

THE

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UNION POST

NEWS YOU CAN USE

NOVEMBER 2011

A TALE OF TWO CITIES: Nov 26 and Nov 30

NIPSA general secretary Brian Campfield has issued a rallying cry to his union's members as they prepare to join colleagues from other public sector unions on the November 30 picket lines.

In an editorial in this month's *NIPSA Reports*, he writes: "When the flak starts to fly, don't be afraid to proudly proclaim that public servants and their representative organisations, the trade unions, have a just case.

"They hold the high moral ground against those who would have workers, their families and communities

pay for a crisis precipitated by banks and financial institutions that care only for profit and shareholder value, not human welfare."

November 30 will be the largest mobilisation of UK workers in a generation and centres around opposition to public sector pension changes.

Mr Campfield adds: "The decision to strike has been a democratic one. Members have voted. What else is democracy about? The workers have given a mandate to their trade unions to call action to defend their pay, pensions and jobs."

But despite this, unions are braced for the usual anti-union vitriol coming from the usual sources.

Speaking at a conference in Belfast last month, UNISON regional secretary Patricia McKeown warned of an increasingly "hostile" press in the run up to November 30.

She said: "One day they [health workers] are angels but when they exercise their rights, they are devils – how quickly angels turn to devils."

Meanwhile, a few days before the big strike north of the border, thousands will take to the streets of

Dublin to call on the Irish government to reverse its disastrous policy of austerity ahead of what is expected to be another slash and burn budget in December.

The pre-budget demo, dubbed the March Against Austerity, organised by the Dublin Council of Trade Unions and supported by Congress, takes place on Saturday, November 26.

Assembly point will be 12 noon at the Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square, followed by a march to the GPO. Congress president Eugene McGlone will speak at the event.

GROWTH



IS THE KEY



Congress Pre-Budget Submission

- ▶ Invest in jobs ▶ State assets
- ▶ Social protection ▶ Tax reform

SUMMARY PAGES 2&3

Govt's fiscal plan is 'bad medicine' for jobs & growth

AN INCREASE in spending cuts from €1.4bn in 2012 to €1.9bn in 2014 will lead to the Republic's long-term economic decline, Unite has warned.

Regional secretary Jimmy Kelly said: "The government sees this itself but has neither the courage nor the competence to break the spiral of decline it is creating.

"It has cut its own growth forecast from 2.5% to 1.6% next year. It has cut its own forecast of net new jobs from 100,000 to 62,000."

Mr Kelly predicted the medicine being prescribed by the government would "kill the economic growth we need to foster".

He added: "We've heard empty promises of investment in jobs but the €750m reduction in capital spending means 7,500 hoped-for jobs will not now be there in 2012.

"This plan gives us a road map towards long-term, near permanent high unemployment.

"That will be the legacy of the last years of failed austerity and the stain on the political establishment's record that will take a generation to erase."

Meanwhile, SIPTU general president Jack O'Connor has called the strategy outlined in the government's fiscal statement "the wrong approach" and cautioned that it would not succeed in delivering economic growth or new jobs.

He said: "This is the wrong approach. It will not provide the necessary impetus for growth.

"While the EU/ECB/IMF troika is dictating the terms, there is a need to leverage as much into the economy as is taken out in the December budget."

Mr O'Connor added that the balance between cuts in public services and tax increases, while an improvement on the previous government, did not sufficiently transfer the burden to those most in a position to pay.

He said: "There is more scope for taxing the rich while the reductions in public expenditure should be implemented in such a way that the wealthier sections of society carry more of the burden.

"Essentially there is a need for a strategy that involves investment for jobs and growth, leveraging money into the economy without compromising the national finances."

PRE BUDGET SUBMISSION

CONGRESS: MAPPING A WAY OUT OF THE CRISIS



CONGRESS has emphasised the importance of stimulating economic growth as the only way out of the recession. Speaking at the launch of ICTU's pre-budget submission, *Growth is the Key*, general secretary David Begg said: "The most important deficit facing Ireland is the deficit in the demand for labour.

"The most effective way to tackle our financial deficit is with policies that create jobs and develop innovative new products and services. Austerity is self-defeating and is suffocating the economy. Growth is the key to recovery."

Pointing to the example of Denmark where a new government has embarked on an ambitious programme of public investment to boost growth, *Growth is the Key* outlines a number of proposals to reverse the downward spiral of the Irish economy.

Invest in jobs

For every €1 million invested in infrastructure, up to 12 direct jobs are created. Congress has identified various sources of funding for growth. These include:

- €2 billion from the National Pension Reserve Fund over the next three years invested in job creation.
- Private pension funds should be encouraged to increase their investment in the Irish economy by 5%, raising an extra €4 billion a year. This could be achieved by making those pension funds which increase investments in the domestic economy by 5% of asset value exempt from the government's temporary pension levy. These investments should be in approved activities that boost job creation.
 - Encourage investment in Solidarity Bonds by pension schemes.
 - A new state pension scheme would give a substantial flow of funds to the Exchequer. This could raise €1 billion over the next year.

- Multinationals should be encouraged to defer repatriation of some of their profits and set up a commercial fund to invest here.

Role of state companies

State companies can spearhead a drive to create jobs, acting as engines of the recovery. Creating an umbrella State Holding Company, bringing together the major semi-states under one governing structure, would make it possible for this entity to access private capital for expansion and re-investment. This means of raising funds would benefit citizens and is a clear alternative to any privatisation of state assets that would only benefit private corporations.

A State Holding Company could lead investment in infrastructure which would boost our competitiveness and create employment. Such investment would include:

- A state-of-the-art water and waste network: this could create up to 12,000 permanent jobs.
- Retro-fitting energy inefficient buildings: developing a new €8 billion industry to upgrade Ireland's 700,000 energy inefficient homes.
- Investment in public transport.
- Investment in education.
- Funds must be allocated to health to ensure full use of all available beds. There should be a cost-benefit analysis of the continuing jobs moratorium.

Reform of tax system

In a time of unprecedented crisis, all sectors of society must contribute to addressing the gap between tax revenue and expenditure. Our tax system contains a huge number of exemptions and incentives that narrow the tax base and limit tax take. They cost the taxpayer up to €11 billion a year.

- Targeting tax evasion and pursuing uncollected taxes will yield extra revenue.
- A funded social insurance scheme would allow people to pool savings to pay for healthcare, pensions and sick pay. This would also save money through reduced subsidies for private healthcare.



Congress general secretary David Begg and president Eugene McGlone, below right, at the pre-budget submission launch



- The Universal Social Charge should be progressively restructured to reduce the rate paid by low earners.
- There should be a new levy on wealth above €2 million, with 'wealth' defined as current value of all assets, yielding up to €500m.
- The minimum tax for high earners should be 35% with the threshold cut to €100,000.
- A temporary levy of 2.5% to be placed on corporate profits.
- Citizenship is a two-way obligation. The 183-day requirement for tax residency must be halved to at least 90 days – as in the UK – and 'tax fugitives' must pay more.
- There should be a new 12.5% oil and gas royalty tax, on production.
- Raise Capital Gains Tax from 25% to 30% and apply the Universal Social Charge to all capital gains.

Social protection

There should be no further cuts to social welfare and strategies are needed to help the working poor and safeguard income supports for people with disabilities.

Community projects that protect and boost employment should be safeguarded and supports which help people take up work – such as affordable childcare – must be maintained.

Full *Growth is the Key* pre-budget submission can be downloaded at www.idu.ie

Aviva workers in 90% vote for action

UNITE members at Aviva have voted overwhelmingly to take industrial action if jobs are threatened or relocation measures put in place before any deal is brokered with staff.

The ballot for industrial action was passed by more than 90%. It follows the insurance giant's announcement last month that it intended to cut 950 jobs in Ireland and poten-

tially outsource a further 300.

Aviva workers in Dublin, Cork, Galway and in the 26-strong branch network were shocked by the severity of the cuts.

It is understood that starting on November 10, Unite has asked its members at Aviva not to take part in any activities that facilitate the transfer of work out of Aviva Ireland.

Regional officer Brian Gallagher said: "As things stand all 2,000 staff are still living under the shadow of the potential loss of their career.

"We are determined to fight for every one of our members, whether in keeping jobs that can be kept or winning a fair agreement on voluntary redundancy for those whose roles cannot be maintained."

REPORT

Families take a £4,600 hit

A COMBINATION of stagnant wages, tax and benefit changes, and cuts in public services will slash the living standards of an average middle income family in the UK by more than £4,600 by 2013.

The claim is made in a new TUC analysis of the living standards gap, titled *Unhappy Families*.

According to the research an average income, two-earner family, living in the UK's East Midlands with two children, is facing a living standards gap of £2,000 this year – and this shortfall will rise by a FURTHER £2,600 by two years' time.

As in the Republic, living standards have fallen more in the UK than at any time since the 1970s.

Earlier this year, Bank of England governor Mervyn King told a House of Commons select committee of his surprise that the "degree of anger hasn't been greater than it has been".

Reacting to the research findings, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "People should be angry at the effect that the crash and government policies are having on living standards.

"The wrong people are paying the price for what went wrong over 30 years and the coalition's naive belief that they can put right the damage in just four years."

www.tuc.org.uk/tucfiles/75/UnhappyFamilies.doc



Picture: UFCW

Unions forge alliance

UNI Global Union has formed a Walmart Workers Alliance as a trans-national forum so that unions can forge a common agenda in dealing with the US-based retail giant.

Walmart has 8,500 retail units in 15 countries and employs more than 2.1 million worldwide.

Unions representing Walmart workers in Argentina, Brazil, Chile,

Canada and the US have joined the alliance.

A UNI Global Union source pointed out that Walmart is the largest company in the world by revenue, with sales in fiscal year 2010 of \$405bn.

He said: "A company of the size and scale of Walmart requires an international response from the labour movement."



Any ESB sell-off 'will be net loss'

CONGRESS has warned that funds generated by any partial sale of the ESB would scarcely dent the national debt – and represent a financial loss to the Republic's state balance sheet.

Chief economist Paul Sweeney made the comment at a conference on the future of state assets in Dublin on September 28.

He pointed out to delegates at Chartered Accountants House that any stake would raise between one and two billion euro but cautioned that even that sum might not be realised in the current climate.

Mr Sweeney said: "When set against the huge level of debt at €157bn and the potential liabilities arising from the banks (€279.3bn), it is clear that the impact on our debt burden would be negligible.

"And when all costs are taken into account, the sale would represent a net loss to the state's balance sheet."

He claimed that while consumers, ESB workers and the wider economy would lose out in any sale, stockbrokers, top managers and lawyers would "make a killing".

Mr Sweeney also added that it was "ironic" that state assets were being sold to pay for the collapse of "Ireland's biggest private companies, the banks".

"And it's doubly ironic that the partial privatisation of the ESB is being floated when we have just undergone the biggest nationalisation programme in our history."

CLAIMING OUR FUTURE

Building the 'new localism'

THERE should be a renewed focus on local economies as a means of developing an alternative economic strategy, it has been claimed.

About 250 people took part in a "national debate" organised by Claiming Our Future and PlanBetter and held at the Millennium Hall in Cork on November 5.

Debate centred on the need to build an economy that would serve both society and the environment.

Niall Crowley, one of the COF organisers, said: "The current economic structure is based on false accounting, serving neither the environment nor society.

"It is built on resource misuse, high levels of unemployment and diminished public services. It is an economy where commitments made to address climate change are reneged on. This is why we need to build support for an alternative."

Participants felt that economic growth as a means of solving the current crisis on its own could lead to an environmental crisis.

They emphasised that growth must be robustly regulated to ensure environmental sustainability and to achieve social cohesion. There was also strong

backing for the view that a change in the approach to development was not possible without political reform.

New forms of democracy were needed to enable a wider participation in decision making.

Jim Nix of PlanBetter said: "We need alternatives to the current approach to economic policy, and the state has a key role to play in this.

"It should enhance local economies, further develop the services it provides, and regulate the national economy to stop it damaging the environment and society."

There was also a call to

redefine what is meant by prosperity.

It was claimed that levels of prosperity should be calculated in terms of health, participation, well-being and community – rather than simply by money and possessions.

Another conclusion was that there should be new ways of measuring progress in terms of social inclusion and environmental sustainability that move beyond the current focus on GDP.

And participants called for the values of equality, environmental sustainability and participation to underpin economic policy.



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Buckley: Winning approach

SIPTU take Fair Hotels concept to workplace

SIPTU has launched a new campaign, Supporting Quality, aimed at protecting Irish manufacturing jobs.

The union is urging consumers to buy goods made in firms that engage in collective bargaining with unions and encouraging them to consider the wider economic and social impact of their shopping choices.

Products produced in unionised workplaces in Ireland will be allowed to indicate this with a special Supporting Quality mark. The drive is based on a similar long-running campaign by unions in the US.

Supporting Quality co-ordinator Miriam Hamilton said: "More and more people are realising that there is a need to support brands produced by companies which support decent employment in Ireland.

"Indigenous manufacturing will be central to the country's economic recovery and the Supporting Quality campaign allows consumers to play their part in helping the recovery by choosing quality Irish products produced by companies which provide decent jobs."

Unions have been running a similar Fair Hotels campaign to encourage union members to support unionised hotels.

According to Ethel Buckley, SIPTU's national equality and campaigns organiser, there has been a 24% increase in the number of hotels that have recognised the union since the drive started two years ago.

Youth jobs crisis in UK

YOUTH unemployment has increased in 97 per cent of local authority areas in the UK over the last 12 months, a new TUC analysis has found.

With nearly a million young people unable to find work, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber claimed the stats showed the UK was facing "the biggest unemployment crisis in a generation".

He added: "The Chancellor's plan A has already sent unemployment to a 17-year high. Our young people urgently need a plan B to get people back into work and the economy back on its feet."

SMASH FASCISM!

Anti-fascist demonstrators give the BNP a raucous Belfast barracking as senior figures from the party enter the Industrial Tribunal offices on November 2. They were attending an employment hearing in the city



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Begg: Equality is good for growth

CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has claimed greater workplace equality can help boost economic recovery and ensure "a more sustainable growth model in the years to come".

He was speaking at the October 12 launch in Dublin of a series of workplace equality resources and guides.

Mr Begg said: "Those societies that prioritise equality across all spheres of social and economic life are more stable, less prone to crisis and more economically efficient – the Nordic countries being a fine example."

He added: "During the property and credit boom, all the evidence suggests that Ireland became a more unequal place. And the evidence now is that the austerity drive has aggravated that inequality."

The materials were launched formally by Kathleen Lynch, Minister

for Disability, Equality, Mental Health & Older People

They include trade union resources for LGBT workers, a revised disability code of practice, guidance on taking an equality case as well as a study on developing an integration strategy for unions with regard to migrant workers.

Davin Roche, director of workplace diversity at Gay & Lesbian Equality Network, said: "There has been enormous progress for lesbian and gay people in Ireland over the last 20 years."

"Congress and the trade union movement have played a very important role in supporting this work."

"The recent introduction of civil partnership continues this progress in bringing equality in the workplace in the area of pensions and workplace benefits for same sex couples."

"This guide provides very practi-

cal information for LGBT employees and trade unions on a range of LGBT workplace equality issues."

Broden Giambro, of the Transgender Equality Network Ireland, also praised the guide.

"It represents a positive step towards workplace equality by providing trade unions and managers with the tools and knowledge to support transgender workers."

Brian Merriman, of the Equality Authority which sponsored some of the publications, also spoke at the launch.

He said: "It is important to unions and employers that the tools necessary to enable them to ensure statutory obligations to employees are fully met."

"We owe it to workers and their employers to do what we can to ensure that their workplaces take discrimination seriously and are properly equipped to tackle it."



Mackel: 'Clear message'

'Fantastic' result over NI libraries campaign

NIPSA has welcomed Board of Libraries NI's decision to retain eight out of 10 rural libraries ear-marked for closure.

Delighted assistant secretary Paddy Mackel said: "The hard work carried out by local library campaign groups has produced a fantastic result."

"Over the last 12 months, NIPSA played a significant role in setting up the campaign groups, providing material for them and helping to co-ordinate the overall strategy to retain as many of the libraries as possible."

"This campaign has sent a clear message that local people can make a difference and with support and organisation local voices can be heard."

He added that the campaign success flagged up the clear role unions could play in working alongside local communities to protect vital public services.

UK default retirement age ended

WORKERS celebrating their 65th birthday will no longer lose their job simply because of their age after the UK's default retirement age (DRA) was scrapped on September 30.

Employers now have to justify why they want to retire a member of staff.

The TUC had labelled the DRA an "unfair anachronism in the modern workplace" and claimed the move would help people retire at a time that suits both them and their employer.

General secretary Brendan Barber said: "After years of campaigning, it's great to see the end of the default retirement age."

"This should give more workers the opportunity to retire at their own pace, rather than having it imposed on them by a short-sighted employer."

He added: "Not everyone wants to work beyond 65, and many have no choice but to work on, but many older people still have a lot to contribute – and employers can really benefit from the wealth of their experience."

'Re-invigorating commitment to equality, diversity and solidarity'

TRADE unions and community groups attended the recent launch of the second PETAL equality training programme in Belfast.

Speaking at the September 14 event, Congress assistant general secretary Peter Bunting said: "We in the trade union movement must treat the present crisis as an opportunity to re-invigorate our commitment to equality, diversity and solidarity."

"PETAL is a vital component of that commitment. Be part of it."

Equality Commission chief Evelyn Collins also spoke of the success of last year's programme.

Roisin Graham, from NIPSA, Teresa Devenney of the ATL and PCS member Seamus Larkin related their experiences of the programme as well as outlining the challenges that lay ahead in keeping equality top of the workplace agenda. Congress equality officer Pauline Buchanan said: "The key aim of PETAL is to help to meet union representatives' needs in carrying out the important role of equality in the workplace."



Teresa Devenney, centre, receives her certificate from Peter Bunting of Congress. Pictured left is Equality Commission chief executive Evelyn Collins

"This year we are offering topics including Equality Law and Workplace Policy, A guide to the Tribunal Process, Mental Health and Stress in the Workplace, ASIST (Suicide Awareness), Social Guardians (facilitated by Women's Aid), Mobilising for a Bill of Rights and Women and Leadership."

Anyone wanting more information on the programme should contact pauline.buchanan@ictuni.org Or to book a place contact eileen.gorman@ictuni.org Check out the programme at:

<http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/petalprogramme.pdf>

Pictures: Congress



Pension facts from NIPSA

NIPSA has produced a new booklet that seeks to debunk media myths about public sector pensions.

The booklet, titled *Public Sector Pensions: Myths and Facts*, was launched on October 30 at an event in the Belfast Unemployed Resource Centre.

Along with other public sector unions in the North and across the

UK, NIPSA balloted its 43,500 members on taking strike action on the pensions issue on November 30.

General secretary Brian Campfield, left, said: "This booklet highlights how, far from the myth of 'gold-plated' pensions, the average public sector pension is £7,000 with half of public sector pensioners receiving less than £5,600."

Pointing out that the real cost of public sector pensions was forecast to fall over the next 50 years, he added: "The real pensions divide is not between public and private sector workers, it is between the boardroom and the workplace with directors' pensions 34 times the average public sector pension and 74 times that of the average local government employee."

Check out the booklet at: <http://www.nipsa.org.uk/Docs/Publications/2011/PublicSectorPensions-web>



Peruvian workers take to the streets to demand decent work for all. They have joined fellow workers in neighbouring Chile in demanding both their governments officially recognise World Day for Decent Work Picture: ITUC

Demanding decent work across globe

MORE than 400 actions were held across 80 countries to mark World Day for Decent Work on October 7.

This aim of this year's protests was to highlight the deepening trend towards casual, temporary and insecure jobs – defined as "precarious work".

The latest figures reveal that there are more than 200 million people unemployed across the world, with hundreds of millions more lacking decent, secure employment.

ITUC general secretary Sharan Burrow, who addressed a special conference in Amsterdam to mark the day, said: "People's rights at work are under attack as never before, and governments lack the vision and commitment to fix a global economy which is failing working people

"Decent work – rights at work, job creation policies, social protection and social dialogue involving unions and employers – is crucial to turning the global economy around and generating the tax revenues for governments to tackle the fiscal situation."

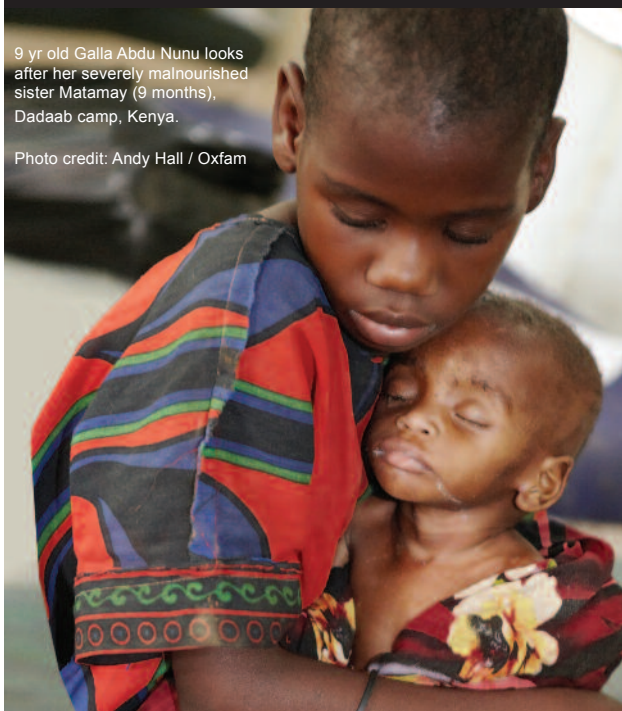


Oxfam

Ireland

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

Photo credit: Andy Hall / Oxfam



EAST AFRICA EMERGENCY

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UNIONAD11

Social Europe under deadly attack



THE WHOLE concept of a Social Europe is being killed off “to balance the books” Mandate general secretary John Douglas, left, has warned.

He made the comments in a speech to a special conference organised by Belfast and District Trades Council on October 15. A large number of trade unionists gathered at UNISON headquarters to hear a range of speakers debate the theme ‘Building Resistance and Developing Alternatives’. Mr Douglas gave the northern audi-

ence a run-down of how a series of grim austerity budgets had impacted on workers in the Republic.

He told them that a team from the EU/IMF/ECB troika was in Dublin to rubber-stamp yet another attack on jobs, services and living standards in the next budget – taking €3.6bn out of the economy.

In marked contrast, he noted there did not seem to be “any appetite” to “tax the wealthy”.

Acknowledging a general sense of “fear and hopelessness” in the South, Mr Douglas added: “The troika medicine that is being prescribed is killing the patient. It will do

permanent damage, not just to the economy but to the very fabric of Irish society.”

He also predicted the current EU/IMF/ECB strategy would “turn Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Greece into an economic and social wasteland for decades”.

What was needed instead was a strategy to promote growth.

Mr Douglas added: “Growth is the only thing that is going to reduce the deficit. You can’t keep pruning your tree and keep pruning and pruning it and expect it to live. It has to be watered and fertilised. At this point in time, the Irish economy has been pruned to the bone.”

Don’t buy into the cuts agenda

UNITE regional secretary Jimmy Kelly, right, underlined the need for unions to strengthen their organisation in workplaces and to increase efforts to combat falling union density.

He warned: “There is not going to be an Earth shattering speech made by somebody on November 30 that is going to fix everything unless we get better organised.”

Mr Kelly also slammed the

concept of a “good capitalism” and a “bad capitalism”.

He cautioned: “One always leads to the other, and leads us into an absolute mess.”

“Politically, it is no longer good enough [for Northern Ireland politicians] to say it’s the bad boys in Westminster [who are to blame] because it is the same as the troika in the Republic...”

“If you agree these parameters [budget cuts], you can’t

do anything.” Mr Kelly said November 30 was about saying no to cuts and about showing “we’re fighting back and we’re not for backing down”.

“We have to challenge in a unified way. We’re saying no cuts. We’re not buying into the view of ‘Let’s do it somewhere where it’s not too visible’.”

He insisted: “We will not wait for a tsunami to rush over us and all of our families.”



The conference, organised by Belfast & District Trades Council, featured a number of other speakers including Unite chief of staff Andrew Murray, Dessie Murray of the PPR Project and George Pontikos, international secretary of PAME, the Greek trade union federation

We are in the struggle of our lives

IN her contribution, UNISON regional secretary Patricia McKeown, right, spoke of the strong public support for Northern Ireland’s public sector in the past and contrasted this with what she called “the rabid fundamental opposition” seen currently from some quarters “to the very existence” of trade unions.

Warning of an increasingly “hostile” press in the run up to the November 30 actions, she said: “One day they

[health workers] are angels but when they exercise their rights, they are devils – how quickly angels turn to devils.”

She also reminded those present of what “sustained trade union pressure” had achieved for health sector workers in the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

“Continuous action did get responses and U-turns – and that was from the Thatcher government.”

Referring to the 1986 strike at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Ms McKeown

flagged up the involvement of local communities. “From the beginning to the end, local people stood side to side with trade unionists – and that made the significant difference.” Claiming that unions were in “the struggle of our lives”, she continued: “We must go on the offensive and re-engage with the public because it is going to be about who will win the battle of hearts and minds.”



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

FTT prescription from healthcare Bill



THE magnificent National Nurses United – a union that has spearheaded a year-long campaign Stateside to get Wall Street to pay its fair share – turned up in force on this side of the Atlantic earlier this month.

A sizeable delegation of NNU nurses joined colleagues from the caring professions from across the world – including Ireland’s INMO – to gate-crash the G20 summit in Cannes.

Speaking from Cannes, INMO president Sheila Dickson told *The Union Post*: “In Ireland reckless behaviour by global financiers is hurting our people. Unemployment has gone through the roof, the housing market has collapsed.

“Our highly skilled young people have to leave our country to find work. We are saying enough is enough – no more cuts!”

And at a press conference on November 3, the nurses took part in what NNU spokesperson Jill Furillo described as “a spirited skit” with top UK actor and Financial Transaction Tax campaigner Bill Nighy.

She said: “It displayed the unique role nurses are playing in advocating for the FTT, as a first step in funding social services, healthcare, a healthy environment, jobs and education programmes.”

Beside manner: Nurses from across the world, including INMO president Sheila Dickson, fourth from left top, and Executive Council member James Geoghegan, fifth from right, get in on the act with Bill Nighy in demanding a Financial Transaction Tax



Nurses also took the lead role, above, in a CGT-organised march at the G20 summit

Pictures: NNU/ITUC

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NUJ chief welcomes return of *The Irish Post*

THE NUJ has joined Irish community groups in the UK to welcome the announcement that *The Irish Post* has been saved as is now back on the newsstands.

London-based Irish businessman Elgin Loane – owner of *Loot* magazine – stepped in to bid for the title after the formal liquidation of Irish Post Media Ltd by owners Thomas Crosbie Holdings on September 14.

A Save the Irish Post campaign was then launched to resurrect the weekly – an essential read for many Irish expats across the UK.

Following the successful outcome of the campaign, Save the Irish Post chair Fiona Audley said: “We look forward to a new and exciting future for *The Irish Post* and thank all the readers and friends of the paper who showed their support over the last six weeks.

“We hope they will continue to support us now as we bring this valuable paper back to the newsstands. The voice of the Irish in Britain is back!”

Federation of Irish Societies chief Jennie McShannon said Irish people in Britain would be “overjoyed” by the news.

She added: “Our community needs every sympathetic voice in the media to celebrate Irish identity and highlight our achievements.

“We need support to tell our story, to talk about our culture and sports – but also to reflect our concerns and defend our interests.”

NUJ general secretary Michelle Stanistreet said: “We welcome the news that the campaign to Save the Irish Post has been successful and we would like to invite all journalists at the title to become members of the NUJ.”



Post: Back on newsstands



Dozens of trainee teachers delivered copies of the Trident Report on Public Service Pensions to TDs in Leinster House on October 5

TD: Do your pension sums again

DEPUTY Finian McGrath has called for an independent evaluation of calculations underpinning proposed pension changes for new public servants.

The Independent TD said figures provided by the Comptroller and Auditor General must be reviewed before the Bill passes.

He told the Dail it was wrong to enact legislation on the basis of incorrect information.

His comments came as the Irish government introduced a Bill to bring in a single pension scheme for all new public servants.

The move has been strongly opposed by teaching unions. On October 5, an INTO/ASTI/TUI delegation met with Brendan Howlin, the minister charged with spearheading the reform.

At the meeting, unions outlined why the proposals – contained in the Public Service Pensions (Single Scheme) and Remuneration Bill 2011 – were “seriously flawed”.

They backed up this view by referring to a report drawn up by actuarial firm Trident last November. That study had shown that the current system is, in fact, sustainable.



Pat King: ‘Nonsensical’



Sheila Nunan: ‘Devastating’

However, the changes – which unions claim are “unfair and unnecessary” – will mean student teachers starting their careers next year will work longer, pay more in and get less out of their pensions.

Unions insist the measures will lead to vastly different conditions of service for teachers and lecturers doing identical jobs.

Reacting to the legislation published on September 29, INTO accused the government of walking away from any responsibility for pension provision.

General secretary Sheila Nunan described the measures in the Bill as “devastating” for new teachers. She said: “There will be no net

benefit from being in a pension scheme as many will pay in far more than they will ever get out.”

ASTI general secretary Pat King slammed the plan as “nonsensical”, adding that teachers would end up not just fully funding their own pensions but “oversubscribing”.

However, on introducing the Bill to the Dail on October 19, Minister Howlin described the unions’ argument that they had already been subjected to a pensions levy by the last government as a “misnomer”.

Rather, this had been, he claimed, “a levy on pay” and insisted unions were mistaken in “characterising it as a pension contribution”.

He added: “It is not, by definition, a permanent measure. I hope it will not be... permanent.”

But the Minister’s arguments were strongly disputed by Deputy McGrath who pointed out that while the minister had been critical of the Trident Report for including the pension levy in its calculations, the Comptroller and Auditor General had done the same in his report.

He told the Dail: “While the levy is not legally a pension contribution, it is a pension-related contribution

confined to public servants and is related to public service pension terms. It is a pension contribution in fact, if not in law.”

Deputy McGrath noted also that Minister Howlin had used a figure drawn from the Comptroller and Auditor General’s 2009 report that estimated the annual pension cost to the State for teachers to be “22.4% of pay”.

He claimed this figure was “flawed” and added that there had been an “overstating” of the cost of public service pensions through using “outdated assumptions”.

Mr McGrath said: “The most serious of his assumptions is that pay will increase every year by the rate of inflation plus 1.75%.”

“The more realistic calculation used in the Trident Report is that it will increase by the rate of inflation plus 1%.”

“This indicates a new entrant cost to the State under current pension terms as low as 3.4% of salary, which is a long way from the minister’s figure of 22.4%.”

Deputy McGrath’s call for an independent evaluation of the figures has been welcomed by the INTO.

Ditch austerity, go for growth, Troika told

CONGRESS has once again warned IMF/ECB/EC troika officials that Ireland needs growth – not more austerity.

General secretary David Begg, speaking before an October 19 meeting with the troika, said: “We desperately need a plan for jobs and growth, an innovative strategy that will help to kickstart an economy that is effectively flat-lining.

“The troika officials cannot ignore the evidence and it is no longer sufficient to administer prescriptions for cuts and ignore the consequences of those cuts.”

Mr Begg said this was underlined by Aviva’s decision to axe 950 jobs, which he described as a “terrible blow” to the workers and their families. “We now have to now focus on growth as it presents the only viable

escape route from this crisis.”

He claimed that there was “a serious contradiction” at the heart of the official response to the crisis, at both a national and EU level. To date, it had focussed on cutting wages, welfare rates and the living standards of working people.

“But the crisis didn’t originate with working people, it originated with private, profit-hungry banks

and reckless management.”

Mr Begg added: “Yet there been precious little focus on reforming the hugely powerful and secretive banking system to ensure that it can never again bring Ireland and Europe to the edge of collapse.

“It seems reform is for the ‘little people’ and that the real source of the problem will remain untouched.”

Saoirse assault



SIPTU general president Jack O’Connor has described the boarding of two vessels – including the Irish MV Saoirse – by Israeli forces in international waters as “an illegal act of piracy without any mandate in international law”.

During the November 4 boarding, it was claimed that passengers and crew were hosed down under gun-point by IDF commandos before being taken into custody. According to activists’ accounts, the Saoirse

was “corralled to such an extent” during the operation that it collided with sister ship the Tahrir, damaging both vessels.

A spokesperson claimed the boats nearly sank in the manoeuvre and that the takeover was “dangerous to human life”.

Fourteen Irish people were initially held at the Israeli port of Ashdod. It is understood that at least five of those have now been released and are due back in Dublin late on

November 10. Mr O’Connor said: “The strongest representations should be made to the Israeli government about this appalling treatment of people who volunteered to bring humanitarian aid to, and raise awareness of, those suffering under the inhumane blockade of the Gaza strip.

“We would hope and expect that those still in detention in Israel are released immediately and allowed to return home safely.”

Any pupil-teacher ratio cuts ‘will hit recovery’

ASTI has hit out at reports the pupil-teacher ratio may be increased in Budget 2012.

General secretary Pat King said: “Ultimately economic recovery is about jobs. If the pupil-teacher ratio is increased by one, almost every second level school in the country will lose between one and three teachers.

“Schools will be forced to drop subjects and classes.

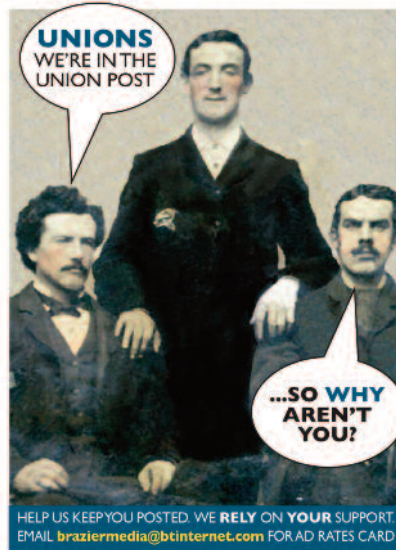
“For many young people this will impact on their career and study options, whether or not they will get work in Ireland, and

what kind of job they will have. It’s that serious.”

He pointed out that second-level schools in the Republic were already overstretched after a series of “regressive cuts” over the last three years.

“Yes, the country is in dire straits, but we still need a coherent pathway out of this.

“It is widely accepted that a knowledge-driven economy based on sustainable jobs is the way out. We must ensure that young people have the education and skills they need to live and work in such an economy.”



A NEW ILO report has warned that the world economy is teetering on the edge of an even deeper jobs recession which is threatening to stall any recovery.

According to the authors of the new *World of Work Report 2011: Making Markets Work for Jobs*, it could take at least another five years before employment returns to pre-crisis levels.

This year’s report has also included a “social unrest” index for the first time.

It found that there was increased risk of social unrest in 45 out of the 118 countries examined.

Unite queries role of New Era agency

UNITE has queried the motivation behind the setting up of a new government body to manage shareholdings in semi-state companies.

Regional secretary Jimmy Kelly claimed the New Era body, which will operate under the National Treasury Management Agency, was "very plainly a vehicle to dismantle the best of our state assets".

It is understood New Era's remit covers ESB, Bord Gáis, EirGrid, Bord na Móna and Coillte. Speaking at a meeting of the union's activists in Dublin last month, he said: "Do

we need another layer of management to oversee state companies that are serving the country well and contributing a strong dividend?"

And he asked: "Would private investors have sanctioned rural electrification or even the founding of the ESB in the earliest days of the state?"

Mr Kelly also slammed what he called "the hollow grandstanding" that privatisation will lead to more investment and vowed that Unite would resist the sale of state assets.

DESIGN

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Paul Kenny: New role

GMB chief is TUC prez

GMB general secretary Paul Kenny has been elected TUC president and takes over from Community general secretary Michael Leahy.

Mr Kenny, a 61-year-old Londoner of Irish descent, was elected at a meeting of the TUC's governing body, the General Council, on September 15.

Speaking after the vote, he said he was looking forward to the new role and, in particular, developing the TUC's campaign against the cuts.

He added: "The values of our movement are the only beacon of light for millions of people who deserve a fairer society and a better future."

"The union movement, with its campaigns for decency and social justice, has more credibility, more consistency and more relevance than any politician."

"The TUC is a powerful force for good and I am very proud to be president for the year ahead."

Picture: TUC



Picture: INMO

Nurses from Limerick travelled to the Dail to highlight patient safety concerns at Mid-Western Regional Hospital

Emergency dept nurses take grievances to Dail

INMO and SIPTU have agreed to suspend industrial action at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital for four weeks, starting on October 19.

The move follows talks last month between the unions and management at the Labour Relations Commission.

Staff at the Limerick hospital have been complaining about the "deterioration" in the "patient care environment" brought about by overcrowding in the emergency de-

partment. It is understood a full review of rosters and resources is being held across all hospitals in the mid-west.

Additional resources have also been allocated to the emergency department at the Mid-Western Regional Hospital.

SIPTU sector organiser Louise O'Reilly said: "The HSE has a lot of work to do over the four weeks to conduct the review and to ensure that patient safety concerns raised by our members are addressed."

The agreement by the HSE to review services in the Mid-Western Regional Hospital follows three four-hour work stoppages by emergency department nurses and a protest by staff who travelled to Dublin on October 12.

Nurses from both SIPTU and INMO held a lunchtime protest outside the Dail, handed in letters of protest to Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Health Minister Dr James Reilly and HSE chief Cathal Magee. They also met with TDs from the mid-west.

'Reckless' FAC cut proposal slammed

CONGRESS has described as "reckless" a Fiscal Advisory Council proposal that the Irish government should impose deeper cuts in its December budget.

Chief economist Paul Sweeney warned the call for even more austerity at a time when the policy was clearly failing was "reckless and could threaten a possible recovery".

The FAC, a public finances watchdog set up in June under the terms of the troika bailout, estimates €4bn in cuts and new taxes is needed to meet the deficit cutting target of 8.6% of GDP next year.

The body has also recommended further cuts of €400m on top of that

figure. Mr Sweeney said: "The Council's obsession with debt reduction ignores the impact of the €21bn austerity adjustment to date."

"The deficit in the demand for labour – and not the financial deficit – is what we need to prioritise."

"The recent small increase in volatile GDP and the small increase in GNP give no comfort to those working in the real economy and even less to those who are out of work."

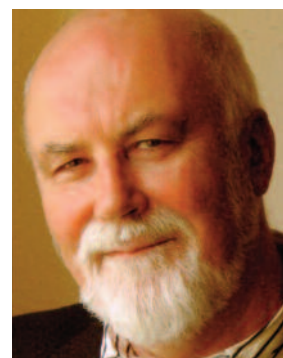
He pointed out that domestic demand had fallen substantially in the second quarter of this year and that this had been compounded by a "staggering" fall of 25% over the past three

years. "We have had too much austerity and it is not working. We need to significantly moderate our budgetary plans and invest for growth."

Mr Sweeney also flagged up a new study by Laurence Ball of John Hopkins University and two IMF staff members, warning that austerity damages income and jobs.

He added: "It found that the pain is not shared equally – wage earners are hurt most. For example, their model found that wages fall by 0.9% with each 1% cut in GDP, whereas profits and rents fall by only 0.3% – and they recover faster!"

"These proposals will damage jobs and prospects for growth."



Sweeney: 'Too much austerity'

STRESS 1

Strong link between job security and health

A NEW survey has revealed that stress is the most common cause for long-term sickness and absence for both manual and non-manual workers in the UK.

The Simplyhealth Absence Management study carried out with the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development and published last month also found a strong link between job security and mental health problems.

It showed that employers planning to make redundancies in the next six months are significantly more likely to report an increase in mental health problems among staff (51% compared with 32% who are not planning redundancies).

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber claimed that the figures revealed the "serious impact" cuts, job losses, restructurings and pay inequalities were having on workers' health.

He added: "Unfortunately there is still a tendency among many employers to think of it as 'just stress' but this is a real issue which can devastate people's lives and tear apart families."

PHOTOLINE

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

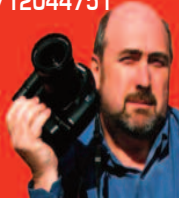
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\$hock \$tats

PROTEST group 'Occupy George' has put its money where its mouth is by using infographics against the Corporate Machine.

The group is using a key emblem of US capitalism – the dollar bill – to hammer home its message.

'Occupy George' was set up by a pair of California-based designers who have made dollar bill prints in support of the international 'occupy' movement.

The branded notes informing

the American public in graphic terms of economic disparity are being distributed widely throughout the States.

A spokesperson for the group said: "Money talks, but not loud enough for the 99%. We think this is a much more effective way of trying to change minds by presenting people with the info so they can draw their own conclusions."

Check out the designs at www.occupygeorge.com



Pictures: Occupy George



We're in a 'global jobs crisis'

UNI Global Union chief Philip Jennings has claimed the world has been engulfed in "an unprecedented global jobs crisis".

He said: "There's a sense out there that the social dimension has been lost and people are getting lost in this whole agenda to deal with the deficit."

Mr Jennings, left, made the comments from

the fringes of the G20 Summit earlier this month in Cannes.

He insisted the "huge mistake" made at the 2010 G20 Toronto conference had been that the focus was taken off jobs.

"We want to put people back on to the agenda. If we don't have a growth strategy, we won't deal with the deficit."

STRESS 2

Austerity could lead to more suicides

UNITE has warned the UK government its austerity policies could lead to increased suicide rates.

And the union pointed to a 40% hike in the number of people taking their own lives following the meltdown in the Greek economy.

The claim was made in a response to a UK Department of Health initiative on the issue.

Unite professional officer Dave Munday said: "We believe that the economic crisis will increase the pressures on individuals, faced with tightening finances, repossessed homes, marital breakdown and lost jobs.

"Bearing in mind that 20% of the population will suffer mental problems during their lifetime, this cost-cutting government should not sweep mental health under the carpet because society deems it as an uncomfortable subject."

VHI survey points to 'emotional stress' hike

MORE and more Irish workers are suffering burnout and mental ill health because of increased workloads and stress, among other factors, it has been claimed.

According to health insurer VHI, there was a 110% hike in the number of employees citing "emotional health" concerns in the first quarter of this year under their employee assistance programmes.

Dr John McDermott, of VHI, said: "The trends we are seeing in terms of the services employees require speak for themselves – companies need to put in place support structures to address these issues to prevent burnout and promote positive workplaces.

"While this can seem incidental in times of huge economic pressure, this is crucial in terms of a company's productivity and has a definite impact on the bottom line for every organisation."

VHI's EAP services are provided in more than 450 companies nationwide.

King vows to delegates: 'We'll fight on pensions'

SIPTU vice president Patricia King, right, has fired a pensions salvo at employers warning them the union will consider strikes and industrial action to protect existing schemes.

She made the comments in a speech to SIPTU's biennial conference in Ennis on October 4.

Warning delegates a "major catastrophe" was "careering down the tracks" on retirement income, Ms King claimed the "precarious position" of pension funds had been worsened by the recent levy.

She said: "I want to make one thing very clear – we will resist any attempt to make workers pay for this levy."

"They have lost enough of their retirement savings already and it is a matter for the employers and the pensions industry to meet this cost."

Ms King also slammed authorities who were "straining at the leash" to impose a Funding Standard which, she predicted, would cause "chaos", leading to the collapse of many schemes.

Funds need time to recover,

she cautioned, and called for "direct engagement" on the issue.

She added: "However, if the Pensions Regulator or others in authority insist on enforcing this, we will do the only thing we can do – in the event of any scheme collapsing – which is to confront the employer concerned directly."

"We will fight on this issue and we will promote industrial action and strike action to preserve pension schemes, and if they want chaos, insisting on this Funding Standard is the right way to go about it."



'The private sector has never been a key driver of productive investment'

CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has warned delegates at SIPTU's biennial conference that private sector investment could not be relied upon to deliver growth in the current crisis.

He said: "The only way to get growth in the domestic sector is through investment. Private investment has all but collapsed, so other

sources have to be found."

Mr Begg claimed that the private sector had never been "a key driver of productive investment" in the domestic economy, citing total private investment of €14.5 billion between 2000 and 2008.

Pointing out that during the same period, the state and semi-state sectors had invested €33.5 billion in infrastructure, he added: "If that

was the best that the Irish entrepreneurial community could manage in the good times, what can be expected of them now?"

Mr Begg fully endorsed SIPTU's *Investing for Jobs and Growth* policy proposal on how pension funds could be incentivised to invest in Ireland.

Austerity policies being pursued in Ireland and Europe were destined to fail, he claimed.

"They are... nothing less than more extreme versions of the liberal market ideology that got us into this mess in the first case."



'Hawks of austerity had their way... the results clear to see'

SIPTU general president Jack O'Connor has slammed "the hawks of austerity" for unleashing "a war on working people" since the 2008 collapse in the global economy.

He told those gathered in Ennis, Co Clare, for the union's biennial conference that this had prompted in Ireland, a policy of "simulated internal devaluation" by the then Fianna Fail-led government.

They did this "to assuage the voracious appetite of the financial 'markets', restore 'confidence' and bring about a quick

recovery when it would be back to business as usual."

Mr O'Connor, right, reminded delegates that the trade union movement had highlighted the "absurdity" at the time of "treating a gaping collapse in demand with austerity".

He said: "We organised mobilisations, engaged in negotiations, lobbied and employed every other legitimate technique within our capacity."

"Despite all our efforts to bring about a basis for a sane way forward, the hawks of austerity had their way."

Mr O'Connor claimed the consequences of embarking on a policy of austerity were "clear for all to see" with an unemployment rate approaching 15% and the return of "the spectre of forced emigration".

He added that these terrible consequences for working people were being mirrored in the North.

The Tory/Lib Dem government has signalled a massive £4bn retrenchment strategy targeting public services and threatening one in eight jobs.





Amnesty International

REPORT

Write for Rights

Just do the write thing

WHEN Amnesty International was launched 50 years ago, it was founded on a sense of outrage at the persecution of individuals who expressed views contrary to those of their government.

Peter Benenson, a London lawyer, felt a sense of rage when he read about two Portuguese students thrown in jail for raising a "toast to freedom" in a pub.

He wrote an appeal for like-minded people to come together and act to voice their opposition to the persecution faced by many from oppressive regimes around the world.

Mr Benenson's appeal was heard and, within months, Amnesty International was born.

Yet at the time Peter Benenson made that rallying cry, he had not yet galvanised his sense of outrage into a course of action. People shared the sense of injustice, but did not yet know how to act on it.

The founding Amnesty members decided to write to heads of state, and others in positions of power, and insist that their demands be listened to.

This was a completely novel concept – that a normal, ordinary person could moonlight as a diplomat or lobbyist.

People simply picked up their pens, and detailed what they knew about an individual who was locked up, or in some other way abused and then insisted they be set free. When the first letters were sent, there was no way to know if they had any affect.

But then prisoners started to be freed and to attribute their release to Amnesty International and its armchair-activism.

Five decades on, Amnesty knows it works. Better still, governments know it works.

Since then the group has diversi-



Inspirational: Peter Benenson

fied its campaigning techniques.

Today it tweets the President of Azerbaijan, or emails the head of the Georgia parole board – every form of communication is in its arsenal.

This year though, Amnesty has appealed once again for people in the UK and Ireland to pick up their pens once more in a return to the original, classic form of activism.

On the December 10, International Human Rights Day, Amnesty is asking people to write a letter demanding action on behalf of one of 10 cases in its "Write for Rights" campaign.

Cases such as that of Natalia Estemirova who was abducted and shot in the head in 2009 in Chechnya.

She had been gathering eyewitness testimony of crimes against humanity in the Chechen conflict.

Despite assurances that her case would be investigated properly, her family are still left without justice or answers.

Find out more about how you can pick up a pen and change the world, by visiting amnesty.org.uk/rights



Look how we've kept you POSTED... check out our back issues:

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



FAIR PAY NOW! NIPSA medical secretaries in the Western Trust took part in a one-day strike on November 8. The action was called after it was revealed that more than 30 workers in the Trust had been left with a pay gap of £4,000 following a regrading process. NIPSA official Alan Law described the action as “a last resort”. Picture: NIPSA

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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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