

Liberty

Vol. 19 No 1

September 2022

ISSN 0791-458X

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Photo from left to right: Amy Dowd, Early Years Manager, Roscommon, Deborah Reynolds, Early Years Educator, Galway, Eilish Balfe, Early Years Manager, Meath and Timms Crotty-Quinlan, Early Years Educator, Cork. following their attendance at the launch of the new Core Funding model for the sector in the Department of Health in Lower Baggot Street, Dublin, on Thursday, 15th September. The funding model was launched on the same day that the terms of the pay deal in the sector came into force, resulting in pay raises for an estimated 70% of Early Years care and education workers. (see page 3)

Photo Bryan Meade

by Scott Millar

SIPTU members in childhood care and education have secured an historic first pay deal for their sector following negotiations with representatives of employers and the Government.

On Thursday 15th September, the new Employment Regulation Order (ERO) for the sector came into force, setting legally-binding minimum rates of pay that will see at least 70% of workers get a pay rise. This advance for the estimated 27,000, mainly women, workers in childcare and education resulted from the Big Start campaign, a long-term organising drive by SIPTU activists in the sector.

The victory could establish a template for how other low pay workers in the economy can fight for better pay and conditions.

Early Years teacher and SIPTU activist, Deborah Reynolds, said: "This is an historic time for our profession. After years of campaigning, we finally have our first pay deal. Thousands of Early Years professionals will see a pay increase that will end poverty wages and set us on a path to professional pay and recognition."

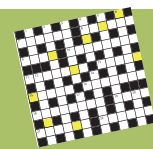
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WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE

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Produced, designed, edited and printed by trade union labour.

Printed by The Irish Times, City West, Dublin.

Liberty is dedicated to providing a platform for progressive news and views.

If you have any ideas for articles or comments please contact:
communications@siptu.ie

Liberty is published by the Services, Industrial, Professional & Technical Union,
Liberty Hall, Dublin 1

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SIPTU shows support for RMT strikers



Photo: (From left) Ethel Buckley, SIPTU deputy general secretary, Joe Cunningham, Mick Lynch and Mary O' Sullivan, SIPTU honorary president in the Imperial Hotel, Cork City, on 12th August.

A solidarity donation was made by SIPTU members to rail workers currently conducting a campaign of strike action in the UK, during his recent visit to Ireland by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) General Secretary, Mick Lynch, on 12th August.

The RMT has been leading a wave of strike action by workers in the UK. This has resulted in several days of nationwide strikes on the rail network since late June. The industrial unrest has also spread to several other sectors of the UK economy as trade union members seek to prevent cuts to their earning power in the face of the worsening cost of living crisis.

Lynch, an Irish citizen who was

born in London to Irish parents, became a social media sensation during the first week of strikes by his members as he batted away loaded questions from journalists and tackled anti-worker attacks by politicians.

A proud fan of Cork City FC who says he takes his inspiration as a trade union leader from James Connolly, Lynch has described his union's strikes as a "defensive action" in an attempt "to stop compulsory redundancies, defend members' terms and conditions and get a pay rise".

Lynch has welcomed the support his union has received in recent weeks and has called for other unions to take industrial action. "If we don't, people will say, 'Well, the unions are a waste of time. There's no point in having

them,'" Lynch said. "Sometimes it's the struggle itself that proves the worth of the unions, because you would undoubtedly be in a worse position without the struggle, without the campaign. We've got to fight now, otherwise we will fade into irrelevance."

On his visit to Cork in August, SIPTU general secretary, Joe Cunningham, gave a donation on behalf of union members to Lynch. Presenting a cheque for €20,000 at the Imperial Hotel, Cunningham congratulated Lynch for the impressive manner with which he has articulated the demands of his members during their ongoing dispute and the views and frustration of working people in Britain over the soaring cost of living.

Continued from page 1 — We Did It

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The victory could establish a

template for how other low pay workers in the economy can fight for better pay and conditions.

Early Years teacher and SIPTU activist, Deborah Reynolds, said: "This is an historic time for our profession. After years of campaigning, we finally have our first pay deal. Thousands of Early Years professionals will see a pay increase that will end poverty

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Members of the SIPTU negotiating committee who achieved a first Employment Regulation Order for Early Years care and education workers Amy Dowd, Deborah Reynolds, Eilish Balfe and Timms Crotty-Quinlan with (left) SIPTU Organiser Diane Jackson, SIPTU Head of Organising, Darragh O'Connor and Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, following their attendance at the launch of the new Core Funding model for the sector in the Department of Health in Lower Baggot Street, Dublin, on 15th September. The funding model was launched by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman, on the same day that the terms of the pay deal in the sector came into force, resulting in pay raises for an estimated 70% of Early Years care and education workers. (see the agreed rates on the right). Photo Bryan Meade.

New ERO Minimum Rates of Pay in the Childhood Care and Education Sector

The average rate of pay for an Early Years educator with a QQI Level 5 qualification is €11.57 per hour. This will rise to a minimum of €13 per hour. The average rate of pay for an Early Years room leader with a QQI Level 8 is €13.21 per hour. This will rise to a minimum of €15.50 per hour.

O'Connor added: "This is our first pay deal, not our last. The campaign for recognition, respect and professional pay and conditions will continue."

Legally binding rates of pay came into effect on Thursday, 15th September. All time worked, contact and non-contact must be paid. The rates set out below are minimums. Higher rates can be agreed between individual employers and workers.

- Early Years Educator: €13.00**
- Lead Educator: €14.00**
- Graduate Lead Educator: €15.50**
- Deputy Manager: €15.70**
- Manager: €16.50**
- Graduate Manager: €17.25**



SIPTU says government should raise minimum wage to €12 per hour



Teresa Hannick

The Government should raise the minimum wage to at least €12 per hour, according to SIPTU Services Division Organiser, Teresa Hannick. Her comments followed the decision by the Government to raise the minimum wage to €11.30 per hour.

"The Low Pay Commission's recommendation of an 80-cent increase to €11.30 per hour fails to take into account the impact of inflation on the living standards of low-paid workers. It will not make

up for the real cuts in the minimum wage that workers have suffered last year and this year," Teresa Hannick said.

"Further, it will undermine the ability to implement the Living Wage. At the rate of the Commission's recommendation, it could take up to 10 years before the minimum wage is increased to the level of the Living Wage. This is in sharp contrast to the commitment in the Programme for Government to implement the living wage by 2025.

"We have a low-pay crisis. There

are 400,000 employees officially categorised as low-paid. One in every five workers effectively earn below the Living Wage. This is well above the EU average. We need to transition from a low pay business model to a high road one where workers, owners and businesses all benefit."

She added: "Increasing the minimum wage to at least €12 per hour will benefit hundreds of thousands of workers and provide greater protection from rising living costs. It will also be of assistance to do-

mestic businesses that rely on workers' purchasing power. One of the best ways to avoid a recession is to drive up wage floors since those on low pay spend almost all the additional income they receive.

"The Government is not bound by the Low Pay Commission report. The trade union representatives on the Commission dissented from the recommendation. The Government should give serious consideration to increasing the minimum wage to at least €12 per hour next year."

Workers Rights Centre wins €1,695,000 for members in first half of 2022

ADVOCATES in the SIPTU Workers Rights Centre (WRC) won €1,695,000 in successful settlements and awards on members' behalf during the first six months of 2022.

This figure included €1,435,600 which was secured in cases that were settled without the need for third party referral.

SIPTU Head of Legal Affairs, Rachael Ryan, said: "The settlement figure represents the total amount that members agreed to settle their cases for, without being heard by a third party. Settlement details are ordinarily confidential between the member, their Advocate and their employer. It is worth noting that a significant number of cases

are settled by our WRC and often significant monetary sums are achieved on behalf of members."

Over the same period, SIPTU Division referred 294 members' cases to the WRC. The Health Division made the largest number of referrals, handling 104 cases during that time.

Ryan added: "January, February and March saw significant decisions being issued by the Workplace Relations Commission and the Labour Court in favour of SIPTU members. Two cases were taken successfully on behalf of members in the construction industry for breaches of the Construction Sectoral Employment Order (SEO), with one worker awarded €3,500 and the other €6,000.



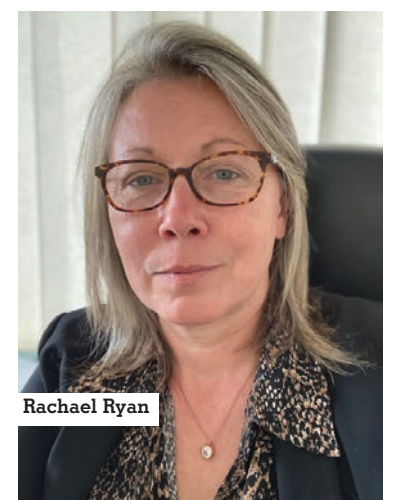
"Following a successful outcome for a lecturer in the private education sector, a number of other workers who read the press release contacted the Advocate who took the case and said they wanted to

join the union."

The SIPTU WRC takes cases for individuals only. However, there are times when Divisions will refer employment rights cases to the Workplace Relations Commission affecting groups of individuals within the one workplace.

A number of these commenced in 2022, including 125 cases being taken for members in one company in the Manufacturing Division over breaches of the Organisation of Working Time Act.

In the TEAC Division, in one workplace, seven members cases are being taken for breaches of the Payment of Wages Act; in a second, eight are being taken for breaches of the Redundancy Payment Act and Minimum Notice Act; and in a third, 24 cases are being taken for



Rachael Ryan

a breach of the Construction SEO.

Markievicz Partridge summer school

The SIPTU Sligo Leitrim Roscommon District Council (SLR) held its annual Markievicz Partridge summer school in Roscommon on 9th-11th September.

A packed few days of union events included the presentation of 50 year and 25 year union badges to local members by SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham, an oration by SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley, at the grave of William Partridge in Ballaghaderreen and a tour of Strokestown House and the National Famine Museum.

A seminar was held on the housing crisis in the District

Council area, which also discussed the launch of a local Raise the Roof campaign. At the housing seminar, SIPTU Researcher, Michael Taft, said that average monthly rents in the North West region have increased significantly over the last five years. They rose by nearly 40% in county Leitrim while in county Sligo, rents rose by a third.

House prices have also skyrocketed in the region, with prices in Sligo and Leitrim rising by over half since 2017. During the same period, homelessness has increased by 70% in the North West.



SIPTU General Secretary Joe Cunningham presents a 50 year, long service award to Seamus Kilcrann at the 4th Annual Markievicz / Partridge Summer School, held in Co. Roscommon.



Sandra Flanagan, SLR District Council Coordinator, presents the SIPTU Award to Joan Egan, for her outstanding service to our union.



SIPTU Honorary President Mary O'Sullivan at the Famine Museum, Strokestown, Co Roscommon with NEC member Annette Donlon and SLR District Council member Mary Dolan McLoughlin.



Daire Martin, President of the Students Union, Atlantic Technological University Sligo, gives the 'Lived Experience' of students in Sligo seeking accommodation for their return to university.

Irish Equity and MUI back grant awards pilot

IRISH Equity and the Musicians' Union of Ireland (MUI) have welcomed the awarding of 2,000 grants for artists and workers in the creative arts through the new Basic Income for the Arts pilot, announced on Thursday, 8th September.

Irish Equity and MUI Organiser, Michelle Quinn, said: "Our members welcome the announcement by the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and the Media, Catherine Martin, that 2,000 successful candidates have been chosen for the

scheme. We sincerely hope that it makes a real difference to the quality of life of the successful recipients.

"However, we are also mindful that 6,200 people – eligible for inclusion in the random draw for these grants – were unsuccessful and must be disappointed. We will monitor the development of the scheme and flag any issues arising with the department."

She added: "We are aware that the pilot scheme is a significant change to the way Ireland recognises and supports artists. It is our hope it will be successful and ultimately will be



2,000 creative arts workers, chosen by random draw, were awarded grants in new Basic Income for the Arts pilot

developed in a manner that ensures all artists receive financial support."

President of Irish Equity, Gerry O'Brien, said: "Ireland could lead the way on a new model to support all people active in the sector. We would fully support such an initiative and

we would urge the Minister to give favourable consideration to it.

"We also need to ensure that artists living with a disability do not lose any existing benefits as a result of their inclusion in the scheme or any future initiatives."

New flat rate pay deal agreed at M&S

MARKS & Spencer has agreed a new two-year pay deal, including a path from temporary to permanent contracts, for its 1,800-strong workforce in the Republic of Ireland.

The deal, which involves SIPTU and Mandate members, will see flat rate increases in hourly rates of pay. From 1st February 2022, a 60 cents increase in hourly pay will apply to all sales advisors and team managers. From 1st August there is a 30 cents or 2% minimum increase, whichever is the

higher.

The agreement also includes a pathway to permanent contracts for temporary staff. The company will offer new employees four-month, fixed-term contracts to work the autumn/Christmas season.

After this, employees may be made permanent or they can get a further 12-month extension of their fixed-term contract.

If there is another 12-month extension, that would be the maximum fixed-term work offered.

Deal brokered to reconfirm T&Cs of phlebotomists

TERMS and conditions set out in HSE National Employees Relations memo 5/2022 restates existing agreements for directly employed phlebotomists – apart from overtime rates which have since been clarified.

In those circumstances where directly employed phlebotomists had agreed to work 5 over 7 in the past, this is now only on

a personal to holder basis.

Any new directly employed phlebotomist must adhere to a 5 over 5 (Monday to Friday) schedule.

However, this does not apply to nursing staff who are phlebotomists as they are covered by separate nursing terms and conditions.

Pay agreement and pension boost at Smartply/Medite

SIPTU members at Smartply/Medite in Waterford have agreed a 10% three-year pay deal that also includes a boost in their pension contributions

The 80 SIPTU members at the plant voted for the 10% pay increase which is front-loaded for the period 2022 to 2024.

The deal also includes a 1% increase in pension contributions from 1st January 2022. Earlier in 2022, a 9% pay rise over three years was agreed by members at the Smartply/Medite plant in Clonmel, county Tipperary.

Smartply/Medite, which produce engineered wood panels, form part of the Coillte Group but are distinct entities that conduct collective bargaining separately.

NAS job evaluation process begins

AN INDEPENDENT job evaluation process has begun in the National Ambulance Service following agreement at the Workplace Relations Commission between unions and the HSE.

Included in the evaluation process are the roles of ORM, Fleet Logistics estate manager, ECAT and QRSM. It has been agreed that whatever the outcome of the evaluation process, allowances and annual leave entitlements will remain following its completion.

Government must move now to honour terms of Security ERO

By Scott Millar

SIPTU activists have been joined by TDs and Senators in calling on the Government to honour the terms of an Employment Regulation Order (ERO) for the security industry.

The implementation of the Security ERO was halted in August by a High Court injunction taken by three companies. These firms only employ approximately 250 workers – out of a total of more than 16,000 licenced security guards who work in the sector.

The move prevented the first pay rise in three years for these frontline workers.

At a meeting with TDs and Senators in Leinster House on Tuesday, 13th September, SIPTU Sector Organiser, Ed Kenny, said: "There is palpable fear and anger among security sector workers about the impact of this legal move to prevent a well-earned pay rise. These



workers have not received any pay increase since June 2019. This in a highly-regulated industry where all workers are required to be trained and licenced by legislation."

He described it as "a slap in the face" for workers who had been "on the frontline" during the pandemic.

Pointing out that the ERO had been agreed between employers

and worker representatives before being ratified by the Labour Court, Kenny added: "It was a long and at times challenging process, in which the three employers who secured the injunction participated. This court injunction is wrong and grossly unfair."

Among those at the meeting were Sinn Féin Senator Paul Gavan; Labour TDs Duncan Smith, Brendan Howlin and Alan Kelly; People Before Profit TD, Paul Murphy; and Independent TD Cathal Berry. The event was organised by Ged Nash TD and Senator Marie Sherlock of the Labour Party.

Nash said that that the court challenge to the ERO was a case of "back to the future" by employers who had repeatedly attempted, and failed, to legally bring down the wage setting mechanism. Senator Paul Gavan said Sinn Féin would join with Labour in calling for immediate action on the ERO, and would raise the issue in the Dáil at the first opportunity.

In an impassioned contribution, SIPTU NEC member and security worker, Christy Waters, said that during his 30 years in the industry, union members had worked with governments to ensure its professionalisation and regulation only now to have a rightful claim for a pay rise delayed.

He also asked why Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail, Damien English, had announced the ERO would be coming into force three weeks before its date of implementation –

the effect of which was to inadvertently give time to those mounting the legal challenge.

Closing the meeting, Ed Kenny called on the Minister to overturn the injunction. "If the Government does not take immediate action to implement the terms of the Security Industry ERO, we will be considering all options including balloting SIPTU members on industrial action in pursuit of pay increases and other improvements to their terms and conditions."

Unions slam treatment of LES and Jobs Clubs workers

UNIONS representing staff in Local Employment Staff Services (LES) and Jobs Clubs in Dublin have condemned the sacking of workers providing vital community services because of a controversial new tendering process.

The redundancies came after the Department for Social Protection (DSP) enacted the changes cutting funding for services in the capital.

All 39 LES workers in the South Dublin County Partnership were sacked, despite the organisation

successfully securing a new contract to deliver the service.

SIPTU Public Administration and Community Division Organiser, Adrian Kane, told Liberty: "When we met with DSP officials they attempted to wash their hands of responsibility for the mess that they have created. Their decision to go ahead with a flawed tendering process has led to job losses, layoffs and huge uncertainty across the sector.

"Although this has all come about as a result of their actions, they are

refusing to pay an enhanced redundancy package to those staff who have been forced out of their jobs.

"They have even refused to intervene in cases, such as the South Dublin County Partnership, where workers' rights have been blatantly violated."

He added: "Ultimate responsibility for this debacle rests with the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, and she needs to intervene to ensure an enhanced redundancy is paid to those workers."

Meath council votes to back unions' campaign

MEATH County Council has unanimously endorsed a motion backing the Valuing Care, Valuing Community campaign seeking pay justice for Section 39 and community sector workers.

The motion, passed at council meeting in Navan on Monday, 5th September, was proposed by Sinn Féin councillor, Edward Fennessy.

Independent councillor and former SIPTU Branch Secretary, Brian Fitzgerald, supporting the motion, outlined for the meeting the vital services provided by the workers locally.

SIPTU Meath District Council Secretary, John Regan, said: "In July, strike action was taken in selected



care and community organisations in several counties, including Meath.

"Unfortunately, the Government, which controls the funding of these organisations and so has ultimate control over whether the wages of workers can be increased, has failed to positively respond to their demand for pay justice. Strike action in support of their campaign will now take place in more counties from 21st to 23rd September."

SIPTU Meath District Council President, Anton McCabe, said: "The Government is failing to grasp the link between its chronic underfunding of the wages of workers in these organisations and the failure to meet recruitment targets in, for example, disability services."

Callinan to speak at Irelands Future event in 3Arena

Congress President Kevin Callinan will participate in a major event organised by Ireland's Future in the 3Arena, Dublin on Saturday 1st October.

The theme of the event entitled 'Together We Can' is the need to prepare for a successful referendum on Irish unity and for the new Ireland that can emerge from such an historic decision.

Among those participating are leading political figures including Leo Varadkar TD, Mary Lou

McDonald TD, Jim O'Callaghan TD, Ivana Bacik TD and Colum Eastwood MP.

ICTU president, Kevin Callinan, IBEC director, Danny McCoy and National Women's Council director, Orla O'Connor are taking part in a panel discussion on the day with leading actors and musicians also appearing at the event.

SIPTU members who to attend can contact the Communications Department at 01 858 6380 or info@siptu.ie. There will be no charge for tickets acquired through the union.

Protecting incomes and the economy: three ways to a progressive, anti-inflation Budget



By
Michael Taft

THERE will be a number of subsidies, tax breaks as well as permanent and one-off emergency measures in Budget 23.

How can we assess the impact of the budget and its ability to protect not only household incomes but the productive economy as well?

There are three foundations which we should look to that would address rising energy costs, raise income floors and reduce living costs:

1. Energy price controls

Introducing price controls is not a solution but it can, at the very least, limit the damage of any upward pressure in energy prices. There are a number of ways this could be done – through introducing maximum price orders (which the Government has the power to implement) to imposing a new tariff regime.

For instance, for the six-month period over winter, the Government – through the Energy Regulator – could roll back prices to households and businesses to this time last year. This would cost, over the winter months, approximately €2.5 billion.

This may seem like a high price, but don't forget the Government is likely to end up paying significant amounts on subsidies that are chasing rising prices.

This cost could be reduced by targeting price reduction at low to average income households. High income households have a greater capacity to absorb high prices and reduce consumption. In the business sector, wealthy industries such as data centres could be exempt from the benefit.



Reduce fares



Roll back energy costs



Raising the income floors

Energy price controls, raising income floors, and reducing public service costs would provide substantial help to households and businesses

The State through subsidising price reductions would be taking on the risk; that is, socialising the risk. The Government, with its massive surplus, is in a stronger position to absorb this risk than households and businesses.

2. Raise the income floors

The State should intervene in both the labour market (through the minimum wage) and social protection payments to raise income floors.

For the minimum wage, the Low Pay Commission's recommendation of an 80 cent increase is completely inadequate. It will not make up for the real cuts in the

minimum wage that occurred last year or this year; that is, the wage increases did not match inflation. The minimum wage should rise to at least €12 per hour (See Page 3).

For social protection payments, just to keep up with inflation this year and next will require a €20 increase in basic social protection payments. This should be combined with similar increases – in particular, the Working Family Parent Allowance (formerly, the Family Income Supplement). This approach will benefit those on fixed incomes and those in work.

This is economically efficient. The biggest recessionary threat is the fall in consumer spending as

people start saving because of nervousness and uncertainty over the future. By focusing significant increases on the income floor – the minimum wage and social protection – we will see most if not all this extra money spent in domestic businesses. Raising income floors is anti-inflationary and anti-recessionary.

3. Cut public service costs

We can ease inflationary pressures by reducing the cost of services provided through the public economy. For instance, more substantial reductions in public transport fares across bus, train and light rail services would provide a boost to users' living standards.

Reducing childcare costs through SIPTU's proposals – that the Government take over the payment of childcare workers' wages – could see considerable reductions in childcare fees equating to thousands of Euro per year.

Raising the income thresholds for access to free GP visits and prescription medicine (the medical card) is another sensible option. These and other measures taken across public service provision – from transport, recreation, health, education and local services – could do much to reduce overall inflation in the economy and improve living standards.

These three principles – energy price controls, raising income floors, and reducing public service costs – if fully integrated into the budget, would provide substantial help to households and businesses.

They are not the only measures that should be taken. But if the Government ignores these or only partially implements them, it would mean a significant opportunity lost. A loss for which all of us will pay.

➔ 952,185
IN POVERTY
➔ 10,568
HOMELESS
➔ 30%
IN FUEL POVERTY

THESE NUMBERS
WILL RISE
IF WE DON'T!

COST OF LIVING COALITION
NATIONAL PRE-BUDGET PROTEST
2.30PM SAT SEPT 24TH
PARNELL SQ DUBLIN.

Transport policing and Just Transition for debate at TEAC BDC

THE NEED for a dedicated transport police unit and a voice for workers in the Just Transition process are among a number of topics to be debated at the TEAC Divisional Biennial Delegate Conference to be held at the Green Isle Hotel in Dublin on 23rd and 24th September.

The conference will include the launch of a campaign to push for the setting up of a dedicated transport policing unit, much needed to combat anti-social behaviour on the public transport system. SIPTU has made a number of submissions to the Government on issue in recent years.

SIPTU TEAC Division Organiser, Karan O'Loughlin, said: "While anti-social behaviour on our public transport system and infrastructure is not a new problem, it does appear to have escalated recently. SIPTU representatives have continually highlighted this matter for more than 20 years. Unfortunately,



Keynote speaker:
RMT's Eddie Dempsey

PICTURE: RMT

no adequate or lasting solutions have been put in place at government level."

She continued: "We have for many years held the view that a standardised response is needed across all forms of public transport. This can only occur with the direct involvement of both the Department of Justice and Department of Transport.

"The view of SIPTU members is

that a dedicated transport police service needs to be established to provide protection and give confidence to passengers using the public transport system and those working to provide it," O'Loughlin added.

The new campaign will seek to unite public and political support to find a solution that can make a real impact on the problem.

The Energy Sector Committee has submitted a motion to the conference on the challenges facing workers associated with the greening of the energy sector and urging support for them so that they have "a voice in the transition process so that there can be a just transition". The motion calls on SIPTU to take a proactive approach "on future platforms, including conferences and seminars, to deliver the worker perspective on the impact of this transition on our members".

For the Construction Sector, the focus is on a campaign to have the

minimum 39-hour working week applied to all construction workers "regardless of who they work for", whether main contractors, sub-contractors or agencies.

A motion to conference states that ensuring uniformity in a 39-hour week in the industry is necessary to provide construction workers with a living standard "equal to most workers across the many other industries in the economy".

The report to conference will cover 2020 and 2021 during which the Covid-19 pandemic was a defining feature. Most TEAC Division members in the Energy and Transport Sectors worked throughout this period as their work was considered essential.

Covid-19's impact on Construction and Aviation was in stark contrast, with lay-offs and redundancies a feature across both sectors.

In Construction, there were some initial lay-offs but many members continued working on essential projects such as the Na-

tional Children's Hospital and public housing.

This presented its own challenges for the union to ensure its members worked safely, to minimise compulsory job losses, and to ensure that any ground lost on terms and conditions could be clawed back as soon as possible after the pandemic.

The impact on the Aviation Sector was most severe but even here union members were recovering lost ground by the second half of 2021.

RMT Senior Assistant General Secretary, Eddie Dempsey, will be a keynote speaker at the conference. Dempsey has been a key voice for workers in Britain during the ongoing rail strikes and is a prominent figure in the 'Enough is Enough' movement. Dempsey is also a leading member of the Connolly Association which has brought together Irish emigrants and others in the UK since the 1960s.

'Don't use non-compliant contractors' call on council

SIPTU members have joined colleagues in the Trade Union Federation to call on Kilkenny County Council to stop using non-compliant contractors on publicly-funded construction projects.

The demand was made at a protest by council workers and supporters in Kilkenny on 26th July. More than 150 local authority workers marched from Kilkenny Castle to the County Hall.

Other issues highlighted included the privatisation of community services, the need for equal treatment for water caretakers, and a call for independent investigations into allegations of victimisation and bullying made by trade union activists.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, John Regan, said: "Local authorities have a duty to ensure compliance with Sectoral Employment Agreements. We're proud to stand with our Trade Union Federation allies employed in the public and private sectors to highlight the need for Kilkenny County Council to take action wherever and whenever non-compliance is found."



SIPTU and TUF members at a Kilkenny protest on 26th July

€3.5k payout for SEO breach underpayment

AN ADJUDICATION award of €3500 was secured by SIPTU for a member, Lazaros Saridis, in compensation for breaches of the terms of the Sectoral Employment Order (SEO) for the construction industry.

SIPTU Workers' Rights Centre Advocate, Shonagh Byrne, told Liberty: "Lazaros was employed as a groundsperson for 10 months in 2019. He has more than 20 years' experience in the construction industry. His employer, Ch Groundworks Contracts Ltd, failed to pay the worker the correct statutory rate of pay of €17.04 per hour set down by the 2017 Construction SEO.

"SIPTU brought the case to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC), where the Adjudicator found that Lazaros should have been paid the correct rate established by the Construction SEO. He was awarded €3500 compensation for the breaches of his legal entitlements."

Lazaros, who is a Greek national, was provided with a translator by the WRC for the hearing. This reflects the support that workers whose first language is not English can receive from their union when they seek to vindicate their rights.

8.5% pay rise over 3 years secured for ESB workers

WORKERS in the ESB have backed a pay deal worth a cumulative 8.5% over 36 months, following a recommendation issued by the semi-state's internal Joint Industrial Council.

The trade unions within the ESB

group of unions, representing around 8,000 workers, have accepted terms that were seen by union officials as the "best available". The four unions are SIPTU, Connect, Unite and the ESU. The company is not seeking any work practice changes.

Three annual pay rises will be ap-

plied, starting from January 2022. These are:

- 3.25% - 2022
- 3% - 2023
- 2% - 2024

The new agreement follows the expiry of the previous 39-month agreement at the end of 2021. That pay

rise was worth up to 7.5%, but this was during a long period of historically low inflation.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Davy Lane, told Liberty: "The Joint Industrial Council said it was making its latest recommendation in the context of the three-yearly 'PCI pay review'.

The deal allows for differential outcomes depending on pay scales and whether individuals are covered by the PCI performance-related terms or have remained outside this reward model.

"It is also weighted in favour of the lower paid, as was the previous agreement," he added.



Combating low pay and organising workers key focus of Services BDC

Supporting moves to end the scourge of low pay in the economy and organising workers so they can more successfully fight this problem will be two of the key points of discussion at the Services Division Biennial Delegate Conference on 5th and 6th October in Kilkenny.

SIPTU Services Division Organiser, Teresa Hannick, said: "We have a low-pay crisis. There are 400,000 employees officially categorised as low-paid. One in every five workers effectively earn below the Living Wage. This is well above the EU average.

Supporting this position are motions to conference submitted by the Wholesale Retail Distribution Sector and Arts Culture Print Media and Sports Sector calling for the Government to fulfil its commitment to make the level of the minimum wage that of the living wage.

The motion from the Wholesale Retail Distribution Sector states that it "is primarily a low paid sector where the minimum wage is the norm, and where workers rely



heavily on bonuses linked to targets. Unfortunately, these targets are often difficult to achieve. Also as the bonuses are not classified as actual part of pay by external financial institutions, this has the consequences that these members cannot gain access to loans and mortgages due to being low paid."

She added: "Pensions within the workplace are also affected as contributions are based on the low hourly rate thus not providing financial security in retirement."

A motion in support of a cam-

paigned to secure an Employment Regulation Order for workers in the hospitality sector outlines the difficulties that many of them face in the workplace, with more than 62% paid less than €12 per hour and 16% paid less than €10 per hour. "Furthermore, workers have complained of not getting proper breaks and being on call despite being rostered off work. Over 60% of workers do not receive a Sunday premium and 33% of workers are not getting additional holidays when they work on a public holi-

day".

The continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on workers will be discussed, with a motion from the Contract Services Division on Long Covid Paid Leave.

It states, "Many Contract Services workers in catering, cleaning and security, are frontline workers who carried out essential work during the Pandemic. These vulnerable low paid workers were on the frontline during the most difficult time of the pandemic, when there were no vaccines, very little

understanding of Covid and very questionable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Many of these vulnerable workers became very sick with Covid."

It notes, that "Contract Services work is still being undervalued by employers, especially when it comes to the debilitating effects of Long Covid", adding "workers could find themselves seriously ill and/or with a substantial loss of income for being out of work for a protracted amount of time without any sick pay protection, thus causing an unnecessary financial and emotional burden".

It calls for support for "a campaign by SIPTU Contract Services Sector members to compel employers to agree a Long Covid paid leave whereby such vulnerable workers will have some assurance to alleviate financial worries at a very difficult time".

New Agreement for Film Workers

THE ICTU Film Construction Group of Unions (FCGU) has welcomed the introduction in July of a new national collective bargaining agreement for the Irish film and television industry.

Members of SIPTU, BATU, OPATSI, and the Irish National Painters' and Decorators' Trade Union (INPDTG) voted to accept the agreement which will remain in place until 31st December, 2025.



The agreement will act as an important framework for the industry in setting consistent standards and enhancing work practices.

SIPTU TEAC Division Organiser, Karan O'Loughlin said: "This agreement has been years in the making and creates a consistency with employment standards for the industry across the country.

"The Trade Union Group welcomes it and appreciates the work undertaken by our activists and

officials in bringing this agreement to fruition. The agreement covers several important measures, including the promotion of positive and safe work practices, the extension of coverage for pension, sick leave and other benefits to industry construction workers under the Construction Workers Pension Scheme.

"It also covers the setting up of a new joint monitoring structure that will help ensure the agree-

ment is appropriately implemented." Screen Producers Ireland CEO, Susan Kirby, said: "This is a positive moment for the Irish AV Sector, as it demonstrates what can be achieved when member organisations and trade unions work together to reach an agreement that helps drive the industry forward.

"It is important to continuously find effective and appropriate ways to enhance workplace standards for those working across

Reform film industry tax breaks call

IRISH Equity has called for the reform of tax breaks in the film industry to ensure a fair return for taxpayers and greater protection for those employed in the sector.

Irish Equity President, Gerry O'Brien, said: "The Government must ensure that the Section 481 film tax credit delivers value to the taxpayer, drives innovation in the audio-visual sector, and delivers on its promise of quality work for all film workers, includ-

ing actors.

"The Section 481 tax credit is one of the largest taxpayer investments in our film industry, so it is vital that the public sees a real return on that.

"This includes changes to the eligibility criteria to widen access and drive innovation as well as ensuring that producers are required to observe all relevant legislation including national and international copyright legislation."

He added: "It also necessitates

re-examining the current corporate structures to ensure that public investment secures a fair return, if and when a project becomes successful. This must include an ability to track the investment across multiple territories and platforms."

Among other items contained in the Irish Equity proposals for Budget 2023 is a call for the introduction of a scheme similar to the 481 film tax credit for the live theatre sector.



Members of the SIPTU Services Division Committee met in Liberty Hall, Dublin, on 22nd August, to discuss their upcoming conference and nominate NEC candidates.

Wage rises will be centre of debate for manufacturing conference

THE successful campaign for wage rises by SIPTU members, and the need for continuing action on this front in the face of the worsening cost-of-living crisis, is likely to be the main concern of delegates at the Manufacturing Division Biennial Delegate Conference.

Up to 200 delegates, observers, and union officials are expected to gather in the Tower Hotel in Waterford on Thursday, 13th and Friday, 14th October.

SIPTU Manufacturing Division Organiser, Greg Ennis, told Liberty: "The theme of the conference, 'Organising to Win' clearly resonates with the work that many of our members are engaged in at workplaces on a daily basis. That is precisely what members and activists have been doing, Organising to Win."

He continued: "There can be no doubt that the three sectors which make up the SIPTU Manufacturing Division, have led the way in the fight against Covid-19, through our members' ability to adapt and re-configure workplaces.

"This approach is evident through the formation of vaccines in pharma, the production of ventilators in medical devices, engineering and electronic solutions to keep critical production lines moving or the essential food and drink produce needed to sustain life during these unprecedented pandemic times."



SIPTU members on Bausch & Lomb picket Line in Waterford in June.

A motion from the Manufacturing Divisional Committee, which will be debated at the conference, "notes with concern, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis with particular reference to the rising costs of food, energy and housing". It calls on SIPTU to "fully support members in the private sector, who wish to pursue industrial action and strike action in pursuance of obtaining improvements in their pay and terms and conditions of employment so as to combat such cost-of-living pressures".

In addition, the union is asked to "lobby government through the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to

adopt measures to ease the burden on working people and their families".

The continued blight of the spread of precarious work practices is another issue that will be the subject of discussions. A motion from the Agriculture, Ingredients, Food and Drink Sector Committee states that "current legislation legitimises continued precarity in jobs, where otherwise a permanent role exists. Conference calls on the NEC to formulate a strategy aimed at the eradication of the use of temporary and fixed-term contracts where a permanent role exists".

The sector is also calling for action to improve the Unfair Dismissals Act, with a motion seeking the introduction of a 60-day time limit for the hearing of a case by the Adjudication Service of the Workplace Relations Commission from the date of referral and a further 30-day time limit on the issuance of its decision. As well as these time limits, the motion calls for fixed penalties on employers where a dismissal is found to be unfair.

Greg Ennis said: "The big issues in the Division recently are the successful pay claims across all sectors addressing the cost-of-liv-

ing crisis. The satisfactory resolution of such claims included industrial action in several companies such as Lisk, Bausch & Lomb and most recently Kyte Powertech.

He added: "Another major concern for the Division has been organising more workers into its membership and this has included a major drive in the Cork area by the Pharmaceuticals, Chemicals and Medical Devices Sector."

The divisional report, which will be presented for approval at the conference, covers 2020 and 2021. It will outline the activities of the Division during these years, including the large number of industrial actions undertaken and the pay rewards secured.

On a positive note, it finds that the implications of Brexit on manufacturing in Ireland have been less than had been feared, largely due to the EU-UK Trade and Co-operation Agreement of December 30th, 2020, which fully came into force on May 1st, 2021.

However, it highlights that the Northern Ireland Protocol – designed to prevent a hard border on the island of Ireland, and so protect the economy and the Good Friday Agreement – remains an issue which could give rise to serious difficulties in the near future.

Manufacturing division members win fight for pay rises

In recent weeks, SIPTU members from across the Manufacturing Division have successfully taken industrial action in pursuit of fair and reasonable pay increases to combat the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

Recent disputes have resulted in improvements in pay and other conditions of employment at Lisk in county Galway, Bausch & Lomb in Waterford and an improved offer from the Labour Court is being balloted on by members in Kyte Powertech, following two days of industrial action at its county Cavan facility.

SIPTU Manufacturing Divisional Organiser, Greg Ennis, said: "Further industrial action may well be imminent at other employments as many lower paid workers struggle to retain their purchasing power and make ends meet in the face of the worsening cost of living crisis."



Greg Ennis Manufacturing Divisional Organiser, Martin O'Rourke Sector Organiser on the Picket Line with striking members at Kyte Powertech, Cavan in August.

He added: "Members are worried about spiralling energy and food costs as they move into the winter period. Their

loyalty and commitment to their employers throughout the pandemic must now be repaid with decent pay, terms and conditions, when their needs are



Lidia Cichocka Industrial Organiser, Neil McGowan Sector Organiser, Stephen Lavelle Industrial Organiser and Greg Ennis Divisional Organiser with striking SIPTU Members from Lisk Ireland Ltd on the Picket line in Gort, Co Galway in April.

Shaping the future: Health members set for BDC

Health Division members will gather for their Biennial Conference on 26th October in Waterford city.

A range of motions submitted by Sector Committees will be up for discussion, and the theme for this year's conference will be 'Shaping the Future – A Health Service for All'.

It is also an election year for the Health Divisional Committee and the union's National Executive Council.

The conference will focus on the rollout of Sláintecare and will also seek to ensure that any developments within the public health service do not come at the expense of hard-won terms and conditions of employment.

Other motions call on the HSE to address problems retirees have accessing pension benefits and on the Government to put in place a collective bargaining mechanism to address pay disparities between public and private home care services.

Another motion calls for increased investment in the National

Ambulance Service.

Conference speakers include Róisín Shortall, co-leader of the Social Democrats, who will speak on the implementation of Sláintecare; Coru CEO Ginny Hanrahan, who will speak on Professional Regulation in the Irish healthcare system; and Emma Dowling, Assistant Professor of Sociology of Social Change, University of Vienna, and author of 'The Care Crisis'.

Guest speakers will cover a range of topics, including the regulation of several grades and professions within the health service, key developments in employment law in Ireland, and the importance of organising within all healthcare settings.

A keynote speaker will discuss the challenges experienced in addressing Covid-19 in the United Kingdom.

It is sure to be a conference of interest to all healthcare workers. Members can follow the debates on Twitter @suptuhealth if they cannot attend conference in person.



Strength in unity: Health service catering staff



Ginny Hanrahan

Róisín Shortall

Building Momentum pay successes for members

UNDER the 'Building Momentum' agreement, 1% of payroll expenditure was to be used to resolve outstanding claims for specific grades. The money set aside was known as the 'Sectoral Bargaining Fund.'

SIPTU was one of the first unions to complete negotiations as to how the 'fund' relating to certain grades would be used and has achieved success for a number of grades.

Radiographers and radiation therapists have achieved a 3.73% pay increase, have put in place new management pay scales to reflect the work they perform, and a new rate for CT Call which will be 25% higher than the hourly rate applied for other modalities. These measures were recommended in the 'National Radiography Review Report 2020' and came into effect from 1st February, 2022.

It was also agreed that SIPTU chefs' salaries would be aligned to relevant craft grades within the HSE in line with the 'Review of Role of Chef within the HSE' report. This came into effect on 1st February.

In addition, a balance of 0.5% remaining within the fund was

distributed to all other grades within the bargaining unit from that date.

The fund includes SIPTU grades such as support grades, Health and Social Care professionals, National Ambulance Service, healthcare assistants and healthcare support assistants.

Nursing and Midwifery, Clerical/Admin and General Operatives are in a different bargaining unit, and the union is to update members on these funds separately.



Organising for fair pay and equal treatment

SIPTU members in community and Section 39 agencies took part in a series of one-day work stoppages in July seeking pay increases already given to colleagues in the public service.

The Government has so far remained silent on their claim and members in more locations have now joined the campaign for fair pay. Earlier this year, SIPTU members in St Joseph's Foundation, Ability West and Western

Care Association took part in a ballot for industrial and strike action on the issue.

Members in all three locations voted for both strike and industrial action, and notice has been given to the organisations for action on September 21st (St Joseph's Foundation) and 22nd September (Ability West and Western Care Association).

The union has underlined the need for community and Section 39 workers to organise so that their demands are taken seriously.



The Future is Public

Under the slogan 'The Future is Public' more than 150 delegates from across the SIPTU Public Administration and Community Division (PAC) will gather in Wexford on 10th-11th November.

As the conference slogan makes clear, much focus will be on the need to bring vital services back under democratic public control and end the continued, failed approach of outsourcing and privatisation.

In their motions to conference both the PAC Divisional Committee and Local Authority Sector focus on the union's campaign to promote the "in-sourcing of work".

The PAC Divisional Committee "notes the global trend of re-municipalisation, where previously outsourced public services are being brought back into direct public provision".

It calls on the SIPTU NEC "to organise a campaign to promote the re-municipalisation and the in-sourcing of jobs" which includes

working with other unions to create a data base of successful in-sourcing campaigns along with lobbying for progressive public procurement regulation and for political parties to include commitments to direct public sector provision of services in their election manifestos.

If such an approach does not deliver the necessary results the Local Authority Sector is calling for the union to support "an industrial campaign in the Local Government Sector to rebuild direct labour services". This Sector is specifically targeting for in-sourcing "a combination of Local Authority services originally outsourced from the Public Sector during the austerity measures of 2008 to 2012, and other new types of work coming online, such as, home insulation programmes, apartment/senior citizens complex refits, which are all part of the Governments new Green Energy Conservation Plan".



Delegates at the PAC conference in 2018.

It adds: "We are calling on the Government to deliver this through specific and targeted commitments through the Public Service Agreement, to build and sustain an agile public service, through a combination of an innovative up-skilling programme and the new apprenticeship/traineeship initiatives, and by increasing the number of direct labour staff operating across the Local Authority Sector."

SIPTU PAC Divisional Organiser, Adrian Kane, said: "It is vital that the union spreads the good news that through our local authorities we can have both better and cheaper local services in many areas such as refuse collection. Bringing 'the bins' back under local authority control would end the situation where multiples of trucks in excess of what is required

cover the same collection routes, leading to unnecessary traffic congestion and increased carbon emissions."

He added: "The same principles of efficiency, long term planning and democratic control mean that re-municipalisation must become the key strategy in the development of local authority services in Ireland and globally".

Other motions to conference include support for the aim of the Valuing Care, Valuing Community industrial action campaign for the creation of a collective bargaining forum for community sector workers. The Education Sector has submitted motions on the need for the union to seek fair guidelines for the roll out of a high degree of remote and blended working and continued efforts to end the spread of precarious work within our third level educational institutes.

COMMENT

Towards a referendum on water

By Brendan O'Brien

Since the establishment of Irish Water by the Government in 2012, SIPTU, along with the ICTU water service unions, has sought to protect our members employed by the Local Authorities in water services, as well as oppose any attempt to privatise our public water services. It is important to note the decision to create Irish Water as a single purpose utility was a political decision, a matter of government policy. It was not an agreement with the unions.

The decision to legislate and give the Government the power to compulsorily transfer local authority workers to Irish Water under Section 19 of the Water Services Act 2013 was also a political decision and not an agreement with the unions. Further, the decision to sign the associated Statutory Instrument which gives the minister the powers to move on the legislation was a political decision.

The water services framework agreement reached under the auspices of the Workplace Relations Commission prevents the compulsory transfer of any Local Authority staff to Irish Water. This IS an agreement with the Unions, and it fully addresses the biggest concerns of our members. Our members

have the choice to remain in their Local Authority or to voluntarily transfer to Irish Water and that the workers earnings and pensions are fully protected.

In June 2022, the Local Authority Sector Committee, following extensive consultative meetings and discussions with rank and file water service members conducted throughout the negotiating period, welcomed the Framework which addresses a number of our members' key concerns.

It was particularly noted that all existing terms and conditions of employment of union members are protected, and that no member can be forced to take up employment with Irish Water. The Sector Committee also noted that members have choices and time to determine what the best option is for them. In light of these considerations, the Sector Committee established that there was no basis for a ballot vote of members as there is no obligatory change in any member's terms and conditions of employment.

The Sector Committee also noted that further clarification is needed in respect of some elements of The Framework for Future Delivery of Water. The Sector Committee noted the contents of Irish Water Transformation – The Wider Policy Context and wel-

comed specifically the forthcoming legislation which will establish Uisce Eireann as a state authority. Under the Framework, ICTU will have the capacity to nominate a member of the board of the new state authority. The Sector Committee, however, believes that the commitments under The Future of Local Government strand fall short of the union's aspirations.

The Unions have secured a commitment from the Government to hold the referendum on the ownership of our public water services, in 2023. The Government has committed to holding the water referendum in tandem with the proposed referendum on the right to housing. The Sector Committee believes that further work needs to be done to ensure that the referendum on the public ownership of the water services system is held during the lifetime of this government. Accordingly, the Union has proposed that the ICTU Group continues to engage with the parties, through the Implementation process, and with the wider political system to achieve the Union's objective of securing a referendum on the ownership of our public water services as soon as possible.

Carlow County Council to hire more outdoor staff

CARLOW County Council is now planning to hire more outdoor staff, following a SIPTU protest by workers and their supporters on 19th August to highlight the continued outsourcing of local authority work in the area.

SIPTU Organiser, Ger Malone, speaking from the Liberty Tree fountain in Carlow town, told the rally that the local council had not hired any outdoor staff since 2008. Some 168 outdoor staff had been employed in 2008 compared with 101 in 2022.

She said: "That's a loss of 67 permanent, full-time positions, with much of that work now being carried out by contractors. Workers are very concerned about diminishing community services and standards.

"Workers in the council see this as a race to the bottom and detrimental to the local community. Currently, there are approximately 20 workers over the age of 63, all of whom are eligible to retire in the coming years with no replacement plans. There is no structured training or upskilling

taking place." Malone added: "There is no replacing of workers who retire. There are no progression opportunities and no development plans of any kind for the workers. This is privatisation of public services by stealth.

"The workers consider that these jobs are community jobs that provide locals with a means to stay and live in the community, providing essential services and contributing hugely to the local economy."

Following the protest Carlow Council, released a statement, in which it said it had "reviewed" its outdoor staffing levels and "subject to budgetary approval", intended to recruit additional general operatives in 2023 and 2024.

The statement continued: "SIPTU were advised that the management team would consider their request to recruit additional outdoor staff and that the decision would be advised to them, but the protest took place before the decision could be communicated to them."

Enough is enough – after 14 years without a pay rise



By
Adrian Kane

They provide some of our most vital services, caring for the vulnerable and maintaining our communities. Despite this thousands of workers employed in community and section 39 organisations have been left in the dire situation of being on the same rate of pay since 2008, and left with no way of securing a rise – apart from taking the campaign of industrial action they have now embarked on.

Left with no alternative, these workers will take to picket lines in counties Cork, Kerry, Mayo, Galway and Donegal for three days of targeted strike action from 21st to 23rd September. This follows two days of strike action in July in Dublin, Waterford, Galway and Donegal.

The demands of their Valuing Care, Valuing Community campaign are simple; a pay rise for the first time in 14 years; safeguarding the vital services they provide and the return of the pay link which many of these workers had with the public service prior to 2008.

Some of the hundreds of organisations they work for are well known: the Irish Wheelchair Association, EmployAbility Services, the Rehab Group, Enable Ireland, St. Joseph's Foundation, while others work in locally based organisations such as Ability West and Western Care which have evolved to meet the needs of their immediate community. They provide a wide variety of services including personal care, crisis intervention, meals on wheels, youth clubs and many other essential schemes.

What unites this diverse group of workers is that they fill the gaps left by the State. They are often a lifeline for the most marginalised people in our society.

The community sector suffered the largest cuts of any sector in the



Rally by the community sector and Section 39 health workers, who marched for better pay and respect for their jobs in Dublin, May 2022.

aftermath of the economic collapse. From 2008 to 2014, there was an average resource cut of 40%, including cuts in support staff of nearly a third. Their colleagues in Section 39 organisations while working in largely government funded services, have none of the protections of public servants, although many are in identical roles. They also have seen their wages massively decline in real terms without being offered any avenue to negotiate improvements. These workers cannot now be left behind by our Government and their dedication left unnoticed.

Until 2008, union members employed in community and Section 39 organisations received pay increases in line with national wage agreements under Social Partnership. Public sector workers' pay

What unites this diverse group of workers is that they fill the gaps left by the State. They are often a lifeline for the most marginalised people in society

continues to be determined through public service pay agreements negotiated between the Public Service Committee of the ICTU and Government. In the private sector unionised workers' pay is determined through enterprise-level negotiated collective bargaining arrangements. Reliant on largely stagnant government funding, employees of community sector and Section 39 organisations have not had any pay increase since 2008 (some have had pay restored which had previously been cut).

The Government has consistently refused to accept any responsibility for pay and conditions of employment in these organisations, claiming that the state is not the employer. This has resulted in workers in the community sector

and Section 39 organisations having the worst of both worlds. Many were treated as public servants when the Government reduced their pay in the aftermath of the 2008 economic crisis. But when it comes to pay increases the Government pulls down the corporate veil and refuses to take any responsibility for pay and conditions.

Organisations in the sector are also facing a staff retention crisis due to the uncompetitive nature of pay and their sub-standard conditions of employment.

The solution to this situation is quite simple. The Government must sit down with the unions which represent these workers and agree a way forward which ensures they receive the pay increases they deserve and the services they provide are protected. Despite numerous requests this is something the Government has refused to do. This refusal to engage with workers' representatives is all the more disappointing in the context of an EU directive which is due to be transposed in October.

The draft directive stipulates that where countries have collective bargaining coverage below 70%, they must put in place a framework for the enablement of collective bargaining to take place. Collective bargaining coverage in Ireland is just over 30 per cent. If the Government is serious about living up to this directive it should provide collective bargaining to the community and Section 39 sector immediately.

Until this is done the Valuing Care, Valuing Community campaign will be forced to expand and escalate its actions with the full support of workers who have said 'enough is enough'.

The Valuing Care, Valuing Community campaign is supported by the ICTU, SIPTU, Fórsa and the INMO.

Adrian Kane is SIPTU PAC Division Organiser



VALUING CARE VALUING COMMUNITY

THE CAMPAIGN FOR PAY JUSTICE FOR WORKERS IN SECTION 39 AND COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS



Raising hell to protest crisis in housing

Raise the Roof housing comprises a range of key civil society bodies, including SIPTU and other unions, housing and homeless agencies, women's groups, political parties, representatives of older people, children's advocacy groups, community organisations, student unions, Traveller groups, and housing experts.

Founded in August 2018, the ICTU-led initiative has active support and input from affiliated unions and trades councils across the country. The network also includes key housing and homeless agencies Focus Ireland, Simon Community, and the Peter McVerry Trust.

Raise the Roof is backed by the Union of Students in Ireland (USI); the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC); Age Action; the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM); the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA); National Homeless & Housing Coalition (NHHC); and the Home for Good campaign group.

It enjoys strong political support and backing, including from Sinn Féin, Social Democrats, Labour Party, People Before Profit/ Solidarity, and various independent TDs and senators.

Raise the Roof has been campaigning for a radical change in housing policy since it was set up. In October 2018, the Raise the Roof campaign ensured the successful passage of a mass opposition party motion demanding radical action on the issue through the Dáil. The debate on the motion coincided

with a major rally of more than 15,000 people outside Leinster House. Among the demands were a call for a major state-led programme of housing investment and construction, action on evictions and secure tenure for those in the rental sector; the use of public land for public housing; and the creation of a new, legal right to housing.

All of the main parties, with the

exception of Fine Gael, supported the motion, although it has yet to be implemented. A similar agreed opposition party motion calling for urgent action on the worsening housing crisis was also debated, but defeated, in the Dáil in July 2022.

During the Covid-19 enforced lockdowns the Raise the Roof campaign focused on organising webinars on the housing crisis which has deepened over the past three years. The Government's Housing for All plan, announced in September 2021, has failed to alleviate this crisis, with a continuing significant shortfall in reaching construction targets, rising rents, and increases

in the number of evictions as well as homeless figures returning to their pre-Covid high.

Over recent months the Raise the Roof campaign held a series of public meetings on the housing crisis in Navan, Waterford, Limerick, Dublin, Galway, and Maynooth.

For each of these meetings SIPTU researcher, Michael Taft, prepared a detailed summary of the local city and county housing emergency. Dr Lorcan Sirr, of the Technological University of Dublin, also gave presentations on the State's abject failure to provide adequate social and affordable housing at meet-



the meeting.

It is hoped another new group can be formed in Sligo, Leitrim and Roscommon in the coming weeks.

The campaign also lobbied and leafleted at union conferences, including at the SIPTU Biennial Delegate Conference in Sligo in May.

The short-term objective of the campaign is to encourage local action to highlight the housing crisis, including the problems it presents for students, renters, and homeless people, in securing safe and secure accommodation, and a roof over their heads.

These actions will be supported by Raise the Roof, including providing speakers, placards, posters, social media promotion, and other supports as the campaign builds to a national demonstration.

ings in Waterford and Limerick.

Following this, new local Raise the Roof groups were formed.

Similar decisions were taken in Navan, Galway, and Kildare, where academic Rory Hearne addressed

Letter to the Editor

Enshrining right to housing in Constitution would force hand of government



Raise the Roof protestor with flare on Parnell Street at May 2019 rally

Monday 5th September

Dear Editor,

Last week, a public consultation on holding a referendum on housing closed. The Meath Council of Trade Unions made a submission to this consultation in which it emphatically supported the holding of such a referendum.

However, we were disappointed that the terms of reference of this consultation did not refer to the right to housing. We believe that including such a right

is essential to address our housing crisis.

Ireland is now an outlier among similarly developed European countries in that almost half – 47% – of 25- to 29-year-olds are living with their parents compared to 5% in Denmark, 18% in France, and 24% in the UK.

A recent report from the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) stated that if houses do not become affordable, less than 50% of those aged under 30 will own their own home by the time they retire. More than 90%

of current retirees own their own homes. The social implications of this scenario are deeply disturbing.

In 2020, the UN Special Rapporteur on Housing wrote to the Irish government to express its concern that "contrary to international human rights obligations, investment in housing in the Republic of Ireland has disconnected housing from its core social purpose of providing people with a place to live in with security and dignity." Changing the Constitution to include a

right to housing would require current and future governments' housing policy to deliver on this right.

It won't solve the housing crisis overnight but it will require the state to ensure that housing policy is about people – not profit.

Yours sincerely,

John Regan,

SIPTU Organiser

Chairperson of Meath Council of Trade Unions

Michael Taft on the recent submissions made by SIPTU to government commissions

Commission on Taxation and Social Welfare

Building up the 'moral infrastructure' to help forge a better society

IMAGINE that if you were made unemployed you would receive 75 per cent of your previous wage for up to a year – to ease the loss of your income and allow you time to search for an appropriate job?

Or that you become pregnant and receive your full wage during maternity leave? Or that you become long-term ill and receive most of your wage for your period out of work? Imagine a strong safety net for workers regardless of which company or sector they work in?

Sound improbable? Not really. These are standard supports for

workers in other European countries. This was the focus of SIPTU's submission to the Commission on Taxation and Social Welfare. We argued for a new suite of pay-related in-work benefits for workers. Ireland's current social protection system is based on flat-rate payments. For instance, an average paid Irish worker will receive €250 per week during maternity leave which amounts to about 33 per cent of their wage. That is a significant fall in income at a time when household costs are rising. In other countries, the worker will receive their full wage.

The Irish system is based on poverty-amelioration. What SIPTU is seeking in its submission is a system that is truly social protection with European-level of supports for workers. We argued for new pay-related benefits for short-term unemployment, family supports (maternity and paternity leave, parental leave), illness benefits, and supports for long-term illness, occupational injuries and disability.

SIPTU also showed how these enhanced benefits could be paid for. Employers pay one of the lowest social insurance rates (employers' PRSI) in the EU. A small increase of

2 to 3 percentage points in PRSI for employers (which would still leave them at the bottom of the EU table) phased in over a number of years would pay for our proposals. Not only would that provide greater security for workers, the enhanced payments would end up being spent, providing increased revenue for business.

Social insurance, or PRSI, is the ultimate solidarity system. Everyone pays into the Social Insurance Fund – employers, employees, and self-employed – and accesses benefits in times of need. That is why it has been described as the 'moral

infrastructure' of society. SIPTU fully agrees.



Implementing the Living Wage consultation

How we can put a final end to the social obscenity of low pay

IRELAND suffers from one of the worst levels of low pay in the EU. One-in-five workers are officially categorised as low-paid.

As General Secretary, Joe Cunningham, said at SIPTU's recent bi-annual conference: "Low pay is economically inefficient, fiscally harmful, and, most of all, it is a social obscenity."

Recently the Government announced it would increase the national minimum wage to 60 per cent of the hourly median wage over a four-year period.

The median wage is not the average wage. It is the mid-point in the

wage scale, whereby 50 per cent earn above and 50 per cent below. For instance, this year approximately half of all workers earn below €20.50 per hour while half earn above.

What would this mean in terms of the minimum wage? It would rise from its current level of €10.50 to €12.35 per hour – an increase of nearly €2 per hour.

This is a positive step. But the Government is claiming that reaching 60 per cent of median wage constitutes a 'Living Wage'.

They claim to be basing this on recommendations of the Low Pay Commission. They are wrong on both counts.

First, 60 per cent of the median wage is not a 'living wage'. The Living Wage is closer to 66 per cent of the median wage. This is the actual low-pay threshold used in official measurements.

Secondly, the Low Pay Commission did not state that 60 per cent of the median wage is a living wage. Instead, they proposed that in the medium-term the minimum wage should increase to 66 per cent – or the low-pay threshold.

Therefore, SIPTU's submission to the Government's consultation on implementing the Living Wage made three key recommendations:

First, the Living Wage be set at 66

per cent, or the low-pay threshold.

Second, this should be phased in over a six-year period.

Third, employers should be required to engage in sectoral collective bargaining so that employees can protect their working conditions during the phasing in of the Living Wage and beyond.

This last point is key because employers could resort to exploitative practices such as sweating labour, abolition of occupational benefits, and suppression of wages just above the low-pay threshold.

Sectoral collective bargaining can help ensure that employees receive the full benefits of the Living Wage.

SIPTU's proposals would transform the living standards of hundreds of thousands of workers and finally end the social obscenity of low pay.



Submission to the White Paper on Enterprise Strategy

Developing an authentic stakeholder enterprise model for Ireland

IRISH society will face a series of challenges beyond the cost-of-living crisis we are currently experiencing.

There is the deepening climate crisis. There is the disruption due to increasing automation. And forecasters have warned that in a few years we will enter into a long-term, low-growth environment – essentially an economic drought.

Ireland's current business model is not up to the task of meeting these challenges. Indeed, it is actively constraining economic growth, productivity increases and innovation.

Meeting these challenges will require significant reforms – a thorough-going democratisation of our enterprise base which ac-

knowledges the centrality of each and every worker in the production process.

SIPTU's submission to the Government's draft White Paper on Enterprise policy put forward proposals in four areas:

First, as a matter of urgency, establish the sectoral taskforces provided for in the Programme for Government with the participation of all stakeholders – in particular, employee representatives.

Strategic planning means anticipating future trends and new technologies, directing investment into the most productive streams, decarbonising business activity, and promoting social prosperity.

Second, the introduction of an unequivocal right to collective bar-

gaining for employees at enterprise and sectoral level. Collective bargaining has been proven to increase productivity and innovation in the workplace.

Third, move away from our low-pay business model through introducing a Living Wage, tackling precariousness and self-employment through an automatic presumption of an employer-employee contract, and provide employees with the right to access more working hours in their employment as they become available.

Finally, support high-road enterprises by introducing social clauses in public procurement contracts and state-aid grants that award best-practice enterprises in labour

rights, gender equality, work-life balance, elimination of low-pay and precarious contracts, and decarbonising strategies.

Alongside this, we should promote the role of public enterprise within the market economy at both national and, in particular, local level.

Such enterprises could play a role as 'market leaders' in democratic organisation, investment and R&D. This would include alternative enterprise models such as private sector stakeholder firms, civil society-led enterprises (e.g. civil society co-operatives and trusts), and labour-managed enterprises.

Ireland has the opportunity to become a First Mover in the devel-

opment of a truly authentic stakeholder enterprise model which promotes employee voice and participation, and privileges enterprises which are capable and willing to embrace a new democratic dispensation.



New public sector pay proposals 'significant improvement'

THE 'Building Momentum' public sector pay proposals (2021-2023 combined) represent a significant improvement which, if accepted, will help to offset the effect of the cost of living and inflationary crisis and will importantly provide long-lasting improvements to the pay and conditions of employment of SIPTU members in the public service.

SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, John King, said that the pay proposals negotiated in the review of 'Building Momentum' represented

a significant improvement on the pay terms accepted by members in January 2020, when the current public service agreement was balloted on.

King pointed out that, when taken together with the original terms of 'Building Momentum', the revised pay terms negotiated in 2022 would further improve the pay and conditions of all SIPTU members both in the public service and in Section 38 agencies. They were also consistent with ensuring pay measures were targeted to maximise benefits to lower to middle income earners.

Pay terms combined

TABLE 1 shows the total effect of the 'Building Momentum' pay measures for public service workers if these revised proposals are accepted.

TABLE 1 Current and revised pay terms...

1% or €500	1st Oct 2021	existing (paid)
1%	1st Feb 2022	existing (paid)
3%	2nd Feb 2022	new payment
1% or €500	1st Oct 2022	existing
2%	1st Mar 2023	new payment
1.5% or €750	1st Oct 2023	new payment



SIPTU DGS John King

1) 'Building Momentum' original terms:	2) 'Building Momentum' revised terms:
1st October 2021 - 1% or minimum €500 - Paid	The revised terms provide for an additional:
1st February 2022 - 1% Sectoral Bargaining Process - Paid	1st February 2022 - 3%
1st October 2022 - 1% or minimum €500 - To be Paid	1st March 2023 - 2%
	1st October 2023 - 1.5% or minimum €750
Restoration of Austerity measures imposed in the Haddington Road Agreement:	The proposals, if accepted:
Restoration of overtime rates - implemented 1st July 2021	Extend the period of the agreement to the end of 2023.
Restoration of Premium Twilight Shift - implemented 1st July 2021	Extend the current protections covering outsourcing, compulsory redundancy and redeployment to the end of 2023.
Implementation of Hours Body Report - with effect from 1st July 2022	Provide a commitment on the parties to engage in discussions on a possible process to review broader public service pay issues.
	There are no new reform or change measures conceded as part of these proposals.

TABLE 2 Effect on pay...

Date	Increase	€25,000	€30,000	€35,000	€40,000	€45,000
01/10/21	1%*	€25,500	€30,500	€35,500	€40,500	€45,500
01/02/22	1%	€25,755	€30,805	€35,855	€40,905	€45,955
02/02/22	3%	€26,528	€31,729	€36,931	€42,132	€47,334
01/10/22	1%*	€27,028	€32,229	€37,431	€42,632	€47,834
01/03/23	2%	€27,568	€32,874	€38,179	€43,485	€48,790
01/10/23	1.5%**	€28,318	€33,624	€38,929	€44,235	€49,540
All 'Building Momentum'		13.3%	12.1%	11.2%	10.6%	10.1%
Salary Increase		€3,318	€3,624	€3,929	€4,235	€4,540

TABLE 2 clearly demonstrates SIPTU's prioritisation of pay measures that are targeted to give maximum benefit to lower and middle income earners in the public service.

These pay proposals will also further improve overtime earnings, shift premium payments and pensionable allowances.

John King said these proposals were considered by the union's

National Executive Council at a special meeting. Following a report and subsequent discussion on the proposals, it was decided they would be put to a ballot of members in the public service with a recommendation that they be accepted.

SIPTU's NEC acknowledged the extraordinary cost of living crisis and its impact on all workers and their families, including public ser-

vants, and that these pay measures would go some way towards this.

The Executive also noted the statements of Government Minister for Public Expenditure that Budget 2023 will be a cost of living Budget which will also provide measures to alleviate the effect of this inflationary crisis on workers, including public servants.

NEC recommends acceptance of offer

"SIPTU's National Executive Council (NEC) met on Monday, 5th September 2022, to consider the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) proposals on the review of the pay provisions in the 'Building Momentum' public service agreement.

SIPTU, along with colleague trade unions in the Public Ser-

vices Committee of the ICTU, invoked the review clause of the agreement as a result of the cost-of-living and inflation crisis. The NEC, having considered the details of the proposals, decided that they should be put to a ballot of SIPTU members in the public service and Section 38 agencies with a recommendation for acceptance.

The WRC proposals issued in

respect of the review, when taken with the existing measures of 'Building Momentum', are structured in a manner that is consistent with previous public service agreements that prioritised the position of lower and middle-income earners.

The NEC also noted the position of the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform that economy-wide, cost-of-living

measures would accompany pay improvements. These measures will be addressed in Budget 2023 and through the Labour Employer Economic Forum which is to meet in September 2022.

If these proposals are accepted, it will extend the current public service agreement until the end of December 2023. Talks on a successor agreement

for 2024 and beyond will likely take place during the summer of 2023.

Accordingly, the SIPTU National Executive Council recommends acceptance of these proposals in a secret ballot vote to be held over the period from Monday, 12th September to Wednesday 5th October, 2022."

Liberty View

Building a better future



By Joe Cunningham

We stand at a crucial juncture for our union and the wider trade

union movement. The worsening cost of living crisis has many workers concerned that even with decent pay they are facing into financial difficulty this winter, while for many others in low paid jobs such concerns are only being intensified.

For both groups it is crucial that our union proves that by workers organising themselves and by taking collective action we can assist one another. We are already making good progress on this front.

For the more than 27,000 workers in the crucial, but low paid, childcare sector, SIPTU through the Big Start campaign and the dedication of numerous activists and organisers secured a pay deal that will see significant wage rises for many. The Employment Regulation Order for this sector came into force on 15th September.

It was not only a key moment for childcare and education workers but also for those in other low paid sectors of the economy who now have a blueprint of what can be achieved if they effectively organise into our union.

For the more than 27,000 workers in the crucial, but low paid, childcare sector, SIPTU through the Big Start campaign and the dedication of numerous activists and organisers secured a pay deal that will see significant wage rises for many.

Following a long process of negotiations, an agreement on the review of public sector pay has resulted in a set of proposals which the SIPTU National Executive has recommended for acceptance. While this pay increase, if accepted, will not completely offset the impact of inflation, it is weighted in favour of the lower paid and should go some way to protecting members' living standards.

In the private sector, union members have fought a number of successful industrial battles. In workplaces across the country, members in our manufacturing division have pursued and obtained significant improvements in pay and conditions, winning a greater share of the wealth produced by their labour.

Elsewhere, thousands of workers in community and Section 39 organisations have come together to jointly fight for their first pay rise since 2008 in the 'Valuing Care, Valuing Community' campaign which is backed by ICTU, SIPTU, Fórsa and the INMO.

That these workers, whose dedication to assisting the vulnerable and their communities is unparalleled, have been forced to take to picket lines across the country reflects their rising anger among over government inaction on their plight over many years.

Industrial action may also be a necessary course for our members in the security industry. Despite reaching agreement on a Sectoral Employment Order, these workers have twice been denied their well-deserved pay rise due to legal action by a tiny section of employers.

Our union has taken this case to the Government and other politicians and if action is not taken soon to vindicate the rights of these members, there will be no alternative than to ballot for industrial action.

Similarly, the union is pursuing, as a matter of urgency, the legal right of workers in this country to engage in collective bargaining with their employers. It is a right enjoyed by most workers across the EU and can help to enhance democracy and productivity in the workplace.

SIPTU does not only seek to advance workers interests in narrow industrial terms. As a union, we must also seek to change the political landscape to improve

Similarly, the union is pursuing, as a matter of urgency, the legal right of workers in this country to engage in collective bargaining with their employers.

public services in education, health, housing and water in the interests of our members and wider society.

That is why the issue of a constitutional referendum to ensure public ownership and control of water services is so important.

Earlier this year, a new 'Framework for Future Delivery of Water Services', was agreed between unions representing local authority water workers and the Government. It successfully protects the terms and conditions of our members in this sector.

As part of those negotiations, the Government agreed that a referendum should be held next year. We are now calling on it to name a date for a referendum on water provision to ensure that this crucial service will never be privatised.

Joe Cunningham is the General Secretary of SIPTU

SIPTU's broad welcome to rights update for disabled workers



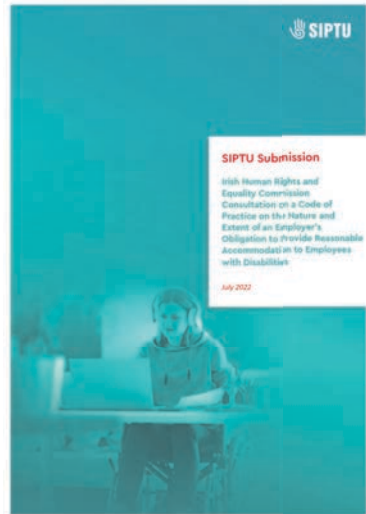
By
Rachael Ryan

THE Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) ran its consultation on a draft 'Code of Practice on the Nature and Extent of an Employer's Obligation to Provide Reasonable Accommodation to Employees with Disabilities' between 27th May and 29th July this year.

SIPTU broadly welcomes the Code of Practice as it outlines in practical and understandable terms the duty all employers are under to provide reasonable accommodation to workers with disabilities.

In particular it sets out that the duty "is proactive and individualised in nature" and that it "includes an obligation on the employer to carry out a full assessment of the needs of the person with a disability and of the measures necessary to accommodate that person's disability".

This duty was confirmed by the Supreme Court in the case of *Daly v Nano Nagle*, a case which orig-



inated before the then-Equality Tribunal. Marie Daly, a special needs assistant and a member of SIPTU, was represented by her union.

In its response to the consultation, SIPTU raised a concern that the definition of "disability" in the Code (and which includes the social model of disability as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in EU case law), appears to create a two-step test for employers to follow. Each step has to be satisfied for the definition of disability to apply and only thereafter for a worker to be reasonably accom-



PICTURE: Paul Wilkinson (CC BY 2.0)

modated. SIPTU asserted that the inclusion of the social model of disability is to broaden the definition of disability and not for narrowing the number of workers to whom employers owe a duty. The union recommended that the IHREC clarify the relevant section in the Code.

The draft Code also states that the "provision of reasonable accommodation does not oblige the employer to create a new job that is different to the job the employee is contracted to do... As any such change would almost certainly give rise to a disproportionate burden on an employer".

SIPTU has pointed out that there may be circumstances in which a new role does not create an additional cost, or a significant additional cost, and therefore has asked the IHREC to clarify this in the final Code.

While the Code recommends employers "prepare, implement and keep under review" a policy setting out its approach to disclosure of a disability and request for reasonable accommodation, it also suggests that employees who think they have not received the "appropriate measure" or "have suffered discrimination in the workplace on the grounds of disability"

should raise the matter informally with management through the internal grievance procedure.

According to the Code, if this is not resolved informally, employees should then pursue the matter formally. And if they are not satisfied with this outcome, they have the option of lodging a complaint with the Workplace Relations Commission.

SIPTU has asked the IHREC to include that such a complaint should be referred within the statutory six months of a request for reasonable accommodation being refused, noting that while the time limit for complaints is set out elsewhere in the Code, the statutory time limit is vitally important when engaging with internal procedures and awaiting an outcome from the employer.

While the various relevant sections of the Employment Equality Acts and the relevant case law are cited throughout the comprehensive Code, the case most heavily cited is that of *Daly v Nano Nagle*.

The Supreme Court when granting leave for this case said: "The issues which arise are, undoubtedly, of significant importance, not only to the appellant, but in the broader field of disability law." This has certainly proved to be the case.

SIPTU campaign to end gender pay gap

SIPTU and the wider trade union movement has long campaigned for pay equity between male and female workers. Despite decades of equal pay legislation, the gender pay gap in Ireland - the differential between the average pay of males and females within an organisation - is currently 14%.

Last year, the Union welcomed the enactment of pay transparency legislation as a tool in tackling pay equality between men and women.

On 3rd June last, the long-awaited Regulations under the Gender Pay Gap (Information) Act 2021, setting out the information required to be published by employers were published. Essentially, organisations with over 250 employees are required to report on their gender pay gap for the first time in 2022. The obligation to report for organisations with more than 150 employees will arise in 2024 and for organisations



with more than 50 employees in 2025.

The report should contain a written statement in which the employer sets out its opinion as to the reasons for the differences, if any, in pay referable to gender. It should also outline the measures being taken to eliminate or reduce these differences.

Publication of employer audits provides unions with a real oppor-

tunity to tackle the gender pay gap through negotiation and collective bargaining. To this end, the trade union movement has produced a toolkit for negotiators. Written by international equal pay expert Dr. Jane Pillinger, 'Gender Pay Gap Reporting - Guidance for unions on closing the gender pay gap and bringing the issue into collective bargaining' will be officially launched by Minister for Children,

Last year, the Union welcomed the enactment of pay transparency legislation as a tool in tackling pay equality between men and women

SIPTU College has developed a training course for organisers and activists on evaluating employer audits and tackling the gap between male and female earnings in an organisation through collective bargaining.

Short courses for Shop Stewards will be advertised shortly. Speaking about the training course, Ethel Buckley, Deputy General Secretary said; "I would encourage all Shop Stewards and union representatives to avail of this training. Shop Stewards in employments which will come under the remit of the legislation, with 50 or more employees by 2025, will find it particularly beneficial. They will learn practical techniques for equalising pay which they can put to use at the bargaining table. Along with the toolkit, the course will equip them with the skills to represent their members effectively."

Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderick O'Gorman T.D. later in September.

Understanding the Energy Crisis



By
Michael Taft

The following is a brief summary of the issues contributing to the energy crisis. This focuses on domestic energy – the use of electricity, gas and other fuels by households and businesses. It excludes petrol and diesel.

The Rise of Energy Costs

Energy costs are fuelling inflation. In July, inflation was running at 9.1 per cent. Energy products (electricity, gas, other fuels) were running at 55 per cent. Energy costs feed into inflation in two ways: first, the direct cost to households and businesses purchasing energy; and, second, the cost of producing goods and services whereby businesses pass on the cost to consumers (e.g. it costs more to produce bread, so the price of bread rises).

There are a number of reasons for the rise of energy prices: post-covid supply chain interruptions, rising demand and limited supply, the impact of the Ukrainian war, the suspension of Russian gas imports, etc. Another reason is the design of the energy market itself.

The Energy Market

People ask how the cost of renewables can rise so steeply given that it doesn't cost more to produce wind energy today than it did a year ago. The reason is that the EU operates a 'pay as you clear' pricing model (or 'marginal pricing'). This is a very complex model but in simple terms:

- Energy producers offer their product into the market. The cheapest products get bought first – for instance, wind, solar and hydro-based products. However, we need more than renewables to satisfy demand.
- So then the next most expensive products are bought: coal and oil-based products. However, we still need more.
- So the final product purchased is gas which is now the most expensive energy source.

The final price is set by the last, most expensive product purchased – gas. This is regardless of how cheap renewables and other energy products are.

If we had enough renewable energy to satisfy demand, there would be no problem. Energy would be much cheaper. That is the long-term goal. However, it will be over a decade and more before we get to this stage. In the meantime we will continue to consume fossil-fuel energy products and under the current model, pay for the highest-priced product.

Impact of Energy Prices on Households

Energy prices hit low-income households hardest. Even before the Covid pandemic the lowest income groups were spending 14 per cent of their income on energy. The highest income group spent only 2.3 per cent.

The situation now would be worse for lower income groups given the inflation in energy products. Over 40 per cent of households may be experiencing 'energy poverty' (spending more than 10 per cent of their income on energy). That

Over 40 per cent of households may be experiencing 'energy poverty' (spending more than 10 per cent of their income on energy). That figure is likely to rise as we come into the winter



figure is likely to rise as we come into the winter.

What Can the Government Do?

There is little the Government can do to reduce the price of energy production. These prices are set by international markets. It can, however, limit the impact of inflation – and energy prices, in particular – during what will hopefully be a short-term phenomenon. For instance, the Government has provided €200 electricity credits for every household and reduced VAT on electricity and gas. However, this can only go so far. We need more radical strategies.

Control Energy Prices

A number of countries have introduced price controls, capping the increases in electricity and gas. They have been successful in limiting the inflation damage. For instance, France introduced electricity price caps. In the year to July, electricity prices went up by only 8.2 per cent, compared to

Energy prices hit low-income households hardest. Even before the Covid pandemic the lowest income groups were spending 14 per cent of their income on energy. The highest income group spent only 2.3 per cent

Ireland's 40 per cent. Though it has not spared France from the inflationary crisis it has helped reduce such increases to well below Irish levels.

There are many ways to control energy prices: caps on increases, targeted reductions to low-income households (e.g. radically reducing standing charges, tiered tariffs similar to tax bands that favour low-consuming households, etc.). Such controls would be challenging to introduce and would not be a magic wand to substantially reduce high prices. But they can help mitigate inflationary pressures and make social transfers more efficient. The EU Commission is currently examining proposals to 'decouple' gas prices from electricity, and is looking at capping the prices of non-gas energy sources (e.g. renewables, oil, coal, etc.).

Energy price controls combined with raising the income floor for low-paid workers – through a significant rise in the minimum wage - and those on fixed incomes would greatly assist people's living standards and allow the Government to target budgetary measures in a more economically efficient and socially equitable manner.

By Frank Connolly

Israel slaps illegal restrictions on foreigners entering Palestine

IN FEBRUARY 2022, the Israeli government published a new set of discriminatory, restrictive, and arbitrary rules for foreigners entering or staying in the occupied West Bank.

The measures, outlined in a 90-page document titled 'Procedure for Entry and Residence for Foreigners in Judea and Samaria Area' and dubbed illegal by the Palestinian Authority (PA) and a number of human rights organisations, will come into force on October 20th, 2022.

In violation of international law, the rules consider the West Bank – including East Jerusalem – to be part of Israel, and specifically target Palestinians and visitors of Palestinian descent as well as foreigners wishing to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT).

None of the measures contained in the directive apply to foreigners visiting illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The measures further complicate and formalise written and unwritten entry restrictions for foreigners who wish to travel, conduct business, work, volunteer or study in the OPT or teach in Palestinian educational institutions.

Palestinians with foreign passports are subjected to additional discriminatory measures, including having to disclose whether they have, or stand to inherit, property.

The measures also require foreigners who enter into a relationship with a Palestinian to inform occupation authorities within 30 days or when they re-new a visa.

They grant the Israeli authorities the arbitrary right to approve the qualifications of students and teachers, as well as their field of study, before granting admission to Palestinian universities. It also limits the stay of foreign academics in the OPT to one semester.

Strict time limits have been placed on visas and visa extensions, making



Israel's wall of concrete and steel around Jerusalem (main picture) and (right) a security checkpoint in Hebron in the OPT
PICTURE: Peter Mulligan (CC BY 2.0)



organisations, hospital staffing, education, academic diversity, and socio-economic development.

The statement continued: "Given Israel's expanding illegal settlement enterprise, the information acquired by these measures will likely be used to further appropriate Palestinian property.

"Aside from being arbitrary, they make it clear that the Palestinian people do not have the right to family life, as the Israeli authorities have the absolute and sole right to refuse family reunification and/or visits on 'general policy grounds'."

The PA and civic society have called on the international community to condemn the directives as unlawful and utterly unacceptable and demanded their immediate revocation.

They have also called for retaliatory restrictions – including academic co-operation – to be imposed on Israeli citizens and the halting of visa waivers and other forms of co-operation with the state of Israel until the measures are reversed.



Israeli military checkpoint in Bethlehem in the the OPT

it impossible for people to work or volunteer for a Palestinian institution for more than a few months.

According to the Palestinian Authority, these actions also impose high "security guarantees" for entry into the OPT – starting at 70,000 NIS (equivalent to approximately US \$20,000/€20,000) – and the PA claims they are part of Israel's "new discriminatory measures" in its bid "to create an Israeli-Jewish demographic majority and maintain its apartheid over the Palestinian people".

The PA said the move would inevitably harm Palestinians and their families, impact on human rights or



Delegates at ICTU Global Solidarity Committee conference in Sligo in early September calling for boycott of sportswear firm Puma over its sponsorship of the Football Association of Israel which includes among its members teams from illegal settlements in Palestine.



Dr Mustafa Barghouti and Bahia Amra of the Palestine National Initiative with SIPTU vice-president, John Montgomery, in Liberty Hall on Friday 17th June following a meeting to discuss current conditions in their country with members of the union's Global Solidarity Campaign.

Renewed hope in Colombia – left wing victory



By
Ethel Buckley

WHILE trade unionists across the world have long stood with the Colombian people in their struggle for peace and social justice, foreign governments have largely turned a blind eye to the appalling human rights abuses in the country.

Multinationals have reaped the benefits of violence directed against trade unionists and social activists, as well as the forced displacement of millions of people that opened mineral-rich territories to resource extraction.

From the 1990s, the Colombian military received massive US funding as it committed atrocities against civilians. When communities exercised democratic rights to demand social improvements, they were massacred. The result was a Colombia which was lucrative for global capital while consigning large swathes of the population to perpetual hardship and violence.

Yet in June this year, something changed. For the first time in the Colombian history, a progressive government was elected. The new president is Gustavo Petro, a former guerrilla and mayor of Bogota. The vice-president is Francia Márquez, a black, single mother from one of Colombia's poorest and most conflict-affected regions with decades of involvement in environmental, feminist and social activism.

Their Historic Pact coalition triumphed thanks to a political agenda that prioritised peace, human rights, workers' rights, equality and the environment. In short, they offered the national transformation urgently needed by so many people.

Three weeks earlier, a Justice for Colombia delegation of trade unionists and politicians from Ireland, England, Scotland, Wales and Spain visited Colombia to witness the election's first round and to learn about the situation for workers and their unions as well as the current state of the peace process.

I was honoured that SIPTU sent me, as Deputy General Secretary with responsibility for global solidarity, to Colombia as a member of the international delegation.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has declared Colombia to be the world's deadliest country for trade unionists. As a union, we wanted to see first-hand what that meant for our comrades on the ground and to demonstrate our solidarity with them. Despite the enthusiasm generated among grassroots communities and social



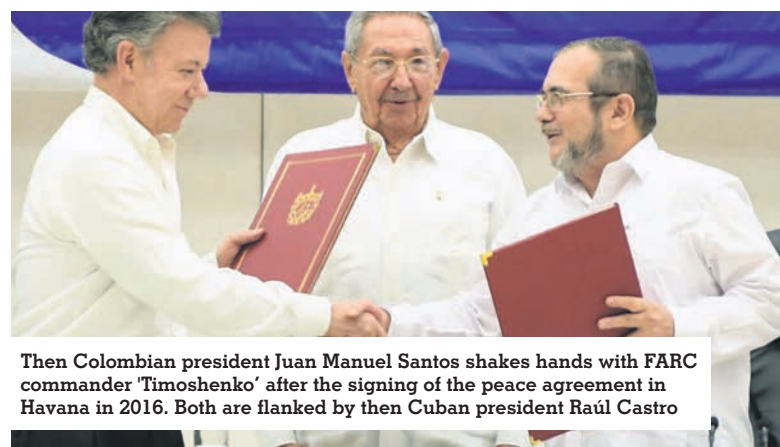
Justice for Colombia international delegation with Gloria Ramirez (fourth from left) in Bogota on the first day of the Presidential Election. Ramirez is now Minister for Labour



The sash of office is placed around the shoulders of Historic Pact leader and new president Gustavo Petro in August



SIPTU's Ethel Buckley with Jorge Enrique Cortes, of the Central Union of Workers



Then Colombian president Juan Manuel Santos shakes hands with FARC commander 'Timoshenko' after the signing of the peace agreement in Havana in 2016. Both are flanked by then Cuban president Raúl Castro

organisations by the Historic Pact's energising campaign, things were – and still are – extremely difficult. The scale of the challenge facing the new government cannot be overestimated.

The 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) has faced right-wing attacks since it was signed.

Under now-departed president Iván Duque, the peace process was starved of resources amid blatant government disregard for the safety of former guerrillas who voluntarily laid down their weapons to enter civilian life. More than 340 of them have since been killed.

Meanwhile, core elements of the agreement, such as rural development and state support for

peasant farmers to transition away from growing illegal crops, have been impeded from above. Violence against former guerrillas is only part of the human rights crisis, with more than 1,300 social activists, including many trade unionists, also murdered since the agreement was signed.

Public figures are frequently targeted, with Petro, Francia and other progressive politicians having received credible death threats a situation which intensified during campaigning in the election.

Now in office, the Historic Pact coalition has immediately sought to make a difference. Peace is the priority. Petro has moved to fully implement the 2016 agreement, open negotiations with the country's largest remaining guerrilla

movement, the ELN, and invited other paramilitary and armed groups to meet round the table. The new president has also addressed state violence by removing 15 generals implicated in human rights violations, while he plans to restructure the ESMAD riot police unit responsible for killing several young protesters last year.

The strengthening of human rights will develop alongside a 'green new deal'-type project to move the economy away from dependence on fossil fuels and to ban fracking.

Anti-union violence and regressive legislation has generated some of the world's weakest workers' rights. In response, Petro has named two trade unionists to head the Labour Ministry: longstanding women's rights and teachers union activist and

Public figures are frequently targeted ... progressive politicians having received credible death threats which intensified during the election campaign

former congress member Gloria Ramirez as Minister for Labour, and the former president of the USO oil workers' union, Edwin Palma, as Vice-Minister.

Both have worked closely with Justice for Colombia, as has the new Peace Commissioner, Danilo Rueda. Appointments like these demonstrate the government's intent to meet its promises to the Colombian people.

I was among the Justice for Colombia delegates who met with Ramirez and Rueda – before they assumed their new roles – in May.

Like other unions in Ireland and Britain, SIPTU has been a strong supporter of JFC's campaign work. The international trade union movement's support will be crucial to strengthening the new government's transformative agenda, which is sure to generate hostility among powerful interest groups both at home and abroad.



Colombian paramilitary police in riot gear. The new government plans a restructuring of the country's security forces

Finding a Better Place

"United Nation - The Case For Integrating Ireland" (Gill Books)
Frank Connolly

When the new King Charles III visited the North on Wednesday, 14th September, he was met by a Sinn Féin Speaker of the Assembly who then introduced him to the First Minister Designate, Sinn Féin's Michelle O' Neill. Then he greeted the Sinn Féin Lord Mayor of Belfast and the Sinn Féin MP for North Belfast, John Finucane.

In contrast, shortly after the accession to the throne of his late mother, Queen Elizabeth II, seventy years previously, Sinn Féin was banned by the then Unionist dominated Stormont government.

But things change - the most recent powerful agent of such change being the 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement, accepted by overwhelming majorities on both sides of the border. It not only laid down a political road forward but also a peaceful democratic pathway to a United Ireland, based on consent and subject to referendums of the people, north and south.

Since Brexit, there has been an ever-growing debate in both public and private spheres on Irish Unity across the island and there's hardly a media outlet or platform that has escaped such discourse. There are frequent opinion polls on the subject, with increasingly narrow margins on the option for unity, and there is a growing body of research on the issues and the mechanics involved.

One of Ireland's leading investigative journalists, with a lifetime's coverage of and involvement in trade unionism, politics and culture, Frank Connolly is uniquely placed to reflect this growing discourse on change in his recently published book "United Nation - The Case For Integrating Ireland".

Within its 400 pages there are the voices of nationalists and unionists, politicians and trade unionists, actors, singers and poets, many of them household names, some less well known but whose views are no less valuable and thought provoking for that.

Principal among the former group is President Michael D Higgins who notes that neither state has served its citizens well since partition and argues that the future for Ireland "isn't a continuity or a simple modification of what happened North or South. What is necessary is a transcendental leap that passes the excesses of both of these great institutional failures".

Connolly also points out that in

Within its 400 pages there are the voices of nationalists and unionists, politicians and trade unionists, actors, singers and poets

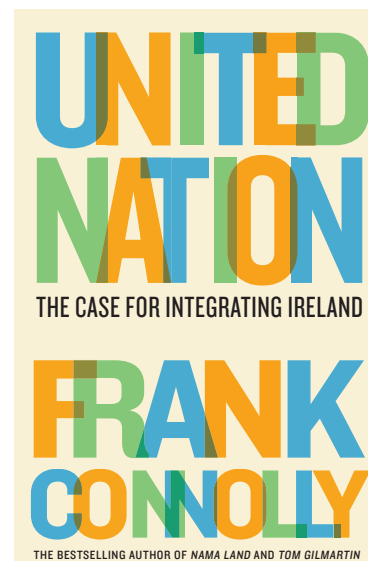
the President's view "the discussion on the future of the island has to include consideration of universal basic services to remove the insecurities facing working people, including the curse of low-paid, precarious workers".

Others echo that view, seeking to place the needs of working people at the heart of any discussion. Patricia King, General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), speaking personally, argues that "We need to get into a place where we identify the social and economic issues that need to be addressed in both jurisdictions and where we can establish beyond doubt that having one economy and one society is better and more pleasing for the population than having a divided economy and a divided society".

While the ICTU itself does not advocate for constitutional change or for the status quo it nevertheless adopted a motion at its most recent Biennial Delegate Conference to prepare in advance for any referendums by identifying the key concerns of working people.

On the political front, there are some surprising voices (to some) heard here as well. Gavin Robinson, DUP MP and his former leader Peter Robinson (no relation) are recorded as having called upon their colleagues to prepare unionists for the debate.

However, not all of their colleagues appear to be of the same view. The book recalls an RTÉ Prime Time discussion in 2021 when DUP MP Gregory Campbell appeared less than enthusiastic. On the other hand, GAA pundit and barrister Joe Brolly was uncer-



emoniously dumped off the show for calling out the DUP in what some might regard as a case of post-colonial cringe.

Away from the front line there are other, interesting commentators such as British Army veteran Glen Bradley from the unionist Woodvale area of Belfast who calls for a roadmap of how any constitutional change would come about, pointing out that creating a new Ireland is not a republican project.

From the Arts there are those such as actors James Nesbitt, Adrian Dunbar and Stephen Rea as well as singer Christy Moore and poet Paula Meehan. Another artist, Scottish singer Eddi Reader, herself from a strong Labour background and whose grand-uncle Seamus Reader was an associate of James Connolly, is a passionate supporter of independence for Scotland. If that were to be achieved it would send shock

waves through the British establishment and likely heralding the end of the Union. The resultant after effect on the North could be equally seismic.

This is a must read for all those interested or involved in the current debate on the future of our island, not least because of the authors' inclusion of lesser known voices but, most importantly, the voice of Labour and the concerns of working people.

In addressing the issue of institutional change generally President Higgins refers to the Greek word 'ou topos', or Utopia, meaning a better place.

"We need to have the courage

This is a must read for all those interested or involved in the current debate on the future of our island

and find that better place", he tells Connolly.

If that better place is in a United Ireland then it needs to be one based on the concerns and needs of ordinary working people.

Mick Halpenny

Debut novel: Stolen Faith

Jim McVeigh's debut novel, *Stolen Faith*, is a thriller that deals with the issue of Ireland's mother and baby homes and, in particular, the scandal of illegal adoptions to the US.

It is a tragic love story that begins in Belfast in 1944 and moves to modern day Boston.

A thriller with plenty of twists and turns, it tells the story of a young Belfast

woman who falls in love with a US soldier in the North, becomes pregnant and is banished to Tuam in Galway to have her baby.

Her baby is stolen by the church and sold to a wealthy Irish American family in Boston.

What follows is one family's fight to find a stolen child, uncover the truth and hold the Catholic Church to account.

A work of fiction, it could also be the story of any one of those young women who were cast out by their families and sent to one of these terrible homes.

Published by Brandon, an imprint of O'Brien Press it is available in most book shops and on Amazon.

Jim McVeigh is a SIPTU Organiser.



Ukraine's EU candidate status must also respect workers

Last June, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and its members warmly welcomed the decision to grant Ukraine EU candidate status. That is a long-time aspiration of Ukrainian workers who are sacrificing their lives, health and wellbeing in the fight for democracy and sovereignty against Russian aggression.

Ukrainian trade unions are actively helping to deal with the humanitarian crisis provoked by it, while European and international trade union movement has mobilised funds and solidarity aid for workers in Ukraine, but also to millions of refugees fleeing in EU countries. Trade union facilities and offices host tens of thousands of displaced people, and trade union activists coordinate the provision of material aid to those in need, and the organisation of deliveries of vital goods and products.

However, we regret that the Ukrainian government and the majority party in the Ukrainian Parliament, the Rada, are acting against the EU's values of social dialogue and social rights. Ukraine will need unity for national reconstruction,



built on respect for labour rights and social dialogue as the basis for a new industrial and employment policy, including a revision of labour legislation.

But the actions of the government and the legislature are taking Ukraine in a different direction. On several occasions we communicated our concerns to the Ukrainian authorities and the EU institutions about a new regressive

Ukrainian trade unions are actively helping to deal with the humanitarian crisis

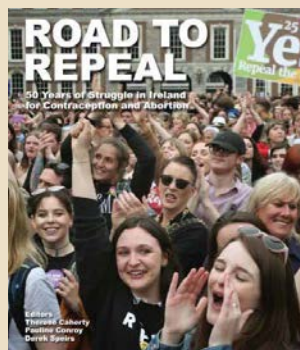
labour reform (Bill 5371) that would discriminate against workers in organisations with less than 250 employees and deprive them of labour protections, including collective labour rights. Despite that, the bill was supported by the Ukrainian parliament and came into effect. Its application will cause irreparable damage to the industrial relations in the country, by creating a two-tier labour market and establishing incentives for employers to split organisations into smaller legal entities at the expense of workers' and trade union rights. In addition, other legal initiatives have been pushed through the Parliament despite martial law, in the conditions when social dialogue is not functioning and collective actions are prohibited.

This is a new stage in the persistent attack on workers' rights and trade unions of Ukraine that precedes the Russian aggression. The trade unions of Ukraine face anti-social legislation, defamation campaigns and abuse against trade union leaders, interference in trade union activities, and attempts to seize trade union properties that are currently used to shelter thousands of internal refugees.

The government of Ukraine has been preparing a plan to rebuild Ukraine after the war. We greatly appreciate the leading role of the EU in this huge task and we expect that the reconstruction will not be limited to restoration buildings, enterprises and transport infrastructure, but will involve the comprehensive revision of all aspects of the functioning of Ukraine as a state. That is a unique chance for the country to build democracy and freedom, a social market economy and the well-being of its people, guaranteeing their rights. We are willing to contribute to this mission, which should also guide Ukraine's integration into the EU. But we regret that the government so far has shown no intention of including social partners in the development of the reconstruction project, although they will be key to reconstruct the country.

The reconstruction process should also foresee a revision of labour legislation, with full participation of the representative trade unions and with full respect of the national social dialogue and international obligations of Ukraine. The ETUC is ready to contribute to that process with its expertise.

50 Years of Struggle in Ireland for Contraception and Abortion



Edited by: **Therese Caherty, Pauline Conroy, Derek Speirs**
Lilliput Press

In *Road to Repeal: 50 Years of Struggle in Ireland for Contraception and Abortion*, the editors Therese Caherty and Pauline Conroy, along with photographer Derek Speirs, look back on the journey of the Eighth Amendment.

Road to Repeal: 50 Years of Struggle in Ireland for Contraception and Abortion

opens in 1970 when the Irish Women's Liberation Movement burst onto the streets and screens of a society bewildered by women demanding equal status in the home and in the workplace. It tracks the bitter backlash to their successes that culminated in the Eighth Amendment's fixture in the Irish Constitution in 1983.

Over five decades, *Road to Repeal* describes and depicts individual tragedy, referendums, court cases, the actions of a misogynist Church and State. It shines a light on the journey of thousands of women and girls who braved stigma and hardship, often travelling alone and anonymously for medical treatment they were denied in Ireland. *Road to Repeal* closes with the visually dazzling *Together For Yes* campaign whose determination and grit finally got rid of the Eighth Amendment, Article 40.3.3 on May 25th, 2018.

Mass graves found as Russian forces retreat

A mass burial site in a forest outside the Ukrainian city of Iziium has been witnessed by journalists from Associated Press (AP), according to the Guardian newspaper on Friday, 16th June.

This follows an apparent disorderly retreat by thousands of Russian soldiers from the area over previous days and reports that they left significant amounts of military hardware as they departed.

According to AP, hundreds of graves with simple wooden crosses, most of them marked only with numbers, were found in the forest. A larger grave bore a marker saying it contained the bodies of 17 Ukrainian soldiers. Meanwhile, the European Trade



Oleg Kotenko, the Commissioner for Issues of Missing Persons under Special Circumstances looks at the unidentified graves of civilians and Ukrainian soldiers in the recently retaken area of Iziium. Photograph: Evgeniy Maloletka/AP

Union Confederation (ETUC) has criticised the Ukraine government of suppressing trade unions and their members as the

war drags on with no sign of meaningful negotiations for resolution on the political horizon.

Save Moore Street Concert



Damien Dempsey, Éamonn de Barra, Louise and Michelle Mulcahy and Paddy Casey performed in Liberty Hall on 11th August to raise funds for the campaign to save the Moore Street historic quarter in Dublin from the developers wrecking ball.



Monument honour for 'Mother and Father of all the Behans'

A MONUMENT honouring the parents of artists and political activists Brendan, Dominic and Brian Behan was unveiled at Deansgrange Cemetery, Dublin, on 23rd July.

Relatives of their mum and dad, Kathleen and Stephen, joined union activists for the ceremony.

Members of the Irish National Painters & Decorators Trade Union Group (INP&DTG) – which has had a long association with the Behan family – also attended the event.

The Behan brothers were among the leading cultural figures to emerge from the Dublin working class in the 20th century, with Brendan producing works including *Borstal Boy* and *The Hostage*, Dominic songs including *Come Out You Black and Tans* and *Liverpool Lou*, and Brian plays including *Mother of All The Behans*.

All three were active in left-wing politics. Historian Donal Fallon spoke about the cultural importance of the Behan family at the unveiling.

At a social event held later in the Eblana Club, Dun Laoghaire, labour historian Padraig Yeates led a dis-



INP&DTG members at the unveiling ceremony in July

cussion on the Behans, including their close relative Peadar Kearney – Kathleen's brother – who wrote the national anthem *The Soldier's Song*.

The evening events were chaired by former SIPTU President Des Geraghty and included performances by musician and singer Daóiri Farrell. In an event befitting the Behan family many joined in the singing and craic.

Liberty Hall Theatre Listings

Aladdin
PURE GENIE-US OF A PANTO

SOMETHING MAGICAL IS COMING THIS DECEMBER
The Liberty Panto 2022
December 21–30 Bookings on 087 245 0095
www.LibertyPanto.com

ACE & DEUCE OF PIPING

Jarlath Henderson
UILLEANN PIPES

Sorcha Costello
FIDDLE

Elaine Reilly
BANDJO

Catherine McHugh
PIANO

Ciarán Mac Fheidhlimidh
UILLEANN PIPES

Ciarán O Maonaigh
FIDDLE

Steve Cooney
GUITAR

Deirdre Collis
ACCORDION & TIN WHISTLE

Mary Corcoran
PIANO

Ellie Nic Fhionnghaile
SONG

Aine Ni Bhreisleáin
MC

8.00pm, Saturday 1st October 2022
Liberty Hall Theatre, Dublin

Tickets €25 (Senior/Student/Unwaged €20) Family ticket €70 (admits 4)
On sale at www.pipers.ie or aceanddeuce.eventbrite.ie or phone: 01 8750095

arts 70 NPU PÍOBAIRÍ UILLEANN

For Liberty Hall Theatre bookings contact Laura Woods, E-mail : lwoods@siptu.ie or Tel: 01 858 6354 for more information.

Gateway to the West



Shannon Airport is the key international gateway into the West of Ireland and beyond. In a further boost to the range of services provided by the Airport a direct flight route to Orly Airport, near Paris, began on 12th September.

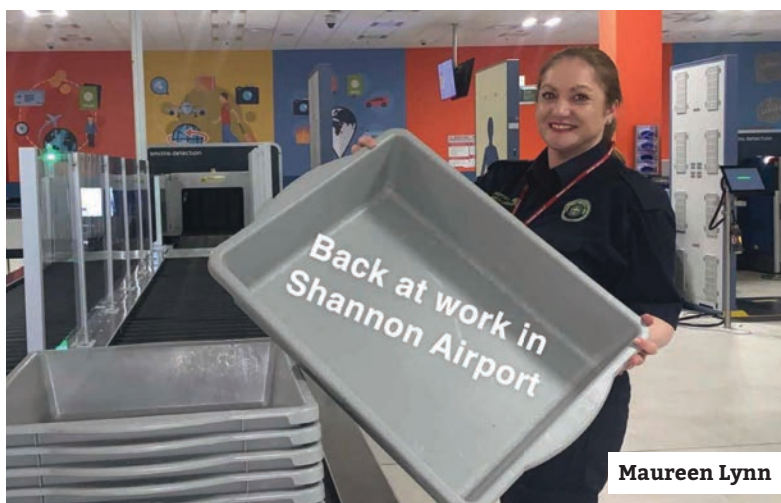
The airport now provides services to airports across the US, UK and Europe. Orly Airport is the nearest airport to the centre of Paris. It is the second largest airport in France and provides hub connectivity with onward connections to major European cities and Middle Eastern countries.

Commenting on the new route,

interests in the region. Paris is one of the most popular cities in the world and we know this will be an exciting destination for our passengers to enjoy."

The winter schedule at Shannon Airport begins on 31st October and includes daily flights to Boston and New York with Aer Lingus, six flights each day to London and in addition to the link with Orly new routes also to Malta and Marseille.

In order to service the growing number of routes and passengers, Shannon Airport has expanded its airport security team. Since March this year, the airport has recruited a total of 19 new Airport Screening Unit (ASU) officers to add to its



Maureen Lynn

Shannon Group CEO, Mary Considine said: "We are delighted to welcome our new carrier Vueling, part of IAG, to Shannon Airport. This service is another major boost for inbound and outbound business and tourism

existing team. The new recruits hail from Limerick, Clare, Galway, Lithuania, Poland, and as far away as Bangladesh and New Zealand.

The new officers have undergone training, which includes how to operate the

The airport now provides services to airports across the US, UK and Europe

airport's state-of-the-art 3D x-ray screening system. The high-tech system has in-built explosive detection software, that eliminates

the need for passengers to separate liquids and electronics from their cabin bags. Shannon is the first state airport to introduce this new technology which halves the time spent going through screening.

Shannon Airport Head of Security John Francis said: "We are committed to making our passenger's journey at Shannon Airport, as easy as possible. The new recruits have undergone intensive training in all aspects of airport security to prepare them for this extremely important role, as we continue to invest in our screening process."

This year the Shannon Airport Group also announced its sponsorship of the Women's Irish Open taking place at Dromoland

Castle Hotel and Country Club, county Clare, on 22nd to 24th September.

SIPTU Organiser, Rachael Keane, said: "Shannon Airport is a vital resource for our nation and for communities in the mid-west and along the west coast. SIPTU members work across a range of different areas in the airport, such as security, administration, the fire service and more. You'll probably meet some of them if you travel through Shannon Airport this summer."

She added: "Our members are delighted to have the Shannon Airport as a member of the Supporting Quality campaign, which aims to assist in protecting quality union jobs in our communities."

Diploma Graduates in SIPTU Workers Rights Centre

A number of colleagues Des Courtney, Aine Feeney, Joanna Ozdarska, Marie O' Connor, Andrea Cleere, Victoria Stephens, in our Legal Rights Unit Roisin Boyle and the unions Divisions Robbie Purfield and Rachel Keane are due to be conferred in December following their successful completion of the

Professional Diploma in Employment Law from UCD. Attached is a photo of the colleagues attending their last lecture on 27th April. This was given by John Hendy QC (also pictured) and it was entitled "Collective Bargaining and the Law". Also in the picture is Anthony Kerr who lectured on the course.



SIPTU Sector Organiser Deirdre Canty (right), who graduated from NUIG on Friday 26th August having completed a law degree.



Vital link between Ireland and the world...



SUPPORTING QUALITY has welcomed Dublin Port Company (DPC) into the campaign. A State-owned commercial company, it is responsible for operating and developing Dublin Port.

The first port authority was established in 1707. And some 300 years later, Dublin Port Company is the largest freight and passenger port in Ireland with all its cargo-handling activities carried out by private sector firms.

Dublin Port is the leading facility among the five major ports classified in National Port Policy and is categorised as a core port in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T), a planned network of roads, railways, airports and water infrastructure across the European Union.

The facility's large share of national port volumes is due to two principal factors – location and depth of water. Dublin Port is a key part of the national port system and DPC seeks to ensure that it plays its role in providing national port capacity.

Dublin Port handles almost 50% of all trade in the Republic of Ireland. Located in the heart of Dublin City – and at the hub of the national road and rail network – it is a key strategic access point for Ireland and, in particular, the Dublin area.

Supporting Quality and DPC

DUBLIN Port Company is delighted to lend its backing to Supporting Quality – a joint initiative of the three trade unions that count DPC employees as members, SIPTU, Connect and Unite.

Dublin Port Company Head of HR, Ursula Sherlock, told Liberty: "Core to the mission of HR in

DPC is to create a positive employment relationship between management and employees and their representatives in a climate of mutual trust, equality and respect.

"We are delighted to extend our network to include Supporting Quality which promotes the same values."

Bringing our city's history back to life

THE Dublin Port Archive covers the history of the port from 1707, offering a unique insight into how Dublin Port shaped Dublin city.

The archive comprises 75,000 photographs, 30,000 engineering drawings, 600 historical registers, yearbooks dating back to 1926 along with a 'Name Book' for employees from 1906 to 1925. The

collections from the archive are currently being catalogued. The Dublin Port Digital Archive is an online resource and contains examples drawn from the collections as well as a searchable database of handwritten records from the 'Name Book' for employees from 1906-1914. For more information go to www.dublinportarchive.com

Enhancing safety at work: Dublin Port's EHS team



Enhancing safety at the port

CENTRAL to the Dublin Port Company's mission is to ensure the port is a safe and healthy work environment, with a commitment to ensuring the safety of its employees and other persons affected by its activities.

The Dublin SafePort initiative was set up to enhance safety culture and practice for all workers in Dublin Port.

Launched in 2022, the initiative is the result of extensive collaboration

between Dublin Port Company and the seven unitised terminal operators at Dublin Port who account for an estimated 75% of port workers on the estate.

This port-wide initiative will see DPC and the terminal operators increase their collaboration to align and standardise safety practices and procedures across the 261-hectare port estate.

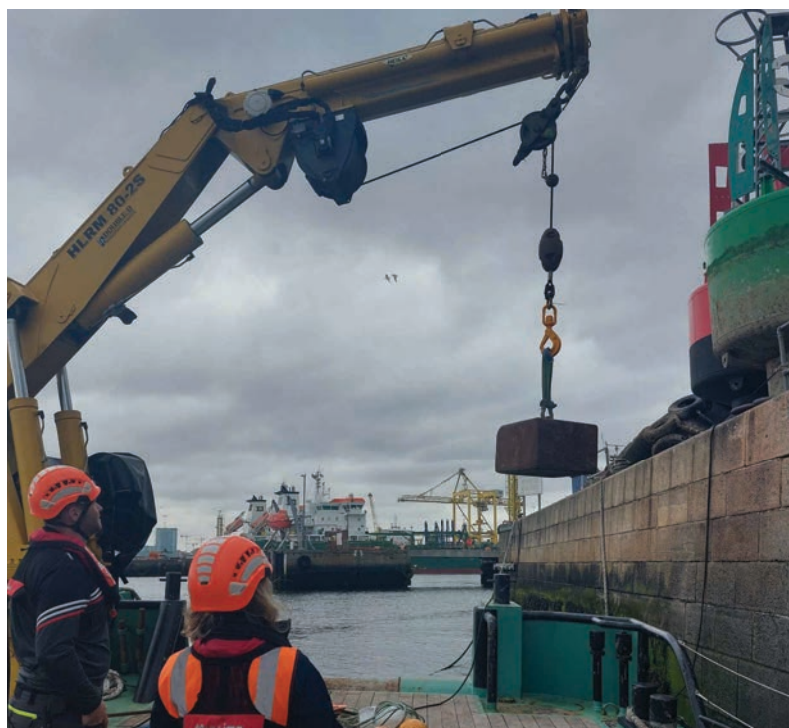
For more information go to www.dublinport.ie/dublin-safeport

To 2040 and beyond

DUBLIN Port is constantly changing and evolving to fulfil its role as the key transport infrastructure asset for Ireland.

The 3FM Project is the third and final Masterplan project needed to complete the development of Dublin Port and bring it to its ultimate and final capacity by 2040.

It focuses on development in the south port area, known as the Poolbeg Peninsula, which contains nearly one-fifth of the Dublin Port estate. For more information go to <http://www.dublinport3fm.ie/>



€1,000 voucher scheme could be of major benefit to workers

RAISING the annual tax-free cap on gift vouchers given as rewards to workers from €500 to €1,000 would be of major benefit to SIPTU members, according to Me2You, the only Irish-owned and unionised gift card providers.

Among the Me2You team is Pat Daly, who was formerly a long-serving SIPTU shop steward in a large multi-national company.

He told Liberty: "SIPTU has publicly called for the cap on such rewards for workers to rise. It is hoped that Budget 2023 will include this measure. Providing gift vouchers is the most tax-efficient way to reward staff for employers, and results in more value for workers."

"That Me2You is a SIPTU-organised workplace, which has developed its links with the union over recent years and is a member of the Supporting Quality campaign, means it is the obvious card for shop stewards to recommend during negotiations on pay. It is also the simplest card to use in the Irish market as it does not require a PIN."

He added: "If a shop steward is in negotiations, I would encourage them to consider seeking reward and recognition payments as vouchers rather than cash, where you will pay up to half of it back in tax. It is a way to ensure you get up to €500 – and perhaps shortly €1,000 – tax free, into the hands of your members." "Shop stewards should also talk to their HR officials during talks and ask them to try Me2You. Once they have started utilising them, I think they will want to stay with it."

He added: "We are also the only voucher which can be used in a nationwide fuel chain and uniquely in local businesses which have also signed up to the scheme."

In April, SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, Gerry McCormack, called for the value of the vouchers permitted to double from €500 as workers struggle to cope with energy hikes. He said higher-value vouchers could be used as bargaining tools with employers where pay deals that do not keep pace with inflation have already been agreed.

Me2You Managing Director, John Wall, said: "Our company is constantly developing new products to make our cards work as even better rewards for workers. These include the development of a Recognition and Reward Employee Engagement



A Me2You gift card can be used in more than 5,000 local stores across the country, including; Smyths Toys, Tesco, Applegreen service stations, Arnotts, Penneys, Brown Thomas, Harvey Norman, Compu b (now Select), Currys PC World, Boots, M&S, TK Maxx plus so many more. The large selection of retail partners means that there is something for everyone, whether it is used for everyday essentials or more luxury purchases.



Software, which allows for a joint employer and worker reward system to be established. ("The cards are also usable in the Bike2You scheme which is run in conjunction with the bike to work scheme) Me2You also operate a bike to work scheme, Bikes2You.ie. We have also established local card schemes in Carlow, Athlone and Laois and elsewhere which ensure that monies provided are spent with retailers within the local economy."

To win a €100 Me2You Gift Card answer these three questions:

- 1) Which Irish-owned leading toy store chain accepts Me2You cards?
- 2) Is Me2You cards a member of the Supporting Quality campaign?
- 3) Which union organises workers in Me2You?

Send your answers, email, and workplace address to:

Retail@Me2You.ie

Entering this competition will result in your inclusion for contact by Me2You concerning the benefits of gifts cards being used to reward employee performance.

Entries to be in by 31st October 2022!



Each employee can get up to €500 Tax Free once per year. Me2You is the only Irish owned Multi-Store Gift Card

Exclusively Accepted in Tesco, Smyths Toys, Supermac's, Applegreen and many more exclusives across Thousands of Stores Nationwide

Gift cards are becoming a popular aspect of pay negotiations for companies of all sizes, from large multi-nationals to smaller SME's

Here are some ideas...

- Pay Negotiations
- Christmas Gifts
- Good Attendance
- Long Service Awards
- Company Milestones/Achievements
- Health and Safety - Good Catch
- Employee Referral
- Reward and Recognition
- Good Suggestions
- Customer Service Awards
- Labour Court Recommendations
- Relocation Incentive
- Clothing Allowances



SIPTU members can avail Free Postage & Packing
Use offer code: SIPTU19 Valid Until 20/12/19

Some of our many thousands of shops, hotels and experiences throughout Ireland



For information on the Small Benefit Exemption contact Pat Daly on 085-1540673 / pat.daly@me2you.ie or contact 01-5542000 / sales@me2you.ie

Dublin Bus recruitment drive

Ireland's largest public transport provider, Dublin Bus, is seeking to recruit drivers, engineering operatives, heavy vehicle mechanics and dedicated workers for other roles in its fully unionised workforce.

In total, the company is looking to recruit 450 drivers and 50 mechanics and engineering operatives, as well as additional clerical positions, in what will be the organisation's biggest recruitment drive since 1989, to enable the projected growth and development of the organisation.

SIPTU Dublin Bus Traffic Committee President, Stephen Millane, said: "There is no other job quite like it as drivers are immersed in city life on a daily basis. The newly

recruited drivers and mechanics, who will be paid while in training, will join their colleagues in connecting people and communities with new routes, buses and technologies to meet transport needs into the future for Dublin."

He added: "Dublin Bus is also a proud member of the Supporting Quality campaign and all new employees are encouraged to join a union. The company has a long history of collective bargaining agreements in which worker representatives seek to ensure that the best possible conditions and rates of pay are enshrined."

Aside from a competitive average salary of up to €42,000 annually, the packages include a mentoring programme to help career progression, paid maternity



and paternity for all employees including same sex couples, gym access, subsidised GP medical scheme and employee assistance scheme with free counselling sessions, access to an education support scheme for those going to third level study, free bus travel and much more.

A former stay at home mother for 16 years, recent recruit and SIPTU member, Angela O'Callaghan, decided to return to the work-

force in 2019 but wanted to do something "empowering, engaging and challenging". She said: "Dublin Bus delivered on all three! Sometimes I pinch myself when I see the bus and think 'Wow I can drive that!' Anyone who enjoys driving and meeting people will love it."

In 2021, Dublin Bus topped the list of companies in 'Ireland's 150 Best Employers Guide'. The company has long been recognised as

having one of the most inclusive and diverse workplaces. It currently employs almost 3,700 people, including over 2,700 bus drivers and 500 engineering employees, representing 73 different countries. By 2027, Dublin Bus expects to introduce an additional 330 buses to respond to the anticipated rise in demand for services and to support the delivery of Bus Connects, one of the biggest investments in public transport in the history of the state.

Carrying 142 million customers annually (pre-pandemic), the recruitment drive will allow the company to fulfil its commitment to delivering increased frequency and capacity to meet the demand for sustainable public transport. Dublin Bus is a key enabler in helping Ireland to meet its sustainability targets; not just in terms of moving people out of cars onto public transport but also in terms of its own ambitious carbon reduction targets announced in 2021 in its Sustainability Report.

For more information and to apply for a position in Dublin Bus visit www.dublinbus.ie



Bus Átha Cliath
Dublin Bus

Pilgrim's Food Masters joins Supporting Quality

The owner of the Denny and Galtee brands, Pilgrim's Food Masters, has joined the Supporting Quality campaign which ensures that the finest products are produced in the best workplaces in Ireland.

Pilgrim's Food Masters manages leading consumer brands such as Denny, Galtee, Shaw's and Ballyfree and manufacturers many private label products for leading supermarkets, including sliced cooked meats and breakfast meats at its facilities in Shillelagh, county Wicklow.

The company was established following the acquisition of the Kerry Group consumer foods, meats and meals business in 2021 by Pilgrim's Pride Corporation, which operates processing plants and prepared-food facilities in the US, Puerto Rico, Mexico, the UK, Ireland and continental Europe.



General Manager of the Pilgrims Food Masters plant in Shillelagh, Joe Brien, said: "Our people are our greatest strength. We have long standing and deep connections across our local communities, with generations of families as part of our superb team. It is their talent, hard work, skill and enthusiasm that allows our business to make great products for our customers and consumers

through our fantastic brands like Denny, Galtee, Ballyfree, Shaws and Fridge Raiders."

He added: "We put our customers at the heart of everything we do, so we can continue to deliver high quality products in Ireland for generations to come and we are proud to be part of the Supporting Quality Campaign."

SIPTU Organiser, Jason Palmer, said: "Organised workplaces with good collective agreements ensure the best working conditions for workers which in turn provides the conditions for the manufacture of the best products. SIPTU members employed by Pilgrim's Food Masters are proud that the company has signed up to the Supporting Quality campaign which guarantees consumers the best products produced in workplaces with the best conditions for workers."





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Rovers and Bohs — Football success and building a New World

By Kevin Brannigan

AS THE latest version of the League of Ireland rounds the corner for home, season 2022 will be remembered as another year of subplots: Damien Duff at Shelbourne, airport chaos impacting the fixture list and snakey managerial moves, but also one of European success.

As Shamrock Rovers close in on their third league title in a row, 20 over-all, the establishment of the UEFA Conference League seems to have almost guaranteed the league winners group-stage European football.

As Shamrock Rovers close in on their third league title in a row, 20 over-all, the establishment of the UEFA Conference League seems to have almost guaranteed the league winners group-stage European football.

In the past, European football had been a siren call upon which club owners and directors have scuttled historic names, but now it just requires a league win and victory in a two-legged tie.

A league win comes at a price and continuous on-field success for Shamrock Rovers has allowed them to stack the player pool in their favour.

Regular Conference League qualification will dramatically alter the landscape here. For instance, Rovers have already banked a guaranteed €3.3 million by qualifying for the group stages, and will earn another €500,000 for every group game they win, and €166,000 for a draw.

To put it this way, Rovers would need to win five league titles to outstrip the prize money on offer for a single win across their six group games in this year's European campaign.

This feels like an era-changing moment for the League and the FAI. Dublin's recent dominance of inter-county Gaelic Football saw boredom and apathy creep into other counties' players and sup-



Activist Anita Chitaya (left) in *Ants and the Grasshopper*, featured in the Bohemian Environmental Justice Film Festival

We began working on climate justice at Bohemian FC because we recognised climate crisis was the single greatest challenge facing our fans, our community, and the world today



Bohs Climate Justice Officer Seán McCabe



Workers labour under a blistering sun building a football stadium in Qatar. The Guardian reported that 6,500 migrant workers have died during the construction effort

porters – what fun is a competition where the trophy is held in perpetuity by its wealthiest member?

The phrase "a rising tide" comes easily to the conversation but football operates in perhaps the most extreme version of the free market and the trickle-down economics theory has long been disproven, yet still practised and preached.

How the FAI navigates one of its subjects becoming more economically sound than itself and racing past fellow League members is a headache fans of all clubs will hope they have prepared for.

It's impossible to think of European football in 2022 without acknowledging the spectre of war which hangs over the whole continent.

Russia's clubs are banned from competing in European competition while Ukraine's club teams compete against their European counterparts from adopted homes in Poland. Heroically, the Ukrainian domestic league has re-started within the country's borders, but is operating behind closed doors.

Putin's war has forced tens of thousands of refugees to flee Ukraine, many of whom have

found themselves in Ireland, some finding refuge with host families, while others have landed inside our broken Direct Provision system, alongside refugees fleeing war and climate disaster the world over.

Once again fans of clubs from Dublin to Cork have stepped up where they can, with Bohemians continuing their volunteer-led Direct Provision outreach by running a bus from centres in Dublin to Dalymount Park and also organising a Christmas Toy Drive, with the aim of making sure each child in Direct Provision has presents to

wake up to on Christmas morning.

This September, Bohs also launched the Bohemian Environmental Justice Film Festival (BEFF). Speaking about the festival, Bohemians' Climate Justice Officer Seán McCabe said: "We began working on climate justice at Bohemian FC because we recognised that the climate crisis was the single greatest challenge facing our fans, our community, and the world today.

"We also realise that both the impacts and the societal changes necessary to avoid the crisis come with risks of hardship and injustice for people living in situations of poverty or marginalisation. We also understand the risks posed to workers in fossil fuel-intensive sectors.

"The world is waking up to the need to act on the climate crisis, but there is still a lack of understanding as to the central importance of fairness and justice in delivering effective solutions."

He added: "The Bohemian Environmental Justice Film Festival allows us to shine a light on the importance of ensuring that that action is fair and inclusive of all people. We were delighted with the success of the inaugural festival and hope to develop it into a permanent fixture."

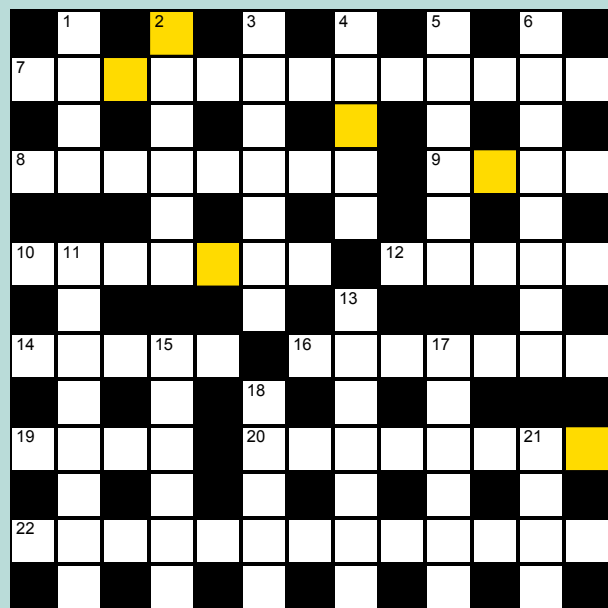
Meanwhile, this winter the World Cup in Qatar will prove a welcome distraction to talk of war and climate disaster, but it's a distraction built on the blood of workers.

In February 2021, The Guardian reported that 6,500 migrant workers from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have died during construction of stadiums.

Fans at clubs here have shown that football can be a part of building a new world rather than be an instrument in destroying the one we have.

Liberty Crossword

PRIZE DRAW
To win a hamper to the value of €200
courtesy of MARSH (see back cover)



ACROSS

- 7 Non-sustainable business model (7,6)
- 8 Required (8)
- 9 Scandinavian city (4)
- 10 Lift (7)
- 12 Death row reprieves (5)
- 14 Founded by Larkin and Connolly (5)
- 16 State created in UK after 1945 (7)
- 19 Male ruler (4)
- 20 Make vision possible (8)
- 22 Causes a sore throat (13)

DOWN

- 1 Crucial in Holland (4)
- 2 North of the USA (6)
- 3 Mix of Hebrew and German (7)
- 4 "All kidding ____..." (5)
- 5 Essential to swallow (6)
- 6 Organised by IBEC (8)
- 11 Place their country first (8)
- 13 An argument in support (7)
- 15 Composed the Ride of the Valkyries (6)
- 17 Home of the Franks (6)
- 18 Home of St. Johnstone FC (5)
- 21 Funding advance (4)

*Correctly fill in the crossword to reveal the hidden word, contained by reading the letters in the shaded squares from top to bottom.

Email the hidden word to communications@siptu.ie or post to Communications Dept., Liberty Hall, Dublin 1 along with your name and address and you will be entered into a prize draw to win a hamper to the value of €200 the winner of the crossword quiz will be published in the next edition of Liberty.

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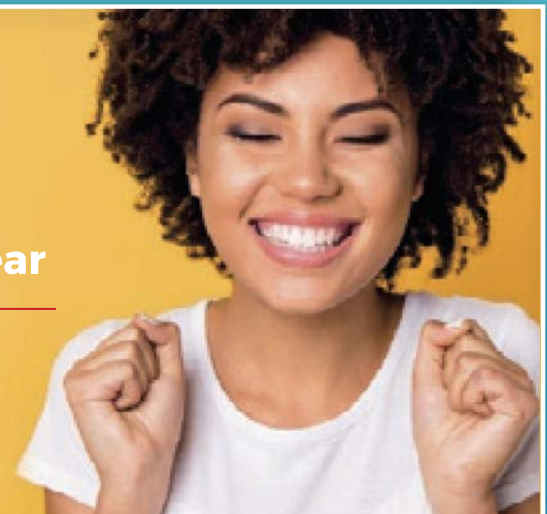
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