

THE

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UNION POST

NEWS YOU CAN USE

SEPTEMBER 2011

Standing up to fight cuts on Oct 5

UNISON members working in Northern Ireland's health and education sectors are staging a one-day strike on October 5.

Calling the move "a decision of last resort", UNISON insisted it had been left with no option but to highlight the massive impact the cuts will have on both sectors.

The action will affect health workers – apart from doctors – as well as non-teaching staff in schools.

Regional secretary Patricia McKeown said: "We have to stand up. We have to put pressure on the employers and our government here, because things are going to get worse.

"There is a question of people under serious stress trying to deliver services under ridiculous conditions and standing up and saying 'enough is enough'. They want to tell their story to the public."

According to the union, the health service is facing a £2.3 billion shortfall over the next four years. Education faces a £300 million shortfall.

It is six years since UNISON members in education last took part in strike action over budget cuts.

In the 1990s, members in the health sector took to the picket lines over the issue of the privatisation of services.



Picture:TUC

Begg: Front-loading cuts will kill jobs, choke off growth

AUSTERITY WARNING

CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has warned that any attempt to 'front-load' austerity measures by increasing budget cuts would have "terrible consequences for jobs and choke off any prospect of growth".

He said increased austerity was precisely the opposite of what Ireland needed and described 'front-loading' as "a non-sensical non-starter", adding, "It is exactly what we should not do at this point in time."



Mr Begg made the comments at a public lecture at the National College of Ireland, Dublin, on September 26. Mr Begg said that to allow room for growth less austerity was needed. "The process of fiscal consolidation has to be significantly recalibrated and the period of adjustment extended until 2017.

"In addition, we need to be innovative about investment and divert monies from the National Pension Reserve Fund for 'high multiplier' infrastructure projects that deliver jobs and aid national competitiveness."

He said such projects could include the retrofitting of homes or

a national broadband scheme. Private pension funds were also a source of potential investment.

"If we manage to create jobs, that will lift domestic demand and help to spur growth. And this, in turn, will contribute to the process of fiscal consolidation."

Mr Begg claimed the current austerity programme hurt wage earners and those on welfare to a far greater degree than those who derived income from profits or rents. He flagged up a recent IMF study that showed that during a time of fiscal consolidation, wages fell faster than rents of profits.

"The IMF study found that for every one per cent of GDP of fis-

cal consolidation, wage income reduced by 0.9 per cent, while profits and rents fell by just 0.3 per cent. The essential unfairness of this process makes it untenable in the longer-term."

Mr Begg said Europe needed to jettison the "dogma of the market" if it was to have any hope of building a fairer future for all.

In addition, Ireland had to devise an entirely new "development model" as the current one had resulted in at least three serious crises in 60 years.

Instead, he suggested, Ireland should look towards the small, open economies of the Nordic countries for inspiration.

Absence of solidarity evident in the debate over debt

CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has warned efforts to tackle the European debt crisis have been marked by “a chilling absence of solidarity” that could lead to the destruction of the European social model.

Speaking at a Social Justice Ireland policy conference earlier this month, Mr Begg claimed recent remarks by ECB official Jurgen Stark reflected a failure to take account of how austerity affects people’s lives.

He said: “Mr Stark talked of the moral and ethical dimensions of the crisis and stressed the need for solidarity.

“But while he demands further cuts for people on welfare and low wages, he also insists that private speculators and bondholders must be protected at all costs.

“That is not solidarity – and it certainly is not moral.”

Mr Begg warned: “It is this failure to grasp a wider social responsibility that could see the European social model hollowed out and destroyed in the coming years.”

The Congress chief explained that the social model was characterised by a “cross-class consensus” that the state would shield citizens from the excesses of the market and that people could not be treated as “disposable units of production”.

Mr Begg also slammed the “shocking” actions of Talk Talk management in laying off more than 570 staff with little notice.

He added: “It is hardly surprising that Irish society is gripped by palpable fear and a widespread sense of economic insecurity.”

Mr Begg pointed out that any resolution of the current crisis must involve addressing people’s fear and their sense of insecurity.

That could happen if there was “genuine solidarity” and a belief that the burden of adjustment was being fairly shared.

He cited the example of wealthy French citizens who recently stated their willingness to pay more tax, leading to the French government applying an ‘exceptional contribution’ to higher earners.

Mr Begg added: “Unfortunately, I do not expect to see similar developments here at home.”

LATEST CSO FIGURES



Picture: ICTU

DON'T LET TROIKA DIKTAT SNUFF OUT FLICKER OF HOPE

SIPTU general president Jack O'Connor, above, has called on the Irish government to launch an investment programme to seize the initiative for jobs and growth.

Responding to the latest CSO figures, he said: “They are positive, as far as they go, but it is now critical that the Troika’s insistence on a further deficit-cutting budget is not allowed to extinguish this small flicker of light which may be appearing at the end of the tunnel.

“The government must find an innovative way to launch a major investment programme to promote jobs and growth. It must at least offset the effect of deficit reductions in Budgets 2012 and 2013.” Though admitting resources were “limited”,

he flagged up a new SIPTU policy document, *Investing for Jobs and Growth*, setting out how this could be done.

He added: “This [document] envisages the use of a combination of the residue of the pension reserve fund and an equivalent amount to be generated from private pension funds through exemptions from the 0.6% levy.”

The document also envisages private pension funds acquiring a minority stake in a new state holding company and project bonds issued by public utilities as well as providing venture capital for innovation.

This would be incentivised through exemptions from the pension levy.

Check out report on: <http://www.siptu.ie/media/pressreleases2011/fullstory,14928,en.html>

Stimulate don't stifle growth

THE IRISH government should use the next budget to “significantly moderate” the ongoing austerity programme and move immediately to stimulate domestic demand, Congress chief economist Paul Sweeney has told a major conference on Ireland’s debt crisis.

Mr Sweeney said the government should not proceed with the planned €3.6 billion of cuts and tax rises in the forthcoming budget.

He was speaking at a conference on Ireland’s debt crisis, organised by the Feasta economics foundation, in Dublin on September 22 and 23.

Mr Sweeney told delegates: “We need a better way to tackle this crisis. We should

stretch out the ‘period of adjustment’ to 2017 and significantly moderate the budgetary adjustment planned for this year.

“We also need to raise more in tax from high income earners – as is happening in the US, France and Spain.

“In order to stimulate domestic demand we should invest €2 billion per annum over the next three years from the National Pension Reserve Fund and put that money to work creating jobs.

“It can be invested in ‘high multiplier’ projects that will deliver quick returns in terms of jobs and growth. These include: the retrofitting of homes, a programme of school building and upgrades, invest-

ment in public transport, national skills upgrade, a national water system and broadband.”

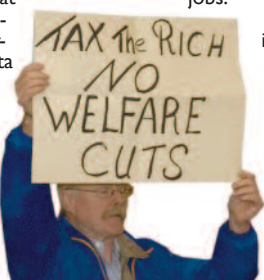
Mr Sweeney claimed that if the government proceeded with the planned adjustment there would be no economic growth at all next year.

He added: “That would be disastrous for jobs and for working families. We need to significantly moderate that plan.

“We have already taken some €20.6 billion from the economy and the result is a shocking 24% collapse in domestic demand, over three years.

“We now have a major unemployment crisis and it is clear to anyone who studies the data that these policies are unsustainable.”

Mr Sweeney also warned that while exports were performing well, that alone would not be sufficient to generate a recovery.



Republic goes under UN rights audit

THE REPUBLIC'S record on human rights – including trade union rights – will be put under the UN spotlight in Geneva next month.

On October 6, Ireland is being assessed under a Universal Periodic Review for the first time.

Each of the UN's 192 member states must now go through this UN Human Rights Council's monitoring process every four years.

The UPR assesses how countries respect the commitments they made and agreements signed under inter-

national law, focussing on any gaps in human rights protection.

Irish trade unionists have long claimed there is currently no effective legal protection here for workers who experience discrimination or 'blacklisting' because of their union activities or membership.

They claim this violates the principles of freedom of association and the right to unionise enshrined in Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Unions also point out that Ireland

does not recognise a right to strike and that there is no legal entitlement to strike.

Instead, Ireland has a system of "immunities" that apply in certain circumstances when the collective action is part of a "trade dispute".

However, employers in Ireland are increasingly going to the courts to seek injunctions to halt the strike action.

This gives power to employers to disrupt, curtail, delay and halt strikes. There are also no restrictions on

the use of agency labour during a strike. Unions claim this runs counter to the right to strike articulated in Article 28 of the EU Charter and the basic principles of the ILO.

After the UPR, recommendations are made on how compliance with human rights obligation can be improved. The country under review has a duty to implement these recommendations in the four years before it comes up for review again.

For more information go to: <http://www.rightsnow.ie/>

UK PENSIONS STRIKE

'Fight of our lives ... make no mistake. This is it'



Ed Milliband: Heckled over strikes

THERE will be widespread disruption to public services in the North and across the UK as unions take part in a massive co-ordinated day of action on November 30 over pensions.

It comes as talks between unions and government on the proposed hike in public sector pension contributions scheduled for next April seem to have run into the sand.

There was a unanimous vote in favour of the action at the end of the TUC conference in London on September 14.

General secretary Brendan Barber vowed to make November 30 "the biggest trade union mobilisation for a generation".

The angry mood in the conference hall was reflected by the cat-calls and heckles directed at Labour leader Ed Milliband when he claimed during his speech that strikes "were always the consequence of failure – failure we can't afford as a nation."

Meanwhile, UNISON chief Dave Prentis told delegates he was serving notice on more than 9,000 employers that the union was balloting its 1.1 million members.

He said: "It's the fight of our lives. I know it's an over-used cliché, but make no mistake, this is it." In June, public sector trade unions in the North agreed a joint declaration on industrial action.

Congress assistant general secretary Peter Bunting said then that the declara-



UNISON chief Dave Prentis has served notice on 9,000 employers Pictures:TUC

tion was a signal both the Stormont administration and the UK government that unions would – with the support of local communities – resist public sector cuts and attacks on jobs, pay and pensions.

He predicted a "a prolonged period of industrial strife".

Journalists' safety event

THE NUJ is holding a one-day conference examining the experiences of journalists who have worked through the Troubles in the North and other conflict zones.

The one-day event, titled 'NUJ Journalist Safety – the Northern Ireland Experience', will be held from 9.30am to 5pm at the NICVA offices in Belfast on Friday, September 30.

It is dedicated to the memory of murdered *Sunday World* reporter Martin O'Hagan.

The 10th anniversary of his killing takes place on September 28 – two days before the conference.

Organiser Kevin Cooper said: "We are hoping that journalists – who may have experienced censorship, threats, legal challenge, physical assault, or who may have witnessed trauma or experienced interference with their professional work – will be able to share their stories."

A number of workshops under Chatham House rules will be run.

Participants will be asked to reflect on past experiences of conflict journalism as well as talk about current events and methods of news gathering and to make recommendations to improve journalistic ethics, training and industry practice.

For more info and a registration form email Kevin at: photoline@supanet.com

Long-term dole figures show 'chill' of austerity

CONGRESS has dubbed the Republic's soaring long-term unemployment figures a "chilling commentary on austerity" and demanded the government takes urgent and immediate action.

Commenting on the dramatic rise shown in figures released on September 15, Congress chief economist Paul Sweeney, inset right, said: "A full 54% of those out of work are now long-term unemployed, without jobs or a decent income for over a year.

"That is a chilling statistic and a chilling commentary on the failure of the austerity programme that was supposedly designed to save us.

"In fact, it is directly responsible for thousands of job losses. These figures require an immediate, urgent and strong response from government."

Mr Sweeney claimed those calling for more spending cuts and increased taxes on regular workers "seem not to realise that austerity is

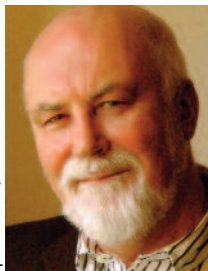
killing the patient and smothering any prospect of a recovery".

He added: "To cut another €4bn out of the economy next year is madness, but even to cut the planned €3.6bn will mean no growth whatsoever in 2012.

"The adjustment must be scaled back and accompanied by investment in jobs. That is vital.

"The Irish economy is failing on so many fronts that it is time for a significant change in policy. The key to recovery is real investment in jobs."

Meanwhile, the UK's public sector shed 111,000 jobs in the three months to the end of



July – the biggest quarterly fall since records began in 1999.

The figures, revealed in a bulletin from the UK's Office for National Statistics, showed the number of unemployed rose by 80,000 over the period.

The number of jobless now stands at 2.51 million – or 7.9% of the UK's working-age population.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber described the ONS figures as "terrible".

He said: "They are further evidence that the recovery has been choked off by a self-defeating rush to austerity.

"The public sector is shedding jobs more than twice as fast as the private sector can create new ones, and with the increasingly gloomy outlook for the economy as a whole, the outlook for jobs is as bad as at any time since the height of the recession."

SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

MARTINA O'LEARY on ICTU's new YouthConnect programme coming to a school near you...



ASK ANY teenager about trade unions and they'll most likely stare at you blankly. Ask any trade unionist "what's our biggest problem?" and, chances are, they'll tell you we need to attract more young people into our ranks.

With minimum income protection under attack and youth unemployment soaring, connecting with a young workforce has never been more vital for trade unions. And vice versa.

Now Congress' YouthConnect project is set to take trade unions and the world of work into classrooms across the country.

This student-focused resource pack, with accompanying supports, aims to raise young people's awareness of the role and activities of Irish trade unions. It also promotes collective action and the value of participating in schools, communities, unions and other organisations.

Congress' project coordinator Fiona Dunne claims eight out of 10 kids have never heard of a union.

"They don't know who we are. They don't know what unions do. If there's no family connection fewer and fewer young people are becoming union members.

"YouthConnect is about getting into schools and making young people aware of what we do," she says.

Initially funded by IMPACT's former Tax Officials branch, the programme is being launched for the new school year.

It centres on a five-module teachers' resource pack.

Fiona and her team are offering teachers an introductory session on how best to use it, along with two copies of the impressive pack – one for teaching and one for the library.

To this end, Congress has set up a group of 'schools champions' – graduate teachers who are trained to present the resource pack to teachers and students.

So far 100 schools have signed up for visits, a positive start towards



Class action: Some recently trained YouthConnect champions discuss the best way to introduce the world of work and unions to students. From left: Yvonne O'Callaghan, Laura Dooley (also pictured left) Seamus Dowling, Grainne Murphy & Colm Flaherty

Congress' ambition of reaching all 750 secondary schools over the next two years.

"Initially we planned to target transition year students. But a pilot project, consultation with teachers and engagement at the teacher unions' conferences made us realise that teachers in a wide range of subjects – business, economics, religious education, CSPE – could use this resource.

"They can use a complete module or just part of it. Either way, it will bring trade unions and the world of work into the education mainstream.

"It will get kids thinking about the whole collective idea that you aren't alone at work and learning about what trade unions can do for them," says Fiona.

The easy-to-use YouthConnect resource pack includes information for teachers, lesson plans, students' information handouts and worksheets – all bound together with clear teaching and project objectives.

Its five information-packed modules cover the world of work, unions and solidarity, rights at work and school, globalisation and equal-

ity and inequality in society.

A new YouthConnect website – www.youth-connect.ie – is designed to work hand in hand with the pack.

It contains news and information on the five module themes, a section for teachers, an e-zine and a platform for students to discuss and explore the issues that interest them most.

Congress' YouthConnect project is working closely with the Irish Second-level Students' Union (ISSU), which is Ireland's representative body for second-level students.

Both aim to encourage students to become more aware of their rights, and to assert those rights in school and the workplace.

One of the themes of YouthConnect is about encouraging students to be more active in their own lives; to understand and stand up for their rights – including in school.

ISSU have already set up 40 school councils and hopes that exposure to YouthConnect will help generate more.

The schools visits will also showcase the iConnect card, jointly developed by ISSU and YouthConnect, which entitles holders to a range of discounts.

Laura Dooley, one of the school champions, says: "I think it is important students have the information they need when they are going forward.

"I know myself from being in school, if you did business you might know a little bit about your rights at work, but there was no one really there, especially when you first go into work, to tell you this is what you should know, these are your rights, unions do this, they look after you.

"The YouthConnect project is about getting into schools and giving the kids the information they need."

Fiona and her team are buoyed by positive feedback from a pilot scheme, even though it revealed that few kids are currently aware of unions and what they do.

She believes schools will be clamouring for the resource once word gets round. "The most important thing for us is to get into schools and make contact with teachers," she says.

"In the pilot I was struck by the negative views that young people have. They think unions are all about strikes, giving out and negativity.

"They know nothing about the positive day-to-day stuff.

"Helping people who have been unfairly fired, or are underpaid or bullied at work.

"That doesn't make the news so we need to explain that it's part of what it means to be a union member," adds Fiona.

A lot of work and preparation has gone into the project, well before it hits the classrooms.

Congress is determined that the resource won't end up gathering dust on shelves.

"My ambition is that this will be permanent. It will be something that Congress continues to do so that young people leave school thinking it makes sense to join a union," she says.

For more information contact Fiona Dunne at fiona.dunne@ictu.ie.



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EMERGENCY SERVICES

Dublin fire brigade ruling welcomed

SIPTU and IMPACT have both welcomed a Labour Court ruling preventing further cuts at Dublin Fire Brigade.

The two unions representing fire fighters in the capital had agreed to €3.5m in budget cuts for 2011 in talks with management under the workings of the Croke Park agreement.

These cuts were ratified in a secret ballot of members – but just two months after that vote, management sought additional cost savings of €1.7m.

But this move was blocked by the Labour Court's September 5 ruling backing the unions' position that further cuts were unacceptable under the Croke Park agreement.

IMPACT assistant general secretary Phil McFadden said: "We welcome this

decision, not alone because it acknowledges those savings already agreed for this year – savings which are being implemented while the service continues to be fully delivered.

"The recommendation is also welcome because it proves how effective the Croke Park agreement is in solving what might otherwise have been an acrimonious dispute."

Also welcoming the move, SIPTU sector organiser Owen Reidy said: "We found it completely unacceptable that the employer would seek to set aside the agreement and seek additional savings.

"We utilised the dispute-solving procedures and our position has been vindicated by the Labour Court."

FBU trashes Reform claim

THE Fire Brigades Union has slammed as "right-wing trash" a claim that huge cuts in the UK's fire service are manageable.

The claim made by leading think-tank Reform was dismissed by FBU general secretary Matt Wrack as "dangerous and ignorant".

Reform also claimed that the falling number of deaths in accidental fires in Britain was due to smoke alarms.

While acknowledging the usefulness of alarms, Mr Wrack said such devices were not the "magic bullet" Reform research had suggested.

He said: "Reform ignores the fact that fire crews have been carrying out near-record numbers of rescues from dwelling fires and other 999 incidents.

"We have been saving more lives and rescuing more people – there is no reduction in the need for a fire service."

Pointing out that the fire service had already been "cut to pieces", Mr Wrack warned: "To follow the Reform agenda will put the lives of the public and fire crews at much greater risk at all the incidents we respond to."

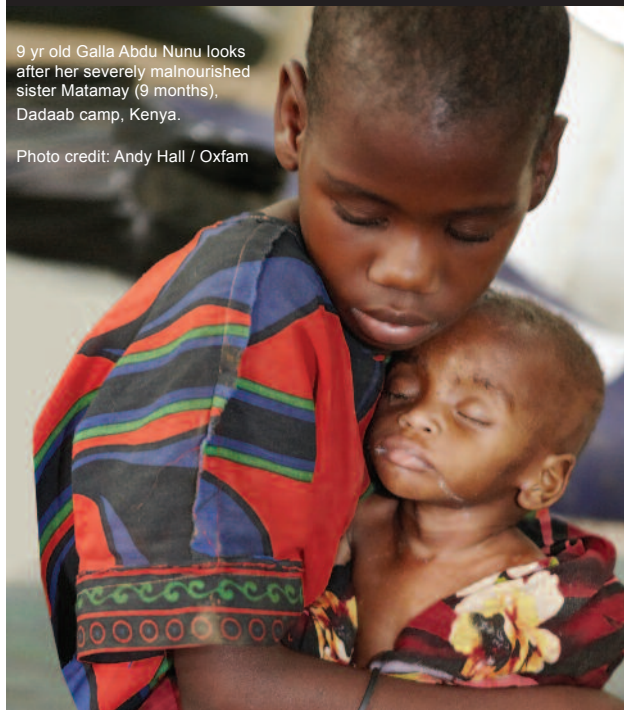


A delegation of pensioner activists from Northern Ireland take a breather in the sun before joining 3,000 other OAPs in marching through the centre of Blackpool at the start of the National Pensioners Convention's Pensioners Parliament in June

Workplace STRESS survey

CONGRESS has launched an online workplace stress survey in order to get a better picture of the causes and experiences of and responses to work-related stress. If you have any queries, contact Esther Lynch of ICTU at esther.lynnch@ictu.ie

Or you can access the survey at: <http://irishcongress.polladdy.com/s/08A19FB29FAD6599>



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

Photo credit: Andy Hall / Oxfam

EAST AFRICA EMERGENCY

YOU CAN SAVE LIVES

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

Donate online at oxfamireland.org, your local Oxfam shop, call ROI 1850 30 40 55 or NI 0800 0 30 40 55. Thank you.

UNIONAD11

Speculators playing Irish roulette with our economy

IRELAND is acting as a roulette wheel for the world's top financial gamblers arising out of the massive increase in secondary trading on its sovereign debt.

That's the conclusion of a new study, titled *Audit of Irish Debt*, published on September 16.

The research, carried out by a team from the University of Limerick and supported by Unite, uncovers the complexity that lies behind the actual ownership of Irish debt.

The report seeks to quantify and explain the debts for which the Irish people have been made responsible.

It covers the issuing of government bonds, explains the way in which ownership of those bonds is traded in financial markets without any control by the people who ultimately have to repay it, and the liabilities for which Ireland is responsible through taking ownership of the largest banks in the state.

Ireland's national debt has soared because of the fateful decision to turn private debt public through the bank guarantee scheme of September 2008.

This debt rose from less than €20 billion in the late 1980s to a little under €40 billion in 2007.

It has since shot up to more than €91 billion. Speaking after the release of the report, Unite regional secretary Jimmy Kelly called the figures "a scandal in every sense".

He said: "Back room deals have saddled the people of this country, and their children, with debts that are completely unsustainable."

Mr Kelly also accused those in government who were "continuing the myth" that "cutting further and deeper will free us of the debt" of insulting the Irish public.

The government's austerity programme – that has led to a surge in unemployment, a return to emigration and widespread gloom through the

country – has failed to stop the runaway train that was created when the government of the day signed away a generation's future to protect wealthy overseas interests.

Referring to the "disastrous consequences" of that move, Mr Kelly said a picture emerges from the report that "will shock those who care about Ireland's freedom as a nation to determine its own future".

He warned: "It must prompt a total revision of our economic priorities. Without change we will be crushed under the weight of debt that has been placed upon us."



'Scandal': Jimmy Kelly



ILO chief Juan Somavia after speech Picture: European Union 2011 PE-EP/Pietro Naj-Oleari

ILO chief: Don't use crisis to attack workers' rights

ILO director general Juan Somavia has warned European parliamentarians that the economic crisis should not be used to weaken basic labour rights.

His address to the European Parliament in Brussels on September 14 was welcomed by ETUC general secretary Bernadette Ségol.

She gave her backing to what she called Mr Somavia's "unequivocal" assertion that workers' rights should not be "sacrificed to austerity".

In his speech, Mr Somavia listed the challenges facing EU countries as "working poverty, precarious work, low pay, social exclusion and long term unemployment".

He insisted that short-term challenges facing Europe required fiscal consolidation that was socially responsible.

Mr Somavia told MEPs: "Respect for fundamental principles and rights at work is non-negotiable; not even in times of crisis when questions of fairness abound. This is particularly important in countries having to adopt austerity measures. We cannot use the crisis as an excuse to disregard internationally agreed labour standards."



Picture: ETUC

Support: Bernadette Ségol

INTO makes history appeal



THE Irish National Teachers Organisation – which will be celebrating a century and a half of service to Ireland's teachers in 2018 – has commissioned historian Dr Niamh Puirseil, left, to write a history of the union.

The 'INTO 150' project will be published in 2018 and follows a deci-

sion taken by the union's Central Executive Committee last year to seek expressions of interest in researching and writing a book on the subject.

Dr Puirseil wrote the widely-praised *The Irish Labour Party 1922-1973* and co-authored *We Declare: Landmark Documents in Ireland's His-*

tory. She told INTO's *In Touch* magazine: "This is not only a chance to record and celebrate the history of the organisation and its members but to protect its past."

"There will be current and retired INTO members across the country whose attics and garages contain boxes

of old branch minute books or registers which are taking up room and gathering dust.

"If this sounds familiar, we want to hear from you."

Anyone who has INTO-themed items stored away can contact Dr Puirseil on historyproject@into.ie

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

NIPSA backs MPs' report slamming PFI

NIPSA general secretary Brian Campfield has welcomed the findings of a highly critical parliamentary report on Private Finance Initiative contracts.

The House of Commons Treasury Select Committee report, published last month, dubbed the PFI financing method "extremely inefficient" and flagged up how the cost of this type of finance had "increased significantly" in recent

years. It noted: "The price of finance is significantly higher with a PFI. The financial cost of repaying the capital investment of PFI investors is therefore considerably greater than the equivalent repayment of direct government investment."

"We have not seen any evidence to suggest that this inefficient method of financing has been offset by the perceived benefits of PFI

from increased risk transfer. On the contrary there is evidence of the opposite."

PFI contracts were also attacked for being "inherently inflexible" and concerns were raised that the VFM (value for money) appraisals were skewed in their favour.

The UK has 700 PFI contracts delivering a wide array of public assets and services. It is understood another 61 contracts are currently

being considered by the government. Mr Campfield said: "The report confirms in many respects the views expressed by NIPSA and other trade unions that private financing of public sector infrastructure and other investments – including the design, build and operate model of Public Private Partnerships – does not provide the public with good value for money or more efficient delivery."

Check out the full report on: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmtreasy/1146/114602.htm

Aussie unions on the march



MORE than 40,000 Australian trade unionists took to the streets of Sydney earlier this month in protest at the state government's attack on public sector jobs.

The September 8 rally is part of a developing campaign highlighting not just the assault on the public sector but legislative moves unions claim have targeted public employees' bargaining rights in New South Wales.

Demonstrators gathered in the Domain park area of Sydney before marching past the state parliament in Macquarie Street.

Since being elected earlier this year, state premier Barry O'Farrell has pushed through billions

of dollars of spending cuts teamed with a massive wave of privatisation of state assets under the justification of dealing with a "budget black hole".

His coalition government also plans to axe 5,000 public sector jobs.

United Union Services general secretary Graeme Kelly claimed Mr O'Farrell had "broken his word" by threatening the jobs of public servants.

He added: "The community deserves and demands sufficient numbers of workers to undertake the back-of-office functions to free up our front-line emergency services for their essential duties."

Pictures: ASU/USU



Pay cuts Job losses on the increase
 Downturn Slump Cuts to services
 Future uncertain for many
Recession
 Job threats
 Pensions collapse
 Credit crunch
Crisis
 Downturn Recession
 Shares plummet
 Tax increases
 Shortfall
 Market crash
 Cutbacks
 Job threats
 Job threats
 Cutbacks
 Job threats

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'MAIN STREET' FIGHTS BACK...

US nurses stage a wave of tax demos

THOUSANDS of nurses staged a day of action across the US earlier this month to highlight their call for Wall Street's moneybags to pay for the crisis they created.

A total of 60 protests across 21 states were held on September 1 as part of a National Nurses United campaign to have a half a per cent federal levy slapped on bond deals and other financial transactions.

Supporters claim such a move could raise as much as \$350bn to improve health care services Stateside.

Individual actions included

blockades of the offices of House of Representatives leader Eric Cantor and Minnesota pro-austerity firebrand Michelle Bachmann.

At other events, soup kitchens were set up outside Congressional offices to underline the devastating effects the collapse of the economy has had on "Main Street USA" and the knock-on impact of scaled-down welfare programmes.

NNU co-president Jean Ross said: "This is a sales tax on the business Wall Street does. It would disincentivise the extreme gambling they do."



Bridge protest, above, in San Diego. Soup kitchen in Frisco, below, and, below left, NNU town crier in old Boston town



Pictures: NNU

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TUC backs workers in boardroom

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber has backed the concept of workers' representatives sitting on executive remuneration committees.

He was responding to a proposal contained in a UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills discussion paper published on September 19. Welcoming the proposal, Mr Barber said: "The UK's flawed executive pay culture has allowed those at the top to award themselves vast pay

increases without any link to performance. This system contributed to the financial crash and needs urgent reform.

"Workers' representatives on remuneration committees will help regain public confidence in executive pay by adding a sense of perspective and forcing directors to explain how their rewards relate to those offered to their workforce. But any attempt to seriously reform executive pay will be fiercely resisted by vested

interests in the City – many of whom rely on the status quo for their own inflated salaries – and the government must be prepared to stand up to them."

The practice, known as co-determination, is well established in Germany where employee reps sit on company supervisory boards. In the UK, retailer John Lewis and transport operator First Group already have employee representation on their boards.



Barber: Backed concept



Former Irish Post staff and contributors at the campaign launch earlier this month at the Federation of Irish Societies office in London

Staff in bid to save Irish Post

FORMER staff at The Irish Post have launched a campaign to save the London-based weekly.

The final edition of the newspaper – whose motto was 'If its Irish in Britain, we've got it covered' – came out on August 19.

It followed an announcement by owners Thomas Crosbie Holdings last month that it would place the Irish Post Media Ltd into liquidation on September 14.

The campaign to save the title is backed by the Federation of Irish Societies, representing hundreds of Irish community groups in the UK.

The closure of the 41-year-old

paper comes as a devastating blow to the expat Irish community in Britain.

But according to former members of staff, there now exists an opportunity for potential investors to re-launch what was the biggest selling national newspaper for the Irish in Britain.

At the time of its closure, The Irish Post has seen a boost in circulation since the start of the year, with sales reaching in excess of 20,000 in mid-March.

Former Irish Post chief executive Niamh Kelly said: "We the management and staff believe passionately

that The Irish Post can be saved.

"The rise in circulation of the newspaper in several months this year underlines its massive potential.

"With the right backing, it is a title which could be profit-making within 12 months of a return to the newsstand. The timing of its closure is difficult to fathom given the increasing numbers of young Irish people moving here.

"I am happy to speak with any prospective investors to outline the newspaper's potential, some of which has not yet been explored, and will do everything possible to

ensure the invaluable service provided by The Irish Post is not lost to its loyal readers within the Irish community."

Former editor Malcolm Rogers said: "The Irish Post was a vital forum for the Irish community in Britain for over 40 years.

"With over 1,000 Irish people emigrating to Britain every week, it is evident that there is still a huge role to be played by the newspaper.

"We, the staff, are resolute in our determination to save the title."

For further information on the campaign, e-mail savetheirishpost@hotmail.co.uk or follow their Facebook page 'Save the Irish Post'.

IMPACT warns of economic fallout if govt's stake in Aer Lingus is sold

IMPACT has warned of the damaging long-term consequences to the Irish economy of any sale of the Irish government's stake in Aer Lingus.

National secretary Matt Staunton said: "The consideration of the sale of the state's share of Aer Lingus needs to be mindful of the lessons of the past, such as the sale of Eircom.

"We have learned – very much to our cost – what it means to abandon core assets that serve the interests of the state, its citizens and its industries in haste."

He was responding to comments made by Transport Minister Leo Varadkar earlier this month that he was actively considering the sale of the government stake in the national carrier.

Mr Staunton also blasted "as not a sound argument" Mr Varadkar's view that the government would need more than a 30% share to block any changes to slots.

He added: "As for arguing that anything less than 30% is not sufficient to protect our strategic interests, the state would have no influence whatsoever with zero per cent."



It was all smiles at the Unite summer school in Belfast. From left: Unite Ireland education officer Ritchie Browne; senior organiser Jim Quinn; guest speaker Derek Wall – who spoke on 'Green/Left alternatives' – Northern Ireland Water shop steward Paul Kelly; Irish regional secretary Jimmy Kelly and Geraldine Kelly, Unite's seconded officer to the education board

UK teaching unions set for mass lobby of Parliament

A COALITION of UK teaching unions is organising a joint mass lobby of the Houses of Parliament next month to highlight their campaign against pension cuts.

The October 26 action, including the ASCL, ATL, NAHT, NASUWT, NUT, UCAC and UCU, is expected to involve up to 25,000 teachers and lecturers.

It is being held during the half-term holiday to avoid interrupting schooling and causing disruption for par-

ents. But the seven unions involved in the lobby have not ruled out further industrial action if the UK government continues to erode pensions.

A source said: "We hope to have at least one representative from every school and college in England and Wales to demonstrate to Parliament the unity and determination of the entire profession in opposing cuts to our pensions."

EMERGENCY AID

CWU donate €50k in Somalia appeal

THE CWU has donated €50,000 to help fund a nutrition programme in Somalia through Irish charity Concern.

A union source said: "The money will be used to provide direct life-saving support for some of the world's most vulnerable displaced people.

"These are people who have lost everything due to famine, drought and the continued conflict in the region.

"Once again our big-hearted members have shown how willing they are to dig deep to help people on the very edge of existence."

The programme, which started last month, is set to run to January next year and will be monitored by Concern. It covers the hard-hit Mogadishu, Bay and Lower Shabelle districts.

The current crisis affects half the Somali population – a total of 3.7 million nationwide, with 3.2 million of those in urgent need of lifesaving assistance.

It's estimated that the €50,000 provided by CWU will pay for a month's food for 1,051 families – approximately 6,300 people.

Each household receives a special ID to get vouchers from the local Concern office.

They then use the vouchers to buy provisions from local shops.

A household food voucher for a month costs €47.54.

Those Somalis in the programme can exchange the vouchers for basics such as rice, white flour, sugar and cooking oil.

According to Concern – which has worked in the region for 25 years – the advantage of providing food vouchers is that they are less bulky than food supplies, are safer to transport than cash and help existing local markets.



Mary Robinson on recent visit to Somalia Pictures: Concern

Mary Robinson to speak at SIPTU Somalia benefit

FORMER Irish President and UN Human Rights Commissioner, Mary Robinson, is to speak at a benefit concert in aid of famine victims in Somalia next month.

The SIPTU-organised Forgotten Famine concert will be held at Liberty Hall Theatre, Dublin, on Thursday, October 13.

Musicians Donal Lunny and Paddy Glackin, and PD and the Undertakers, fronted by Phelim

Drew, poet Paula Meehan, singer Eoin Glackin and traditional group, Le Chéile are on the play-bill. Proceeds will go to Concern in Somalia.

Tickets at €25 are on sale from www.centralticketbureau.com or tel: **0818 205 205**

For further information or concessions contact: SIPTU Communications: **01 8586372** or email: info@siptu.ie

USDAW

Protecting vulnerable workers is at heart of what we do

USDAW president Jeff Broome has claimed unions must do more to protect vulnerable workers from exploitation.

He made the call while speaking in support of a motion by broadcasting union BECTU at the TUC congress in London earlier this month.

Mr Broome told delegates: "As trade unions, protecting vulnerable workers is at the heart of what we do.

"We seek to extend the protection of union membership to those who need it the most.

"We believe in fairness and we believe in giving everyone a voice at work."

He also welcomed the new agency workers regulations, which he claimed would deliver "key new rights" to many vulnerable workers.

However, he added that effective enforcement was needed to ensure the new legislation would deliver equal treatment.

Mr Broome warned: "Without enforcement, representation and organisation, the new rights to equal treatment will fail to deliver for agency workers."

INMO

Emergency depts crisis

THE INMO has claimed overcrowding in the Republic's emergency departments reached record levels last month.

An analysis of its Trolley Watch figures for August found that there was a 35% increase on the August 2010 figure and a staggering 106% on August 2007.

According to the union, a total of 401 people on trolleys were logged on August 31 alone.

INMO general secretary Liam Doran said: "These figures must tell the Minister and the HSE that their current cost containment programmes are having a serious negative impact upon patient care.

"Increasingly we are facing attempts by local hospital managements to deal with this problem by placing additional beds on all in-patient wards, notwithstanding the fact that there are closed beds/wards in all of these hospitals. This is simply wrong."

He added: "Emergency department overcrowding, and people waiting for a bed on a trolley, is the greatest challenge facing the entire health system every day.

"It cannot, and will not, be solved by hiding the problem, with extra beds on wards, thus compromising the care of all patients."

Mandate welcomes lease deal

MANDATE has welcomed a new 15-year lease agreed between the Arcadia Group and Green Properties Ltd.

Mandate divisional organiser Brendan O'Hanlon described the development as good news as it will protect almost 100 retail jobs at the Arcadia Group's outlets in the Blanchardstown Centre.

These include Top Shop, Top Man, Wallis, Miss Selfridge, Dorothy Perkins and Burtons.

He said: "Last April, the Arcadia Group informed its staff of its intention to close its seven outlets in the Blanchardstown Centre.

"Negotiations then took place between

Mandate and Arcadia and the issue regarding options for the 104 staff affected were referred to the Labour Relations Commission.

"In July, Arcadia advised Mandate – during an LRC hearing – that agreement had been reached with Green Properties and that only the Evans store would be closing, with 14 staff affected.

"Following local talks in August, proposals regarding options for the staff affected were unanimously accepted and they included redeployment on current terms and conditions or voluntary redundancy of five weeks pay, including statutory redundancy."

SUMMER SCHOOL

Thinking globally on ethics & rights

A RANGE of topics – from climate change to disability in the workplace – was up for discussion at Congress' third annual Global Solidarity Summer School earlier this month.

The event, which took place on September 2 and 3 at Carlton Hotel in Galway, was officially opened by Congress president Eugene McGlone.

In his address, he stressed the importance of raising consciousness and educating delegates about a range of rights and ethical issues on a global theme.

Irish Aid deputy director general Michael Gaffney spoke about the work of his organisation which he dubbed "the Irish people's aid programme".

He claimed that the work of Irish Aid reflected the core values of the Irish people.

Mr Gaffney also acknowledged the good relationship between his organisation and Congress not only in terms of funding but in working together on ILO pro-

grammes dealing with women's entrepreneurship, disability, forced labour and child labour.

The impact of climate change was a key part of the discussions over the two days.

There was a panel talk on the theme of Climate Change, Green Jobs and Decent Work chaired by National Union of Ireland Galway academic Prof Jim Browne.

Others on the panel included Prof Terrence McDonough, NUIG, SIPTU researcher Loraine Mulligan and Gavin Harte of the Stop Climate Change Chaos Coalition.

They were joined by Congress' Liam Berney and Neil Walker of IBEC.

Annabella Rosenberg of ITUC gave a keynote address on how climate change relates to the issue of decent work through video link.

Pointing out that "we live in very interesting and challenging times", she set out the common ground that existed between those campaigning on social issues

and those pushing the green agenda.

She said: "It is clear that the poorest and the most vulnerable across the world will be the first to suffer as a result of climate change."

Delegates also heard about developments in strife-torn Colombia.

Freelance journalist Mike McCaughey gave a first hand account of the constant danger faced by trade unionists and others in Colombia. He told delegates that assassinations occurred often without press comment or coverage.

Mariela Kohan of Justice for Colombia UK and JFC Ireland's John O'Brien also spoke.

Congress chief economist Paul Sweeney gave a global perspective on the need for progressive taxation to deal with the financial crisis. He also outlined four factors that had led to balance of power shifting away from workers and citizens.



ICTU's David Joyce



Annabella Rosenberg

<http://www.ictu.ie/globalsolidarity/newsevents/keyissues/2011/09/12/report-from-3rd-annual-global-solidarity-summer-sc/>

Pictures: ICTU

PCS CLAIM:

UK lost tax revenue is triple HMRC estimation

THE amount of tax lost to public finances in Britain each year is more than THREE times the UK government's estimate, the Public and Commercial Services union has claimed.

According to the union, figures produced by the HM Revenue and Customs on September 21 massively underestimate the problem.

HMRC bean counters claim that there is a £35 billion tax gap – money lost through tax evasion and avoidance – and not being collected.

The PCS's own research puts the tax gap at around £120 billion.

General secretary Mark Serwotka said: "By any measure, £35 billion is a lot of money and it ought to be chased. But we estimate the real figure is more than three times that, and cuts in HMRC are leaving the department unable to cope.

"Instead of cutting jobs and offices, ministers should invest to rigorously pursue the tens of billions of pounds in tax lost through the use of tax havens and evasion and avoidance tactics by big corporations and the very wealthy."

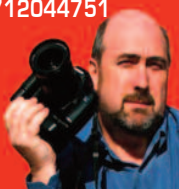
PHOTOLINE

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Pictures: ETUC

50,000 AT RALLY AGAINST EU AUSTERITY



MORE than 50,000 trade unionists from across Europe took part in a massive anti-austerity demo in Poland earlier this month.

The march in Wroclaw, organised by the European Trade Union Confederation with Polish confederations Solidarnosc and OPZZ, was timed to coincide with an informal meeting of European finance ministers in the city on September 17.

In a statement the day before, the ETUC steering committee called for sustainable growth to be teamed with social cohesion.

The ETUC also warned against those "siren voices" who argued

for a return to national solutions and a break-up of the eurozone.

It predicted that a "renationalisation" of European economic policy would have disastrous consequences on workers' conditions and give an impetus to right-wing populism.

The ETUC claimed the current wave of austerity was fostering unemployment and boosting inequality.

"Workers in a number of countries are facing frontal attacks on their acquired legal rights enshrined in European legislation and international instruments.

"Some governments are using

the crisis to dismantle social provisions that are the bedrock of the European social model."

The statement also underlined that "wages are not the economy but their engine".

"Unleashing a 'race to the bottom' on wages and welfare policies will undermine demand dynamics and threaten deflation across the entire monetary union."



HEALTH

Services are at 'breaking point'

SIPTU has warned the Republic's health minister Dr James Reilly of the damaging impact the numbers of health service staff planning to retire next year will have on nursing care.

The warning came in a September 5 letter to the minister from the union's nursing sector committee.

The letter stated: "As nursing provides the largest number of hours to the health service it is logical that nursing will be hardest hit.

"Frontline nurses and midwives are already struggling to cope from the impact of the moratorium which has had a disproportionate impact on nursing care and they simply cannot take another dramatic cut in numbers."

Meanwhile, SIPTU mid-west organiser Jim McGrath claimed nursing staff in his region were already at "breaking point" as a result of the moratorium.

He added: "We are deeply concerned about the impact the retirements will have on nurses who are already overstretched."

DESIGN

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INMO: Free jailed Bahraini medics

THE INMO has renewed its call on the Irish government and the EU to redouble efforts to secure the freedom of 12 medical professionals still held without reason by authorities in Bahrain.

The medics and nurses were detained following serious civil unrest in the Gulf state earlier this year.

President Sheila Dickson said: "The government and the EU must utilise all avenues to have pressure applied upon the government of Bahrain to free these innocent people.

"All health professionals are obliged, by their code of practice, to care for everyone, without fear or favour, and there is never justification for detaining any individual who follows this code."

You can't hold a candle to NHS, that's why we'll keep this lit...



Picture:TUC

TRADE unionists – including TUC chief Brendan Barber and UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis – join members of the public outside the Houses of Parliament in London at a candlelight vigil for the NHS earlier this month.

The September 7 event drew attention to the "damaging consequences" of the Health and Social Care Bill, particularly the removal of the private patient income cap and the threat of privatisation. Mr Prentis warned the vigil marked "the end of

the NHS as we know it".

He said: "Despite the denials, this government is throwing the door wide open to private companies, who will cherry pick profitable parts of our NHS and make a fortune.

"Survey after survey has shown that the public care deeply about who provides health services. They do not want private companies making profits from healthcare – every penny must go towards caring for patients, and boosting our NHS for the future."

Bruton warned over EU work directive

SIPTU's acting health division organiser Paul Bell has warned Richard Bruton, the Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation, his union will reject any attempt to negotiate a derogation from the EU directive on temporary agency work.

The directive – set to come into effect on December 5 – will ensure agency workers are entitled to the same pay and conditions as their directly-employed colleagues.

He said: "In the health

service there are more than 2,000 employees on agency contracts.

"The implementation of this directive would give these workers the right to the same pay and conditions as their permanent colleagues, be it in the private or public sector, from the minute they are employed.

"The Health Service Executive moratorium on recruitment has resulted in a situation where key professional grades such as radi-

ographers and health care assistants have been maintained on agency contracts – in some cases for more than three years."

Mr Bell said that the employment of agency workers was never meant to be managed in such a way. He also pointed out that it was not value for money "as the employer has to pay VAT and commission on top of wages".

Rejecting Minister Bruton's claim the full adherence to the directive would

cost 8,000 jobs, he added: "That is simply wrong and constant attempts to frighten workers in order to discourage them from asserting their right to fair treatment is no longer working.

"The government, as an employer, can no longer disregard good employment practices and procedures by using agency workers to casualise the health service. Patients need a full-time, caring and professional service."

Blueprint for the future ... unions working together

Pictures: UNI Global Union



CWU chief Steve Fitzpatrick has spoken of the pressing need for what he called “co-operative organising” both to boost membership and spread the influence trade unions have in wider society.

He made his comments in a presentation at the UNI Post & Logistics World Conference in Washington DC earlier this month.

Mr Fitzpatrick, above, told the gathering of more than 200 representatives from postal unions across the world that it was necessary to find ways to act “collectively to grow the movement”.

Detailing how Irish unions were facing the future, he referenced the Commission on Trade Unions report, *A Call to Action*, presented at ICTU’s biennial conference in July.

That document underlined the need for unions – in the words of UNI deputy general secretary Philip Bowyer who delivered the report – “to get rid of old prejudices and to take a leap into the future”.

Mr Fitzpatrick described the document at the time as a “road map on co-operation”.

One of the strategies outlined in *A Call To Action* was bringing unions together along sectoral lines.

He told delegates in Washington that UNI Global Union had agreed

to sponsor three of its affiliates in Ireland – CWU, IBOA and Mandate – in developing a “collaborative approach”.

This was especially needed, he added, when unions faced similar issues – declining membership, hostile employers and repressive industrial relations legislation.

Mr Fitzpatrick pointed out that all these factors had been further compounded by the financial crisis.

Giving delegates an insight into

the special difficulties experienced by trade unions in the Irish Republic, he said: “No employer is legally obliged to recognise a trade union, irrespective of the numbers of union members employed.”

Mr Fitzpatrick said this meant that employers could claim they had the “law on their side” even when global agreements, such as those at O2 Telefonica, were in place.

He added that this was now the subject of legal challenge at the Eu-

ropean Courts, ILO and the UN.

Mr Fitzpatrick underlined how the “old demarcation lines” had been blurred by developing technologies and that this fact added to the argument that unions should combine resources and share experiences together.

Contrasting the “old way of doing things” with new forms of co-operation, he flagged up the need to build on “shared objectives” rather than “working in isolation”.



Dear John

Delegates to the UNI Post & Logistics conference signed this giant postcard, addressed to US House of Representatives speaker John Boehner, in support of postal workers in their fight to save the US Postal Service, jobs and bargaining rights

Hayes is elected as UNI P&L pres

BILLY Hayes, general secretary of the CWU, UK, was elected as UNI Post & Logistics world president at the Washington conference.

In his acceptance speech, he said he hoped to work closer with P&L affiliates to put in place a strategy to deal with the liberalisation and privatisation issues facing postal unions across the world. But Mr Hayes also flagged up new opportunities for organising workers in “an expanding and rapidly altering communications industry”.

He added that he wanted to continue the good work carried out by outgoing president Rolf Buttner in fighting to maintain decent jobs for all postal workers.



‘OK, Nick, put your money where your mouth is...’

UK telecoms union CWU has urged Lib Dem leader Nick Clegg to “put his money where his month is” after he promised to give “priority status” to infrastructure projects, including beefed-up broadband networks.

Mr Clegg made the comments in a speech delivered at the London School of Economics earlier this month.

CWU general secretary Billy Hayes, left, called on the deputy PM to ensure funds were made available for universal superfast broadband.

He claimed such a service “would allow all homes and businesses to play a full part in the digital economy, boosting jobs and growth right across the country”.

But Mr Hayes warned this would not happen without strong government backing.

“The government needs to put its money where its mouth is and invest sufficient sums to ensure that superfast broadband networks extend right across the country.”



Picture: INTO

Powerful advocate: Frank Bunting

Fearless fighter for union rights

INTO general secretary Sheila Nunan has led tributes to Frank Bunting, the union's former northern secretary, who died, aged 61, on August 27.

Mr Bunting, a towering figure in the world of education and trade unionism in the North, had been suffering from cancer for some time.

The Belfast-born activist, who retired from his post in May on health grounds, served as the union's northern secretary for 20 years.

Mr Bunting was presented with the INTO President's medal at the union's northern conference earlier this year as a recognition of his years of service.

He was also a former chairperson of the Northern Ireland Committee of Congress and worked with ICTU for 15 years before taking up his post at INTO.

Before that he had worked as a school teacher in west Belfast.

Ms Nunan described Mr Bunting as a powerful advocate for teachers over the years.

She said: "He led many significant campaigns for educational investment and improvement. His commitment to teachers, education and the trade union movement is widely recognised and admired."

Ms Nunan said Mr Bunting had also steered INTO through difficult times.

"Under his leadership the union developed successfully as one of the authoritative voices in the world of education.

"He was a progressive leader, anxious to solve problems and seek improvements. He also fearlessly challenged injustices and wrongs whenever and wherever he saw them."

Congress assistant general secretary Peter Bunting – a cousin of Frank's – described him as "hugely non-sectarian" and credited him with having led the way in forging stronger links between INTO, which mainly represents Catholic maintained schools, and the UTU which works within controlled schools.

NUJ so proud of centenarian Jimmy

NUJ Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley has paid tribute to veteran Belfast-based journalist Jimmy Kelly who died last month, shortly after celebrating his 100th birthday.

Describing him as the "uncrowned king of Irish journalism", Mr Dooley said Jimmy had a long and illustrious career working on a number of titles,

including Irish News, Irish Press and Irish Independent.

He added: "Jimmy Kelly was a towering figure on the Irish media landscape and an authoritative commentator on Northern Ireland.

"He was unfailingly helpful to visiting journalists, some of whom could be taken aback by his intimate knowl-

edge. Once a journalist asking Jimmy if he had ever covered Stormont.

Jimmy replied with a twinkle in his eye, "Yes, I covered the opening!"

"He was also totally committed to the NUJ and to the principles of the union.

"He was proud of the NUJ and we were very proud of him."



Sightsavers

Every wipe of his eyes takes Talla closer to blindness



©Jenny Matthews/Sightsavers



©Jenny Matthews/Sightsavers

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



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