

STRONGER TOGETHER



Picture: Congress

WHEN trade unionists from across Ireland gather for Congress' Biennial Delegate Conference in Killarney next month, they will find a trade union movement that is in good shape, fighting fit, and ready for the battles that lie ahead.

The 800 delegates, observers and guests will hear figures detailing how membership has remained robustly strong despite the depth of the recession and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs.

Trade unions are working people's first – and last – line of defence against a neoliberal onslaught that has turned a banking crisis into an attack on jobs, pay, conditions and services.

But a guiding principle of our movement has always been strength in numbers – and figures show that the number of members drawn from Congress' 54 affiliated unions now stands at 797,399.

This is down 19,449 on the 2010 figure and represents a 2.4% dip in union membership.

It is a reflection of the savage assault on jobs and is not an indication of any disenchantment with trade unions or trade unionism.

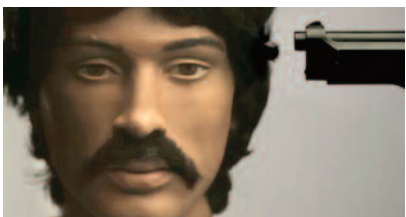
In fact, the figures back this view, showing that decline in union membership has occurred at a **SLOWER** rate than the general fall in employment.

It should be remembered that in the Republic alone, there is a trade union density rate of 38.3% of the workforce – one of the highest rates in Europe.

UNION POST



**Oxfam: Cards on table
time at G8 summit 9**



**90 trade unionists
murdered last year 11**



**50,000 workers at
Prague anti-cuts demo 13**



**US nurses march on
D.C. and Wall Street 14**



**Activists' 'flash mob'
action at awards do 15**

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Congress delegation briefs Dutch unions on debt crisis

A CONGRESS delegation has met with senior Dutch trade unionists to discuss the Irish and European debt crisis, and organised labour's response to it.

The delegation – Congress president Jack O'Connor, general secretary David Begg and economic advisor Paul Sweeney – met leaders of the FNV at their HQ in Amsterdam.

The FNV – the Federation of the Dutch Labour Movement – represents 1.4m unionised workers across all sectors of Dutch society.

According to David Begg, the meeting is part of an ongoing initiative designed to change the picture of Ireland abroad and to stress that the debt crisis is a European issue that needs to be resolved at an EU level.

He said: "The debt crisis cannot be corralled or quarantined in one country – the sickness is at the heart of the European financial system and

that has to be addressed."

Congress has already met and briefed the leadership of Germany's main union federation, the DGB, as well as the heads of Finland's leading labour federation, the SAK.

Mr Begg added: "The crisis in Ireland is a manifestation of a wider EU crisis and it requires resolution at that level. But three years on, the only official response has been to ignore the problems in the financial sector and impose severe austerity programmes. That is entirely self-defeating."



Begg: 'Self-defeating'



Delegates get set for Congress BDC 2011

TRADE UNIONISTS from across Ireland are heading to Killarney early next month for Congress' Biennial Delegate Conference 2011.

Some 800 delegates, observers and guests will converge on the INEC in the Co Kerry town for the conference, which runs from July 4-6.

The overall theme of this year's BDC is 'A Better, Fairer Way' with participants debating a total of 41 motions, including four from the Executive Council.

Conference formally opens on Monday, July 4, at 4.30pm. Taoiseach Enda Kenny is scheduled to address conference that evening, while Tanaiste Eamon Gilmore will deliver an address on Wednesday, July 6.

Debate will focus heavily on the economy, the bank crisis and workplace rights. There are also motions on equality and international solidarity.



Flashback: How The Union Post covered BDC 2009

Findings from eagerly-awaited report from the Commission on the Trade Union Movement will also be delivered.

A range of other speakers will address the conference, including incoming European

Trade Union Confederation general secretary Bernadette Ségol, while delegates will also hear from the head of the global trade union federation – the ITUC.

The conference will also feature a round table debate on the theme of 'Which Way for Europe', featuring a host of national and international experts.

Killarney mayor Sean Counihan and homeless charity activist Sister Stanilaus Kennedy will also address delegates.

Delegates moving a motion can speak for five minutes, with each subsequent speaker getting three minutes each to make their point.

Congress organisers have urged delegates to be punctual and to be present throughout all sessions.

Delegates are also reminded to show their credential card when entering the conference hall.

ACTION PACT!

Public sector unions to co-ordinate anti-cuts campaign across North

NORTHERN Ireland's public sector trade unions have vowed to work together to oppose public service cuts, job losses, pay freezes, attacks on welfare benefits and pensions.

Congress assistant general secretary Peter Bunting said the unions that had signed up to the June 15 declaration had agreed to co-operate in a co-ordinated campaign of industrial action.

He added: "The declaration is a signal to those in government in Northern Ireland that the unions,

with the support of local communities, will resist the cuts being implemented by the Executive.

"All the unions party to the declaration plan to commence preparations leading to a balloting of their members for industrial action."

Mr Bunting claimed this represented an "unprecedented unity" of workers to prevent further attacks on jobs, services, pay and pensions.

He added: "A co-ordinated cam-

paign of action will galvanise opposition in Northern Ireland to the cuts in public spending and welfare benefits that will severely damage the fabric of our society resulting in a huge increase in unemployment in both the private and public sectors.

"If there is no reversal of these attacks on ordinary working people, then we are unfortunately facing a prolonged period of industrial strife, commencing in autumn or earlier where specific services and jobs are under immediate threat."



Peter Bunting: 'Unprecedented'



ILO chief Juan Somavia joins a delegation of domestic workers in giving the thumbs up following the landmark vote on June 16

Ireland should lead way in ratifying historic treaty

CONGRESS has called on the Irish government to take a "global lead" on workers' rights by becoming the first nation to ratify a landmark treaty that gives protection to an estimated 53 million domestic workers throughout the world.

Legal affairs officer Esther Lynch made the call following the vote at the International Labour Organisation's annual conference in Geneva on June 16.

Speaking from the conference, she said: "Ireland was one of the first countries in the EU to establish a code of practice for domestic

workers, which Congress negotiated as part of the Towards 2016 national agreement, in 2006.

"That helped establish rights for an often forgotten and neglected cohort of workers.

"Given that all members of the Irish delegation at the ILO voted in favour of this treaty, it would seem entirely reasonable that the government could move with speed to ratification."

The vote was hailed by ILO director general Juan Somavia as "history being made". He said: "We are moving the standards system of the ILO into the informal economy for the first

time, and this is a breakthrough of great significance."

The new ILO standards set out that domestic workers must have the same basic labour rights as those available to other workers – reasonable hours of work, a weekly rest of at least 24 consecutive hours, a limit on in-kind payments, clear information on terms and conditions of employment, as well as respect for fundamental principles and rights at work, including freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

'Cynical' attack on jobless

CONGRESS president Jack O'Connor has slammed as "populist play acting" calls for the dismantling of wage protection mechanisms after the Republic's jobless rate rose to 14.8% in May.

He described the calls from the employer lobby as a cynical exploitation of the plight of the unemployed.

Mr O'Connor, who is also SIPTU general president, said: "Far from alleviating unemployment, cutting the pay of the lowest paid 20% of the workforce is the very last thing the country needs because it will only

serve to further depress consumer demand resulting in the loss of more jobs. To use the latest unemployment figures as a pretext for cutting the wages of low paid workers is a cynical exploitation of those who have been deprived of employment while enhancing the position of some in the business community.

"Populist play acting to the business gallery will contribute nothing and ill behoves those charged with responsibility for providing leadership in our current difficult circumstances."



Jack O'Connor: Pretext

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CWU hits out at 'callous' plan to off shore jobs by Vodafone

THE Communication Workers' Union has slammed plans by Vodafone Ireland to "off shore" more than 130 customer services jobs to India and Egypt as "breath-takingly callous and insensitive".

Deputy general secretary Terry Delany made the comments following a meeting with the communication giant's senior management on May 27.

It is understood that Vodafone is terminating its contract with Rigney Dolphin, its customer care call centre provider in Ireland.

More than 100 jobs in Dundalk and Dublin will go in the move. Thirty more jobs within Vodafone are moving overseas and a further 41 are being outsourced to an Irish company.

Mr Delany said: "The company's plan to shift moderately paid Irish jobs servicing Irish customers to off-shore locations in India and



Picture: CWU

Terry Delany: 'Insensitive' move

Egypt at a time when over 400,000 people are unemployed and ordinary workers and businesses are struggling to keep their heads above water, displays breath-takingly callousness and insensitive."

Mr Delany also claimed that Vodafone was making a "false distinction" between those directly

employed by the company and those working at Rigney Dolphin.

He pointed out it was the CWU's view that Rigney Dolphin had been an "integral part" of the customer care service.

He added: "The company appears happy to make profits from its Irish customers, enjoy Irish pro-business supports and Irish tax rates, but is not willing to reciprocate in supporting Irish jobs to service its Irish operations."

Mr Delany called on Communications Minister Pat Rabbitte, to intervene and spell out clearly that companies such as Vodafone that enjoy the benefits of Ireland's pro-business tax and investment supports also have obligations – particularly to their workers.

He said: "The entire focus of the government's economic recovery

policy is on job creation and retention.

"The quid pro quo must be a commitment from large companies to support jobs in Ireland on the back of the large profits and favourable tax rates they enjoy."

Meanwhile, Congress general secretary David Begg has confirmed he raised the issue with Enterprise Minister Richard Bruton at a recent meeting.

He underlined how the Vodafone plan seemed to "run counter to the spirit and the thrust of the government's Jobs Initiative which aims to create new opportunities and save existing jobs."

Mr Begg also noted that Vodafone Ireland was a highly profitable company that had enjoyed consistent profits since it entered the market here.

EMAIL YOUR TD AT <http://www.cwu.ie/Activists/Vodafone-Campaign-Email-Your-TDs.1008.1.aspx>

CSO FIGURES

'LIMITS OF AUSTERITY' HIT

NEW figures showing a sharp fall in domestic demand confirm the Republic has reached "the limits of austerity" and urgently needs to inject new life into the economy, Congress has claimed.

Data released by the Central Statistics Office show domestic demand fell by almost €1bn (€990m) – or 3.1% – in the year to end Quarter One.

There was also a substantial fall in Gross National Product of some €4.3%, in the first quarter of 2011.

Congress economic advisor Paul Sweeney said: "The austerity programme is crippling the domestic economy. It is choking off demand, closing businesses and costing us jobs."

"Even the most ideological of zealots must now concede that the programme is self-defeating as it is killing that which it purports to try and save."

He warned the rise of 1.3% in Gross Domestic Product would have little impact on the lives of people in Ireland.

"That figure primarily reflects the ex-

ports and flows of funds, the profits and royalties of multinationals

"We have reached the very limits of austerity and need an urgent change of policy."

"The cost of the bank bailout and cuts in public spending are costing jobs and devastating people's lives."

Mr Sweeney, right, said the first step in a new strategy would be to announce an enhanced Jobs Initiative to boost confidence.

He added: "We should invest some of the remaining €5.3bn in the Pension Reserve Fund in job creation, in credit for small business, in training and in needed infrastructure, especially public transport and school buildings."

Congress president Jack O'Connor said the data highlighted the "nonsense" of pursuing an austerity programme that has "bedevilled our country" for four years.

He added: "The figures prove, if any more proof was needed, the necessity of

re-negotiating the Troika Agreement so that the country can get a chance to breathe and grow again."

Meanwhile, a new report has revealed that – despite the hardship suffered by most people as a result of the recession – a significant number are getting BETTER off.

The yearly Merrill Lynch/Cap Gemini World Wealth Report shows there were about 19,000 so called "high net worth individuals" in the Republic during 2010, an increase from 18,100 recorded a year earlier.

These high net worth individuals are defined as having more than €694,000 – the equivalent of \$1m – in financial assets.



UK SALARIES

30 years of standing still

A NEW report has highlighted how middle and low income workers in the UK have seen barely an improvement in their wages over the past 30 years.

But the same data shows that pay has soared for traditionally high-earning occupations, such as solicitors and doctors, over the same period.

The TUC paper, *The Livelihood Crisis* by Open University researcher Stewart Lansley, details the sharp divide between the likes of medical practitioners – seeing a 153% hike in their pay packets – and bakers,

who have had to stomach a one per cent cut in theirs.

In his conclusion, Mr Lansley writes: "It is surely now time to openly acknowledge the failings of the last 30 years and fashion more pragmatic and nuanced policies that recognise that markets can indeed be powerful drivers of growth and wealth, but that without significant corrective measures, they consistently fail to provide for all in a fair and humane way."

According to TUC general secretary Brendan Barber, right,

vast sections of the population have not derived any benefit from economic growth in the UK for decades.

He added: "The financial crash has exposed decades of limp wage growth offset by soaring household debt."

"Unless we radically transform our economy – from recasting the role of the state to prioritising a fairer distribution of new wealth and jobs – we will simply be storing up more problems for the future."

Picture: TUC

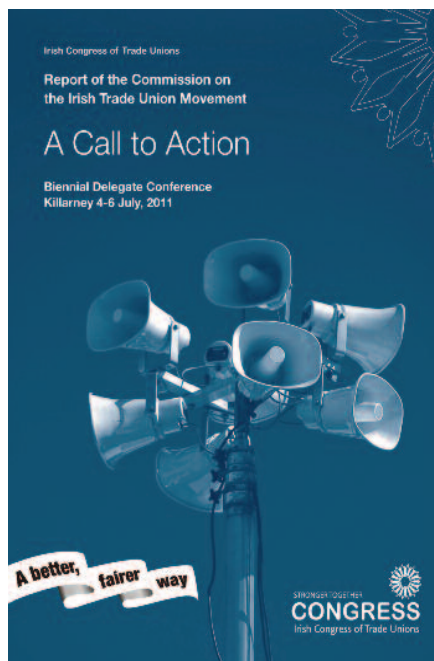


http://www.tuc.org.uk/tudfiles/28/Britains_Livelihood_Crisis.pdf

A Call to Action paper puts forward agenda of change

ROOT AND BRANCH LOOK AT

HOW UNIONS DO BUSINESS



THE Biennial Delegate Conference is to signal a major sea change in the way unions operate in Ireland North and South.

It will come in a report to be delivered in Killarney next month.

Titled 'A Call to Action', the report is being presented by the Commission on the Irish Trade Union Movement against, what the authors acknowledge, is a "hostile environment for workers and the trade union movement in general".

But the report goes on to point out that even though unions were facing crises on an almost daily basis, it was necessary to focus on "ways of strengthening" the trade union movement "in the longer term".

Formulating a new vision was likened to "building a ship on a stormy sea with no blueprint to guide us", but the report claims it also affords an opportunity to change the trade union movement "for the better" over the next 12 months.

Among its key recommendations are:

● **The formulation of a new Strategic Plan that will set out an alternative to the "severe free market**

approach" and develop ways of winning widespread public support for the initiative.

● **A drive to increase the density of trade union membership North and South and to promote an "organising culture" within unions. This would involve calling on ordinary union members to "drive change" at shopfloor level.**

● **Encouraging increased co-operation between unions within sectors. This would be driven by sectoral meetings tasked with strategic organising and with initiating joint campaigns as well as looking at pooling training, procurement and promotional resources.**

● **The forming of a Strategic Organising Group that will include unions from both jurisdictions.**

● **The development of a strategic communications policy to look at better ways of connecting with union members, unorganised workers and civil society in general.**

● **A review of the Constitution of Congress.**

● **The convening of a Global Union Roundtable to learn from trade union centres from around the world.**

Unions call for new home care strategy

SIPTU and the INMO have backed calls by The Carers Association for the introduction of a strategy that will allow for the long-term continuation of care giving in the home.

It follows the screening of a Primetime Investigates programme on May 30 revealing the devastating impact health cuts have had on family carers.

According to a survey carried out for the programme, more than 82% of respondents said that had been affected adversely by cuts in state services.

Catherine Cox, communications manager for The Carers Association, claimed the report backed up the group's own findings.

She said: "Families are literally skipping meals to keep their heads above water.

"Viewers may be shocked by the report's findings but The Carers Association is already aware that this kind of hardship is commonplace for many family carers."

The INMO claimed that anyone who watched the documentary would have to question how a civilised society could leave the most vulnerable to suffer in this way.

President Sheila Dickson said the programme showed the true cost to society of years of neglect of the

health service. She pointed out that the new programme of government had referred to "mending the pieces of a fractured society", adding: "It is now time to begin mending these fractured lives, to look after the most vulnerable members of our society and to help those who care for them at home by giving them the supports they need, when they need them."

SIPTU health sector organiser Louise O'Reilly said the programme highlighted the need to maximise the hours of home helps working both for not-for-profit agencies and the HSE.

She added: "It is scandalous to think that our members are having their hours cut when you see that they are so badly needed by carers.

"The home help service is a very cost-effective way of providing care in the home for people who may otherwise end up costing the state more money in hospital.

"The Carers Association has called for a national primary care strategy which would be welcome. In the meantime, the HSE could maximise the resources it currently has and alleviate the burden on so many parents and carers as highlighted by Prime Time."

Congress hails Rosalba's release

CONGRESS has welcomed the release from prison of Colombian trade unionist and human rights activist Rosalba Gaviria Toro.

Rosalba, who is president of the Women's Movement for Peace and Human Rights and a member of agricultural workers' union FENSUAGRO, was detained in March 2009.

She was accused of "rebellion" and "serious conspiracy to commit a crime" but was released on June 3 after all charges

were thrown out by a judge at a hearing.

Congress equality and development officer David Joyce said: "Last year, Congress asked for emails demanding Rosalba's release to be sent to the Colombian authorities.

"Her release earlier this month shows that campaigning really works. It's really great news."



Tribune archive is launched online

RADICAL weekly Tribune has launched an online archive covering 75 years of its coverage of the British labour movement.

Launched in 1937 as a vehicle to unite the left against the rise of Fascism and the threat of war in Europe, Tribune was the brainchild of UK Labour giants Aneurin Bevan, Stafford Cripps and a staunch band of supporters and financiers.

It quickly became a platform for wider debate within the labour movement and has remained a powerful voice of the social democratic left.

Tribune editor Chris McLaughlin said: "The creation of a digital archive means that a legacy of 75 years of Labour history is now available in a few keystrokes.

"It is a remarkable, unrivalled resource for party and union members, students, researchers, activists, journalists, MPs, civil servants book reviewers and many others.

"Initially the service will be free to new visitors though we do advise that at some stage frequent users will be given the opportunity to subscribe or pay after what we will aim to ensure is a generous measure of free visits."

He added: "Licences will also be available to institutions. These steps will be necessary to recoup the large investment that has gone into creating this unrivalled archive."

<http://archive.tribunemagazine.co.uk/about>



MARCH PAST

An image from the Library of Congress collection of a rainy May Day parade in New York on May 1, 1911. 10,000 workers took part in the march towards the Big Apple's Union Square

DUFFY/WALSH REPORT

Mandate claims report shoots down IBEC's assertion on jobs

MANDATE has claimed the recent Duffy/Walsh report into JLCs and EROs contradicts assertions from business interests that the wage setting mechanisms hinder job creation.

The paper was jointly authored by Labour Court chairman Kevin Duffy and UCD economics professor Frank Walsh.

Employers' group IBEC expressed disappointment with their conclusions and claimed the "antiquated" system was "out of touch with the urgent need to create employment".

Director Brendan McGinty said: "Mere tinkering with the current procedures will be seen by employers as a failure to address the underlying competitiveness issues that are crucial to job creation and economic recovery."

But Mandate general secretary John Douglas hit back and called on employers to stop putting short-term personal gains over the needs of the country and accept the expert findings.

Speaking after the report was published last month, he said: "The fact is that this independent review does not back up the exaggerated claims made by the employers' organisations about the 'job creation' impact of the abolition of the JLCs.

"It's important that the record is put straight in this regard – Mr Duffy and Dr Walsh are independent experts of the highest integrity who reviewed all the evidence in front of them and came to their conclusions.

"What the employers' organisations need to do now is to deal with the facts as presented in this independent review – not the myths they've been peddling for some time."

Mr Douglas also flagged up recent research that had shown that scrapping JLCs would cost 10,000 jobs because of a reduction in the spending power of workers on lower and middle incomes.

He added: "The system which has stood the test of time and delivered for workers and employers alike



John Douglas

Jimmy Kelly

throughout times of bust and boom has been upheld as the best way of maintaining decent jobs and protecting employers and workers."

The Coalition to Protect the Lowest Paid – a group representing a range of organisations including SIPTU, Mandate and UNITE – also welcomed the report's conclusion that wage setting mechanisms should be maintained to protect reasonable employment standards for vulnerable workers.

Speaking on behalf of the group, TASC's Bill Abom said: "We agree that the terms and conditions set by JLCs, agreed between worker and employer representatives in a fair

manner, establish very basic provisions which are reasonable in sectors where workers need and deserve greater protection.

"The JLC mechanisms now need to be strengthened in light of this review."

Meanwhile, UNITE has warned against any attempt to dismantle the agreements through the 'back door' of review and reform.

The union in particular rejects the right for employers to claim derogation from the agreement.

Regional secretary Jimmy Kelly said: "Employers could form a cabal and put up one of their number as needing to reduce wages to survive.

"Then the distortion this would bring could allow them all to plead the same and it is the workers who will get shafted.

"We will always work to find solutions in cases where there is a genuine threat to survival but to formalise an inability to pay clause would be like erecting a neon sign for bad employers to bring everybody down."



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PSC: Report shows Croke deal is delivering

CONGRESS' Public Services Committee has described the findings of the review into the workings of the Croke Park agreement as "positive and encouraging".

IMPACT general secretary Shay Cody, who is chair of the PSC, said: "The report reflects that the agreement, despite the dire predictions of its critics, has achieved in its first year what it set out to do – namely, to reduce the cost of delivering public services, while at the same time maintaining and, in some cases, improving those services."

"This has been achieved in the first year, exceeding projected targets, which means that jobs and pay in the sector are protected from any further cuts." He admitted that "of course" challenges would lie ahead but that it had been a

"very positive and encouraging start".

INTO general secretary Sheila Nunan, PSC vice-chair, added: "This is a very encouraging sign that the agreement can protect jobs and pay. It shows clearly how public servants are delivering vital reforms and at the same time reducing public spending."

"The report's findings show that the required savings can be made without recourse to further damaging pay cuts and compulsory redundancies which would have an enormously negative effect on the economy, as past experience has shown."

Patricia King, vice president of SIPTU, claimed the first review of the implementation body should give critics of the deal pause for thought. She said: "While there have been occasional

calls to abandon the agreement in favour of further damaging cuts, the evidence is that the agreement is delivering what it promised for all citizens and for the state. Croke Park has shown that it can and will continue to deliver value."

PSEU general secretary Tom Geraghty said: "The report's emphasis on the importance of industrial peace in helping to rebuild Ireland's international reputation is welcome."

"The agreement has afforded public servants an opportunity to make a very significant contribution to rebuilding that reputation. Despite the uncertainty brought about by other crises, this sustained effort has provided some certainty. It is a significantly positive achievement at a time when good news is, unfortunately, a rarity."



Sightsavers

Every wipe of his eyes takes Talla closer to blindness

© Jenny Matthews/Sightsavers



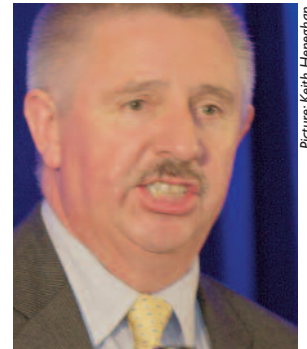
Talla is just five. He has trachoma, a painful eye disease which can lead to a lifetime of blindness. Repeated infections cause the eyelashes to turn inwards and slowly and painfully every blink damages the eye and leads to blindness. Trachoma can be treated effectively in its early stages with a course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



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Please quote ICTU. Thank you!

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Peter Nolan: Media agenda

Beware of 'naysayers' on Croke Park deal

IMPACT has claimed the local government sector in the Republic has already met its end-of-year staffing targets leading to massive savings under the Croke Park Agreement.

But despite this, the union's local government national secretary Peter Nolan warned that some commentators and economists were now seeking "to sow the seeds of fatalism" about further pay cuts among local authority workers.

He made the comments at the union's local government and education conference in Castlebar on May 26.

Mr Nolan told delegates: "In 2009, they successfully sowed the seeds of fatalism, telling us over and over again that pay would have to be cut, until it assumed the status of a fact even among some of our own members."

"They are at it again, with daily opinion pieces saying Croke Park will 'obviously' fail and that it is 'inevitable' that more public service pay cuts will be imposed. They are wrong."

"The government parties have repeatedly said that they will honour the agreement so long as it continues to deliver the necessary savings and reforms. Even the IMF-EU 'troika' has taken the same position."

"Don't listen to the naysayers, but keep on delivering in order to protect your jobs, pay, and pensions – and to continue protecting the local services that our communities depend on."

Ian Cobain, of The Guardian, with Eamonn McCann at Amnesty Awards in London

Bloody Sunday reports award



DERRY Trades Council vice chair Eamonn McCann has won a top human rights award for his reporting on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry. The award was presented to the veteran reporter and activist at the Amnesty International Media Awards in London on May 25. In his acceptance speech, he told those gathered at the British Film Institute for the event that the story of Bloody Sunday was "clear by the day after".

He said: "It happened in broad daylight. There were hundreds of witnesses overall, dozens of witnesses for each killing, all eager to tell what they saw. "But no-one in authority wanted to listen. It took 38 years to get that story finally told."

Mr McCann added: "I want to pay tribute to the families of the Bloody Sunday victims. It has been their tireless efforts for justice which have kept me working on this story for so long. "This award belongs to them."

Picture: Amnesty International

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PRIVATISATION

Fire sale of state assets opposed

IMPACT members working in commercial state companies have voted to oppose the sale of state assets to the private sector.

Delegates gathered at the union's services and enterprises division conference in Castlebar on May 26 heard national secretary Matt Staunton blast sell-off proposals contained in the Review Group report into state assets and liabilities.

He said: "There are only two compelling reasons to sell state assets. Either the aim is to improve services or it is to raise cash. In the current economic environment, neither of these boxes can be ticked."

"The money isn't out there for anyone to purchase state infrastructure and services, or to invest in their development. It looks as though that will remain the case for some time."

Mr Staunton flagged up the fallout from previous privatisations where "citizen shareholders" had got their "fingers badly burned".

Rather he pointed to ICTU's "pragmatic approach" allowing for the sell-off of a minority portion of holdings.

This had the merit of "learning from the mistakes of the past".

He added: "Clearly, in the current climate, there won't be a significant benefit to the government by pursuing a clearance sale."



Picture: Dolphine Bedel/Oxfam France

When the chips are down... does the G8 really care about plight of world's poor?

OXFAM has reminded the leaders of the world's top economies that their commitment to the poor is "dangerously off track".

And the campaigning charity staged an impromptu game of poker, above, on the fringes of last month's G8 Summit in Deauville, France, to ham-

mer home the fact. It was claimed that the world's most powerful movers and shakers are gambling with the future of millions of marginalised and impoverished people.

A spokesperson said: "The G8 leaders made a promise to the world's poorest people to halve poverty by 2015

and to put people first.

"With only four years to go on that commitment, the G8 must enact an emergency plan to deliver the aid they have promised, and invest in reducing hunger, health and education and take action to stop rich companies avoiding taxes in poor countries."



UK govt faces the biggest wave of strikes since 1926



Dave Prentis: Pensions warning

UNISON chief Dave Prentis has warned the UK government it faces the biggest wave of industrial action since the General Strike of 1926.

His prediction of "sustained and indefinite" strikes over proposed changes to public sector pensions came after Treasury chief secretary Danny Alexander claimed unions would be making a "colossal mistake" and be faced with "uncompromising" change later if they rejected the

plans. Mr Prentis – whose union has 1.3 million members – said UNISON was prepared for "rolling action over an indefinite period" and predicted that, unlike the 1984/85 miners' strike, unions would win.

Meanwhile, UNITE has accused the UK government of "gunboat diplomacy" following Mr Alexander's comments which it claimed was "tantamount" to "bombing" the current discussions between ministers and trade unions.



Brekkie butties for June 30 strikers call

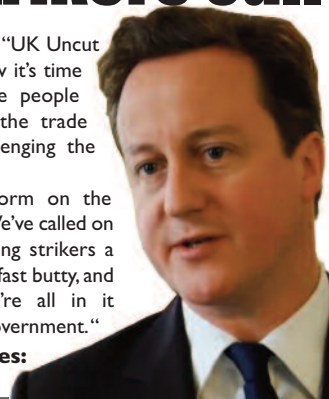
PROTEST group UK Uncut has called on its supporters to back the June 30 nationwide strike by more than 700,000 workers in the most practical way possible – by bringing along mugs of tea and breakfast butties to feed those on the picket lines.

They've dubbed the initiative the 'Big Society Breakfast' in a passing nod to David Cameron's electoral pitch, but it will no doubt prove a lot more palatable to many thousands of NUT, PCS, ATL and UCU strikers on

the day. A source said: "UK Uncut are used to sit-ins, now it's time to stand up with the people going on strike and the trade unions who are challenging the government."

"Picket lines will form on the morning of the 30th. We've called on our supporters to bring strikers a mug of tea and a breakfast butty, and show them that we're all in it together against the government."

Indigestible policies: David Cameron



IBEC lobby to EC slammed

SIPTU has slammed IBEC's "opportunistic" lobbying of the EU Commission.

It came after the employers' group sent representatives to Brussels on June 15 to win support from Commission chiefs for the scrapping of wage setting mechanisms in the Republic. SIPTU divisional organiser John King said: "IBEC should be engaging with the social partners and Irish government rather than travelling to Brussels to ask the EU

Commission to intervene in a process in which it has no competence."

"The Commission has no authority to dictate to a member state what its wage policy or wage setting mechanisms should be. That is the function of national governments."

"The IBEC case that the wage setting mechanisms for low paid sectors should be abolished flies in the face of the independent Duffy/Walsh report that stated that such a move would be damaging to the economy."

Get the most from The Post... back issues at:

<http://www.ictu.ie/publications/fulllist/category/unionpost/>

90 trade unionists murdered last year



Still from a shock ITUC video on the targeting of trade union activists

A TOTAL of 90 trade unionists were murdered last year for defending workers' rights, according to new figures.

The grim tally was outlined in the ITUC's annual survey of abuses of workers' rights and published at the 100th International Labour Organisation conference held in Geneva earlier this month.

Colombia – where 49 activists were murdered – and the Americas still hold the record for murder and oppression of workers because of their organising activities.

The global trends highlighted in the survey include governments not enforcing labour laws, a lack of support for the funding of health and safety at work, the lack of rights and abuse of migrant labour as well as the exploitation of mainly female workforces in the world's export processing zones.

NUJ Irish Secretary Seamus Dooley has called the shooting of a PA photographer covering rioting in East Belfast “an extremely worrying development”. The NUJ member was shot in the leg when trouble flared on the Lower Newtownards Road on June 21.

Mr Dooley said: “This photographer was injured while doing his job. It is vital that journalists should be allowed to carry out their duties without fear of attack from any quarter.

“This incident is part of a sinister assault on the people of Northern Ireland.”

General secretary Sharan Burrow said: “Workers, communities and populations are trying to claim basic rights to decent work and a

decent life, and in many countries these people are being met with sackings, violence and in extreme cases murder by governments and by businesses.

“Independent trade unions are essential to improving the living standards of ordinary workers across the globe. The ITUC annual survey shows that in fighting for basic rights to a decent job and decent life, many trade unionists put their lives on the line for the good of their communities.”

Warning that the “world's unemployment queue” is growing, she added: “Without proper jobs or hope for the future, governments risk increasing political instability. Union rights are fundamental to democracy, to economic growth and to a civilised future.”

<http://survey.ituc-csi.org/>

Picture: ITUC

ITUC & Amnesty drive on union rights in Iran

AMNESTY International has teamed up with the International Trade Union Confederation to launch a drive to end the persecution of labour activists in Iran.

It comes as a new report by the human rights organisation claims Iranian unions are being targeted by a regime increasingly intolerant of dissent and desperate to block the spread of social unrest. The report, ‘Determined to Live in Dignity: Iranian Trade Unionists Struggle for Rights’, was published at the ILO conference in Geneva on June 10.

It documents the courage shown by those activists who have defied a ban on independent trade unions, including the Tehran bus drivers' union, teachers' associations and workers in the sugar industry.

Amnesty's global trade union adviser Shane Enright said: “The government seems determined to break existing unions while continuing to ban new, independent workers' bodies that have begun to emerge, in gross contempt for its international obligations as an ILO member and for the labour rights of its own people.”

Meanwhile, Tehran bus workers' union chief Mansour Ossanlu was conditionally released from jail on June 2.

Amnesty International Iran researcher Ann Harrison said: “Mansour Ossanlu was imprisoned for almost four years because of his peaceful trade union activities, in denial of his rights to freedom of expression and association.

“This was part of a concerted campaign of repression being waged against himself and his union, Sherkat-e Vahed.”

Two of Mr Ossanlu's union colleagues, Resa Shahabi and Ebrahim Madadi remain in custody.

A third activist, Gholamreza Gholamhosseini, has been released on bail but is facing charges.



Mansour Ossanlu

<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/content.asp?CategoryId=12066>

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WORKERS SURVEY

6 in every 10 have been bullied in the workplace or witnessed it

UNISON has claimed a staggering six in every 10 workers in the UK have been bullied – or witnessed bullying – over the past six months.

The findings come from a union-commissioned survey of more than 6,000 employees and, it is claimed, flags up concerns that government cuts are fuelling workplace bullying.

One in four workers say that staff cuts have led to workplace bullying – double the number from two years ago – and around half say they would be too scared to raise concerns during a period of cuts.

And UNISON warns workplace bullying will rocket further, as the cuts really start to bite.

General secretary Dave Prentis said: "Workers are stuck in a living hell, as they are faced with a double whammy of cuts and bullying."

"Our results show that bosses are failing to clamp down on workplace bullying and staff are too scared to raise concerns in the current climate of staff and job cuts."

"There is more pressure than ever from management and the levels of stress are soaring."

"The government must rethink its savage cuts agenda, or see workers' health and efficiency deteriorate."

He added: "It is more important than ever that workers join a union, as this may be their only point of call for help."

DESIGN

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AUSTRALIA'S lowest paid workers are to get an extra \$19.40 a week. The move, announced by the national workplace relations tribunal Fair Work Australia earlier this month, was welcomed by ACTU secretary Jeff Lawrence – though he underlined that the increase did not go far enough in closing the pay gap between Australia's 1.4m low-paid workers and the rest of the workforce. The ACTU had called for a \$28 hike.



New report refutes arguments made for NI business tax cuts

CONGRESS has welcomed a new non-partisan report critical of planned changes to Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland.

The research, published in April, was compiled by Cambridge University-based The Wilberforce Society.

Congress assistant general secretary Peter Bunting claimed the paper effectively refuted nearly all the arguments made for cutting the rate of business tax in the

North. He said: "This report is important because it is one of the very few studies of the arguments around Corporation Tax in Northern Ireland whose authors have no political or material interest in a lower rate for their companies or making savings for the UK Treasury."

"It is truly 'disinterested' research in the best traditions of Cambridge Univer-

sity and its independent stance allows it to reach conclusions which run against the grain of perceived opinion on this matter."

Mr Bunting called for the report to "widely read and considered" in the face of a "high octane campaign" being waged by some political and business interests to lower the levy to match that of the Republic.

http://thewilberforcesociety.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/TWS_Corporation_Tax_NI.pdf

NIPSA CHIEF HITS OUT AT CORPO TAX 'GAMBLE'



Campfield: No guarantee

NIPSA has called on Northern Ireland's politicians to rethink their "rushed" approach to slashing corporation tax.

Almost all of the North's political parties currently back a cut to 12.5%, which will create a single island-wide tax rate.

It follows the passing of a resolution opposing any reduction in the levy at the union's annual conference in Derry earlier this month.

Speaking after the resolution was passed, general secretary Brian Campfield said: "The delegates at this conference seem to be more aware of the deficiencies in the plan to reduce corporation tax than our politicians who appear to be united in their rush to gift business a tax break without any guarantees about job creation."

"The main political parties are pre-

pared to gamble millions of pounds of Northern Ireland's block grant in the hope of delivering additional jobs by giving business a tax break.

"There is no guarantee that private businesses will not just pocket the tax break and treat it as additional profit."

"Any public money targeted at the private sector must be conditional on the creation of additional jobs by private sector firms. Reducing corporation tax is an inefficient and unfair vehicle for providing a proper impetus for economic growth."

"Playing roulette with public money is unacceptable and NIPSA is calling upon Northern Ireland's political parties to engage in a serious rethink and reassessment of their policies on corporation tax."

Tax double whammy revealed

THETUC has warned low rates of corporation tax both cut government revenues AND fail to create jobs.

The tax double whammy was outlined in a new report, Corporate Tax Reform And Competitiveness, published last month.

Tax specialist Richard Murphy, right, who authored the paper on behalf of the TUC, claims recent tax reforms and ongoing cuts in the headline corporation tax rate will reduce vital tax revenues without any significant benefit to ordinary taxpayers.

The report cites data from OECD countries to show that the UK enjoys an extremely competitive tax rate.

More than 90% of UK businesses pay the small business rate of 20% while the effective corporate tax rate for large companies is currently estimated by PriceWaterhouse Coopers to be 23.2% – far lower than the OECD average of 26.5%.

Previous TUC research has esti-



mated that the effective corporate tax rate is lower than 23.2% and has been falling by 0.5% a year for the last decade. According to the TUC, it is likely that many multinationals are now paying a lower rate of corporation tax than small businesses.

General secretary Brendan Barber claimed the UK government had been "seduced" by employer calls for more corporate tax cuts.

He said: "While everyone wants to pay less tax, from multinationals

to ordinary taxpayers, the argument that simply cutting corporation tax will fuel jobs and growth does not stand up to scrutiny."

Mr Murphy's report compared corporate tax and employment growth rates between 1997 and 2010 across OECD countries and found no strong correlation between low taxes and high employment or GDP growth.

Mr Barber added: "UK corporate tax rates are already extremely competitive."

"And while some people, including the Chancellor, have talked about emulating the Irish economy's aggressive low tax policies, its current woes suggest this is not a sustainable economic model."

"The more that big businesses and the super rich avoid paying their fair share, the more ordinary taxpayers will have to pick up the tab through tax rises and reduced public services."

www.tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/22/corporate_tax_reform_and_competitiveness.doc

EDUCATION



Sheila Nunan Jack Keane

Teachers must have right tools to do job

ASTI president Jack Keane has called for adequate specialist resources to be given to schools to protect inclusivity in education.

He made his comments in response to a discussion paper on school enrolment issued earlier this month by the Republic's education minister Ruairi Quinn.

Mr Keane claimed the best schools were those that welcomed pupils with "diverse needs from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and with a variety of abilities", but warned that inclusive schools needed adequate specialist support and funding.

He said: "Schools which have embraced equality of access and participation find that they are struggling to mainstream pupils with specific needs such as special educational needs and English language learning needs.

"The provision of adequate specialist resources would support the practice of inclusive enrolment."

Meanwhile, INTO general secretary Sheila Nunan has also called on the Department of Education and Skills to make sure schools have the necessary resources to meet the needs of pupils once they are enrolled.

She said: "There is no point in schools enrolling pupils if the department is not prepared to resource those schools fully in terms of teachers, other staff or equipment."

INTO raises €60k for sick children

MEMBERS of the INTO have raised more than €60,000 to help buy a flexible bronchoscopy system for the Respiratory Department at Our Lady's Hospital, Crumlin.

The union organises an annual fundraising draw to support children's medical research at the Dublin hospital and members have contributed nearly €1.5m since 1990. Deputy general secretary Noel Ward said primary teachers made a generous response to the appeal this year and that the money raised would make a real difference to the lives of sick children.

■ FRENCH teaching unions are to stage a nationwide one-day strike in protest over job cuts after the summer holidays. Some 16,000 teaching posts – 9,000 in the primary sector – are to be scrapped in September. Unions have called on the Sarkozy administration to stop its policy of only replacing half of workers who retire.



Pictures: CMKOS

50,000 AT PRAGUE CUTS DEMO

MORE than 50,000 people marching under the slogan 'Stop Insidious Reforms' took to the streets of Prague last month over government proposals to radically transform the pension and health care systems.

The May 21 demo was called by the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions (CMKOS). It was a colourful and noisy march with protesters beating drums, blowing vuvuzelas and waving unions flags with slogans such as "We have had enough" and "People wake up!"

Marchers converged on Wenceslas Square – the heart of the Czech capital.

Once there, Josef Stredula, chief of Czech metal workers union KOVO, read out a joint proclamation from a coalition of trade unions and civil society organisations.

He told the crowd: "Reforms of the healthcare system, of the tax, pension and social systems are badly thought out, half-baked, ideologically tinged, lacking any analysis of the impact on citizens.

"They are intended to make healthcare, pensions and social services serve only profit."



STATESIDE PROTESTS



NUU members protested on Wall Street, right, and Washington DC, left, to highlight their union's call for increased taxes on big business as well to defend Medicare and Medicaid from cuts



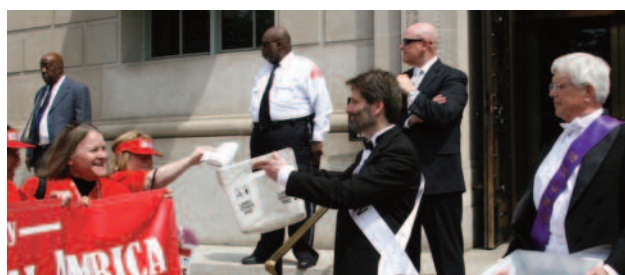
Nurses take health and tax message to Capitol Hill and Wall Street



HUNDREDS of National Nurses Union members have staged demos at the seat of US government – the Capitol Hill in Washington DC – and at America's financial hub – on Wall Street – this month to promote a new campaign calling for increased taxation on big business and to

defend the Medicare and Medicaid programmes from cuts.

Dubbed 'Main Street Contract for the American People', the NNU also demonstrated outside the Chamber of Commerce HQ in Washington where two demonstrators dressed in tuxedos – one named 'Goldman' and the



'Goldman' & 'Sachs' collect invoices at Chamber of Commerce HQ

other 'Sachs' – collected 'invoices' for 'pension contribution increases' and 'mortgages payments' from nurses on the steps of the building.

The new campaign is calling for a decent living wage for workers, equal access to quality, public education, a just taxation system where the wealthy pay their share as well as guaranteed healthcare with a single standard of care.

A spokesperson said: "With the erosion of living standards for many, and new attacks almost daily from Wall Street-funded politicians, all Americans need a new contract, a binding relationship for their security, for their families, and for future generations."

The NNU is the US's largest nurses union with 175,000 members.

UNITE

Consultation launched on political structures

UNITE is to consult with its members on political structures following a vote at its Irish Policy Conference in Dublin on May 24.

Regional secretary Jimmy Kelly said the union recognised that local politics aroused "great passion and sensitivity" but praised the level of debate surrounding a motion calling on UNITE to back a left-wing alliance in the Republic.

He said: "UNITE is an all-Ireland union and we need to work to influence all political parties to place the rights and needs of our community of working people to the fore."

Mr Kelly added: "After the general election in the Republic, we called on Labour to avoid the lure of coalition and to opt instead to lead a 'policy changing' coalition of the left.

"We accept that this option was not taken at the time. We will continue to work to influence all parties of the left, with the trade union movement and with social and community organisations, to advance the interests of all our members and all working people."

PCS

'We won't be made scapegoats for crisis'

AROUND 3,000 civil and public servants in the PCS in Northern Ireland have voted overwhelmingly to strike over cuts to their jobs, pensions and pay.

The workers were included in a UK-wide ballot of more than 250,000 PCS members in which 61.1% voted for a strike and 83.6% voted for other forms of industrial action, on a turnout of 32.4%.

Regional committee chair Barney Lawn said: "Both Westminster and the Northern Ireland Assembly need to listen to this ballot result. Public sector workers will not be made the scapegoats for an economic crisis they didn't cause.

"Attacking our members – many of whom are low paid and already struggling financially – is a disgrace when millions are being wasted on consultants, contractors and casual staff and billions of pounds of avoided and evaded tax goes uncollected."



Pictures & video grabs: MRCI

FLASH STANCE!

MEMBERS of the Restaurant and Catering Workers Forum staged an innovative 'flash mob' action at the annual Irish Restaurant Awards dinner last month to support their call for fair and decent wages in the sector.

Several RCWF members mingled incognito with Restaurants Association of Ireland invitees at the May 25 event in the Burlington Hotel, Dublin.

As guests prepared to enter the function room where the awards were being presented, the flash mob-

sters – sporting bright yellow T-shirts emblazoned with slogans – revealed themselves.

Earlier outside the venue, Forum members had offered gift bags to dinner guests, asking fellow chefs, workers and restaurant owners attending the event to support their call for fair and decent wages and conditions for restaurant workers.

The RCWF is a joint initiative of Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and SIPTU. Pat Ward, of SIPTU, said: "The restaurant industry is driving an

attack on minimum wage rates and basic protections for workers, while lower-wage workers are struggling to survive.

"This is not about saving jobs – the government's recent review of the JLC mechanisms has shown that abolishing these minimum standards will not generate jobs.

"The industry's attack on wages for the lowest-paid workers is shameful. Now, more than ever, we must ensure protections remain in place for those who need them most."



RCWF staged a more traditional protest outside Irish Restaurant Awards venue, above, while inside...



CHECK OUT THE VIDEO AT: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hfc_mUxcssM&feature=channel_video_title



Picture: ETUC

Bernadette Ségol: Leading role

Bernadette to lead ETUC

THE European Trade Union Confederation elected a new general secretary – French trade unionist Bernadette Ségol – at the organisation's annual conference in Athens last month.

Ms Ségol, who is to speak at Congress' Biennial Delegate Conference in Killarney next month, is a former head of UNI Europa.

She has also been a member of the ETUC's Executive Committee since 1985.



Picture: TUI

John MacGabhann: New position

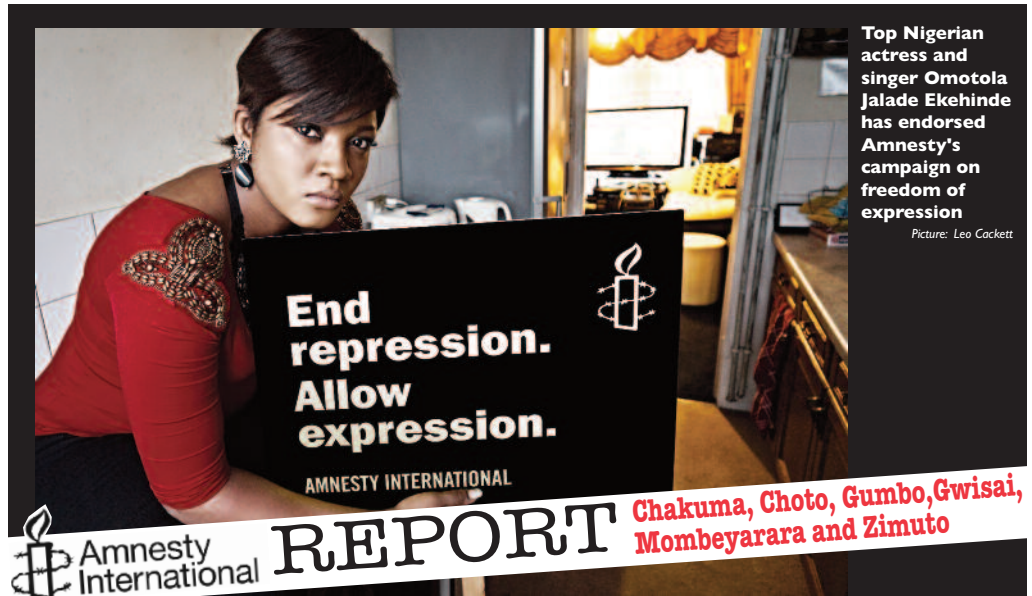
John is new TUI gen sec

JOHN MacGabhann is to be the next general secretary of the Teachers Union of Ireland.

He will take over from TUI veteran Peter MacMenamin, who retires later this year.

Mr MacGabhann, a native of Clonmel, Co Tipperary, was appointed TUI education and research officer in 2003 before becoming assistant general secretary in July 2006.

He has also held the posts of honorary secretary and vice president with the union.



REPORT Chakuma, Choto, Gumbo, Gwisai, Mombeyarara and Zimuto

Zimbabwe six face 20 years in jail for speaking at lecture

AMNESTY International has appealed to Zimbabwean authorities to drop charges against six men arrested earlier this year for organising and attending a lecture about the recent wave of protests in North Africa.

The men were charged with "attempting to subvert a constitutionally-elected government" and are expected to go to trial on July 18. If found guilty, they could face up to 20 years in jail.

The six – Eddson Chakuma, Antonater Choto, Hopewell Gumbo, Munyaradzi Gwisai, Tatenda Mombeyarara and Welcome Zimuto – were arrested along with 39 other men and women in February.

All 45 were originally charged with treason after attending a lecture entitled 'Revolt in Egypt and Tunisia: What lessons can be learnt by Zimbabwe and Africa'.

The charge of treason was later dropped and 39 of the 45 were released after a magistrates court dismissed the charges.

The remaining six either spoke at the lecture or work with the Zimbabwean chapter of the International Socialist Organisation.

A charge of treason against the men was dropped on May 30.

Amnesty International considers the remaining charges brought against these men to be a breach of their right to freedom of expression and appear to be politically motivated.

The human rights organisation has called for the charges to be dropped immediately and unconditionally.

The men were held in solitary confinement for 23 hours a day until they were granted bail on March 16.

Amnesty International has also expressed concern about the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe.

Since February the organisation has noted a significant increase in harassment and intimidation of human rights activists by police.



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NUJ congrats after RTE Radio scoops top gong

THE NUJ has congratulated RTÉ Radio on being named broadcaster of the year at the New York Festival Awards.

In addition to the nomination, RTÉ Radio programmes secured a further 16 plaudits at the June 20 awards ceremony.

These included seven awards plus a Grand Award for RTÉ Radio 1's 'Documentary on One', six awards for RTÉ Radio 1's 'Drama on One', and one award each for RTÉ Lyric FM and RTÉ Gold.

Irish secretary Séamus Dooley said the top gong "highlighted the value of public service broadcasting and reflected the wealth of talent within RTÉ across all platforms and at every level of the organisation."

NUJ vice president Barry McCall said the award underlined the importance of securing the future of public service broadcasting in the Republic and was a timely reminder of "the unique place occupied by RTÉ on the cultural landscape."

Mr Dooley added: "The public service obligations placed upon RTÉ are an additional burden but these awards provide international affirmation of the fact that RTÉ Radio not only meets these obligations but does so with style and distinction."

"It is recognition of the quality of Irish broadcasting and will be celebrated not just by RTÉ staff but by those who are served by RTÉ on a daily basis."



Jack O'Connor: Pretex

Drop in wages impacts demand

CONGRESS president Jack O'Connor has claimed falling salaries are impacting on the Irish economy and hitting consumer demand.

He made his comments after data released by Eurostat revealed that wages in the Republic fell by an average of 2.6% in the first quarter of 2011 when compared with the same period last year.

Salaries rose in all other EU states apart from Greece.

Mr O'Connor, who is also SIPTU general president, said: "These figures confirm what we have been saying for many months."

"Wages have been falling across the economy and the effect of this is to further depress consumer demand."

"This is contributing to the downward spiral in the economy."

"It confirms the economic stupidity of those who wish to cut wages, particularly those of low-paid workers, who invariably spend all of their incomes."

The latest Eurostat figures, published on June 20, show the biggest fall in wages in Ireland was recorded in the construction sector with an average decrease of 11.6%, in industry the decrease was 2.8% and in services 0.8%.

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