

THE

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UNION POST

PUBLISHED IN ASSOCIATION WITH CONGRESS



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STANDING TOGETHER

NOV 24

Public service workers unite in 24hr stoppage

PAGE 3



NOV 6 RALLIES WERE YOU THERE?

PICTURE SPECIALS
PAGES 4,5,8,9

UNION POST



Nov 6 National Day of Action picture special 4



Nov 6 Belfast rally: pictures and reports 8



Boots & Mandate in Labour Court talks 12



Frontline Alliance: picture special 14



Lookback at 80s teachers protests 18

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National Jobs' Summit



WORKING OUR WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS

HOW WE TACKLE THE JOBS' CRISIS BY SAVING AND CREATING JOBS

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- Hear from Poul Rasmussen, Leader of Party of European Socialists, former Prime Minister of Denmark
- Hear experts from the construction sector, electricity generation, economists and union leaders on why jobs are central to any recovery

Conference will be opened by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Councillor Emer Costello

For full conference details log on to:
www.getupstandup.ie/events/2009/11/26/national-jobs-summit/

Or contact marian.flynn@ictu.ie



BURNING ISSUES HERE'S YOUR CHANCE TO GRILL THE POLITICIANS...

CONGRESS is holding a series of 'Town Hall Meetings' across the country.

Local elected representatives will be invited to attend the public meetings and state their positions on a number of key issues including:

- The jobs crisis
 - Extending the adjustment period
 - Threat of repossession hanging over peoples' homes, and
 - Protecting incomes
- Kilkenny held the first of the events on November 13.

Congress has so far confirmed a number of other locations for meetings in Cork, Waterford, Dundalk, Naas and Sligo. Other locations - Galway, Limerick, Tralee and Mayo - are awaiting final confirmation or are under active consideration, but the advice is to check www.getupstandup.ie for latest details.

All meetings are due to place on evening of Monday, November 23, with the exception of Sligo, which goes ahead on Thursday, December 3.



TOWN HALL MEETINGS LATEST CHECK OUT www.getupstandup.ie

NATIONAL PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKE NOVEMBER 24

24 HOUR SHUTDOWN

EDUCATION

UP TO 65,000 teachers and lecturers in primary schools, second-level schools, further education colleges and third level institutions will join the November 24 strike.

Members of ASTI, INTO, and TUI voted overwhelmingly in favour of industrial action in a series of ballots earlier this month. IFUT already had secured a mandate for industrial action.

In a joint statement the general secretaries of all four unions claimed teachers were taking the action because they had never before faced such a serious threat to their pay, pensions and terms and conditions.

The statement continued: "The four teacher unions believe there is a better, fairer way which does not involve singling out public sector workers or dismantling vital public services.

"Teachers, lecturers and other public sector workers are being treated as if they are somehow responsible for causing the crisis in the public finances.

"They are angry at how their sector has already suffered severe cutbacks, both in terms of teacher and lecturer job losses as well as financial support for schools and colleges.

"Public sector workers have already taken a pay cut in the form of the pension levy which was unilaterally imposed on them earlier this year.

"The results of the ballots are a signal to the Government that singling out teachers and other public sector workers is unacceptable and that an alternative approach to economic recovery must be adopted which ensures that the burden is shared fairly, the vulnerable are protected and that vital public services are maintained."

CIVIL SERVICE

SENIOR CIVIL servants have voted to join civil service colleagues on other grades by joining the November 24 stoppage.

Association of Higher Civil and Public Servants, representing principal officers and assistant principal officers as well as as prison governors and court registrars, voted by 60 per cent to 40 per cent to take part.

Last March AHCPs members voted by a similar margin not to participate in industrial action. Union officials said members had already endured an effective pay cut of up to 17 per cent as a result of the introduction of income and pension levies.

CRAFT WORKERS

THE LOCAL authority and health service craft-workers group of unions has served notice of industrial action on local government employers and the HSE.

Finbarr Maguire, acting secretary of the group, said a specially convened meeting of the affiliate unions – comprising SIPTU, TEEU, Unite and UCATT – had given "overwhelming mandate... to enter into a campaign of industrial action as a defence against the unjustified levies unilaterally imposed on them.

"There was also total opposition to further proposed pay-cuts."

He added: "The first leg of this campaign will take effect from 00.01 am to 23.59pm on Tuesday, November 24, 2009.

"The unions have advised the employers that they will make themselves available to discuss appropriate levels of emergency cover as set down in the 'Voluntary Code of Practice on Dispute Procedures for the Maintenance of Essential Services'."

Mr Maguire claimed the group regretted the inconvenience caused to the public but said its members could not "endure further reductions" in their pay.

He added: "The Government now needs to look to sectors other than PAYE workers to contribute to the correction of public finances.

"Further cuts will only hit low and middle income earners, while the high income groups who did best out of the boom continue to remain insulated from the effects of the downturn."

Get serious on talks

IMPACT general secretary Peter McLoone has claimed the pension levy, recruitment embargo and pay freeze had already delivered savings worth €1.3 billion so far this year, and would contribute another €2.4 billion in 2010.

He said: "Public servants are being forced into strikes by the Government's failure to engage seriously to negotiate an alternative, which would deliver the savings it wants without cutting pay or reducing vital services."

"Our members are not prepared to take a second pay cut in less than a year, which would be an invitation to the Government to come back again in 2010 and beyond to further cut their family incomes."

HEALTH

THE IRISH Nurses Organisation has claimed the massive vote in favour of taking industrial action on November 24 is a measure of the depth of anger felt by nurses and midwives.

The 85% vote among INO members is a similar percentage to the backing given by IMPACT members in a similar vote at the end of last month.

In a statement, the INO said the ballot was initiated "against a background of repeated threats from the Government to impose further pay cuts on nurses, midwives and all public servants". It continued: "The mandate allows the INO, if found necessary, to have its members en-

gage in industrial action, involving the withdrawal of labour, with the maintenance of all essential/emergency services."

General secretary Liam Doran described the vote as "an expression of anger, frustration and tiredness of being on the receiving end of threats from Government, of ever-increasing workloads, and of no-one acknowledging the contribution that they have already made."

He added: "I don't see how nurses can do more. They have already contributed in the form of the pension levy, a complete freeze on appointing nursing posts and increasing levels of demand upon the health service."



INO members at November 6 rally

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SOUTH NOVEMBER 6 2009



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Picture: Congress



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Picture: Congress



Picture: Mandate

PICTURE SPECIAL



Picture: ASTI



LIMERICK



Picture: © Paula Geraghty



WATERFORD



KILKENNY





Uniform support: November 11 march in Dublin

Picture: © Paula Geraghty

Alliance warns Govt: Don't test our resolve

THOUSANDS of members of umbrella group 24/7 Frontline Services Alliance marched in uniform to the Dail in a warning to Government not to target the emergency services for cuts.

Speaking outside Leinster House at the November 11 protest, Alliance chair Des Kavanagh said fairness required "a universal contribution by all who can afford it" to tackle the economic crisis.

He insisted that bankers, speculators and the super-wealthy could not be exempted at the expense of ordinary workers dependent on frontline services.

Mr Kavanagh warned ministers not to test the resolve of Frontline workers, who he described as "committed public servants but not fools".

The colourful march was led by a vintage fire engine and 50s and 60s era ambulance and Garda squad car.

It included the Dublin Fire Brigade Band and contingents from the six unions affiliated to the Alliance in uniform or wearing distinctive insignia.

Mr Kavanagh, who is also general secretary of the Psychiatric Nurses' Association, said: "The Taoiseach says the cuts in public services must be fair, while Brian Lenihan says he wants a 6.4% cut in the pay budget.

"Mr Lenihan's mandarins want to target Frontline Alliance workers for a cut of 15% plus.

"We say fairness requires a universal contribution by all who can afford to pay. Fairness demands that the bankers, the speculators, the investors and those with wealth are not exempted."

He warned frontline workers would not be "scapegoated" as managers see them as "an easy touch" either because they are legally prohibited to strike or feel inhibited from taking action because of their commitment to patients.

Mr Kavanagh added: "We do not want to be in dispute. We do not want to strike. We do not want our frontline services undermined.

"However, we must caution the Government: - do not test our resolve. We will not be found wanting.

"We are loyal servants of this state, we are committed servants of the public, but we are not fools and we will not be treated as such."

He claimed that those recommending cuts in allowances were attacking "the very fabric" of pay and conditions for frontline workers.

Mr Kavanagh said: "Those who want allowances cut are merely demonstrating their ignorance of the nature of frontline services, as well as the commitment of frontline workers to specialisation and having to operate in the most challenging of environments.

"Our position is clear. No cuts in allowances, no cuts in unsocial hours' payments, no freezing of increments!"

Firm's €1bn bid to end suicides

FRANCETélécom is to set aside €1 billion in a bid to end a spate of suicides among its workforce.

It is thought the cash will be used to give older employees the option of working part-time. Unions at the telecommunications giant had blamed a restructuring drive that followed privatisation in 2004 for the hike in suicides. Officials had argued that tough management practices, workplace mobility programmes and performance targets had added to the pressures felt by vulnerable workers.

Company bosses have now suspended the restructuring process. Stéphane Richard, who last month took over as deputy chief executive, admitted the firm had "gone too far" in its attempts to supervise staff through the introduction of "control tools".

Govt policy on jobs will delay Irish recovery

GOVERNMENT inaction on the jobs crisis and plans to impose further cuts will guarantee any economic recovery is delayed, it has been claimed.

Congress economic advisor Paul Sweeney told delegates at a Eurofund conference on November 6 that following the advice of groups like the OECD would send the country into a deep, deflationary spiral.

He said: "The one certain way to end a recession is to protect existing jobs and create new work opportunities and there is ample evidence from around the EU that this works, where governments have successfully intervened in the labour market.

"So far, our Government's attention has focused only on the banks.

"And the one guaranteed way to exacerbate a recession is to impose deep cuts in incomes and services. It is economic madness.

"The advice from the OECD and our academic economists will not revive the economy, but send it into a prolonged coma."

Mr Sweeney told delegates at the event held in Dublin Castle: "Equally, the OECD gets all of its information from Government and official sources - the same elements that drove the economy over a cliff.

"That surely undermines the credibility of their findings. It should have been issued with a health warning."

UNITE & Fujitsu agree on talks

UNITE has withdrawn a notice of industrial action at Fujitsu's Belfast operation.

The move follows what was described as "constructive talks" with management on November 11.

Company representatives agreed to extend the period within which the union could call industrial action.

For its part, UNITE agreed to withdraw the notice for industrial action that was due to start on November 12.

Both sides agreed to continue with discussions with the aim of brokering a settlement before Christmas. A further consultation will continue with the company pensions forum until at least January 31 next year.



Des Kavanagh: Warning to ministers

Picture: © Paula Geraghty

FRONTLINE ALLIANCE PICTURES P14/15

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TIME FOR PAYBACK

"THE public is being short changed and it is time for pay-back", Congress assistant general secretary Peter Bunting told crowds gathered outside Belfast City Hall earlier this month.

The November 6 event was one of a series of Congress-organised protests for job creation and in defence of public services at 10 venues across the North.

On the same day as tens of thousands protested in the Republic rallies were held in Belfast, L'Derry, Omagh, Enniskillen, Coleraine, Craigavon, Armagh, Ballymena, Magherafelt and Newry.

Mr Bunting attacked the "squabbling" Executive and claimed it was "no longer fit for purpose".

He said: "Why is this economic crisis not the number one priority? Why does it matter so damn much about the names of sports grounds?"

"Politics is about power. Power is about exercising choices. The choices made by the Executive and the Assembly have been misplaced.

"Get with a new programme. One which places at the centre of our politics the daily lives of its citizens. We need to understand that the best solution to poverty and social exclusion is work. Work in well-paid, humanely rewarding and unionised careers."

He added: "We need to challenge the consensus that cuts are inevitable in our public services because we just have to keep the bankers in the luxury and bonuses to which they have become accustomed.

"We need to cherish our public servants because they are the backbone of the real economy, not small businesses, not multinationals and certainly not the top bankers. In a recession like this, the only source of demand in the economy is coming from the public sector."

'DAMN WELL DONE'

UNISON regional secretary Patricia McKeown praised those who had gathered in the driving rain.

Addressing the crowd, she said: "Damn well done – you're here on your own time, it's not a Saturday, it's a working day and you're not on strike ... yet, but you're out in enormous numbers."

Ms McKeown claimed the protests "would send a strong message" that public sector workers were not prepared to see public services destroyed.

She added: "One of the most important things we're here to do today is to speak not for ourselves but for the people we serve and in particular the most vulnerable people in our society."

Ms McKeown contrasted "the trillions" spent on bailing out the banks with the "millions upon millions" of cuts being forced on health and social care.

Attacking those who called for pay cuts in the public sector, she added: "The fact is public services are keeping this economy alive. Your work and your wages are ensuring that in our towns and in our cities there is some shred of an economy still left."

Ms McKeown reminded local politicians "we have struggled too long and too hard" to let public services go to the wall.

She told the crowd: "We're here today at the start of something – not the end of something. There are one and a quarter of a million people who live here with a desire to be heard – every single one of them relies on health and social care.

"The vast majority of them need all the rest of our public services, all of us need decent jobs – a chance for our future and a real future for our kids. So this is the start and it will get bigger

"And I say this very clearly – on behalf of Unison – the next time we're here, it won't be on our time, it'll be on strike."

In his address, NIPSA general secretary John Corey said working people were "not going to pay for the expenditure cuts" demanded by Government.

In an uncompromising message to local politicians he said: "They are going to have to decide which side they are on – are they on the side of big business or on the side of the vast majority of their constituents?"

PICTURE SPECIAL



Power point: NIC-ICTU's Peter Bunting attacked "squabbling" Executive politicians at Stormont



Speakers: Lawrence Huston, CWU, and UNISON's Patricia McKeown



No compromise: NIPSA's John Corey addresses the crowds outside Belfast City Hall



Picture: Brazier Media

NI group issues poll manifesto on rights of OAPs

A PENSIONERS' Manifesto has been issued by a special campaign group in Northern Ireland in the run-up to the next Westminster elections.

The Pensioners' Manifesto Group brings together representatives of the National Pensioners' Convention, Age Sector Platform, Age Concern, Help the Aged Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Calling in the document for "all men and women should be entitled to dignity, security and fulfilment in retirement", the group demands that local politicians should:

1. Commit to the eradication of pensioner poverty by:
 - Increasing the basic state pension, paid alongside other existing entitlements to provide some financial security for all.
 - Restoring the link with earnings or prices, and
 - Bringing forward the automatic payments of benefits.
2. Increase the winter fuel grant to reflect the higher energy prices and introduce a system to review the amount each year in relation to energy cost.
3. Provide improved access to quality social and long-term care to maintain dignity in advanced years.
4. End unfair discrimination where it adversely affects the opportunities, goods and services available to older people.

ACCOUNTANTS Ernst and Young have predicted the Irish economy North and South will shrink by seven per cent this year. They also warned in a new report of the possibility of a "double dip" recession – meaning a second contraction of the economy following a quarter or two of economic growth. However, the report's authors also pointed to slight improvements in economic conditions in recent months, characterised by one spokesperson as "fragile optimism".



Vanguard: November 6 rally in Dublin was led by construction unions Picture: © Paula Geraghty

PENSIONS CASH PLAN TO RE-BUILD CONSTRUCTION

CONGRESS Construction Committee secretary Denis Farrell has revealed construction unions and employers have agreed a joint rescue package for the industry.

Speaking in advance of the November 6 protest in Dublin, which was led by building workers, he said Ireland could not begin to recover from the recession through slashing construction spending or by scrapping key parts of the National Development Plan dealing with infrastructure.

Claiming the rescue plan "will not cost the taxpayer a penny", he added: "We intend to use workers' money currently in pension funds to provide the investment capital for much needed infrastructural development including the O'Devaney Gardens project and school and hospital projects abandoned by Government.

"The workers on these projects will be better employed than signing on for unemployment benefits. The Government will gain tax receipts and save social welfare payments.

"The plan also includes an integrated training

module which will give unemployed apprentices the opportunity to finish their training.

"All the Government needs to do for us to sort out our own problems is to assure Pension Fund Trustees – many of whom are trade union members – that investing in a construction rescue bond is a prudent and patriotic thing to do."

Mr Farrell claimed "invisible advisors" in the Department of Finance had been "choking off" money already allocated to school projects.

He said: "They apparently count this as a saving. They do not consider the thousands of former hard working and skilled workers being cast on the scrapheap as a cost."

And Mr Farrell had a stern message for those he dubbed "saboteurs" at the Department of Finance.

He said: "Unless they shake off their inertia they will soon be meeting with unemployed building workers who will tell them if they are incapable of helping, let them get out of the way and we will do it ourselves."

Joint Women's Committee marks crusading 50 years

PRESIDENT Mary McAleese met with the Congress Joint Women's Committee earlier this month to mark the group's half century of campaigning on women's issues.

The event at Aras an Uachtaran on November 4 – attended by current and former members of the committee – was described by former Congress president Patricia McKeown as "a celebration of 50 years of struggle and achievement".

The committee was set up in 1959 at the same time as the formation of the modern ICTU with sections established on both sides of the border.

Speaking in advance of the meeting, Ms McKeown, said: "Women were active members of Irish trade union movement from its foundation more than 100 years earlier but they were in large measure absent from its decision-making structures and from positions of power and influence.

"The mission of the Congress Joint Women's Committee was to change the trade union agenda to reflect the concerns of women at work, in their unions and in society as a whole.

"The challenge was to tackle the all pervasive discrimination faced by women across Ireland, North and South. The path was to be a long and difficult and women are still traveling it."

Ms McKeown outlined how early in the Troubles the Northern Ireland section of the Congress Women's Committee had fallen into abeyance as travelling to meetings at night had become difficult and dangerous.

But in 1975, Inez McCormack and Frances Maguire proposed the committee be re-energised at the annual NIC-ICTU conference.

A new and radical section in the North came into being teaming up with a growing women's radicalism in the Republic where women campaigned for equal pay and founded the far reaching 'A Woman's Place is in Her Union' drive.

By the early 80s, the Joint Women's Committee had pioneered a radical agenda which, after overcoming resistance, became the first Con-



Congress past president Patricia McKeown and President McAleese with Clare Tracy & Taryn Trainor, joint chairs of Congress Women's Committee

gress equality programme. Although everyone played their role, those of particular note included May O'Brien, May Clifford, Anne Speed, Padraigh Ni Mhurchu, Therese Moriarty, Roisin Byrne, Noirin Green, Maureen Ganley, Janet Hughes, Gay Cunningham in the Republic and Linda Edgerton, Inez McCormack, Francis Maguire, Patricia McKeown, Bronagh Hinds, Lily Kerr; and Naomi Wayne in the North.

POSITIVE ACTION

A positive action measure – calling for reserved seats on the Congress Executive and the Northern Ireland Committee – created bitter tensions but was eventually adopted.

The Joint Women's Committee went on to produce from its ranks the first woman president of ICTU, Inez McCormack, and the outgoing president Patricia McKeown, both from UNISON.

Rosheen Callendar, SIPTU, become one of the first women vice presidents. Other members became senior officials of their unions, members and office-bearers of the ICTU Executive and the Northern Ireland Committee,

leaders in the Labour Court and leaders of NGOs in both jurisdictions.

Over the years, successive Congress conferences have adopted new policies on low pay, equal pay, minimum wage, childcare, women's rights and violence against women.

Because of the work of the committee, these and other key issues became mainstream and made their way on to the bargaining agenda and into talks with Governments in both jurisdictions.

Today, the Joint Women's Committee, chaired by Clare Treacy of the INO and UNITE's Taryn Trainor, campaigns on both the domestic and international front on behalf of all women.

Its work through the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has influenced the UN Committee's comments on the need for the both Irish and UK Governments to renew their efforts to eliminate discrimination. As the slump impacts strongly on women, the work of the Joint Women's Committee has once again becomes centre stage.

Picture: Tommy Clancy

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CWU: Onus on Royal Mail as interim deal brokered

THE CWU's postal executive has backed an interim agreement with Royal Mail that means there will be no disruption to services in the run-up to Christmas.

Union officials claimed the deal contained "significant developments and concessions".

Both sides said the move will allow for a "period of calm", in which they hope to formulate a long-term agreement to end their bitter dispute over redundancies, pay and working conditions.

The CWU claims stoppages were sparked by management seeking to impose changes and union officials believe under the terms of the deal mean there is "a genuine return to the need to agree change".

At the heart of the dispute is the deal that the two sides signed to end the last national strike in 2007.

The interim agreement also ensures postal workers will work normally over Christmas and have a chance to earn extra money.

Union officials said this had been a benefit denied to full-time staff as Royal Mail had tried to build up a casual workforce. The agreement also deals with discipline cases, clear up arrangements and stops the growing practice in Royal Mail of taking people off pay.

Most importantly, the interim agreement is very specific on how a full and final agreement will be shaped.

It guarantees that Royal Mail will agree change and that workers will get real benefits from the modernisation of

the business. Speaking after the deal was brokered on November 5, CWU deputy general secretary Dave Ward claimed the strength of support from postal workers "made Royal Mail think again".

He said: "They have made significant concessions that are clear for everybody to see. Those concessions have allowed us to suspend strike action and work towards a full and final agreement."

"The union has always been focused on achieving modernisation by consent and now the company has finally acknowledged that is how we must go forward."

"The agreement ensures the imposed change that has led to the bitter local disputes will now be subject to negotiation and agreement."

CWU Northern Ireland's regional secretary Lawrence Huston added: "There is no doubt anyone would have benefited from a national postal strike leading up to Christmas, and the CWU fully recognises its responsibility to the local community at this busy time."

"However, the onus is now squarely on the Labour Government and Royal Mail to work with the union to reach a lasting resolution to end this long running bitter dispute. Clearly trust remains an issue between the union and the company but, hopefully, the introduction of an independent chair to continue the negotiations and fortnightly reviews will mean nobody can walk away from meaningful negotiations."

UNITE has welcomed confirmation by Stormont Transport Minister Conor Murphy that he has ruled out privatising bus and rail networks in Northern Ireland. However, the union has raised a number of concerns it has over parts of a document on transport strategy released for consultation earlier this month.

Regional co-ordinating officer Eugene McGlone said: "The union supports measures that will secure a better service for the travelling public and encourage more use of the systems."

"However, it fails to see how this can be achieved by merely having private speculators use facilities and services built and paid for by the public, particularly when the only motive these operators have is a profit motive."

He added: "A common pricing policy will of course assist, but the union is also concerned at the wage and working conditions of the men and women who drive for these private companies. The union will be seeking assurances from the minister on this and other issues."

Mandate and Boots get down to talks at LRC



Whistleblowers: Boots workers at the November 6 rally in Dublin

MANDATE is taking part in "exploratory discussions" with Boots management in conjunction with the Labour Relations Commission.

The on-going discussions are aimed at resolving the dispute before a nationwide strike at 57 Boots stores on November 28.

Assistant general secretary Gerry Light said: "We are hopeful these discussions can be productive and a resolution can be achieved in the best interests of the staff and the business of Boots."

Picture: Mandate



Picture: USDAW

One in 10 shopworkers in UK 'physically assaulted'

ONE in 10 shop workers in the UK have been physically assaulted while at work, shock new figures reveal.

Retail workers union Usdaw, which commissioned the survey, also found that nearly a third of employees – 29% – had suffered verbal abuse in the last month with 32% being threatened over the last year.

General secretary John Hannett slammed the level of abuse suffered by shopworkers and called it totally unacceptable.

He said: "Shop workers are all too often assaulted, threatened and abused in the course of their work."

"They're in a pressurised environment, particularly in the run-up to Christmas time with increased sales and more stressed out customers."

"Customers can get very frustrated over

long queues or if the item they want is out of stock and they take it out on the shopworker."

Mr Hannett also claimed another till flashpoint was when customers were asked to prove their age.

He said: "Ushaw members tell me that they've been hit, sworn at and threatened for refusing to serve alcohol and other age restricted products to a customer."

"We want customers to be aware that shopworkers are under a lot of pressure to police the law on age-related sales and can be individually fined if they get it wrong."

"They are just doing their job so please carry ID when buying age-restricted goods."

"And even if things don't go as smoothly as you would like, please show shopworkers respect and keep your cool at Christmas."

LIVE REGISTER

Government can take no comfort from fall in jobless

THE IRISH Government cannot take "comfort or credit" from new figures showing a drop in Live Register numbers, Congress has claimed.

And assistant general secretary Sally Anne Kinahan insisted Government threats to take a further €4 billion out of the economy will guarantee further job losses, particularly after Christmas.

She said: "Government itself has conceded its proposals – if followed – will result in further deflation and guarantee further job losses."

"Taking money out of the economy dampens demand and this will impact directly on jobs in 2010."

"They can take no comfort from, or no credit, for these figures. The Government's failure to act decisively to defend jobs – such as in Waterford and at SR Technics – and its failure to protect vulnerable jobs, as our EU counterparts have done, means we have experienced one of the most dramatic increases in unemployment in the EU15."

"The numbers on the Live Register has increased by more than 160,000 over 12 months. In comparison, Germany lost a similar number of jobs but from a labour market 20 times the size of ours. And the difference? The German Government put in place a 'worksharing' scheme that saved 1.5 million jobs."

"In the coming weeks, we will also see a further 80,000 people becoming long-term unemployed, bringing that total to 150,000. These will face huge challenges re-entering the workforce."

Ms Kinahan said it was long past time for Government to act on the jobs crisis and it should immediately set up a €1 billion fund to save jobs based on the model operating in Germany and many other EU countries.

She added: "To date, the scorecard reads Banks: €54 billion; Jobs: €0".

Deadline shift 'is vindication'

CONGRESS has claimed the European Commission's decision to extend the deadline on Ireland's budget deficit is "both a vindication of the Congress demand for a longer adjustment period and proof that Government policy is driving the economy into the doldrums".

Economic advisor Paul Sweeney called the move "a tacit recognition" that Congress was correct in calling for an extended period of adjustment until 2017.

He said: "As the Commission has now acknowledged, the Irish economy does not have the capacity to absorb the deep, deflationary cuts planned by Government."

"We many differ on the time-frame, but we are agreed on the principle."

Mr Sweeney also claimed the move amounted to an admission that Government policy to date had simply made matters worse.

He added: "The European Commission now recognises the situation has worsened since the start of the year as a result of Government policy."

"It would seem perverse that they should then recommend 'more of the same'."

"That makes no sense. It is now very clear that the budgetary prescriptions we hear are based on a flawed analysis. The only thing they guarantee is more job losses and less tax revenue. What then, more spending cuts?"



PARENTS & TEACHERS SET THEIR SIGHTS ON

A NEW campaign bringing together parents and teachers has called for a target investment of seven per cent of GDP to be made in education.

The Stand Up for Education drive, launched earlier this month, is also calling on the Government not to target education for further cuts in the December budget and to reverse cuts imposed over the past year as soon as possible.

The campaign is being sponsored by the Teachers' Union of Ireland and supported by the National Parents Association for Vocational Schools and Community Colleges (NPAVSCC).

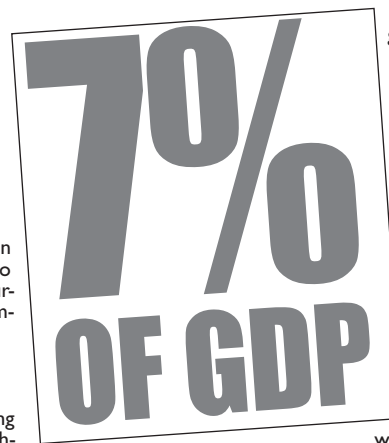
NPAVSCC secretary Jackie O'Callaghan claimed the initiative highlights the need for a long term commitment to greater investment in education.

Ireland currently spends approximately 4.7% of GDP on education which is well below the OECD average of 5.7%.

Countries such as Denmark, Iceland, Korea and the US each spend in excess of seven per cent.

Ms O'Callaghan said: "While significantly increased investment in education may be unrealistic at present given the current income deficit, we nonetheless would advocate that there be an agreement to increase the education budget to seven per cent of GDP over a period of time to be agreed."

Welcoming the reversal of some cuts recently announced in a revised programme of



government, TUI general secretary Peter MacMenamin claimed the move did not go far enough. He said: "The new programme did not address the funding cuts in higher education, nor did it address the critical and artificial shortage of places in Further Education colleges and Post Leaving Cert courses caused by the imposition of a cap on places in spite of hugely increased demand."

Mr MacMenamin called for a "change in thinking" among politicians about

what drives economic recovery. He said: "We need to work together towards a smarter future for all. Education is the key to this future and to our economic recovery."

"It must be safeguarded as an equal right for all children, particularly those who are most vulnerable."

Ms O'Callaghan insisted there were alternatives to proposed Government cuts.

She said: "We have been railroaded into thinking that cuts to our public services is the only way to tackle our economic deficit."

"We believe that we need a wider debate on our values and direction as a society."

"We believe that the fairest and smartest option is to radically review how the taxation system works, distribute wealth and opportunity more equally in our society and protect frontline services."

"We believe that those who earn most – in either the public or private sector – should contribute most, according to their means."

Check out www.standupforeducation.ie

Picture: TUI



Graphic illustration: Congress general secretary David Begg

Report charts income inequality in Ireland

CONGRESS has joined with equality think-tank TASC to produce a "graphic illustration" of the effects of income inequality in Ireland.

The Hierarchy of Earnings, Attributes and Privilege – or HEAP – report designed in an easy-to-read chart format, with accompanying booklet, makes stark reading.

The report, co-authored by NUIG academics Prof Terrence McDonough and Jason Loughrey, shows:

- Five per cent of families live on incomes exceeding €134,000

- 58 per cent of families live on less than €40,000

- 26 per cent of families live on less than €20,000

- When analysed in terms of occupation, only the managerial/professional occupation category makes its way to the very top of the H.E.A.P. (an annual income of €600,000)

- Income distribution became more unequal between 1987 and 2005. The distance between those at the top and those at the bottom widened.

- Conventional measures of income inequality, such as the Gini Coefficient or quintile share ratios, fail to capture the increase in inequality

- Relative poverty levels before Social Welfare transfers increased from 35.6 per cent to 41 per cent from 2001 to 2007. Social Welfare played a critical role in reducing poverty levels from 21.9 per cent in 2001 to 16.5 per cent in 2007

- Women's income was around two-thirds of men's income; adjusting for differences in hours worked, women's hourly earnings were around 86 per cent

of men's. Women were also more likely to be at risk of poverty.

- There is a striking 'education premium': the median gross income of those with no formal education, or primary education only, was €13,489, while those with a university degree had a median income of €45,707

Speaking at the report launch on November 18, Congress general secretary David Begg said: "Here we have a graphic illustration of our clearly divided society, and strong evidential support for the view that Government cannot continue to impose the burden of this recession on low and middle income earners.

"Massive amounts of wealth were generated during the boom years. This report very clearly shows where that money did not go – to the majority of the population. And that wealth has not evaporated; it is still there, albeit concentrated in a few hands.

"If Government had any intention of forging a new and more equal Ireland out of this mess, it would study this report closely and act decisively to ensure nothing like it could ever be compiled again. We won't hold our breath".

TASC director Paula Clancy added: "We've known for some time that income inequality in particular, and economic inequality in general, is rife in Ireland. Now, the HEAP report enables us to put figures on inequality.

"And, by breaking incomes down by occupational category and household type, the HEAP report shows just who gets how much. What is clear is that a very small group of people benefited enormously from the boom."



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PICTURE SPECIAL
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OECD cuts call blasted

THE INTO has hit back at the OECD after it signalled its support for cuts in teachers' pay and allowances across the education sector in Ireland.

General secretary Sheila Nunan also responded to claims made by the international organisation that efficiencies leading to higher teacher-pupil ratios would have saved up to 18 per cent in education spending since 2002.

Pointing to overwhelming evidence smaller class sizes were beneficial, she said: "Even the critics of class size reduction projects do not dispute benefits for young children."

Ms Nunan also pointed out Ireland had the second highest class sizes in the EU

at primary level – a fact not recognised in the OECD's economic report which she claimed had instead selectively quoted pupil teacher ratio figures.

She added: "This is very different to class size."

The OECD report had claimed the percentage of the entire education budget spent on teachers' pay at primary, secondary and third level – 75 per cent – was well above average of other developed states.

The report's authors also hit out at the preception the education sector in the Republic was underfunded and claimed spending was close to the EU average per student.



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NEWSBRIEFS

SIPTU hails courage and tenacity of strikers

BRANCH organiser Sean Nolan has paid tribute to the courage and tenacity of SIPTU members following the resolution of the long-running dispute at Our Lady's Manor Nursing Home in Longford.

More than 40 employees on strike at the Edgeworthstown home since the end of May will now return to work after a settlement was reached at the Rights Commissioner on November 6.

The dispute was sparked by employer's unilateral imposition of wage cuts and changes to work practices.

Returning SIPTU members will go back to their original hours and rates of pay and a sick pay scheme will be reinstated.

The deal also allows for 23 voluntary redundancies among both union and non-unionised members of staff.

Mr Nolan said: "This agreement was accepted by the huge majority of SIPTU members and finally brings this difficult and protracted dispute to an end."

"The result is a credit to the courage and tenacity of the nursing home workers who spent months out on pickets in the wind and the rain."

"We would also like to thank the people of Edgeworthstown and of Longford for their huge support and the assistance of Rights Commissioner John Walsh in settling the outstanding issues."

UNITE blasts 'corporate arrogance' over jobs threat

UNITE has blasted what it called "the depth of corporate arrogance" after it was revealed that 120 jobs are under threat at Halifax's mortgage operations in Belfast.

It comes after owners Lloyds Banking Group announced on November 10 that it was to slash 5,000 jobs from its group operations, insurance and retail divisions by the end of the year.

The plan – part of a bid to "reduce costs" – will mean 2,600 permanent staff will go across the UK. A further 2,400 temporary positions and jobs currently done by outside contractors will also be lost.

However, the company insisted many of the 120 staff in their mortgage operation in Belfast would be redeployed. A spokesperson said the firm's "preference" was to have the reductions achieved through "natural turnover, redeployment and voluntary redundancy".

UNITE regional industrial organiser Joanne McWilliams said: "This country's financial sector should be looking towards the future, rather than continuing to slash jobs without proper consideration of how to rebuild the public's confidence in our tarnished banking sector."

460 Anglo Irish jobs to go

STATE-OWNED lender Anglo Irish Bank is shedding up to 460 jobs as part of a redundancy plan over the next two years.

Employees were told at briefings on November 4 that 230 jobs are slated to go now with further redundancies by 2012.

A total of 110 positions will go in Ireland, 95 in the UK and 25 in the bank's US operation.

Bosses blamed the redundancies on what they called "necessary restructuring" as well as the transfer of €28bn in loans to NAMA over the coming months.

Jobs lost at medical plant

A TOTAL of 250 jobs are to go as a Sligo-based medical facility winds down over the next four years.

The Stiefel Laboratories' plant in Finisklin, which makes a series of products to treat skin conditions, will close by the end of 2013.

It follows what was termed a "global review" by owners GlaxoSmithKline of its operations.



Picture: MRCI

SHAME ON THE DIPLOMATS

MEMBERS of the Domestic Workers Action Group staged a protest outside the South African Embassy earlier this month at a decision to invoke diplomatic immunity over an employment rights complaint.

The complaint was brought by Ukrainian national Valentyna Khristonsen who was employed for nearly two-and-a-half years as a domestic worker at the private residence of Am-

bassador Pricilla Jana in Dublin. Ms Khristonsen, who is being represented by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland, claims her employment rights were violated.

She lodged formal complaints against Ambassador Jana with the Labour Relations Commission, including breaches of the Unfair Dismissals Act, the Payment of Wages Act, and the Organisation of Working

Time Act. The complaints were to be brought before a Rights Commissioner but Ambassador Jana and the South African Embassy invoked sovereign immunity claiming the office had no jurisdiction to rule on the issue.

This point is being considered by the Rights Commissioner.

Ms Khristonsen is a member of the Domestic Workers Action Group.

The group, set up in 2004, is part of the MRCI, and is currently made up of over 200 women fighting for the rights, dignity and recognition of all workers employed in private homes in Ireland.

Ann Guan, of the DWAG, said: "It is our view that Valentyna deserves the right to a hearing and due process regarding her grievance."

"It is shameful and unfair that the ambassador is claiming diplomatic immunity and denying her this basic right. Foreign diplomats are supposed to be representing their country in the highest regard and we would expect that they respect Irish laws and afford their employees due process."

"We will be calling on Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheál Martin to intervene and urge the South African delegation to waive diplomatic immunity so that Valentyna can have the right to a fair hearing."



Bunting: Collective duty

Congress launch

CONGRESS has launched a new service aimed at migrant workers in Northern Ireland.

The Shared Workplace, Shared Future initiative, supported by Belfast City Hall and with funding from SEUPB, will strengthen the hand of this vulnerable section of the workforce.

The programme will help to combat exploitation by helping migrant workers assert their rights and ensure they have the same access to employment

protections and redress as other workers.

A Shared Workplace, A Shared Future will work through the development of strategic partnerships, accredited training, outreach programmes and research.

Assistant general secretary Peter Bunting said: "This project is explicitly aimed at migrant workers but it is not about 'positive discrimination'. It is the trade union movement, along-

migrants service

side the City Fathers and the European Union, doing our collective duty to working people.

"This time, we are taking the opportunity to offer our services to migrant workers, but there it is only discriminatory if you believe that public service unions or manufacturing trade unions discriminate."

"They don't discriminate. They specialise."

"This project is a simple ex-

ension of the services which trade unions offer to all workers. The fact is that migrant workers are in a weaker position to avail of the rights which many workers from Northern Ireland take for granted."

This project is supported by the European Regional Development Fund under the PEACE III Programme and Belfast City Council's Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan



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FEEDBACK: WHY NOT KEEP US POSTED?

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'We are gentle angry teachers'

A HIGH point of teachers' trade unionism in Ireland was Thursday, December 5, 1985, the day that an unprecedented number of teachers came together in one place for a common purpose.

The cause of the mobilisation was the government's decision to withhold an arbitrated pay award of 10%, on the grounds that public finances could not bear the cost.

News of the decision, in August 1985, followed an announcement that there was to be a public sector pay freeze.

Widespread resentment had greeted that decision – ICTU's Donal Nevin memorably commented that it "out-Thatchers anything that has been done by the present British government" – but teachers were doubly indignant because they stood to lose out twice.

INDIGNATION

And their indignation was deepened by the insensitivity of the Minister, Gemma Hussey, in communicating the decision to block their special award.

Scolding teachers, she urged them to "address themselves to the morality of what they are about", and alleged that their representatives were "so bound up in self-justification and media attention" that they were unable to "stand back for the sake of the country".

In September, a national co-ordinating committee of the teachers' unions announced the establishment of a 'Teachers United' campaign to secure the 10% arbitration award.

Teachers United bulletins were published, local co-ordinating groups were formed with representatives from each union, a series of one day regional stoppages was organised, and a national one day strike was announced for December 5.

That an estimated 20,000 men and women, drawn from the ASTI, the TUI and the INTO, were prepared to travel on a cold winter's day

to Croke Park by car, coach, and special train from all corners of the country – and by boat from several off-shore islands – testified both to the depth of feeling and to the effectiveness of the preparations.

And the attention to detail on the day impressed journalists covering the event. For the Irish Times, Christina Murphy wrote: "Organisation was superb. There seemed to be stewards everywhere muttering into walkie-talkies: 'Croke Park to Heuston Station. Come in Heuston'. 'Molesworth Street to HQ; come in HQ'... 'Croke Park looked like All-Ireland day.'"

Some of the protestors, evidently, were lured to Dublin by the opportunity presented of spending a few post-rally hours doing Christmas shopping, but overwhelmingly, the mood was of good-humoured determination.

Not surprisingly, in the rhetoric and the banner of the day, sporting analogies were drawn, beginning with ASTI president, Louis O'Flaherty, who opened proceedings by welcoming the crowd in the manner of sports commentator Micheál Ó hÉithir: "Fáilte romhaibh go léir, a chairde Gael".

In the interval between O'Flaherty's welcome and the march from Croke Park to Dáil Éireann which concluded proceedings, the freezing protestors were treated to more than a dozen speeches, and to a rousing musical performance.

The next day, the Irish Independent showed Kieran Mulvey and the INTO's Gerry Quigley singing along with Connolly Folk who had composed the following chorus for the occasion: "We are the gentle, angry teachers, and we're singing for our rights / Where are the teaching TDs today – are they marching for their rights? / Garret and Gemma are you listening?"

The sense of elation triggered by the enormously successful joint endeavour of December

1985 raised hopes that cooperation between the three unions might be deepened, and that this might lead eventually to organisational unity.

After a decade of explosive growth in their individual memberships, and of necessary cooperation in respect of conciliation and arbitration, these were years of increasing cohesion among the teachers' unions.

It was a cohesion that was assisted by a generational shift at leadership level. Kieran Mulvey's assumption of an influential role in the ASTI in April 1980, came shortly after Gerry Quigley's election as INTO general secretary and just before Jim Dorney's appointment to the same role in the TUI.

The working relationship between Mulvey and Quigley in particular reprised in some respects that of their long-ago predecessors, T.J. Burke and T.J. O'Connell, although a more equal partnership was possible in the 1980s.

GOVT 'CLIMB-DOWN'

In the immediate aftermath of December 1985 demonstration, the government sought to enter negotiations on the disputed award, in the context of a new pay round.

The Minister offered the teachers' unions the 7% offered to other public service workers on condition that they agreed to a postponement of their own arbitrator's special 10%.

Refusing to concede, the three unions continued their campaigns, lobbying individual TDs at their clinics and elsewhere, and encouraging individual members to initiate a correspondence on the issue with TDs in their own constituencies.

That the combined membership of the three unions was a formidable force when mobilised is confirmed by several of those involved at the time.

According to Kieran Mulvey: "The teachers' unions collectively, between them, had become

oppose the Government's handling of the economic crisis. looks back 25 years at another high point for teacher unity.



Teachers join with 150,000 public servants to bring about Ireland's first public service strike in October 1985 Picture: Derek Spiers

the most powerful group in Congress –notwithstanding the industrial power of the ITGWU and the FWUI. As a professional body, when they moved politically, they were akin to the IFA [Irish Farmers' Association]."

The successful mobilisation of the teachers in the three unions would soon lead to a 'climb-down' on the part of the government, in the words of the then Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald. It was a 'climb-down' which was signalled in a cabinet reshuffle of mid-February 1986, in which Gemma Hussey was moved to Social Welfare.

For Christina Murphy, of the Irish Times, it was her handling of the conflict with the teachers' unions that brought about the downfall of this most 'energetic' of Ministers for Education.

Faced with regional teacher strikes, a threatened examination boycott, school student protests, parent pressure, and a Dail motion from the opposition, Hussey's successor, Patrick Cooney, agreed in April 1986 to join talks with the teachers' unions under the auspices of the Employer-Labour Conference.

The outcome was a government offer of concessions in respect of the phasing of the arbitration award, along with a series of ex gratia payments to partly compensate for the delayed phasing. These were accepted by the teachers'

negotiators and were put to ballot along with the general public service pay offer. The package was accepted by large majorities in all three unions, the largest, in the order of four to one, being in the ASTI. It was less than had been offered by the arbitrator the previous August, but it was seen as a good compromise by teachers who had fought an academic-year-long campaign.

UNITY HOPES DASHED

The most salient effect of the Teachers' United campaign of 1985-86 was that it served to show the impact of coordinated action by teachers.

At all levels and in all parts of the country, teachers in the different unions had met together, protested together, and had got to know one another.

It was the impression of Tony McKernan, who became active in the ASTI in Limerick, that many previously passive members were drawn into activity and pressed into accepting positions at branch and national level in the course of the great mobilisations of 1985-86.

Their experience of Teachers' United persuaded these new activists of the advantages of unity and, for a period, a single union for teachers seemed a real possibility. Donal Nevin of ICTU, who had been involved in a similar way in the 1970s, was invited in May 1989 by the three

unions to facilitate discussions between them. The outcome was the establishment of the Council of Teachers' Unions (CTU) in 1990, with its own chief executive and representation from each union in proportion to its membership.

It would be significant that the inaugural meeting of the CTU took place in the same month that Kieran Mulvey informed members of Standing Committee that he would soon be leaving ASTI to take the position of Chief Executive of the Labour Relations Commission.

His resignation coincided with the unexpected retirement of the INTO's Gerry Quigley, removing from the arena a second key promoter of co-operation between the three unions.

Senior figures from different union backgrounds suggest that the changed circumstances now made unity more difficult to achieve for two main reasons – influential individuals feared that their own prospects might be damaged in a post-merger configuration, and the capacity to overcome the inevitable obstacles was reduced by the dissolution of the Quigley-Mulvey partnership.

John Cunningham lectures at NUI Galway and is author of *Unlikely Radicals: Irish Post-Primary Education and the ASTI 1909-2009* (Cork University Press).

ASTI - A CENTURY OF PICTURES - PAGES 16/17

Cross-border legal bid launched

STAFF at Ulster Bank branches across Ireland are being discriminated against by the bank, the IBOA has claimed.

The bank, owned by the British-based Royal Bank of Scotland Group, is pressing its 6,000 employees to sign new contracts which would reduce their terms and conditions of employment in return for a 10% lump sum already due under the staff's existing contract.

RBS has already made the payment to British-based staff without any pre-conditions.

The IBOA lodged papers with the Republic's Rights Commissioner Service on November 3 to start legal action against the Ulster Bank Group for allegedly making illegal deductions from the wages of its employees.

A parallel action was taken north of the border,

where papers were lodged with the High Court.

General secretary Larry Broderick said: "The 10% lump sum has been paid in Ulster Bank in recent years to compensate staff, at least in part, for the fact that wage rates for employees lag behind those of similar grades in other retail banking groups."

"The majority of workers in Ulster Bank in the Republic of Ireland are on low to middle incomes, earning between €21,000 and €37,000 a year.

"However, unlike their colleagues in RBS, Ulster Bank staff are being told that they can only receive this entitlement if they sign away their rights and benefits negotiated by the IBOA."

Accusing Ulster Bank of "naked opportunism", Mr Broderick said senior management was attempting to exploit the recession to change

working conditions. He also claimed future pension benefits would be hit heavily.

Mr Broderick added: "Unlike all previous contracts for staff members, the new contract has not been negotiated with the IBOA since the bank walked away from mediation without prior discussion of the new terms."

"For a financial institution to behave in such a cavalier fashion on issues of serious financial and legal importance beggars belief."

"We do not intend to allow Ulster Bank to walk away from its responsibilities to its staff or its customers."

"This is why we have commenced legal action in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to ensure that the bank honours all its obligations."



Barber: Disaster for economy

TUC: Cuts will prolong slump

THE TUC has warned that public spending cuts will prolong the recession and reduce key services when they are needed most.

The claims, contained in a new pamphlet Speaking up for Public Services, underline how budget cuts would lead to job losses in both public and private sectors.

According to the authors, for every £1 of public money invested in public services either through direct employment or through buying in supplies and services, a further 64p is generated in the local economy.

The pamphlet, which includes

a survey of 2,000 public sector employees, found 92 per cent of them had seen an increased demand for their services since the slump hit.

One of the most shocking findings was that for every three per cent rise in unemployment there was a corresponding 2.7 per cent rise in heart attacks among men aged 30 to 44 and increases of 2.4 per cent in murders and suicides in people under 64.

The authors argued that because around 29 per cent of public sector spending goes into the private sector, this would mean a loss of around

£16.8bn in investment – a move which would inevitably lead to many private sector job losses.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "Immediate and sweeping cuts would be disastrous for the economy, for workers and for the users of public services."

"We need the public sector more than ever in a recession. Sharp cuts in public spending would not only hit the most vulnerable in society, but would also hamper growth, increase the incidence of long-term unemployment and cause widespread job losses in both public and private sectors."



Above: ASTI's 1938 annual convention attended by Taoiseach Eamon de Valera, pictured centre
Picture: Irish Independent April 21, 1938

Far left: ASTI's first president PJ Kennedy. Left: Thomas MacDonagh, poet, teacher and founder member of the ASTI. A signatory to the 1916 Proclamation, he was later executed for his part in the rising
Picture: Courtesy National Library of Ireland

ASTI100 A CENTURY OF SERVICE

A CENTURY OF PICTURES



Above: A meeting of ASTI Standing Committee held in Cork in December 1977. Included are: (front left to right) Tommy Francis, Vice-President; Derek Nolan, President; Gerald Goldberg, Lord Mayor of Cork; Máire MacDonagh, General Secretary. Second row: Michael Ward, Honorary Treasurer; Peter Kerr; Michael Cahill; Mary MacCarthy; Cathal O'Gara. Back row: David Barry; Pádraig O Riordáin, Pierce Purcell; Ray Kennedy; Helen Corcoran; Alf Sheehy; Noel Keane.



ASTI President Louis O'Flaherty addresses a 20,000 strong crowd of teachers to Croke Park on December 5, 1985. The mass rally later made its way from Croke Park to Government buildings
Picture: Derek Spiers



Members of the three teachers' unions gather on Molesworth Street in Dublin after the 1985 march from Croke Park
Picture: Derek Spiers



Crowds gather outside the Dail during the 1995 ASTI demo
Picture: Tony Parkes



12,000 ASTI members attended a pay protest outside Leinster House in December 2000



50,000 marched against education cuts in Dublin in December 2008. The march was organised by ASTI, TUI and INTO as part of a lengthy campaign to reverse the education cuts announced in a budget the previous October
Picture: Tommy Clancy



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