin, Cork and Shannon."

# Calling time on climate change



MORE than 1,000 people took to Sandymount Strand last month in a protest over climate change.

The protestors formed a human hourglass at the June 13 event as part of a campaign to raise awareness of the issue in advance of the Copenhagen summit of world leaders in September.

Organised by Stop Climate Chaos, a coalition of groups including Action Aid, Oxfam Ireland, Concern and Trocaire, the hourglass theme was chosen to remind the 190 gov-

ernments invited to the meeting that time is short in dealing with the crisis.

The outline of the hourglass was formed by participants holding pieces of blue paper.

Other demonstrators on the inside holding red sheets ran through the gap in the centre to represent sand draining through the hourglass.

Oxfam's policy and advocacy coordinator Colin Roche said: "The time to act is now. We'll be urging to the government to make climate change a clear priority for the next six months."

Pictures: Oxfam Ireland

# Usdaw turns up heat on max temp bar

USDAW is turning up the heat on legislators in a bid to have a maximum temperature in the workplace enshrined in UK law.

There is already a minimum temperature law on the statute books, but employers are only obligated to keep temperatures at work at a "reasonable" level.

The retail union claims many employees are therefore forced to work under sweltering conditions which can damage their health.

Following pressure from Usdaw, the UK government has asked the Health and Safety Executive to review current regulations and the union is gathering evidence from

members to support the consultation. Usdaw member Julie Risk, was recently awarded damages after collapsing at work due to heat exhaustion.

She said: "Collapsing at work because of the heat was a nasty experience and put me out of action for two weeks. I know most employers want their staff to have comfortable working conditions, as it makes sense for both the employee and employer.

"I think that making it illegal to have temperatures too high will help to make sure that companies give it a higher priority, which can only be a good thing."

General secretary John Hannett added:

"We have long campaigned for a legal maximum workplace temperature. We are delighted the government has listened to us and is reviewing the situation.

"I am hopeful that a maximum workplace temperature will be put in place by the end of this year so that, next summer, workers will be able to work comfortably and in the knowledge that they are protected in law.

"With rising temperatures being predicted over the coming years, it is even more important we recognise this as an issue and take action for the good of working people."

[www.usdaw.org.uk/getactive/resource\\_library/1060172582\\_11615.html](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/getactive/resource_library/1060172582_11615.html)



Assistant general secretary Peter Bunting and president Patricia McKeown addressed Belfast rally on behalf of Congress

# Belfast says No to racism

HUNDREDS of working people gathered together earlier this month to express their outrage at violence directed at immigrant communities in Northern Ireland

The July 2 rally in Belfast city centre followed a spate of recent attacks on migrant workers from Romania, Poland and India.

Speaking at the gathering, ICTU assistant general secretary Peter Bunting called for properly funded programmes to combat what he described as the "disease of racism" across society in the North.

He said: "This event today ought to be the launch-pad for a new campaign for sufficient resources for anti-racism champions in every community, across the creeds and the classes.

"This should be seen not as a fire-fighting exercise, an emergency plan for the next assault, but as an investment in the human infrastructure of our society.

"We are prepared to invest to prevent the spread of swine flu, and measles, mumps and rubella. We must invest in the prevention of other social illnesses.

"Racism is a contagious disease. But racism is a preventable disease.

"We can and we must invest in prevention because the cure can be too expensive."

Other speakers at the event included south Belfast community worker Heather Elwood, Polish Association's Maciej Bator and ICTU President Patricia McKeown.



Pictures: Kevin Cooper photoline@supanet.com

# Poll reveals North's prejudice hike

AN Equality Commission report has flagged up what it calls the changing face of prejudice in Northern Ireland after a survey showed a deterioration in attitudes towards neighbours, work colleagues and even family members from a different background, sexual orientation or race.

The findings, published on June 24, showed nearly half of those questioned (51pc) would mind a little or a lot having a Traveller as a neighbour - 10pc more than in 2005.

More than one in five (23pc) claimed they would dislike having a gay, lesbian or bisexual person living next door, compared to 14pc three years ago.

The same number (23pc) said they would have the same difficulty with a migrant worker.

Almost one in six of those quizzed (16pc) said they would not want a person with mental ill-health as a neighbour, while six per cent felt the same about the physically disabled.

Interestingly, bearing in mind the North's recent history of sectarian strife, having a neighbour of a different religion was a difficulty for only six per cent of respondents.

Announcing the findings, Chief Commissioner Bob Collins claimed the results showed "a hardening of views" towards some groups.

He said: "Attitudes became more intense as the respondents considered closer social contact with the groups in question.

"So in attitudes towards many groups more people would mind having them as an in-law, than would mind having them as a neighbour or a work colleague.

"The most negative attitudes were expressed towards Travellers. A substantial minority also responded negatively towards gay, lesbian or bisexual people and migrant workers.

"Each of these areas has seen an increase in people expressing negative views, with 51pc stating they would mind if a close relative were to marry a Traveller, compared to 38pc in 2005."

But Mr Collins pointed out the research had

also highlighted a high level of support for equality legislation. He added "The research indicates that prejudice on religious grounds is broadly similar to that found three years ago and is still registered as the area attracting the least negative attitudes from the people polled.

"While it is a consolation so few people expressed such attitudes we can't assume sectarianism is no longer an issue.

"We know that the contrary is true. We know, too, that patterns of behaviour from one context can be transferred to another.

"We are very conscious that negative views covering a range of other grounds including race, disability, and sexual orientation are on the rise.

"With an issue of such importance and universal application as equality, it is necessary to take a detached look at what people think.

"Surveys like this identify developing trends and they enable us to confront the challenge of changing attitudes."

# 110,000 NEW IRISH JOBS IF WE GO GREEN

THE Green Economy can deliver tens of thousands of quality jobs for Ireland and it can achieve "energy independence", a Congress seminar has been told.

Executive Council member Jerry Shanahan, who spoke at the June 24 event in Dublin's Gresham Hotel, claimed Ireland was well-placed to follow the example of Germany.

It is estimated there will be more than 2.5 million Green Economy jobs in Germany by 2030.

Mr Shanahan said: "On the scale of the Irish economy, that would amount to about 110,000 jobs."

He told the audience that Green Economy jobs were less vulnerable to being moved abroad.

"Jobs in wind, solar, tidal power and biomass are labour intensive and difficult to outsource abroad.

"We can, at some stage in the future, meet most if not all of our energy needs, and certainly all of our electricity needs from indigenous re-

newable sources. But to do so we need to replicate the experience of Germany and other world leaders in terms of high level political commitment, sound investment and a coherent national strategy on the Green Economy."

Mr Shanahan suggested that having become "energy independent" Ireland could follow the example of countries such as Denmark and even become "a net exporter of electricity".

He pointed out that the state energy sector was best placed to lead growth and development in this area, but claimed its actions had to be planned and coordinated.

Mr Shanahan said: "In Ireland, the state energy companies are pioneering many areas of renewable energy and developing new eco-based products and services.

"We have four state companies - ESB, Bord na Mona, Coillte and Bord Gáis - competing to supply a mix of renewables and conventional energy to the Irish electricity market.

"Good coordination will ensure there is no du-

plication, or wasting of resources. Mr Shanahan warned that any strategy on the Green Economy would have to address regulatory and planning issues.

He added: "We need to ask ourselves if we can afford to permit often private, parochial concerns to frustrate vitally needed investment at a time of a national economic emergency."

Conference organiser Liam Berney said: "Now more than ever we need to clearly identify the potential for employment in the sector and, crucially, recognise the barriers that exist to the creation of such jobs in order to make clear, accurate recommendations to policy makers.

"We can't afford to be stuck in the slow lane."

THE TUC has welcomed the "bold vision" of a UK government consultation on the future of clean coal technology and claims it could lead to the creation of tens of thousands of skilled manufacturing jobs.

General secretary Brendan Barber said: "The TUC has long argued that investment in clean coal technology has a crucial role to play in guaranteeing energy security and easing the transition to a low carbon economy."



# CSO stats show 90,000 jobs go in first quarter

NEW FIGURES from the Central Statistics Office have revealed the loss of 90,000 jobs from January to March, bringing the total over the preceding 12 months to 158,000.

More than 30,000 jobs went in the wholesale, retail and motor trade sectors while the house building trade continued to suffer with the loss of more than 60,000 positions over the year.

There are now fewer than two million people in work for the first time in three years. The unemployment rate now stands at 10.2 per cent, the highest since 1997.

One economist claimed the losses had "spread like wildfire" from construction to the rest of the economy during the first quarter.

There were 222,800 people unemployed in the first quarter of 2009. Male unemployment

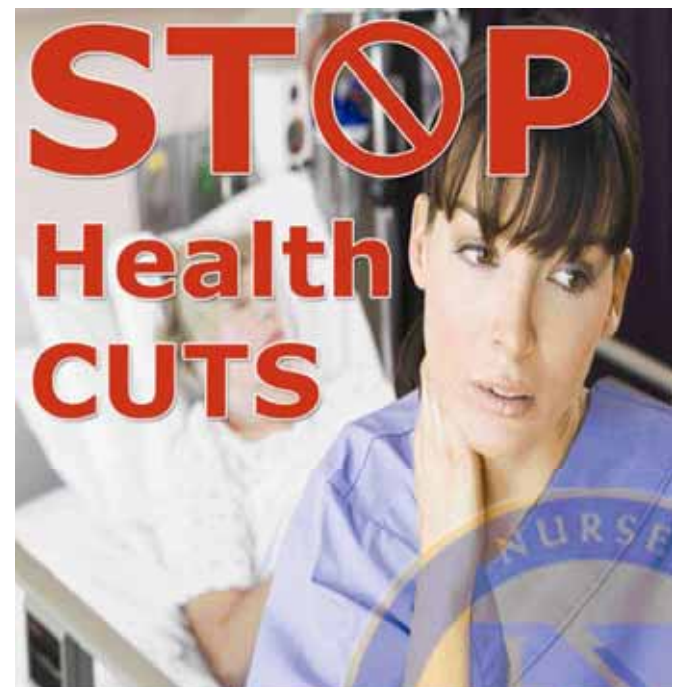
shot up by 85,300 with the number of unemployed females rising 28,200.

Figures contained in the CSO's Quarterly National Household Survey showed that migrant workers were particularly vulnerable with numbers of foreign-born unemployed rising by 26,000.

Many of them had been employed in hard-hit retailing and basic services such as cleaning and gardening.

Large numbers of migrants had decided there was little prospect of finding new work and had decided to leave - CSO stats showed the state's foreign population fell by 21,000.

The survey also flagged up how young men without third level qualifications were continuing to lose jobs at a much faster rate than other groups.



## Patients Deserve Safe Care

Post your observations online - [www.ino.ie](http://www.ino.ie) or Complete and return our postcard (FREEPOST)



The Whitworth Building, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7  
Tel: 01 6640600 Fax: 01 6610466 Email: [ino@ino.ie](mailto:ino@ino.ie) [www.ino.ie](http://www.ino.ie)

The Irish Nurses Organisation is the professional trade union for nurses and midwives with more than 43,000 members - or four out of every five nurses and midwives

## PSEU to survey LGBT members

THE PSEU has launched a survey to gather information on the workplace experiences of its Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender (LGBT) members.

The questionnaire was developed with the help of the Gay & Lesbian Equality Network.

Deputy general secretary Billy Hannigan said: "Currently there is no data available to the union to indicate that LGBT members are satisfied that their workplace is free from discrimination."

"The survey is intended to help us learn what action, if any, the union might need to take to address any concerns these members might have."

[www.pseu.ie/survey](http://www.pseu.ie/survey)

THE ITUC has launched a new video spot to highlight the workplace exploitation of children and press governments to tackle the menace more effectively, both through funding quality education and enforcing labour law.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zZXVq7eLw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4zZXVq7eLw)

## Back union hotels

SIPTU has launched Rest Assured a directory of unionised hotels that employ its members.

General president Jack O'Connor said: "Members of unions should support establishments that employ union labour and offer decent terms and conditions of employment."

"By choosing a union hotel over a non-union establishment you are playing your part in protecting the livelihood of fellow trade unionists."

Many of the hotels featured in the online brochure offer special deals for SIPTU members.

[www.siptu.ie/SupportServices/MembershipBenefits/UnionHotelDeals/](http://www.siptu.ie/SupportServices/MembershipBenefits/UnionHotelDeals/)

## FUNDING

# Levy threat to provision of childcare

CHILDCARE providers, many of whom have already seen a decrease in funding because of the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme, are now facing further financial hardships as a result of the one per cent levy on pay.

SIPTU's Trevor Quinn said this will exacerbate the position of those working poor earning just above the minimum wage of €8.65 an hour who will now be subject to the new tax.

It follows a previous report by Community Technical Aid which found the CCSS had "created a very effective poverty trap, creating a system where the working poor are to support those at risk and those on social welfare".

Mr Quinn added: "We have met parents who have a disposable income of €19 a week. They are on band D of the subvention scheme which means they are not entitled to any assistance through that form of funding. This year's Budgets clearly do not take

into account the struggle modern families are having in maintaining their employment and accessing affordable childcare."

He welcomed the "free year" or ECCE scheme that had redirected €170m from the Early Childcare Supplement to help the sector, but questioned whether it would actually cover the expenses to a working family of providing early years education.

Mr Quinn pointed out the Early Childcare Supplement was running at €480m last year and claimed an additional input from this fund to the community childcare providers would "go a long way toward alleviating many of the problems they currently face".

He added: "Also the new subvention system provides for funding to the childcare providers through a descending subsidies scale to the parents depending on their financial situation and the age of the child."

"This form of funding has raised fear



amount staff about the loss of employment or pay cuts as the facilities no longer receives staff funding but are reliant on funding from parents."

SIPTU is also concerned about the knock-on effect on employment chances for women.

Recent research has shown that mums have only have a one in four chance of still working full-time and a one in five chance if their children are cared for by relative.

Mr Quinn added: "The current funding scheme has already had retrograde implications for several childcare facilities with protective notice being issued to staff through lack of funding."

"This in turn leads to fewer positions for children and as such fewer opportunities for working mothers to gain affordable, quality childcare. A vicious downward spiral has been introduced."

"With Ireland ranked in the bottom of the European league on this issue we must consider the implications on low income workers in the future and their ability to provide for their children."



SIPTU Community Childcare Campaign demo in Cork last December

## Each month The Union Post features the story of a prisoner of conscience taken from Amnesty International files

### Amnesty International Mansour Ossanlu, trade unionist



Mansour Ossanlu

ON July 10 2007 Mansour Ossanlu, 48-year-old leader of the Union of Workers of the Tehran and Suburbs Bus Company, was bundled into a car without warning and beaten by men in plain clothes. He has been in held in an Iranian prison ever since.

Amnesty International believes he is a prisoner of conscience, jailed solely for his peaceful trade union activities. He should be released immediately and unconditionally.

Long before the recent protests over Iran's disputed election result, the Iranian authorities were clamping down on trade unionists and other human rights defenders.

Mansoor Ossanlu was detained for nine months in 2005-6 after the bus drivers' unions went on strike for better pay.

Once again, his 'crime' was simply to be a trade unionist.

When bus workers went on strike to demand official recognition of their union and to call for Ossanlu's release, they were met with a severe crackdown. Up to 1,000 union members were

arrested and more than 40 bus workers who took part in the strike were sacked.

Even though Ossanlu's union is free and democratic it has been subject to repeated harassment by Iranian security forces as it is not recognised by the authorities.

Independent trade unions are not permitted in Iran. Workers have few legal rights or protections and union activists are regularly beaten, arrested, jailed and tortured. Government bodies select who can stand for union posts and all public sector jobs.

Shortly before his arrest, Ossanlu travelled to Europe to build international support for an independent Iranian trade union movement.

During a visit to Amnesty's London office, he said that the appeals from its members and trade union activists "made us know that we were not alone."

Please keep up this support.

Amnesty is working with global unions to help secure Mansoor Ossanlu's release. To take action go to [www.amnesty.org.uk/tradeunions](http://www.amnesty.org.uk/tradeunions)

## A TRADE UNION PUB FOR TRADE UNIONISTS



Lunches served Mon - Sat 12pm - 3pm  
Talking bowls served Fri & Sat 3.30pm - 6pm  
Live music 6 nights per week  
Monthly art exhibitions  
The best choice of local & worldwide beers in the city  
No TVs or gaming machines



REAL BEER • REAL FOOD • REAL MUSIC • REAL PEOPLE

THE JOHN HEWITT 51 Donegall Street, Belfast BT1 2FH. 028 90233768

# One city, two summits



People get ready: Detroit's People's Summit presented different view of US

THE National Business Summit, held last month in Detroit, attracted up to 3,000 heavyweights of American industry.

In the plush surroundings of Motor City's Renaissance Center, the chiefs of Conoco-Phillips, Microsoft, Dow Chemical, General Motors, Chrysler, Humana Inc., Ascension Health, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, BNSF Railway Co, and PVS Chemicals debated "innovation and policy ideas in technology, energy, environment and manufacturing".

But close by in Grand Circus Park, there was a different gathering taking place – a People's Summit – and over three days workers and activists gathered together for a festival of protest "to confront the big business CEOs and politicians gathering next door".

An organiser said: "We staged this because the National Business Summit was held in a city with sky-high unemployment and poverty rates as well

as a massive number of home foreclosures.

"With a registration fee of \$1,500, I doubt if any one of the victims of these foreclosures let alone those workers laid off would have been able to attend.

"One thing's for sure - no one will be in the interests of those most affected by the economic collapse."

The focus on the marketplace concerns organizers of the People's Summit, a simultaneous alternative gathering consisting of marches, rallies and workshops.

Detroit community activist Abayomi Azikiwe added: "The whole thrust of the summit, in our opinion, is misguided.

"The financial community, as well as the industrialists, have created the conditions for the worst economic crisis we've faced in 75 years.

"We don't feel they have a solution."



Full sail: The Jeanie Johnston

# Famine ship trio get €16k back pay

THREE crew members of famine ship Jeanie Johnston, hit by a row over unpaid wages, have finally been awarded €16,000 in back pay.

But former operator Riverrun Ireland is appealing the award of another €5,000 by the Rights Commissioner Service to a fourth member of the crew.

The three masted barque is a replica of the original Jeanie Johnston which shipped 2,500 Famine victims to North America in the 19th century.

It was built largely with public funds and is berthed on the North Wall in Dublin outside the headquarters of its current owners, the Dublin Docklands Development Authority.

The Jeanie Johnston has not been in use this year and it is understood the DDAA is seeking a new operator.

It has been suggested as a possible replacement training ship for the Asgard II.

Last month, International Transport Federation inspector Ken Fleming of SIPTU called on Transport Minister Noel Dempsey and the DDAA to intervene in this long running dispute.

Welcoming the payments to Capt Dermot Kavanagh, Second Officer Ian Davies and Bosun Daithi Dempsey, he said he was confident the award to Chief Engineer Patrick Lawlor would be upheld on appeal.

He added: "I hope that when the Jeanie Johnston is chartered again by the DDAA it will ensure the new operator complies with the laws of the state.

"That is the least we should be able to expect from a state agency.

"It should not have taken since April 26 to secure the arrears of pay due to these men.

"Nor should the ITF and SIPTU have had to appeal to the Minister for Transport and the media for help in ensuring these men obtained their entitlements.

He added: "This shabby affair has been embarrassing for the government and the nation as a whole."

# Tribunal in 'landmark ruling'

AN Employment Appeals Tribunal has found that 300 male council workers were discriminated against because of their sex.

The ruling, involving employees at Hartlepool, Middlesbrough and South Tyneside councils, could now lead to 12,000 similar cases being brought across the UK.

It's thought the settlement, described by legal expert as a "landmark ruling", could cost councils hundreds of millions of pounds.

The men had originally lodged their claims at the same time as female co-workers who had complained that bonuses of up to 50 per cent being paid to male gardeners, refuse workers and street sweepers were discriminatory.

While the women's case succeeded and

they were offered settlements, the men – employed as care assistants, leisure attendants, caretakers and drivers – were not.

The EAT ruled the men should have been offered the same back pay as their female colleagues.

Tribunal president Mr Justice Underhill said: "It would be surprising and unsatisfactory if the [Equal Pay] Act offered no remedy to men in a situation like the present.

"The case where men and women do the same job but receive different rates of pay is the paradigm of the kind of situation which the Act was intended to prevent: how would it seem if – unusually, but not impossibly – the rules were reversed and the 'piggyback' claimants were not men but women?"



# Communications Workers' Union

Improving the working lives of people in the following industries:  
Telecoms, Postal, Courier, IT, Engineering, Call Centre,  
Managerial, General Communications Industry

To improve your working life  
To ensure your rights are respected  
To have a voice in the workplace

Join the Communications  
Workers' Union

Your Union, Your Voice

[www.cwu.ie](http://www.cwu.ie) [www.callcentreunion.ie](http://www.callcentreunion.ie)

575 North Circular Road, Dublin 1

Tel: 01 8663000 Fax: 01 8663099



Sombre: KWCDT staff clear out their desks

# Frontline jobs service goes to the wall as funds dry up

A FRONTLINE initiative providing employment services to three of the Republic's most deprived electoral districts has closed with the loss of 11 jobs.

The KWCDT (Kimmage, Walkinstown, Crumlin, Drimnagh, and Terenure) Partnership went to the wall after the withdrawal of funding by state agency Pobal.

Seven staff at the partnership's head office and four Local Employment Services workers lost their positions while 56 other workers employed under the jobs initiative scheme have been spared temporarily.

This follows an agreement with FÁS to transfer the management of the scheme to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

The partnership was set up in 1996 to manage social inclusion programmes for employment, community development, childcare, young people at risk, training and education.

More than 84 per cent of the 3,900 unemployed people who have used the KWCDT local employment service since 2001 have gone on into training and employment.

At present about 300 people currently use its services, and all have signed a petition to save it.

The closure follows months of uncertainty after an announcement in March of a withdrawal of funding.

Carol French, liaison officer with the Local Employment Scheme at KWCDT, said: "We have gone through hell for four months.

"We were told we would only receive 40 per

cent of our redundancy payment, we would not receive our holiday pay, the offices would close and the services to the community lost."

There are 37 other partnerships throughout the country and fears are growing that similar initiatives will be put to the sword.

Trish McCann, childcare coordinator for the partnership, said: "Pobal are being tough on us in order to set a precedent when it comes to dealing with the other partnerships, many of which are now being audited.

"All we have built up will be lost... people who need the service more than ever before are losing out"

"They probably face the same fate as us." One of the partnership projects, the Childcare Information Bureau in Crumlin has access to funding worth just over €1m from the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, for a childcare facility in Pearse Park.

There is now uncertainty if the facility can go ahead if the CIB is wound down. Pobal has claimed funding for "viable" projects would remain in the area but has not clarified what projects will be funded and who will be responsible for managing them.

Ms French said the withdrawal of funding will have a devastating impact locally when employment services are most needed.

She added: "We have areas within the partnership that have unemployment rates already at 16 per cent. These areas would always have had higher unemployment than the national average during the boom years.

"At the moment, there are vague promises of starting up new projects in 2010, but everything that we have built up here over the last number

of years will be lost. They will be starting from scratch, and people who need the service more than ever before are the ones who are losing out."

Paul Crinion, acting manager of the partnership, added: "There is 50 to 60 years of combined experience in this office, with local knowledge and an understanding of the community networks and the statutory networks that can support them.

"When we are gone, there will be a huge services gap. Even though we are packing up to leave, the phone is hopping with enquiries about enterprise projects and millennium grants for students."

Talks took place between KWCDT's board of management and Pobal, following a recommendation by the Labour Relations Commission that a further extension be granted to the partnership to allow discussions over the transfer of staff and services to another partnership company.

IMPACT official Matt Staunton, who brought the case to the LRC, has said the union would pursue the case to the Labour Court to ensure appropriate sectoral redundancy entitlements, including withheld holiday payments, for those workers affected.

He added, "The LRC expressed surprise at the difference in approach of the two state agencies involved.

"The board of management moved heaven and earth to work things out with FÁS, which has saved 56 workers on the jobs initiative scheme.

"By contrast, Pobal took a severe 'slash and burn' approach to the partnership, and were unwilling to engage with the board of management. They seem intent on shutting it down and dancing on its grave."

# DISGRACEFUL Carr blast at Batt's education cutbacks



Pointed criticism: INTO chief John Carr

A NEW report has highlighted how government cuts will hit disadvantaged children hardest and impact on literacy levels, the INTO claims.

The union says findings published last month by the National Economic and Social Forum back up its view that investment and not cutbacks are needed in education.

General secretary John Carr underlined how Education Minister Batt O'Keefe was slashing back on essential supports.

He added: "Nothing shows this more clearly than the disgraceful decision to cut funding for free books.

"Government is being urged to make literacy a priority for disadvantaged children and its response is to deprive poor children of books."

Mr Carr flagged up several other examples contained in the Child Literacy and Social Inclusion report of where government was failing in its duty to children.

He said the report had called for ICT to be integrated into school-based activities but that

Mr O'Keefe had failed "to invest a cent" in ICT and was "mothballing" his own government's commitment to spend €252 million on it.

Mr Carr also claimed the report had argued for the strengthening of distributed leadership, yet the government had "embargoed posts of responsibility in schools", thereby dismantling leadership capability of schools.

## EXPERTISE

He added that the report had advocated the fostering of literacy expertise through professional development but that funding for such development was "almost non-existent", adding "teachers pay for their own professional development".

Mr Carr said at present young children have to wait years to see speech and language therapists despite the need identified in the report for multi-disciplinary teams to be developed, including speech and language specialists, to work with schools around literacy practice.

He continued: "In too many Irish schools there are children with no money for books,

no lunch to bring to school, no one to supervise or check homework, no one to get them in off the street in the evening.

"There are children who have no one to put them to bed, wash them, control them, turn off the television, call them for school, make a breakfast, encourage or praise them, listen to them or occasionally hug them."

He said teachers in primary school are teaching children who after school hours are skirting around the edges of drug abuse, joyriding, petty crime and violence.

"They don't need another report telling them what needs to be done. They want a government that says once and for all that children at risk are a priority and that real action in these areas will follow."

He added: "A report that isn't backed by that commitment must come with a health warning. Teachers cannot implement recommendations without government supports."

www.nesf.ie

## Set builders keep paid bank holidays

CONSTRUCTION crews working on film sets in the UK have successfully fought to keep their paid bank holidays, on top of statutory holidays, according to the media and entertainment union, BECTU.

Film producers had attempted to include bank holidays in construction crews' statutory leave entitlement, although previously, bank holidays were taken in addition to annual leave.

BECTU assistant general secretary Martin Spence said: "When you cut through the complexity of legal changes and statutory entitlements, at root this was a straightforward issue - members saw a long-standing right being taken away, and they weren't having it.

"They stood firm and this is a great result."

MORE than 300 civil servants have submitted applications for an Irish government offer of a three-year career break, it has been reported.

Those accepted can expect up to €12,500 a year under the scheme but cannot take up paid employment within the state or join a training initiative involving a wage.

Guidelines issued by the Department of Finance outline that a career break may be allowed for family reasons, such as caring for a relative, foreign travel, education or self-employment.

Last month, Finance Minister Brian Lenihan revealed in the Dail that the scheme would be rolled out to local authority and education sectors.

## CWU backs STT bid for Eircom

THE Communication Workers Union is supporting a bid by Singapore Technologies Telemedia for Eircom and comes after similar backing for the move came from the employee share ownership trust Escot.

The union claimed the company needed a new owner who understood the industry and who viewed it as a "long-term investment".

CWU general secretary Steve Fitzpatrick said: "Given that STT is a major player, it presents the prospect of an owner that understands the industry, new technologies and, in our view, the only credible option."

He underlined the union did not want a private equity owner, adding: "Our members' sacrifices were not made to further enrich private equity groups or venture capitalists."



## VIEWPOINT

UCU Political Liaison Officer **JULIE McCAUGHAN** argues university chiefs are willing to sacrifice staff jobs to see Queen's move into academic big league

# Man with the plan ...to cut jobs & close dept

THE Queen's Academic Plan for 2010-2013 recommends that academic staff and teaching fellows not returned in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, should be offered voluntary severance and premature retirement packages.

At present, 103 academics are on the hit-list (initially the plan suggested that up to 333 staff could be axed). There is also a moratorium on recruitment of support staff; and the plan will see the closure of the German department, the Semiconductor and Nanotechnology research

Cluster and E-Science research centre. Both these research groups are recognised as producing world-leading research but are also strongly linked to local business.

Naturally, members of the University and College Union are horrified. Overcoming the initial disbelief, the Local Association officers called an emergency meeting on June 18, and asked members to picket the Queen's University Senate meeting on June 23 – where the VC Prof Gregson was asking Senate to rubberstamp the plan.

Around 200 members joined the picket outside the famous red-bricked Victorian façade that is the Lanyon Building at Queen's – an iconic landmark on Belfast's city-scape.

When politicians and MLAs got wind of the Academic Plan and its content, they reacted swiftly. The Employment and Learning Committee called on the UCU representatives to address the committee as a matter of urgency, and arranged an emergency meeting of the committee.

They also called for the Vice Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor – Gerry McCormick – to appear before them (tout suite!).

Unfortunately, the timing was flawed. The Senate had already met at 10.30 that morning and agreed the plan (15 for; six against; four abstentions – 40 per cent of the governing body refusing to endorse the plan).

The deed was done by the time the Employment and Learning Committee met at 12.30 on June 23 – the only time slot it could meet since



About 200 UCU members joined June 23 picket outside Queen's Lanyon building

the plan was announced. Also, the timing of the whole situation is of interest – just as all educational institutions and the Northern Ireland Assembly approach summer recess.

Indeed, the timing was unfortunate but the Committee's incisive questioning was not; with one MLA asking that consideration be given to a judicial review.

Another highlighted to the VC that the plan was based on the English, not Northern Irish, funding model.

Clearly, Northern Ireland's political representatives and the Employment & Learning Committee will continue to watch this space.

UCU officials and members at Queen's University will continue to lobby, and represent those members who have been earmarked for "voluntary" redundancy.

(There have even been reports of some Heads of School suggesting in a firm and forceful manner that if they didn't accept the voluntary severance arrangements, then the alternatives would not be so favourable; rendering some individuals feeling cornered and pressurised to accept).

Is this behaviour acceptable?

We think not. In addition, when questioned by the Department Committee, the VC would only commit to "No compulsory redundancies, at this stage".

But that's not all....As real life is often stranger than fiction, there is indeed a sub-plot to this story. Just a mile from the leafy Queen's quarter,

as it's become titled by our tourism gurus in the North, is Stranmillis University College – Northern Ireland's teacher training college which trains teachers mainly for the state sector.

Stranmillis was all set to merge with Queen's University. A business plan has been produced and is sitting with the Department of Employment & Learning; it's contents not yet available beyond that.

Originally the merger was to happen in September 2009 – but that's not going to hap-

pen as intended; but it's still on the agenda for 2010. Under the merger proposals, the UCU's Stranmillis branch had been given definite assurances there would be no compulsory redundancies. Almost all academic staff at Stranmillis would become teaching fellows employed by Queen's University Belfast. However, remember who was earmarked for redundancy in the Academic Plan? Any staff not actively involved in international-level research. Most Stranmillis academic staff are not involved in research at this level – they are primarily involved in teaching and training teachers.

So where do these UCU Stranmillis branch members fit in to this grand plan?

The VC has said they won't be affected; but he also gave reassurances to 67 staff not returned in the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise that their non-inclusion in the Queen's entry would not adversely affect their careers.

That was in 2007, now less than two years later, 14 of this group are being "targeted" – a case of 'that was then; this is now' perhaps. UCU Stranmillis branch members need to know where they stand – and have withdrawn from the merger talks until they receive a satisfactory response.

By the time Union Post is published, the summer recess will be in full swing. Nothing much happens in Northern Ireland in July. But come September, rest assured, UCU and both the Queen's and Stranmillis branch will take a terrier-like grip to their respective situations.

## SURVEY

# Slump 'used as excuse' to cut pensions

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber has claimed companies are using the recession as "an excuse to make savage cuts in pensions".

He made the comment as a PricewaterhouseCoopers survey revealed that 96 per cent of businesses were planning changes to their pension schemes.

Mr Barber said this was a whiplash response to a crisis that would eventually end, adding "recessions are short term and pensions are long-term investments that can ride the ups and downs in the economy."

He warned that unions stood ready to resist such attacks but said that non-unionised workforces would be vulnerable.

Mr Barber said: 'Unions negotiate constructively to deal with genuine pensions difficulties and longer lives.

"But too many attacks on pensions are no more than companies walking away from a long term commitment to their staff, and are part of the same short-term profit seeking that gave us the financial crash"

The PwC survey found that:

- 96pc of companies are planning changes to their workplace pension schemes with concerns about risk (68pc), need to reduce cost (60pc) and the UK Chancellor's 2009 budget (45pc) being cited as reasons for change
- 96pc of all employers also now think Defined Benefits pensions are unsustainable
- 88pc of private sector employers say the public sector has an unfair advantage in being

able to offer quality DB schemes PwC chief Marc Hommel said: "Our research shows fewer than one in 20 employers expect their defined benefit pension scheme to be open to new members in five years' time."

He claimed this was happening against a backdrop of "super-protection for benefits already earned", which he predicted would lead to fu-



Brendan Barber



Brian Campfield

ture generations having contributed far more relative to those "lucky enough" to be in defined benefit schemes.

Mr Hommel added: "Pensions apartheid is upon us, with a growing gap between the relative generosity of the public sector and the intention of more than a third of private sector employers to provide the bare minimum under the 2012 auto-enrolment pension requirements."

NIPSA deputy general secretary Brian Campfield slammed private sector employers' fixation with public sector pensions.

He said: "For a long time the private sector employers have attacked public sector pensions because their own employees quite rightly sought similar pension arrangements not because of some concerns about so called pensions apartheid.

"Dismantling public sector pensions takes the pressure off the private sector to provide proper pension entitlements to their employees.

"The way forward is to pressurise companies to improve their pension provisions and to resist any diminution in either existing private and public sector pension schemes provision."

## 'Outrageous & unacceptable'

UNITE joint chief Derek Simpson had expressed his outrage at companies with good long-term prospects using the slump as an excuse to slash pensions

Calling the practice "outrageous and totally unacceptable", he said the

union would fully support its members if they decide to stand up to employers "hell bent on eroding pension benefits".

He added: "We are prepared to work with employers who face genuine difficulties by agreeing tem-

porary measures to deal with the downturn which is a short-term problem.

"It is imperative that when the recession comes to an end, workers' terms and conditions are not permanently eroded."

[www.ictu.ie/rightsatwork/rights/pensions1.html](http://www.ictu.ie/rightsatwork/rights/pensions1.html)  
[www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk](http://www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk)

## NEWS FROM EUROPE



Monks: Warning

### No free lunches for market speculators

THE ETUC has warned of an early return to the same unfettered market practices that caused the global economic crisis.

In a report Green Shoots of Casino Capitalism issued last month, the ETUC claimed financial markets were once again starting to speculate on a new commodity bubble.

A source said: "The net result is driving oil and commodity prices up while the economy goes in the opposite direction."

In response, the union body called on the European Central Bank and other central banks to put in place measures to ensure banks use liquidity for productive investment and not for speculation.

The source added: "Banks seem to be lining up to ask hundreds of billions of one year loans from the ECB.

"They will be able to borrow from the ECB at a rate of 1.5pc and lend it out at rates of 4pc [government bonds] or 5pc [mortgage loans] or even 8pc [corporate bonds]. Not the slightest obligation is put on the banks in return."

ETUC chief John Monks said: "The positions of ETUC were always clear about that – we have asked for public money to support public investment, not 'free lunches' for banks collaborating with speculators."

### Setback for Euro bid on the rights of mums

STRONG opposition from conservative and liberal groups in the European Parliament has led to a vote on European Commission proposals to improve protection for pregnant workers and young mums being put off.

The proposals – which include health and safety protection and maternity leave improvements – have now been referred back to committee level at the parliament with the move drawing criticism from the ETUC.

They claimed the centre right were unwilling to take action "in favour of women workers' rights and reconciliation of work and family life".

THE TUC has launched a 60 second challenge calling on budding film makers to produce a short advert for them to upload on YouTube.

There are three £250 prizes up for grabs and the whole idea is to get the trade union message across in as positive a way as possible and all in under a minute – so the clock is ticking as entries have to be in for August 17.

A TUC spokesperson said: "We want to illustrate the positive role that trade unions play in the world of work and society. The ads should be aimed at those who have little or no knowledge of trade unions."

Visit [www.strongerunions.org/](http://www.strongerunions.org/) 60-second-ad-contest for details.



Health and Safety Authority chief Martin O'Halloran, left, with Road Safety Authority CEO Noel Brett

## ROADS CARNAGE: 100 lives lost a year in vehicles used for work



Horrific: Head-on impact

UP to a 100 lives are lost on Irish roads each year in collisions involving drivers who are using their vehicles for work, a new report has claimed.

The disturbing finding was revealed at a road safety at work conference held at Dublin Castle on June 15.

Launching a new set of guidelines aimed at employers, Road Safety Authority chief Noel Brett claimed the information would help to increase awareness of the issue.

He said: "It provides an overview of legislation, how to carry out risk assessments and highlights the significant benefits for businesses and the wider community when work related road safety is managed effectively."

Martin O'Halloran, who heads up the Health and Safety Authority, claimed all employers are re-

quired by law to protect the safety of their employees.

He said: "Particularly concerning is that 42 per cent of Irish businesses have no driving for work policy as part of their health and safety management system."

Addressing Ireland's business community, Mr O'Halloran added: "As an employer, you should give your employees proper information and training to protect their safety, health and welfare."

"This duty extends to employees who drive for work. Not only will a proactive approach help to protect your workforce, it may also save your business significant amounts of money."

A HSA survey of businesses carried out last year highlighted "a lack of awareness" about work related driving activities.

## Workplace death rates fall

THERE was a significant fall in the number of lives lost in work-related accidents in the Republic last year, new figures have revealed.

The Health and Safety Authority revealed a total of 57 people died in workplace incidents - 10 fewer than in 2007.

A further 7,658 non-fatal accidents were reported to the HSA last year.

Figures also showed the death rate among foreign-born workers was more than 50 per cent higher than their Irish-born counterparts.

Meanwhile, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber has warned against complacency after Health and Safety Executive figures revealed

the number of people killed in workplace accidents in the UK have fallen to a record low.

He said: "This is indeed good news but we should not be complacent, 180 workers still needlessly lost their lives at work last year. Every death is one too many and can be avoided."

"Nor should these record low figures be seen as evidence that employers are taking more care."

"Falls in injury and death rates are usual during a recession because fewer new employees are being recruited and introduced into the workplace."

HOW DO I  
ADVERTISE IN  
**UNION POST?**

SIMPLE. Email [braziermedia@btinternet.com](mailto:braziermedia@btinternet.com)

## Monitoring of Third World supply chain 'ineffective': expert

THE National Labor Committee has claimed attempts by big businesses to monitor Third World suppliers over local working conditions have floundered.

It comes as special representative John Ruggie reported to the United Nations Human Rights Council that even business leaders now confirm that their efforts at monitoring their supply chains have been "ineffective" and "unreliable".

The Harvard professor said: "We keep hearing now, from just about everywhere... monitoring doesn't work."

"Just about everybody, at least off the record, will tell you that monitoring of supplier factories doesn't work because people cheat."

A spokesman for the US-based NLC, which has been documenting workplace abuses for nearly 20 years, claimed nothing will change until corporations are finally held legally accountable to respect local labour laws as well as recognise ILO standards.

These include a ban on child and forced labor, freedom of association, the right to organise a union and to bargain collectively, and decent working conditions.

The spokesman added: "If Barbie Doll can be legally protected, by intellectual property and copyright laws, we sure as heck ought to be able to provide similar legal protection to the 16-year-old girl in Indonesia who made Barbie."



Oxfam Australia

### PUBLIC SECTOR

## 10,000 jobs could go as 'finances bloodbath' to hit North

A TOP economist has warned thousands of public sector jobs could go in Northern Ireland over the next five years as ministers struggle with record levels of government debt.

John Philpott, chief economist at the Chartered Institute of Personnel, predicted up to 10,000 jobs out of a sector employing 220,000 could be at risk, and warned the public sector "has yet to feel the full impact of the recession and the resultant bloodbath in public finances".

He said: "The CIPD's current estimate is that the fiscal squeeze implied by government plans will result in a total of 350,000 job cuts in the public sector [across the UK] between 2010/11 and 2014/15. This will be preceded by about 30,000 cuts in local authorities in the next year."

Mr Philpott conceded this would "inevitably" impact on public service provision. There would also be a knock-on effect on private sector jobs.

NIPSA deputy general secretary Brian Campfield claimed the CIPD findings came as "no surprise" to the trade union movement.

He said: "The burden of the recession and in particular the fallout from the multi-million bail-out of the banks and other financial institutions will be transferred to the community."

"The reality is that the public effectively borrows billions shore up the banking system and this leads to an onslaught on public services - services which provide for human needs and not for profit."

"Health, education, housing and other provisions for the public take the hit while the financial system is subsidised. It makes no sense."

## We won't be 'lambs to slaughter'

UNITE has vowed to fight any attempt to make public sector workers in Northern Ireland "sacrificial lambs for the current economic crisis".

Senior regional industrial organiser Albert Mills claimed there were thousands of unfilled positions in local government, education and health that management was refusing to fill.

He said: "There are more ongoing reviews at present in the public sector than you can shake a stick at and the management are using 'vacancy

control' procedures as an excuse not to fill the posts." Mr Mills claimed that in effect management had drafted in agency and temporary staff to many of these roles and warned they will "force these people out once the reviews are finished with no redundancy payments or pension rights".

He said Unite is determined to ensure there will be no compulsory redundancies of their members and asked: "Why should they and in-

deed the public pay with reduced services at a time in a recession when they are needed most?" Mr Mills added: "It's absolutely ridiculous that we as workers save banks and bankers' bonuses with our money and then reduce education and health services for our children and our elderly."

"It's economic madness to force public sector workers, many of whom are on the minimum rates of pay, on to the dole and pay them benefits when they could be contributing to society."

**KEEP GETTING POSTED FREE** [email postsubscribe@btinternet.com](mailto:postsubscribe@btinternet.com)

## BOOKREVIEW

Former Unite regional secretary **MICK O'REILLY** takes a look at a new book on the life of Roddy Connolly, charting how someone who founded two communist parties ended up backing a man whose father was a founder of the Blueshirts

# Revolutionary road

THIS is a well written study of the turbulent life and times of Roddy Connolly. The son of legendary Easter Rising leader James Connolly, he was also a significant political figure in his own right with a career stretching more than 60 years.

Born in Dublin's Pimlico in 1901, Roddy Connolly's political involvement spanned the revolutionary period from 1916 to 1923 and lasted right up to the 1970s when he defended the Labour Party's coalition with Fine Gael.

He took part in the Easter Rising himself at 15, personally met Lenin and was instrumental in founding Ireland's first Communist Party.

Connolly was involved in the Republican Congress which attempted to challenge the deValera government in the early 1930s. He argued also for an alliance with Clann Na Poblachta which in the end yielded nothing radical because of the Labour Party's decision to enter government with Fine Gael.

He was twice elected a Labour TD and served in the Senate during the Cosgrave /Corish coalition of the 1970s.

I remember Roddy Connolly as Labour Party chairman and though he was a staunch supporter of the coalition with Fine Gael you would occasionally see glimpses of his old radicalism.

In the early days of the Troubles when he was chairing a debate on the outbreak of violence in Belfast he introduced a speaker from the floor who advocated co-operation between labour and the republican movement.

He reminded delegates the last time labour had co-operated with the republican movement was in the GPO in 1916 and anybody who understood his father could ever oppose working with republicans.

The book explores his relationship with his father whom he considered to have been Ireland's greatest revolutionary leader.

One of the most fascinating aspects of this book is the section dealing with the War of Independence in which McGuire describes the bid by Connolly to move the IRA to the left.

McGuire also sheds some light on a man called Seán McLaughlin who at the age of 20 was in the GPO with Pearse and Connolly. After Connolly was wounded and just before the surrender he gave full authority to McLaughlin to lead the Citizen Army.

McLaughlin was a close friend of Roddy Connolly and was active in the first Communist Party.

The book contains an amusing account of McLaughlin's encounter with a British communist where in frustration he tells him that you cannot simply talk to republicans and "turn them" to the left, but you must join them and work with them.

For the current generation of activists it is easy to see communism as one thing and republicanism as something separate - but from the perspective of the time, Citizen Army volunteers who had fought with republicans in the GPO had no problem supporting the Bolshevik revolution and simultaneously fighting British imperialism.

One of the characters mentioned in this book is a man called Sean (Johnny) Nolan who was involved with Connolly in the second attempt to build a communist party, named at that time The Workers Party of Ireland.

Nolan was to remain friends with Connolly although they went in different directions politically. Sean stayed a loyal member of the communist movement while Roddy joined the Labour Party.

Because of their friendship Nolan was sent to see if he could muster co-operation from Connolly on some issue.

While reading this section I was reminded of a story Johnny Nolan told me relating to this. Apparently when Johnny met with Connolly in the Dáil he was studying a book on the mechanics of parliamentary procedure.

Sean never raised any of the questions that he was supposed to and when he returned to his comrades was asked for an explanation.

His answer was that those who study books on parliamentary procedure will not co-operate or help revolutionaries and you don't even need to ask.

That was a penetrating judgment which was to flag up where Connolly

**Roddy Connolly and the Struggle for Socialism in Ireland**  
By Charlie McGuire. Published by Cork University Press,  
ISBN 978-1-85918-420-2, €49/£33 hbk

would eventually end his political career. In the book we get a brief glimpse of his early years. The author relies on information from Roddy's sister Nora which makes it clear there was no shortage of love nor affection in the Connolly household.

Later during the Rising, a teenage Roddy ran messages for his father and Padraig Pearse. Despite strong objections from his wife, James Connolly insisted his son was no longer a child and Roddy took his place in the GPO.

For a brief period following the Rising, Connolly lived in Glasgow where he worked in the shipyards as a draughtsman. There he got to know a group who would later become known as the "Red Clydesiders".

One interesting fact explored in the book is Roddy's meeting with Lenin in 1919.

He was introduced to the Soviet leader in Moscow by the American author John Reid and this meeting is the only meeting of Lenin with an Irish person captured on film.

This was to have a profound impact on Roddy. Lenin explained to him that he had read his father's book Labour and Irish History and regarded him as being head and shoulders above most of his labour contemporaries.

Roddy's impression of Lenin was of a man without pretension and always willing to bend over backwards to find common cause to advance unity within the movement.

The book is particularly useful for students of Irish history who wish to examine the role of the left in the period between 1916 and the early 1940s.

Connolly set up two communist parties and was the first Irishman to describe Michael Collins as a traitor following the Anglo-Irish treaty.

He predicted the civil war and consistently argued that the left in Ireland must support the IRA in their struggle for Irish freedom.

After the failure of the two communist parties the Comintern gave their backing to Jim Larkin as the best possible leader of a left party.

Roddy drifted into the Labour Party and was to stay there for the rest of his life.

Although he was a member of the Labour Party he remained a committed communist until the 1950s. This was expressed by his support for the Republican Congress, his support of the Spanish Republic and his consistent opposition to the Blueshirts and Fine Gael.

The book also charts Roddy's painful move to the right. After a time away from politics, he returned to the Labour Party ranks in the 1960s initially impressed by Labour's anti-coalition stance.

In 1969, however, this period of Labour independence came to an abrupt halt with the eruption of violence in Northern Ireland.

This propelled Labour into a coalition which divided the party considerably. Connolly argued for a coalition with Fine Gael and refused to challenge views expressed by Conor Cruise O'Brien in his avowed opposition to all tenets of republican socialism.

This was to be the tragedy of Roddy Connolly's life. It expressed itself most publicly in his support of Tom O'Higgins' presidential campaign. O'Higgins' father had been one of the founders of the Blueshirts in the 1930s.

This book illuminates an extraordinary long and complex political life but fails to answer the question why Connolly ended up where he did but that is no fault of the author who has unearthed a mass of new material, particularly relating to the 1920s.

The book should be read by anyone who seeks to understand the role of the left in 20th century Ireland.



# Unite unveils stimulus blueprint for economy



UNITE has put forward proposals it claims will get Ireland back to work. The union called for an "achievable, affordable and essential" stimulus programme to be put in place as an alternative to the failed economic policies of the Irish government so decisively rejected at the polls earlier this month.

Speaking at the Dublin launch of Growing the Irish Economy on June 11, Unite regional secretary Jimmy Kelly outlined a package aimed at saving and creating more than 100,000 jobs through investing in infrastructure and indigenous enterprise.

He said: "The key to Ireland emerging from this recession is to tackle unemployment.

"This is the single standout cause of reduced tax revenue and increased social welfare expenditure.

"Present government policies are aimed in completely the wrong direction by seeking to tackle the fiscal deficit through sacrificing employment. Every other country in the world knows there is only one possible result from that - failure."

Mr Kelly pointed to the example of government inaction over SR Technics. He said: "Allowing over 1,000 workers to lose their jobs and go on to the dole will cost the government a minimum of €55 million in social welfare and redundancy.

"Supporting the local management buy out would have cost €15 million. They did nothing and we have to pay the consequences."

Mr Kelly claimed that the loss of 100,000 would cost a minimum of €2 billion in lost tax and increased social welfare without taking into account the long term social damage it would cause.

He added: "In order to avoid this we have outlined the creation of economic recovery bonds; spreading the tax burden to more fairly target the non productive wealthy asset base; raising short term borrowing, albeit to less than the EU average to pay for vital infrastructure investment; and reforming public expenditure to address the €15 billion per annum currently spent on tax allowances."

Claiming the government was "failing the people of Ireland", Mr Kelly concluded: "We have to change from a vicious circle of decline to a virtuous one of stimulus, job creation and reduced social welfare costs. Every other country in the world can see this."



UNITE chief Jimmy Kelly & report author Michael Taft at launch

Growing the Irish Economy can be downloaded from [www.uniteunion.com](http://www.uniteunion.com)

# Kenny in 'levy pay cut' challenge to Taoiseach

FINE Gael leader Enda Kenny has told the Dail 300,000 public servants were misled by the government over assertions the pension levy was not a pay cut.

He made his remarks on June 23 following claims that legal advice from the Attorney General was that the same levy if applied to judges WAS a pay cut and could not be

applied for constitutional reasons.

Challenging Taoiseach Brian Cowen to publish the advice, Mr Kenny said: "He should be upfront by admitting that the political decision taken by him and the Cabinet, based on the advice of the Attorney General, amounts now to a pay cut dressed up as a contribution."



# Third of workers 'too busy' for gym

A REPORT by the UK-based Chartered Society of Physiotherapy has revealed that a third of adults claim to be too busy at work to take exercise.

The physio union survey found this was the most common reason cited by respondents for not keeping fit (35pc), with more than half (53pc) insisting they would only hit the gym if they could fit it into their existing work schedule.

CSP spokesperson Bridget Hurley said: "Regular physical activity is as important as eating five portions of fruit and vegetables a day, and people need to understand that you can't keep putting it off.

"Without sufficient physical activity you increase your risk of life-threatening illnesses."

Last year Hazards magazine warned over-stretched workers were increasingly being labelled "sickos, shirkers and slobbs", but did not have the time or energy thanks to their jobs to make healthy lifestyle choices.

# UCATT wins database argument on blacklist

BUILDING TRADE workers who have suffered from blacklisting will have more time to access their files following a move by construction union UCATT.

The Information Commissioner revealed in March that more than 40 major UK construction firms were using the services a firm that had compiled information on workers.

Since the blacklist was revealed individual construction workers have had the opportunity to contact the Information Commissioner, find out whether they had been blacklisted and receive a copy of their records.

However, because the information had been collected illegally the entire database was due to be destroyed this summer.

UCATT raised concerns that many workers who were not union members or had left the industry would not have received the necessary information about the existence of the blacklist and would not know how to access their files.

The Information Commissioner accepted the argument and will now keep the database until at least March 31 next year when its future will be reviewed.





1914

1916

1920

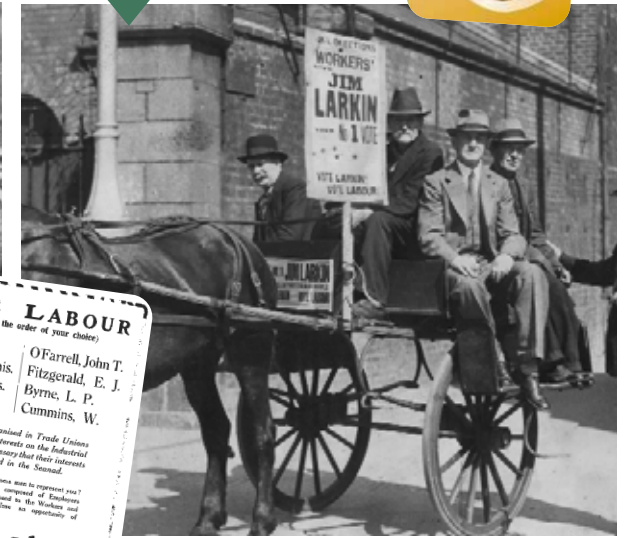
1943



ICA deliver stark message. Liberty Hall, right, in ruins after the Rising



Cork dockers on strike. Labour Senate candidates election flyer



Hitting campaign trail for Big Jim during Emergency

# DARING TO WEAR

THE lesson gleaned from SIPTU's centenary is that history repeats itself. The same forces that battered people from Dublin's streets in 1913 today suppress wages, destroy pension schemes, prop up bankers guilty of economic treason, and scapegoat workers for the sins of a small minority. This minority created capitalism's current crisis through unbridled and unregulated [even when state regulation was available] greed. When will it ever change?

## LARKIN

The Irish Transport & General Workers' Union (ITGWU) was registered on January 4 1909 with James Larkin general secretary. It came as whirlwind, transforming a supine Labour movement, inspired by militant, industrial unionism – an in-

## SIPTU CENTENARY Labour historian FRANCIS DEVINE

jury to one was the concern of all; Irish unions for Irish workers; national self-determination; and socialist politics – the Workers' Republic.

Employers recognised the threat to their previously-unchallenged power, attacking the union in Cork, 1909; Wexford, 1911-1912 and Sligo and Dublin, 1913. Four hundred Dublin employers combined – with no sense of irony – to deny the same right of combination to workers who would not sign a 'document' denouncing the ITGWU.

Workers should reflect that after 22 years of 'social partnership', union recognition remains high on the agenda.

## REVOLUTION

After Larkin's departure to America in 1914, James Connolly became ITGWU acting general secretary. Dismayed by European socialists' failure to oppose the imperialist war, Connolly determined to strike a blow for Irish self-determination.

The Proclamation was printed in Liberty Hall and rebel forces, commanded by Connolly, set out from there in 1916. While the ITGWU was not part of the Rising's formal organisation, by 1918 it claimed that 'Easter week made this union'. Membership rose dramatically. By 1920, it had 120,000

# RED HAND BADGE

## looks back at a hundred years organising Ireland's workers

members in every county and all industrial sectors. General president Tom Foran and treasurer William O'Brien sought to prevent Civil War after Partition in 1922. The Free State government attacked workers' living standards – those that had fought for Ireland were to be marginalised in the new State.

## DIVISION & DISUNITY

Larkin returned in 1923 and accused the Executive of abandoning industrial unionism, adopting illegal rules and not pursuing the Workers' Republic. He went to the courts rather than Delegate Conference, losing his actions. After his ex-

pulsion in March 1924, the Workers' Union of Ireland (WUI) was created in June. Division did not stop there.

By 1945, the Larkin-O'Brien enmity had split both Congress and Labour Party. No one emerged with credit. Mass unemployment, underdevelopment and inadequate incomes were the workers' lot. Labour movement disunity served only their class enemies.

## UNITY

After O'Brien's retirement in 1946 and Larkin's death the following year, their successors John Conroy and James Larkin Jnr championed unity

through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, 1959. Conroy and Larkin Jnr both died in 1969, dashing hopes for ITGWU-WUI merger.

United campaigns sought economic planning, full development of industrial and natural resources, expansion of public enterprise and maximum job creation, adequate housing programmes, improved social welfare, equal educational opportunity and health service free at the point of use.

National Wage Agreements were increasingly narrow and, without Labour Party electoral success, Larkin sought to utilise industrial strength to influence broad economic and social agendas. Similarities with the ICTU's current Ten Point Programme were obvious.



Jim Larkin funeral, left. WUI Connolly Commemoration contingent



Workers in Pye Radio factory, Dundrum. Liberty Hall, above

1947

1953

1954

1957



1970



Liberty Hall conference, left. ITGWU protest against Bloody Sunday

# DARING TO WEAR RED HAND BADGE

## UNDERSTANDINGS TO PARTNERSHIP

National Understandings, 1979-1981, advanced these demands but the employers' offensive, 1981-1987, forced workers onto the defensive.

The Programme for National Recovery, 1987 – a concept and title most thought confined to history – commenced social partnership, ITGWU and FWUI policies informing that agenda.

The Celtic Tiger roared but SIPTU – created on January 1, 1990 through ITGWU-FWUI merger – became concerned about social exclusion. The collapse of the Irish economy indicated how fragile partnership was.

## UNION ACHIEVEMENTS

Every Irish person alive on or born after January 4, 1909, has benefitted from SIPTU's existence. Literally millions were transferred to working people through improved money and social wages. ITGWU and FWUI spent huge sums on dispute pay. They led demands for gender equality within

and beyond the workplace, embraced diversity, defended immigrant workers and opposed racism. Most progressive national economic and social policy emanated from union drawing boards.

Democratic structures engaged all members in decisions affecting them, an under-valued strength conveniently neglected by commentators. The union's role in the creation, democratisation, economic and social development of the state is also ignored by mainstream history.

In Northern Ireland, the union sought full civil rights, opposed violence and supported cross-community and cross-border initiatives. On cultural matters, from O'Casey to Plunkett, Fintan Lalor Pipe Band to Andy Irvine, the union inspired plays, poems and songs. Roses would adorn workers' tables as well as bread. The union's general importance can be posed in a simple question: which is better, a society with the union or a society without?

## HISTORY LESSONS?

SIPTU's value can be gauged by the de-

termination of its class opponents to smash its organisation. Today, unions were never more relevant nor more at risk.

History's lesson is that vigilant, committed organisation is essential. True centenary heroines and heroes were not the well-known leaders but rank-and-file members whose individual acts of becoming active members took courage, not least when threatened with dismissal, discrimination, even emigration.

In reading of this commitment, today and tomorrow's membership should be inspired.

The union was and will always be about the present and future, not the past. The current economic crisis demands our individual determination to be history makers.

Without continuing to make history, the lesson is obvious. Those that attempted to consign us to history in 1913 will do so again tomorrow. Inspired by the past, let us determine to organise the future.

*With thanks to Christy Hammons, CRM Design & Print*



Tom Redmond addresses May Day crowd. Avoca strikers, above



SIPTU Belfast Branch during march

1972



Organising the Union, A Centenary of SIPTU 1909-2009 by Francis Devine. Price €15. Copies available from SIPTU - email equality.unit@siptu.ie for details. Gill & Macmillan will publish Organising History: A Centenary of SIPTU, 1909-2009 by Francis Devine in September

2009



Former senator Evelyn Owens, first woman Chair of the Labour Court, recalls Delia Larkin at Hedge School

## Larkin event recalls Big Jim's radical sis

THE contribution of radical women to the development of the trade union movement was recalled at the inaugural Larkin Hedge School in Liberty Hall, Dublin, last month.

The school, a celebration of labour in music, song, poetry and dance, was organised by the Clé Club and looks set to be an annual fixture.

Theresa Moriarty of the Irish Labour History Society recalled the contribution of Delia Larkin, whose work has long been overshadowed by the historic role played by her brother Jim.

Mary Maher led the workshop which featured contributions from icons of the feminist movement interspersed with evocative songs from Mary McPartlan, Galway-based singer and former trade union activist.

Delia Larkin "The Singing Sister" was a pioneer in promoting a cultural dimension to the work of the trade union movement although her work in choirs and her drama group did not always win the approval of her male colleagues.

Over the weekend Dr John Moulden of NUI, Galway, delivered an evocative lecture on Honest Labourers and Jolly Rakes of all Trades while the early days of

broadcasting was traced by Peter Browne of RTÉ.

The programme included music workshops, lecturers, concerts and set dancing classes.

The school was opened by Michael Halpenny, SIPTU's head of legal services, who recalled Sean O'Casey's description of Jim Larkin as a man "who would put a flower in a vase on a table as well as a loaf on the plate".

In honouring Larkin the Hedge School was also meeting an important need and served as a reminder of the rich heritage of poetry, music and drama within the labour movement.



Anne Jordan takes a bow

## Message to women workers

CONGRESS Vice President Patricia King was among those who contributed reading from Delia's archive, recalling her relevant reflection on class distinction.

*The existence of distinction of class among the women workers of Dublin is deplorable. Women are constantly being condemned for their want of broadmindedness on most subjects or their conservative attitudes. I do not always agree with this wholesale condemnation, but I must confess, that in this particular instance of the relationship of women workers to each other, it is a fact that they are narrow-minded and snobbish. You find the girl who earns her living as a typist stands icily aloof from the girl in a shop and the trades girl. They in their turn look down haughtily on the factory girl, and again, you do not find the factory girl associating with the girls who hawk their goods in the streets. And there we stand: all workers, all women, divided by our own near-sightedness, keeping each other down and playing into the hands of the employers.*

1974

1982

2007

# Come clean call on CIA renditions at Shannon

AMNESTY International has called on the Irish government to admit Shannon Airport was used by the CIA for rendition operations and to ensure it never happens again.

Launching a report into what it called "the most comprehensive examination yet", the group highlighted the cases of Abu Omar, Khaled al Maqtari, Khaled el Masri and Binyam Mohamed, all of whom were subject to the controversial practice where suspects are transported for interrogation.

Amnesty's Northern Ireland programme director Patrick Corrigan claimed the Irish government had "turned a blind eye" to the rendition flights.

He added: "It does not know what is going through Ireland's airports on secret CIA flights, because it does not want to know."

"CIA planes illegally claimed to be civilian aircraft while travelling through Irish airspace and using Shannon Airport, and yet the Irish government cannot be bothered to investigate."

"The fact is, as our report reveals, Shannon has been used by the CIA as a launching pad for kidnapping and torture. This is illegal under international law."

"The Irish government is losing credibility



Corrigan: 'Blind eye'

every day that it prevaricates on launching an investigation."

The report, titled Breaking the Chain: Ending Ireland's Role in Renditions, identifies key priorities a government review must examine to ensure a robust system is put in place to protect against the practice:

- Proactive identification of aircraft and operators that have used Irish territory for renditions. Currently data is collected by concerned citizens, journalists or organisations like Amnesty International.

- Irish authorities cannot identify foreign civilian aircraft that may be engaged in rendition. Current legislation does not go far enough and must be tightened up.

- The review must result in a system requiring detailed information on passengers and flight plan from all aircraft operators travelling through Irish airspace.

Although President Obama's Executive Order 'Ensuring Lawful Interrogations' ends the CIA's programme of long-term secret detention it does not end the practice of rendition.

The order allows the CIA to use detention facilities on a short-term basis, or to use foreign-controlled facilities to detain and interrogate individuals.

■ **WORK** sharing could be one way of dealing with the global jobs crisis, according to a new ILO briefing paper submitted at last month's International Labour Conference in Geneva.

ILO working time expert Jon Messenger said it was a measure designed to "share the burdens of a difficult economic situation - not only among workers but between workers, employers and governments as well."

He pointed to the Kurzarbeit scheme in Germany as an example of best practice.

## Silly bankers can't help it...



This faceless protester at a recent ETUC rally in Brussels took on the guise of a clueless banker in search of a government bail out.

**THE UNION POST**

**FEEDBACK**

Tell us how we can improve The Union Post. Email us with your suggestions at [braziermedia@btinternet.com](mailto:braziermedia@btinternet.com)

## Lords back ECJ ruling

THE HOUSE of Lords has confirmed a recent European Court of Justice ruling that workers can accrue holidays while on sick leave will apply to the UK.

The Stringer V HMRC judgment in January means that:

- Workers can build up four weeks' holiday per year through any periods of sickness leave
- They must be allowed to take this holiday on their return to work
- Employees must be paid in lieu of these holidays if their employment ends, and
- Employers must decide how to deal with the additional holiday entitlements conferred

by the Working Time Regulations as well as any contractual holiday entitlements and detail this in sickness, absence and maternity policies.

The ECJ's ruling does not fit with key provisions of the existing WTR rules in the UK where guidelines are simple - basically use it or lose.

This means that workers who do not use their full statutory holiday entitlement in the current holiday year, are not permitted to carry it forward.

[http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/j\\_6/home](http://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/j_6/home)

■ **TESCO** has reached agreement with UK retail union Usdaw to begin talks on setting up a European Works Council. The council will bring together Tesco employees from across the grocery giant's European operation and it is hoped the structure will be set up some time next year.

Welcoming the move Usdaw general secretary John Hannett described it as "a positive move that will build on existing arrangements and enhance levels of information and consultation between staff and the business."