

Liberty

Vol. 20 No 1

February 2023

ISSN 0791-458X

**Major win for
Roadbridge workers**

Page 5

**Valuing Care,
Valuing Community**

Page 16-17

**Earthquake disaster
in Turkey and Syria**

Page 24-25

Rebuild our community sector

by Scott Millar

Community workers across the country are demanding change in their sector and arguing that years of government neglect are undermining social cohesion and increasing underdependency in some neighbourhoods.

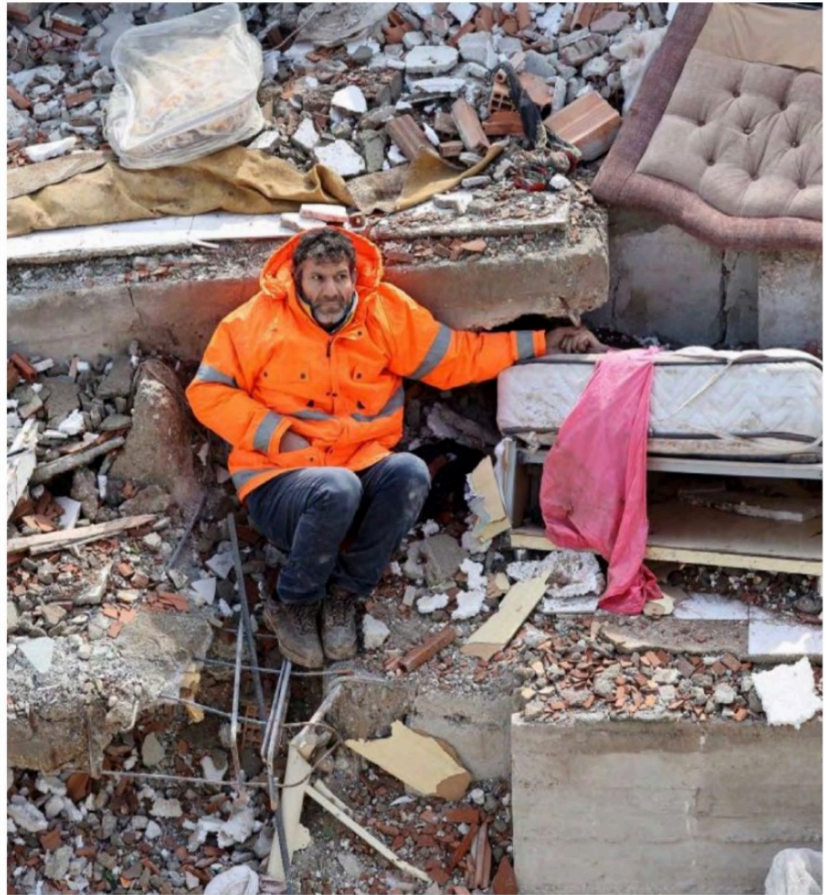
SIPTU member and Inner-City Organisations Network (ICON) co-ordinator, Sián Muldowney, said: "The last few years have seen an acceleration of the move of the sector away from a focus on community development towards service delivery. This amounts to the focus of organisations in our sector being moved to engagement with individuals rather than the wider building of social networks and empowerment of communities."

She added: "A decreased level of funding has become increasingly dependent on adhering to this service delivery model, adding to an increasing sense of turmoil and dismay in the very communities which gave rise to our sector in previous decades."

The 1980s and 1990s saw the development of a vibrant state-funded community development, anti-poverty and equality sector which built on community and citizen involvement of the 1960s and 1970s.

State supported and funded community empowerment and capacity building encouraged local communities to participate in decisions, generate leadership and develop projects in response to social needs. European Union (EU) poverty and community programmes gave important support and funding, Muldowney said.

Continued on page 2



Mesut Hançer holds the hand of his deceased 15-year-old daughter, Irmak in the southern Turkish town of Kahramanmaraş on Tuesday, 7th February. Photo: Adem Altan/AFP/Getty Images. See pages 24-25.



WORKERS RIGHTS CENTRE

1800 747 881

8.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.,
Monday - Friday
wrc@siptu.ie

'Workers Demand Better'
Page 5



Hospital protest
Page 6



Private Sector Pay deals
Page 8-9



Liberty View
Page 15



Supporting Quality - Irish Rail
Page 22



Obituary Robert Navan
Page 28



Sport
Page 30



Editor: Frank Connolly, SIPTU Head of Communications
Journalist: Scott Millar
Design: Sonia Slevin (SIPTU), Joe Mitchell (Brazier Media)
Administrative Assistant: Karen Hackett
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
SIPTU General Secretary, Joe Cunningham • Deputy General Secretary, Ethel Buckley • Deputy General Secretary, John King • Deputy General Secretary, Gerry McCormack
Production: SIPTU Communications Department, Liberty Hall, Dublin 1, Tel: 01 8588217 • Email: communications@siptu.ie

Information campaign on dangers of Silica dust for construction workers

A leaflet highlighting the dangers of silica dust and measures that can be taken to prevent them is being distributed by the TUF Group of Unions, which includes SIPTU, BATU and Connect, to construction workers across the country.

The Silica Dust: Employee Information Sheet outlines the dangers for construction workers of Respirable Crystalline Silica, a naturally occurring substance found in varying amounts in most rocks, sand and clay. It is also a major constituent of construction materials such as bricks, tiles, concrete, mortar and engineered stone.

Silica dust can cause serious lung disease such as silicosis and cancer. Once inside the lungs, it may cause inflammation and gradually lead to fibrosis. The amounts needed to cause this damage are not large.

The leaflet was developed by a working group of the Construction Safety Partnership Advisory Committee, which is chaired by BATU Organiser, Andy Smith.

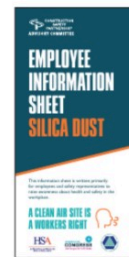
He said: "Silicosis can occur after only a few months of heavy exposure without proper control measures in place. The symptoms of silicosis include persistent coughs, shortness of breath and extreme tiredness."

He added: "To control the spread of silica dust, workers should use the correct equipment. For example, these include tools and equipment that have on-tool extraction to collect dust when cutting, drilling or chasing and using water suppression where possible as well as paver and block splitters rather than cutting."

SIPTU Organiser, Andrew McGuinness, said: "Respiratory protective equipment is the last line of defence for workers in relation to silica dust. Workers must

ensure their masks are of the proper standard, fit well and are changed when needed."

He added: "Along with the Health and Safety Authority and Construction Industry Federation, union organisers will be ensuring this leaflet is distributed widely to workers. We are also highlighting the role of the Construction Workers Health Trust in providing check-ups to workers."



Emergency plan needed to deal with staffing deficits in cancer services

SIPTU representatives have called on the HSE and the Minister of Health, Stephen Donnelly, to develop an emergency plan to deal with the deficits in cancer services resulting from a 30% shortfall in radiation therapists.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, John McCamley, said: "There are currently at least four cancer treatment machines that are not in operation around the country due to a lack of qualified radiation

therapists.

"These machines could treat around 30 patients a day meaning there may be as much as 120 cases not being dealt with on a daily basis due to staffing deficits. Radiation therapists perform a crucial job, as almost half of people with a cancer diagnosis will require radiation therapy as part of their treatment plan.

He added: "We have successfully argued for the setting up of the Radiation Therapist Review which

will hopefully recommend measures to improve recruitment and retention. The HSE and the Minister for Health need to act decisively to avert a full-blown staffing crisis within cancer services. Our members are calling for special provision to deal with the recruitment and retention issues for radiation therapists due to their crucial role in the delivery of cancer services."

Continued from page 1 — Rebuild our community sector

"This approach has been undermined by successive governments since the mid-2000s. When the recession hit in 2008, disproportionate and severe cuts of more than 35% were made to the sector's funding in contrast to 7% to other state funded services.

"During this period Community Development Projects and other local development programmes were ordered to desist from campaigning and advocacy. The language of "community development" was still used but it now referred to what is primarily market-driven work activation and training programmes that had effectively replaced grassroots local and community development projects," she said.

Muldowney added: "An important report on this process by community activists Patricia Kelleher and Cathleen O'Neill has highlighted the key role that trade

unions can have in re-energising the sector.

"The 2018 report found that some community activists now recognise that a strategic error was made in failing to develop, at an early stage, alliances across civil society including with trade councils and the broader trade union movement. This could have made the sector less susceptible to being neutralised by the state."

The crisis in the community sector has also been highlighted in a report by the Irish Network Against Racism (INAR) as having a role in recent social problems around migrants. INAR Director, Shane O'Curry, said: "Anger in several communities stems from cuts to services like community development as well as a lack of housing security, the cost-of-living crisis and job insecurity. All these factors are combining to make people's lives insecure and anxious,

which is making them feel frustrated, angry and disempowered."

The Government has recently launched a new pilot Community Development Programme involving seven organisations across the country including ICON, which, O'Curry said, is a belated recognition of its failed policies over the past decade and more.

SIPTU Community Sector Organiser, Brendan Carr, said: "Improvements in wages and conditions of workers in all the key community areas from youth services to rehab is only part of the jigsaw in putting this sector back into a positive position. SIPTU is seeking to play its role in the wider empowering and re-direction of the sector so it can again play a positive role in communities across the country."

Assaults on workers raised at Health Committee



By
Aideen
Carberry

ON February 8th, SIPTU's Health Division representatives, along with other health service unions, addressed the Joint Oireachtas Health Committee on the safety and welfare of healthcare workers.

The increasing number of assaults on health workers in particular has struck a chord with both public representatives and the wider public.

In his opening remarks to the Committee, SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Kevin Figgis, said: "We have provided statistical data on the incidence of assaults in the workplace on our members and the unequal treatment of benefits which are afforded to support workers by their employer, even if they are assaulted in the same incident as other grades of staff."

"After an assault in the workplace, support workers are classed as non-officers and are therefore distinguished at a lower rate of benefit than other grades deemed to be of officer status. The continued use of these types of policies



Photo from left to right: John McCamley, SIPTU Sector Organiser and Kevin Figgis, SIPTU Health Divisional Organiser outside the Dail on 8th February.

is shameful on the Health Service Executive and Department of Health – and must cease."

He explained that support grades – which include porters, healthcare assistants, catering staff, cleaning staff, paramedics and security staff in the public service – are only afforded 25 per cent of the fi-

nancial supports as some of their health service colleagues.

Figgis pointed out that was the case even when two staff members were assaulted in the same incident.

Committee member, Roisín Shortall TD, responded that this situation was "clearly very unfair".

Committee Chairperson, Seán Crowe TD, said, in his opinion, that it was "simply bizarre that in the 21st century, financial supports to staff assaulted in the



Roisín Shortall, TD

same incident could be different simply due to the staff members' job title," adding that he was "appalled" by the situation.

Senator Annie Hoey made the point that she imagined people listening to the proceedings would be "simply astonished" at the idea that there could be differences to the supports available to staff based on grade.

There was also positive engage-



Seán Crowe, TD

ment on the other areas raised by the union representatives, including concerns about how the HSE and public service employers were dealing with dignity-at-work complaints and grievances; the financial implications for health workers suffering from Long-Covid; and the need for safe staffing across all areas and grades within the health service.

Addressing the Oireachtas Committee was an opportunity for SIPTU representatives to raise issues of concern for union members.

Addressing the Oireachtas Committee was an opportunity for SIPTU representatives to raise issues of concern for union members

However, ongoing organising and campaigning will be needed to turn the political goodwill shown at the hearing into meaningful action by the Government and employers.

Rehab workers demand full redundancy pay

SIPTU members formally employed at the Rehab Enterprises logistics centre in Raheen, county Limerick, and their supporters protested outside the organisation's headquarters in Dublin on Monday, 13th February, to demand payment of outstanding redundancy pay.

After the Raheen facility was closed in 2021 the redundancy payments the workers received fell significantly short of those provided for in an existing collective agreement between the organisation and SIPTU. Rehab claimed that it could not meet the additional €900,000 required to pay the amounts that would have been due to staff, some of whom had more than 25 years service.

When the dispute, which involved 38 of the former workers, came before the Labour Court, a financial expert said Rehab had "options" it could explore to raise the money and so its claim of inability to pay could not be said



Former Rehab workers protest at company HQ in Park West in Dublin on Monday, 13th February

to have been successfully demonstrated.

The court ultimately said that it "could find no clear and undisputed basis not to uphold the parties' existing collective agreement and consequently recommends that it be respected until it is amended or terminated or replaced".

In a letter to the company, SIPTU Manufacturing Division Organiser,

Greg Ennis, said that Rehab is "in receipt of ongoing State funding and supports" and should pay its former staff what its owed to them.

SIPTU representatives have now called on the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, to intervene in the dispute to ensure the workers are paid the redundancy monies that are due to them.

Solidarity March

Ireland For All

Homes For All/Healthcare For All/
Services For All

Sat 18 Feb 1:30pm

Parnell Square to
the Custom House

Diversity Not Division

€2.5bn plan welcomed but more funding needed for fire services

SIPTU representatives have called for increased funding for the fire emergency service to go along with the €2.5 billion allocated to address housing defects to boost safety in the home.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Brendan O'Brien, said: "The announcement of €2.5 billion being made available to rectify defects in houses is a positive move by the Government that will contribute to the safety of the public and the workers who respond to fire emergencies.

"However, if we are serious about maximising home safety, this investment must be done in conjunction with ensuring we have a fully-funded and resourced fire emergency service."

SIPTU Dublin Fire Brigade Chair-

person, Mick Redmond, said: "This is a good investment for homeowners and tenants – but we need to also see an increase in investment in Dublin Fire Brigade.

"The men and women of Dublin Fire Brigade remain the last, best line of defence for the people of Dublin in fire emergency situations. However, these men and women are unfortunately still struggling with the challenges posed by under-staffing. This needs to be addressed."

Redmond added: "As the housing redress scheme will take a number of years to complete, it is important that the public knows the fire service is equipped to meet the risks posed by these defects, including proper resourcing to respond to emergencies and carry out risk assessments."

ETF and Europeche back forced labour regulation

THE European Transport Workers Federation (ETF) and Europeche have welcomed proposals for a new European Commission regulation on prohibiting products, including seafood, made with forced labour being brought into the EU market.

According to ILO estimates, some 27.6 million people – including children – are victims of forced labour across the world.

On 30th January the ETF, which represents over five million transport workers in 30 countries, and fishers representative body Europeche resolved to provide feedback and to follow the legislative process at EU level.

The resolution stated: "European consumers must be able to buy only products obtained in an ethical and sustainable way. Any form of undignified work is contrary to the values of the EU Treaties, and forced labour is expressly prohibited by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights."

Stressing that forced labour, as part of the manufacturing process, left no trace on products – the resolution called for a "clear, fit-for-purpose and effective" system to be put in place to ban their use.

Both organisations have also said that they would help "European, national and ILO officials" through their network of inspectors.



SIPTU shop steward Lar Murphy (centre, with placard), with other union members who work at Marks and Spencers in Liffey Valley, who were protesting on Tuesday, 31st January, over workers being forced to pay for parking spaces at their workplace in west Dublin. The protestors from SIPTU and Mandate marched from the Jim Larkin statue on O'Connell Street to the headquarters of Hines, the owners of the shopping centre, on St John Rogerson's Quay in Dublin.

Radical lawyers to support progressive movement

THE Socialist Lawyers' Association of Ireland, founded at a meeting in the Teachers' Club in Dublin on 14th January, aims to operate as a network of radical lawyers to assist social, environmental and workers movements across the country.

Its inaugural meeting was attended by solicitors, barristers, legal academics and law students. Declan Owens, a solicitor and chairperson of the British-based Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers, was also at the meeting.

Incoming Socialist Lawyers Association of Ireland co-chairperson and trainee solicitor, Erin Allen, said: "We aim to use the law to the benefit of working class communities and all those that suffer prejudice and

discrimination.

"As a working mother of two young kids, I know how hard it is for families right now. In combining our activism and legal skills we have a real opportunity to make an impact."

Incoming co-chairperson and solicitor, Gary Daly, said: "This new group will play a crucial role in movements around housing, international solidarity, anti-racism, the environment and many other areas."

"As the world faces a cost-of-living crisis, environmental destruction and a rising Far Right, socialist lawyers need to be organised to support those fighting for progress.

"We are ready to provide legal opinion for progressive campaign

groups, provide legal observers for demonstrations and publish statements concerning government policy and legislation as well as matters in the Oireachtas.

"We will also engage in public consultations and submit pre-budget submissions. Some of our members may agree to take on cases before the courts to further the objective of any cause we choose to support."

The new organisation is not connected to any political party and is open to all legal professionals who share its progressive values.

• Those interested in the Socialist Lawyers' Association of Ireland can contact the new group at: irishsocialistlawyers@gmail.com

Private bus operator Go-Ahead to attend Labour Court in pay dispute

SIPTU members have suspended two 24-hour work stoppages by members employed by the private bus operator Go-Ahead Ireland that were scheduled to take place on 1st and 8th March, after the company announced it will attend a Labour Court hearing in a dispute over pay.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, John Murphy, said: "SIPTU representatives conducted a ballot for industrial action of our members employed by Go-Ahead Ireland on 20th December. This vote was required due to the refusal of management to engage through the normal agreed process in talks concerning an increase in pay for our members

to take account of the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

"In the ballot, an overwhelming majority voted for industrial action if management continued to refuse to engage on the issue of pay. Following this vote, management did agree to attend talks at the Workplace Relations Commission. However, at these talks it refused to engage

on the pay issue separately to other matters. We then referred the dispute to the Labour Court, which the company had initially refused to attend."

He added: "After the company changed its position and agreed to attend the Labour Court, our members have, in response, suspended their scheduled industrial action."

Go-Ahead Transport Services Limited, known as Go-Ahead Ireland, commenced trading in September 2018. It is a subsidiary of the UK based, Go-Ahead Group and operates a number of routes previously serviced by Dublin Bus and Bus Éireann.

WRC payouts for workers made redundant after UK transfer

WORKERS temporarily transferred to the UK by construction firm Roadbridge – and who lost their jobs when the business went into receivership last year – have won a significant increase in their redundancy payments at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC).

SIPTU Workers Rights Centre Sector Organiser, Deirdre Canty, said: "The company had temporarily transferred some of its workers to work abroad. The company went into receivership and these workers were then made redundant without notice on 28th April, 2022.

"They received their redundancy entitlements under UK legislation. However, this amounted to a major shortfall in the monies due to them had these workers been paid redundancy within this State.

This is a very significant win for our members and has the potential to have a much broader impact across the industry and on employment rights in general

"At the WRC hearing, SIPTU representatives successfully argued under Section 25 of the Redundancy Payment Act, 1967, that as each worker had worked in Ireland for longer than in the UK that they should have received payment under Irish legislation.

"One worker had a total service of 29 years and three months, of



which 10 months were spent in the UK. The shortfall between the redundancy payment he received and what he was entitled to in Ireland was more than €20,000.

"A claim for a minimum notice period for the workers was also successful. This resulted in them being awarded up to eight weeks in additional wages."

Canty added: "This is a very significant win for our members and has the potential to have a much broader impact across the

industry and on employment rights in general."

SIPTU Sector Organiser, John Regan told Liberty: "The members involved have had their cases vindicated in so far as they will receive a top-up on their UK redundancy entitlements to equal what they would have received under Irish legislation.

"This is the first time a redundancy payment has been successfully challenged in this way. It is clear evidence of why those

working abroad should join SIPTU to ensure they are adequately represented in situations such as these workers found themselves."

Donal Ruane, a former Roadbridge worker who was among the complainants, said: "We found ourselves redeployed to a country outside of Ireland as posted workers but due to being organised into SIPTU were able to ensure our legal rights were vindicated.

"All workers that have to redeploy to another country should make sure to join the trade union and also get a written contract of employment which protects all your years of service and your established employment rights."

Northern Ireland Committee
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

**WORKERS
DEMAND
Better!**

**Health &
Education Rally**
For fair pay and decent services

Tuesday 21 February
Assemble City Hall 10.15
Belfast
for music and
speeches at 10.30

ictuni.org
#WorkersDemandBetter

'Enough is enough': SIPTU activists back 'Workers Demand Better' drive

SIPTU Northern Ireland District activists took part in the first 'Workers Demand Better' campaign meeting of 2023 at An Cultúrlann centre on the Falls Road, Belfast, on Tuesday, 31st January.

NIC-ICTU, Belfast Trades Council and trade unions launched the initiative in October last year in response to the cost-of-living crisis.

ICTU Assistant General Secretary Gerry Murphy spoke about the recent wave of industrial action by NHS support staff and nurses, postal workers, teachers, civil servants, and journalists.

The well-attended meeting also heard the panel outline ICTU's 'No Going Back' document, which sets out a vision of practical alternatives to Westminster's current approach of pay restraint teamed with austerity.

ICTU favours a programme of greater state intervention, tax reform and increases to the social wage, such as childcare, adult care and housing provision.



Tim Smith, Gerry Murphy and SIPTU organiser Niall McNally

SIPTU community activist Tim Smith told the meeting: "It's great to see such a turnout tonight. The people of Greater West Belfast have suffered the indignity of low pay and the undervaluing of the work we provide for long enough.

"They're suffering the highest cost of living for decades and soaring inflation.

Enough is enough. We will strike until we get progress on this and all matters concerning working people in Northern Ireland."

SIPTU members will also attend Workers Demand Better meetings in north, south and east Belfast set to take place in February and March.

Thousands at Limerick A&E rally

By
Aideen
Carberry

SIPTU activists were among the thousands of people who protested in Limerick on 21st January to highlight hospital overcrowding and delays at the emergency department of University Hospital, Limerick (UHL).

The protest was held along with 18 similar events across Ireland on the day. Addressing the Limerick rally, SIPTU Organiser, Ger Kennedy, said: "SIPTU represents the interests

of 1,500 to 1,600 members in UHL, the surrounding hospitals and the National Ambulance Service. They go to work every single day knowing one thing – they can't provide the service they want to do.

"They know they don't have the resources, staff or the support of management to provide a service that people in this community deserve and must have."

Organised by the Mid-West Hospital Campaign, along with Friends of Ennis Hospital and groups from Nenagh, the protest heard calls for emergency departments in Ennis, Nenagh and at St John's in Limerick city to reopen immediately.



Massive crowds turned out for the 21st January rally in Limerick.



GUH bosses slammed for not making full use of HCAs

SIPTU representatives have criticised Galway University Hospital management for failing to make full use of Health Care Assistants (HCAs) in providing direct patient care in its temporary emergency department at a time of intense pressure.

In late January, SIPTU Organiser, Yvonne McGrath, said: "Our HCA members are ready, willing and able to use their skills to provide

direct patient care. They feel frustrated that their expertise and skillset is not being recognised and utilised to maximum effect to assist with patient care within the emergency department and broader hospital.

"SIPTU representatives and hospital management had engaged with the Workplace Relations Commission, on 20th July last year, over the role of HCAs. On that occasion, it was agreed they should no longer be carrying out certain

functions inappropriate to their role within the emergency department and that support services staff would be used to carry out these functions.

"Since then, there has been no agreement on how hospital support staff will be engaged to support HCAs in their work. SIPTU representatives have now referred this matter back to the WRC. However, hospital management is yet to confirm it will attend a further WRC convened meeting."

She added: "Unfortunately, the management of Galway University Hospital is not engaging with our union with any degree of urgency to resolve this matter. Our members are ready, willing and able to use their skills to provide direct patient care with the support of their colleagues in support services."

SIPTU member Martina Burke, a HCA at Galway University Hospital, said: "HCAs and all staff are under significant pressure in the

emergency department. However, their problems pale in comparison to those of patients who in many incidences are waiting for hours for treatment.

"We are willing to sit down with management to try and resolve the issues that are adversely impacting staff and patients in the emergency department. However, we need our employer to engage with us and confirm its availability to attend the WRC if these matters cannot be resolved."

Nuremore Hotel workers demand payment of outstanding wages

SIPTU members employed at the Nuremore Hotel and Country Club in Carrickmacross, county Monaghan, have demanded the payment of their outstanding wages and clarification on the future of their workplace, following the closure of its Leisure Centre on 9th February.

SIPTU Organiser, Claire O'Connor, said: "SIPTU members employed in the Leisure Centre have not been paid their wages since mid-January. The management of the Leisure Centre posted on social media that it was closing. This abrupt closure has left workers

locked out of their workplace and facing uncertainty about the future of their employment.

"More than 70 workers employed in the hotel facility were laid off in December. All their wages and money for leave entitlements owed prior to Christmas remain outstanding."

Nuremore Hotel and Country Club worker, Tom Rowley, said: "The workers are sick to their teeth with the way they are being treated. All they are seeking is their basic right to be paid. No worker should be left for weeks without wages. In addition, it is unacceptable that the so called rea-

son for layoffs was to refurbish the hotel and to date there is no sign of any work commencing."

SIPTU Sector Organiser, John Regan, said: "I spoke to the Minister for Social Protection, Heather Humphreys, regarding this situation and called upon her to intervene with the owner of the hotel, a Mr Kai Dai. The first priority is to get Mr Dai to pay all outstanding monies owed to the workers. We also discussed the activation of the relevant state inspectorate machinery to investigate all the business arrangements surrounding the hotel since Mr Dai took over the business."



SIPTU Sector Organiser John Regan (front left) meeting with workers at the Nuremore Hotel and Country Club in Carrickmacross, county Monaghan, on 25th January.

Winter surge hits acute services

THE BEGINNING of 2023 saw SIPTU members deal with a spike in activity across the acute hospital sector and associated services.

The HSE acknowledged, at one point, that attendances at emergency departments and calls to the National Ambulance Service were at higher levels than ever before.

Earlier this month, HSE Interim CEO Stephen Mulvaney told the Joint Oireachtas Health Committee that infectious respiratory diseases were at exceptional levels, with sustained peaks when compared with the last five seasons.

It has, no doubt, created a difficult working environment for all health workers.

During the crisis, SIPTU has been focused on engaging with the HSE to ensure as much as possible is done to protect workers under such trying circumstances, and to regularly update members on these engagements.

SIPTU is seeking a composite document setting out how the HSE intends to deal with this issue in future, as well as full clarity on what supports workers can expect through their employer.

The union has also been asked to address the Joint Oireachtas Health



Ambulances outside the Mater Hospital Emergency Department entrance in early January
PICTURE: Sasko Lazarov / RollingNews.ie

Committee early in February on the safety and welfare of healthcare workers.

SIPTU will use this opportunity to highlight some of the core health and

safety issues facing members, including safe staffing levels, long-Covid, and the impact of physical assaults on healthcare workers.
THE HSE has issued HSE HR

SIPTU active on HCA forum

SIPTU has been actively involved in the National Forum set up following the 2018 report into the role and function of Health Care Assistants (HCAs).

The forum established two different work streams to look at specific HCA-related areas.

One work stream, 'Role and Functions' examines the job description and functions of HCAs, while the other looks at 'Training and Development' focusing on qualification requirements, training opportunities and career pathways. The role of the Health Care Assis-

tant has changed dramatically in recent times, and it is likely to continue to evolve.

It is vitally important that the voices of HCAs are heard at the most senior level within the health service as their role continues to develop.

The union has insisted that HCAs, and their representatives, are represented at all forums relating to the grade.

SIPTU continues to engage with HCAs and home support workers in both public and private healthcare to organise as many of this grade into the union as possible.

Over 3,500 PSRP appeals submitted

THE Pandemic Special Recognition Payment (PSRP) continues to be rolled out, while the appeals process for those working in HSE and Section 38 employments is nearing completion.

More than 3,500 appeals have been submitted from workers in these areas. These appeals come from workers who did not receive the payment and believed they should have, as well as from those disputing the amount they were awarded. It is understood individual workers and their line man-

agement will soon receive written confirmation about the outcome of their appeals. SIPTU has also sought an update about payment of the PSRP within non-HSE and Section 38 employments.

The union was told 347 organisations received funding – totalling over €25 million – to make the PSRP payments to eligible workers. An appeals mechanism for non-HSE and non-Section 38 agencies could not be agreed, despite union requesting for one to be put in place.



Engagement on pay: WRC HQ in Dublin

HSE agrees to engage on Sector 39 pay

HEALTH Division members received a recent update over progress on the Sector 39 pay justice campaign.

Members were advised that, following persistent pressure by SIPTU, the HSE has now confirmed it can attend a process at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) to deal with the Section 39 pay dispute. The union expects to receive a date for the WRC meeting shortly.

The next few weeks will be critical for addressing the long-standing pay issue within Section 39 agencies.

SIPTU has been the fore since the launch of the campaign. In 2018, the union balloted for strike action

in a number of locations, including intellectual disability and home support services.

The action resulted in two agreements brokered through the WRC in 2018 and 2020, which resulted in pay restoration in a number of Section 39 agencies.

However, the work of ensuring pay justice for workers in this sector is far from complete.

Some organisations continue to await their pay restoration, and many more are now seeking pay progression in line with their colleagues in the public service.

Following further action by SIPTU members in July and September last year, as well as commitments given

by government ministers that agencies would engage through the WRC to resolve the issue, SIPTU that referred the matter to the Commission.

It has now been confirmed the HSE will attend this process and a date is expected shortly.

Section 39 agencies provide some of the State's most essential services and cannot be forgotten.

Members have already been advised that if timely and sufficient progress is not made through the WRC, action may have to be taken to secure decent pay. See *Valuing Care, Valuing Community* on page 16-17.

HSE support grade job evaluation nears completion

Circular 003 2023, gave sanction to HSE and Section 38 employers to implement outcomes awarded under the final Phase IV of the Job Evaluation Scheme for Support Staff.

In an update to health support grade members, Support Sector Organiser, Damian Ginley confirmed a number of support grades will have

their grades re-banded under the job evaluation scheme.

The scheme, which was broken down into four phases, involved post-holders completing an evaluation form and subsequently being interviewed in a process overseen by an independent evaluator.

Under the scheme's final phase, more than 180 post-holders from 34

pilot sites took part in the evaluation on behalf of members being assessed.

The Labour Court had previously determined the implementation date for any successful outcomes under Phase IV would be 1st January 2021.

Despite significant challenges in completing Phase IV – mainly due to Covid-19 and the cyber-attack on the HSE – the Health Division welcomed

the fact that the original implementation date, set out in the 2019 Labour Court Recommendation LCR22066, is reconfirmed in the recent circular.

Health Division Organisers will now be engaging with HR departments locally to ensure full implementation of the circular takes place without undue delay.



Challenging but optimistic outlook for members in manufacturing



By Gregg Ennis

THE acute cost-of-living challenges experienced in 2022 will, unfortunately, continue for manufacturing workers in 2023 and for some time thereafter.

The relatively high inflation rates, albeit decreasing somewhat, are set to continue and the cost of housing and rents are projected to remain at an all-time high.

This is becoming a huge issue for many workers in the SIPTU Manufacturing Division and particularly so for those living in our cities and urban districts. Exortionate rents preclude our members in many cases from being able to save for a deposit and to buy their own homes.

Along with the terrible reality of the current homeless figure of 11,500, if there was ever another sign of a failed government housing policy, the fact it is actually cheaper to pay a mortgage and so buy a house than to rent in the vast majority of locations is truly reprehensible.

However, the borrowing restriction of four times one's salary stops most workers from being able to buy their own home, and so they have to remain in the current rent trap.

Average rents in Ireland now equate to 50% of the national



Dispute successes: Lisk (above), Bausch & Lomb (top left) and Kyte Powertech (bottom left)

industrial wage. Elsewhere in the EU, it equates to 18%. Is this a case of the Government continuing to preside over private profit, rather than the public good?

While inflation is expected to fall to around 6.7% in 2023 and 3% in 2024, from a peak of 9.2% in October 2022, the sequential increases in European Central Bank interest rates percolating through Irish financial institutions and on to their borrowers, along with the outworkings of Brexit and Covid, as well as the war in Ukraine, the difficulties facing working people

The best antidote to these cost-of-living difficulties is for workers to organise in their workplace and collectively bargain with their employers to ensure they extract fair and reasonable increases

remain extremely acute.

There is no doubt that the best antidote to these cost-of-living difficulties is for workers to organise within their workplace and collectively bargain with their employers to ensure that they extract fair and reasonable increases, so as to combat the financial pressures and so maintain their purchasing power.

In this regard, we have seen hundreds of successful negotiations concluded by our shop stewards, committees and full-time SIPTU organisers across the three sectors

of the Manufacturing Division, resulting in improved pay, terms and conditions for our members throughout the island of Ireland in 2022.

While collective bargaining has not been afforded to date to members in certain employments, the manufacturing division will continue to mobilise and campaign to secure this fundamental right for workers in those small number of employments which do not grant it.

Also in 2022, there have been occasions when a reasonable settlement to our members' legitimate claims could not be arrived at without recourse to industrial action.

Disputes such as those at Bausch & Lomb, Kyte Powertech, Lisk Ireland, etc. were resolved to our members' satisfaction, with improved pay and conditions being secured following industrial action.

While we will always endeavour to achieve resolutions and so avoid disputes, we cannot rule out further industrial action in the year ahead, should our members decide that such an approach is necessary, so as to ensure that they extract fair recognition for their labour and so maintain a decent standard of living for themselves and their families.

In your workplace, build union density – build union power!

Gregg Ennis is Organiser of the SIPTU Manufacturing Division

PAY DEALS

MANUFACTURING DIVISION

Carberry Milk Products	10.75%	36 months	Cork
Prencos Manufacturing	7%	24 months	Cork
Standard Aero	4.25%	24 months	Cork
Saint Gobain	4%	12 months	Dublin
Mirror Controls	4%	12 months	Leitrim
ETEX	3.4%	12 months	Kildare
Clogrennane Lime	3.75%	12 months	Carlow
Theo Benning	4%	12 months	Wexford
Boxmore Plastics	7%	24 months	Cavan
Kingspan (new staff)	6.75%	12 months	Cavan
Kingspan	6%	12 months	Cavan
Novartis	9%	36 months	Cork
Janssen (Little Island)	10%	23 months	Cork

SIPTU

Basic English Scheme

FOR SIPTU MEMBERS

WRITING • SPELLING • FORM FILING • NOTE TAKING • ORAL

Right Here, Write Now

ENGLISH FOR FOREIGN MEMBERS

THE RIGHT TO READ, WRITE & SPELL

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Tom O'Brien
Liberty Hall
Tel: (01) 858 6311
basicenglish@siptu.ie

Jean Kennedy
SIPTU College
Tel: (01) 858 6498

Construction pay rates increased at start of February

The minimum rates of pay for all construction workers increased by 2.8% on 1st February 2023 and workers should ensure they are being paid the increased rate SIPTU Sector Organiser, John Regan has advised.

The new minimum hourly pay rates are Craftsperson €21.09, Category A Worker €20.47 and

Category B Worker €18.99 under the terms of the existing Construction Sectoral Employment Order (SEO).

John said: "Due to the pressures our members are experiencing as a result of cost-of-living increases, the construction unions have sought a review of the SEO by the Labour Court. The ICTU Group of Unions will seek the Labour Court's support to address the



ongoing increase in the rate of inflation since 2022. We will seek pay increases that reflect the continuation and maintenance of our members 'standard of living'.

He added: "The process of seeking a new SEO will take up to at least June 2023 as the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment has to consider and approve the Labour Court recommendation."

PAY DEALS

SERVICES DIVISION

Arts Culture Print Media & Sport Sector

RTÉ

SIPTU members have balloted to accept a locally negotiated pay agreement as part of the RTÉ Trade Union Group. Salaries* including salary scales will be increased as follows:

- 3% increase from 26th December 2022;
- 1.5% increase from 30th October 2023;
- 1.5% increase from 30th April 2024;
- A non-taxable voucher of up to €1,000 will issue in early 2023 (target end January 2023);
- A further voucher of €500 will issue in January 2024.



Wholesale Retail Distribution Sector

Nissan Ireland

Members have accepted a locally negotiated pay proposal. The terms of the 24 month agreement are as follows:

- 3% basic pay increase 1st January 2023;
- 2% basic pay increase 1st January 2024;
- €1000 tax free voucher.



FedEx/TNT

SIPTU members have accepted a locally negotiated pay proposal, the terms of the 12 month agreement are as follows:

- 2.8% basic pay increase backdated from 1st October 2022.

Egis Port Tunnel

SIPTU members have accepted a locally negotiated pay proposal, the terms of the 24 month agreement are as follows:

- 3.5% basic pay increase 1st January 2023;
- 3% basic pay increase 1st January 2024.



TEAC DIVISION

Aviation Sector

DAA

The following pay increases were secured for our members, which were unanimously accepted following a ballot which concluded on 12 December 2022. These pay increases were negotiated locally under the auspices of ICTU with no cost off-setting measures required:

Pay increases:

- 3.75% effective from the 3rd April 2022 for 12 months;
- 3.50% effective from the 2nd April 2023 for 12 months.

Entry level rates of pay:

As part of this pay proposal entry level rates of pay were increased for the following roles: ASU Officer, Retail Sales Assistants, Service Delivery Team members and Cleaning Team members.

Role	Current	Revised Rate Effective 3/4/22
ASU Officer	€14.14	€15.34 *
Retail Sales Assistant	€12.96	14.17 *
Service Delivery Team Member	€13.01	14.17 *
Cleaning Team Member	€13.01	14.17 *

*These rates are inclusive of the 3.75% increase detailed above

This pay proposal will apply from the 3rd April 2022 and expire on the 30th March 2024.



Transport Sector

PORT AND DOCKS

P&O Ferries

In December 2022, SIPTU secured a one year pay deal for members within this company. 6% pay increase to commence 1st January 2023 & €1,487.85 (equivalent of £1300 based exchange rate). This cash sum was in the form of a gift card. This offer was accepted by members within P&O Ferries.

Dublin Port Company

SIPTU lodged a pay increase with the Dublin Port Company, unfortunately no agreement could be reached and this issue was referred to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and then the Labour Court.

A recommendation was issued by the court and both parties were advised to re-engage at local level to achieve agreement on the issue of pay. Both parties did engage at local level, as per the recommendation, and agreement was reached.

SIPTU members in Dublin Port Company received a pay increase of 3.75% for year 2022, this payment and retrospectation payment has been applied from 1st January 2022. Discussions on a pay increase for 2023, are due to commence in coming weeks.

Peel Ports

Agreement was reached for our members within Peel Ports of 2% for recognition for all efforts made by members within this company. This is for year 2022 and will have retrospectation paid from 1st June 2022.

Boost intellectual property rights for film workers call

IRISH Equity hosted an online discussion on 'Contracts, Your Rights and the EU Copyright Directive' during January which focused on how greater protection can be secured for the intellectual property rights of film workers in Ireland.

The meeting discussed how the rights of all performers, writers, composers and directors are being systematically undermined by the buyout contracts issued by a number of Irish producers and production companies.

It was stated that these contracts are fundamentally incompatible with the copyright protections enshrined in the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000 and in the EU Copyright in the Digital Single Market directive.

Irish Equity President, Gerry O'Brien, said: "It is vital that the intellectual property of indigenous performers, writers, directors and composers, whose creative excellence contributes so much to Irish success on the international market, be acknowledged, protected and properly remunerated."

"It is the right to an ongoing share of the revenue from the success of



Irish Equity President
Gerry O'Brien

our work that allows us to have a sustainable career. It is no longer acceptable that we have to sign away valuable property rights in order get a day's work."

Among those who addressed the meeting were International Federation of Actors General Secretary, Dominick Luquer; Equity UK Assistant General Secretary, John Barclay; Writers Guild of Ireland Director, Hugh Farley; and Screen Directors Guild of Ireland General Secretary, Birch Hamilton.

Health contract workers secure pandemic payment

THOUSANDS of workers employed by contract catering, cleaning and security companies providing services for the health service have secured their right to the Pandemic Special Recognition Payment (PSRP) following a campaign by SIPTU members.

The KOSI Corporation has been commissioned by the Government to oversee the process of providing the PSRP to these workers with the payments expected to be made to all eligible workers by the summer.

SIPTU Sector Organiser, Ed Kenny said: "These workers put their shoulder to the wheel and provided essential services in very difficult conditions during the darkest days of the pandemic. Many were in direct contact with those suffering from Covid-19 or areas in which they were being treated on a daily basis."

"When it became clear these workers were not being included in the PSRP scheme, union organisers engaged with our members in all the key hospitals in the country from late spring 2022.

"There were large turnouts at meetings to discuss this issue, the membership was mobilised and committees were put in place. Many workers joined the union in order to advance their case," he added.

The Forgotten Frontline Heroes campaign included workers addressing TDs and Senators in Leinster House and members directly confronting Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly, about the payment when he visited Galway University Hospital to open a new ward in October 2022.

SIPTU Shop Steward, Lisa Stenson, a contract cleaner at Cavan General Hospital, said: "It is great for contract workers in the health service to secure this payment. It goes somewhere towards recognising our role during an extremely difficult period for all health care workers."

"The campaign also saw more workers getting organised. Committees were brought together in most hospitals around the country and these will continue to work for positive change on other issues affecting SIPTU members."



Activists and organisers from the SIPTU Contract Services Sector protesting outside Dáil Éireann in Dublin. They have called on the new Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Simon Coveney, to implement the Security Sector ERO in December 2022.

Security workers demand ministers honour commitments given on ERO

SIPTU members in the security sector have demanded ministers live up to Government commitments to put in place an Employment Regulation Order (ERO) for their industry and give them with their first pay rise in more than three years.

SIPTU Contract Services Sector Organiser, Ed Kenny, said: "The current ERO is in a legal limbo following a challenge to it from some security contractor companies."

"We are calling on the Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment, Simon Coveney, and his Minister of State, Neale Richmond, to move immediately to deal with this situation and provide our members with the pay rises that have been outstanding to them since last August."

Kenny added: "As these workers have not had a pay rise since June 2019, the situation for them is unsustainable. The current outstanding pay rise under the ERO must be honoured without delay." SIPTU representatives are also moving on with plans for the next ERO for the industry and have called for the convening of the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) for the security sector so that proposals can be formulated.

This process is now under

way and a public consultation lasting 21 days started on 25th January with advertisements placed in national newspapers.

"The Government publicly committed to improving the ERO system as part of the final report of the High-Level Working Group on Collective Bargaining which was published by the Labour Employer

security workers in the proposed ERO for the industry.

"That is why the outstanding ERO must be immediately implemented and work must also progress on a successor which will adequately provide for what is a vital group of workers in our economy."

SIPTU NEC member Ian Black, who is a security guard, said: "The Government before Christmas lifted the salary cap on bankers because they felt they could not attract the calibre of person that was needed for half a million euros a year."

"Yet they expect to attract workers into the vital role of a professional security guard, which requires appropriate licences and training, at €11.65 an hour. It is laughable."

SIPTU security worker activist, Tony Prior, said: "We do not think the Government realises the value of security guards. If they were to take industrial action it would have a massive impact across the economy."

"That is why industrial action is something that our members will not enter into lightly but increasingly they are feeling that they may have no other option."

As these workers have not had a pay rise since June 2019, the situation for them is unsustainable

Economic Forum (LEEF) in October," Kenny continued. "Why are they not taking action to end the current situation with the Security Sector ERO is inexplicable."

SIPTU Services Division President, Christy Waters, said: "There is only a 35 cent difference between the national minimum wage and the lowest minimum rate of €11.65 for

Tolerance and unity was Larkin's gospel

By Scott Millar

MEMBERS of the family of James Larkin were alongside SIPTU organisers and activists who gathered in Glasnevin Cemetery on 2nd February for the annual commemoration of the great trade union leader.

The threat to the unity of workers brought about by an upsurge in far-right and racist activity was highlighted in an address by SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, John King, which followed a wreath-laying ceremony at the grave of Jim Larkin.

"Unfortunately, recent weeks have shown that our struggle for progress is now facing an old threat that has found a new disguise. That is the use of false information to spread hate and division in our communities, including in those areas where people have suffered most from deprivation and official neglect," he said.

Quoting from a speech delivered by James Larkin to the Irish Trade Union Congress in 1914, he said: "It is for us to preach the gospel of tolerance and comradeship for all women and men. There must be freedom for all to live, to think, to worship, no book, no avenue must be closed."

King added: "Larkin recognised the threat that racist and other divisions among workers posed to the solidarity required to take on the exploiters and create a fairer society."

"He worked to unite all workers within our movement. It is only through the promotion of an egalitarian society based on the enduring principles of social solidarity and the common good that we shall defeat those who would now seek to turn working class communities into theatres for the politics of hate."

He continued: "I can assure you that SIPTU members will play our part in confronting those who would seek to divert working people from focusing on the real causes of our housing and health crises, towards a campaign against



A SIPTU banner featuring Jim Larkin led the march to his grave at Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, on 2nd February



Councillor Aoife Breslin laid a wreath (left and inset) at the grave of her great-grandfather in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin, on 2nd February. Pat Byrne (above) of the Fintan Lalor Pipe Band played a lament for the great trade union leader

asylum seekers and migrant workers. It is through involvement in their union that workers – whether refugees, economic migrants or those born and reared in Ireland – can find common pur-

pose." In his address, King also highlighted a number of successful SIPTU initiatives including the Big Start campaign for childcare workers. Valuing Care/Valuing Community which is seeking pay

justice for workers in our Section 39 care agencies and the community sector and STOP67 which was the battle to maintain the state pension age at 66 years.

In relation to the Raise the Roof campaign, he said: "We need a massive, local authority-led construction programme for affordable and social housing in mixed communities across the State."

"This is the only coherent solution to our housing crisis, which is the product of failed policies of successive governments driven by interests who put their private profit over the public good."

Labour Party senator and workers' rights spokesperson, Marie Sherlock, also addressed the event. She highlighted her priorities for the coming year, including the removal of the apprentices exclusion from minimum wage legislation and a focus on ensuring the EU directive of minimum wages is transposed into Irish law "both in the letter and the spirit that it is intended".

Larkin recognised the threat that racist and other divisions among workers posed to the solidarity required to take on the exploiters and create a fairer society

She added: "Extending collective bargaining coverage will be an important development, but it will only be a first step. As we all know, getting the framework is one thing, having the power and the numbers to negotiate a good agreement is very different and so we need to ensure a strong emphasis on unionisation."

See Liberty View on page 15.



SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, John King, delivered the address to the annual Jim Larkin commemoration in Glasnevin Cemetery Museum. Wreath (right) laid on behalf of SIPTU at Larkin's grave



Labour Party workers' rights spokesperson, Senator Marie Sherlock also spoke at the event

Pay and threat of anti-union laws propels UK strike wave

By Scott Millar

Nearly one million workers throughout Britain and Northern Ireland have conducted strike action over recent months. More than 500,000 workers, including teachers, nurses, railway staff and border guards, were striking on 1st February alone in what is the largest united trade union action in the UK in more than a decade.

The wave of stoppages, which have involved workers in both the private and public sector, have received widespread public backing while opinion polls have shown a crash in support for a UK Tory government which has attempted to face them down.

While the impact on the public has been massive, with UK government data showing more than 1.6 million working days lost to industrial action from June to November 2022, more than in any six month period for the past 30 years, union leaders have been buoyed by high levels of support in opinion polls and on the picket lines.

The wave of action was led by a strike by more than 40,000 rail members of the RMT in June 2022. This was provoked by attempts by the privatised rail companies in the UK to cut back on conditions for workers, passen-

gers and safety measures as well as well below the rate of inflation pay offers.

The charismatic leadership shown by RMT leaders, most notably the union's General Secretary Mick Lynch and Assistant General Secretary Eddie Dempsey, provided confidence for further unions, including the 200,000 member Communications Workers Union (CWU) and the large public sector unions to launch their campaigns of work stoppages.

The main focus of the Autumn wave of strike action was on specific pay claims in companies such as the Royal Mail or the wider health service. However the campaigns also took on a greater appeal, with large public rallies and civic campaigns by groups such as 'Enough is Enough', which have focused on the wider cost-of-living crisis.

Many private sector disputes, from container port staff to bus drivers, have concluded pay deals with employers and local authority workers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have also secured agreements.

However, the major strikes in England from the railways to the largely public sector health and education areas, remain unre-



Union members and supporters march towards Westminster, London on 1st February, 2023.

solved as a Tory Government led successively by the hapless Boris Johnson, disastrous Liz Truss and now the billionaire Rishi Sunak have attempted to make political capital by refusing to negotiate.

Instead the Tories are pushing a new raft of anti-union laws that even go beyond an attack on the already heavily circumscribed right to strike. In its Minimum Service Levels Bill, the Tories are seeking to provide employers with the ability to sack workers who defy a "work notice" by striking. In effect, the new bill compels someone to work. The Bill is opposed by the Welsh and Scot-

Our members cannot accept the ripping up of their terms and conditions or to have safety standards on the railway put into jeopardy

tish governments, with SNP MP Mhairi Black branding it "immoral" and "toxic" adding that

"we in the SNP condemn these plans in the strongest possible terms and will oppose them every step of the way". Most parties in Northern Ireland have also voiced opposition to the proposed new laws.

While a growing number of private sector and local authority controlled enterprises are settling the disputes with remuneration packages closer to the rate of inflation or above, public sector workers in England remain caught between the demands of the cost-of-living crisis and bunkered in Tory government

In February, Mick Lynch said the fight was now not only for workers livelihoods and rights but also the wider issue of democracy. "It is really important in a democratic society that we have free trade unions that represent working people. The Tory proposed anti-union laws are a symbol that the government are losing the argument.

"They've lost the argument on austerity and pay, and the state of our national public services. And instead they want to close that argument down by closing down the unions and stopping us from campaigning against poverty."

Firefighters urged to accept 12% pay offer in major victory for UK unions

UK Firefighter union leaders have decided to recommend acceptance of a 7% plus 5% pay offer and call off planned strike action, it was announced on 10th February.

The offer to the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) of a 7% pay rise backdated to July 2022 and a further 5% from July this year is being interpreted by many UK commentators as a major victory in the campaign of strike action that is sweeping many sectors of the British economy.

The FBU executive decided to

recommend that members vote to accept the offer in a ballot which opens on 20th February and closes on 6th March. FBU

UK Firefighter union leaders have decided to recommend acceptance of a 7% plus 5% pay offer and call off planned strike action



Firefighters marching in Sheffield during the demonstration against the Strikes Bill, February 1, 2023 [Photo: FBU]

General Secretary Matt Wrack said in a message to members: "We should all be proud of the campaign we have run to get this far.

"We have now moved our employers from 2% in June last year, to 5% in November, and now to 7% plus 5%. This achievement was only possible because of our overwhelming mandate for strike action.

He added: "It is clear evidence of the value of collective bargaining and negotiation as opposed to so-called 'independent' pay review bodies."

RMT members to continue industrial action

UK Transport union RMT rejected the latest "dreadful" offers from Network Rail and several train operating companies on 10th February, after what General Secretary Mick Lynch said was an in-depth consultation with the union's 40,000 rail members.

He said this had delivered a "loud and clear" message that the proposals fall well short of the union's position in relation to pay, job security and working conditions for its members throughout England. Lynch stressed that the RMT would seek further meetings with the state-run infrastructure firm and employer-body the Rail Delivery Group to demand an "unconditional pay offer, a job security agreement and no detrimental changes to working conditions."

"Our members cannot accept the ripping up of their terms and conditions or to have safety standards on the railway put into

jeopardy under the guise of so-called modernisation. Our industrial campaign will continue for as long as it takes to get a negotiated settlement that meets our members reasonable expecta-

Our members cannot accept the ripping up of their terms and conditions or to have safety standards on the railway put into jeopardy

tions", he said.

The RMT campaign of strike action began with a 24-hour strike on 21st June, 2022, when tens of thousands of RMT members walked out over wages and planned changes to working practices – involving the removal



Rail workers stand at the RMT picket outside Euston Station, London in January 2023.

of guards from trains, the reducing in the number of open ticket offices, and an increase in the age at which people could claim the young persons or senior citizen travel cards – and the threat of redundancies.

Since then there have been approximately dozens of national and more localised days of strike

action. Other rail unions including ASLEF which represents drivers and the TSSA also joined the action. The disruption has affected the entire railway network of Great Britain. However, the strike has not affected Northern Ireland where rail workers are largely represented by SIPTU and Unite.

The rail workers have won notable successes with RMT members voting to accept an agreement with ScotRail over pay, benefits and job security ending the strikes in Scotland in November 2022. As well as securing jobs and other payments the deal included a pay rise of between 7% and 9%, backdated to April 2022. In December 2022, a pay and employment deal was reached between the Transport for Wales and the rail unions with similar significant pay rises among the measures secured. No overall deal has been reached with the Tory UK government and the RMT.

The TSSA is expected to organise a ballot of its members on a set of proposals by the Rail Delivery Group, which organises rail employers in England. This deal includes clauses for no compulsory redundancies and a 5% wage rise.

Whitewashing workers out of white paper



By Michael Taft

LAST December, the Government produced a White Paper on Enterprise. Usually, white papers are big events, presaging major reforms and policy innovations.

However, this particular white paper was a glorified box-ticking exercise with little insight, never mind new directions. This is probably why it didn't get much attention.

Nonetheless, we can glean some of the Government's attitudes. And none more so than about the role of workers in promoting enterprise development and resilience. In short, the Government's attitude is: workers don't count for much.

SIPTU made a submission in the consultation process, focusing on the enterprise and economic benefits of increasing employee voice in the workplace. We highlighted the benefits of collective bargaining at both firm and sectoral levels; the Living Wage; elimination of precariousness; access to increased



In short, the Government's attitude is: workers don't count for much

working hours. All these measures would significantly boost enterprise performance.

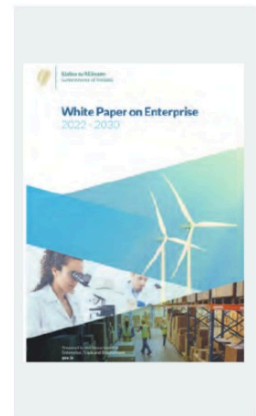
We further highlighted how the State could provide additional supports to high-road employers through social clauses in public procurement contracts and the provision of additional enterprise supports for businesses that com-

A worker-centred economy is a superior social and economic model

mit to collective bargaining, in-house training and productive investment.

Through these and similar measures, we could start the transition away from a low-pay, low-value, business model towards a high-road model in which everyone is a winner.

However, in the final report the Government not only ignored the benefits arising from the measures SIPTU put forward, it ignored the whole issue of worker participation in the decision-making process of Irish business. Indeed, there is no reference at all to employees as agents in the workplace. In effect, the White Paper on Enterprise whitewashed employees out of the picture. The Government sidestepped any debate on the role of



workers in the economy – but we don't have to. A worker-centred economy is a superior social and economic model. We don't have to wait on any government to start that debate.

We can start it ourselves and begin winning over public opinion. In this way, we can create a new consensus which any government would find difficult to resist.



By
Michael Taft

Wrong policy, wrong time as ECB's rate rise hits economy

THE European Central Bank (ECB) is engaged in an attack on the productive economies of Europe through its policy of increasing interest rates.

They are fighting last year's battles with weapons which were never fit for purpose, based on a mistaken reading of the current cost-of-living crisis.

The ECB increased interest rates four times last year – starting from zero. It now stands at 2.5 per cent. Further rate increases in 2023 are highly likely. Their goal is to reduce inflation. That is the orthodox response.

Higher interest rates are intended to reduce economic activity (i.e. consumer spending, employment, wages, investment). This, in turn, is supposed to reduce prices as demand for goods and services fall.

However, the current bout of inflation is not being caused by too much spending, high wage demands or unproductive investment (like property investment prior to the crash). In short, the ECB's policy won't work because the main contributors to inflation are impervious to interest rates.

Increasing interest rates will not produce more energy, remove the barriers in supply chains, cure Covid or resolve the crisis in the Ukraine. Our current inflation rates are being driven by 'supply-side' factors and increasing interest rates will make little difference.

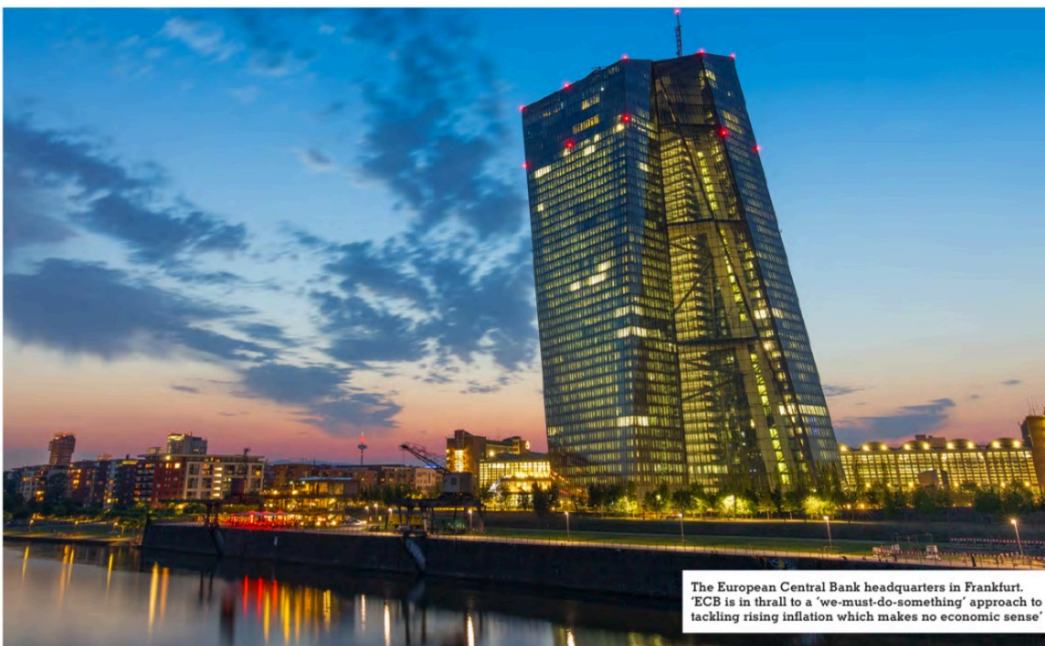
So why is the ECB increasing rates? A large part of it comes from the school of 'we-must-do-something'. The main thing the ECB does is to set interest rates. So, if that's your only weapon and there is a demand that you do something, you use your only weapon. The problem is that this can produce perverse consequences.

Increasing interest rates will make it more expensive for businesses to invest in solutions to the current supply constraints – that is, make it more expensive to bring down inflation. It will make it more expensive to invest in cheaper renewable sources of energy, again making it more expensive to reduce inflation.

At its extreme, increasing interest rates can risk driving Eurozone economies into recession. This will undermine public finances, forcing governments to borrow more (which will be more expensive). This will make it more difficult to spend money on protecting households and businesses from the cost-of-living crisis.

There is no perspective from which the ECB's interest rate policy makes economic sense.

A large part of this failed ortho-



The European Central Bank headquarters in Frankfurt. 'ECB is in thrall to a 'we-must-do-something' approach to tackling rising inflation which makes no economic sense'

...considerable anecdotal evidence that corporations in key sectors are driving up prices and blaming it on inflation...

dox framework is based on the notion of a 'wage-price spiral'. This means that as inflation rises, workers attempt to protect their living standards through higher wage demands. This, in turn, feeds into more inflation which sets off

a new round of wage increases until both go into a spiral. It's a convenient theory for employers and financial interests. However, there is no basis for it.

In Ireland, inflation reached 8% last year and the Central Bank projects a 6% rate for 2023. Average wage increases will fall considerably short of that, resulting in a real cut (after inflation). If wages are being cut, there can hardly be a wage-price spiral. This pattern of real wage cuts is taking place throughout Europe.

Indeed, the idea of a wage-price spiral has largely been discredited. The IMF conducted a study of 79 episodes of wage and price increases (including Ireland) going back to the 1970s and found hardly any evidence of a wage

price spiral. What doesn't get discussed much, however, is the role of profits. There is considerable anecdotal evidence that corporations in key sectors are driving up prices and blaming it on inflation when, in fact, they are pushing up profits and using inflation as a veneer.

This is especially the case in the energy sector where oil companies are reporting record profits. In early February Shell and BP confirmed combined profits of more than \$68 billion for 2022, the greatest in history. Studies in the US and the UK show that profit margins across the private sector are at their highest since the 1950s.

It is difficult to track profits in Ireland as the legal and accounting

activities of multi-nationals distort profit data in much the same way as they distort GDP. However, over the last year profits in the Eurozone increased faster than wages. Ireland is unlikely to be an exception. Yet, we never get a discussion of a 'profit-price' spiral.

While there is little that Ireland can do directly about ECB interest rate policy, it can take steps to ensure low-cost financing of key investments in the business and household sector. In the first instance, this would mean the State – through public agencies such as the Strategic Banking Corporation of Ireland – providing loans for investment in housing, retrofitting and renewable technologies at significantly reduced interest rates. The billions of euros being placed in the National Reserve Fund could be used to finance these loans.

With inflation looking like it is now falling back (though it is still too early to tell), the case for interest rate increases is even weaker. However, as long as the ECB continues its policies, the Government should step in to provide alternative financing options. And hope that ECB policy makers prioritise the productive economy in their future deliberations.



Liberty View

We need unity of workers, not division

Since we gathered last year to commemorate the great Jim Larkin, then finally emerging from the Covid pandemic, workers across the country have been grappling with a deep cost-of-living crisis. Over that time, we have also had to manage the economic damage and disruption caused to many workers across the island by a disastrous Brexit.

Union members have worked diligently and effectively in the private sector and the public service to fight for improvements in pay and conditions of employment to recover lost ground and to protect the value of workers' spending power. In the tradition of Larkin, we have pushed on many fronts to improve the pay and conditions of low paid workers who make up some 25% of the workforce, the majority of them women.

In that respect, we look forward to the implementation of the EU Minimum Wage Drive which will provide greater rights for workers to be covered by collective agreements, and to the enactment of legislation to strengthen Employment Regulation Orders, Sectoral Employment Orders and to ensure wider union representation across the economy.

Over all of this looms the existential challenge facing this generation and of those to come - the threat of climate change. In SIPTU, we are

We are committed to developing, along with our partners in Congress, a set of policies that will place the interests of workers at the centre of the necessary changes we must all accept if we are to meet the ambitious but essential climate change targets.

committed to playing our part in securing our environment for the sake of our people and our planet. To this end, we are in serious engagement with our members, employers and government on achieving a 'Just Transition' for workers and communities who must diversify from carbon based energy production. We are

committed to developing, along with our partners in Congress, a set of policies that will place the interests of workers at the centre of the necessary changes we must all accept if we are to meet the ambitious but essential climate change targets.

Through the Big Start campaign we are also helping to improve the quality of childcare, to make it more affordable and where the work of early years educators is properly valued. Similarly, our Valuing Care/Valuing Communities campaign is achieving long overdue pay justice for workers in our Section 39 and other care agencies across the community sector.

In this regard, I would like to express solidarity with our members in the North and those workers across the UK in their current dispute for better pay and conditions in health, teaching, rail, fire and other public services.

In SIPTU, we remain committed to organising workers in all sectors of our economy, not just to attain fair treatment and justice at workplace level but also as a platform for the wider battles to improve our society. These include the reform of our two-tier health system, combatting educational disadvantage and ending the social crisis provoked by a lack of decent, affordable housing.

The housing crisis in this jurisdiction affects almost every family with young workers, in particular, unable to acquire or afford a decent roof over their heads. It is now driving a new wave of emigration and has contributed to the highest homeless figures in decades. That is why SIPTU continues to support the Congress-led Raise the Roof campaign as it pushes for a dramatic change in government policy through public action and information campaigns.

We need a massive, local authority led, construction programme for affordable and social housing, in mixed communities across the State. This is the only coherent solution to our housing crisis, which is the product of failed policies of successive governments driven by interests who put their private profit over the public good.

With over 11,600 people, including more than 3500 children in emergency accommodation, or sleeping on the streets, and many more rearing families in overcrowded and damp conditions, we must intensify our efforts to provide decent homes for all, and that includes those seeking

refuge from war and poverty abroad.

Unfortunately, recent weeks have shown that our struggle for progress is now facing an old threat that has found a new disguise. That is the use of false information to spread hate and division in our communities, particularly in those areas where people have suffered most from deprivation and official neglect.

I can assure you that SIPTU members will play our part in confronting those who would seek to divert working people them from focusing on the real causes of our housing and health crises, towards a campaign against asylum seekers and migrant workers.

I can assure you that SIPTU members will play our part in confronting those who would seek to divert working people them from focusing on the real causes of our housing and health crises, towards a campaign against asylum seekers and migrant workers.

It is through involvement in their union that workers whether refugees, economic migrants or those born and reared in Ireland can find common purpose. That is why I am proud that SIPTU has been at the forefront in assisting Ukrainians arriving in Ireland with information and advice. We have also reached out to organise workers through our Migrant Workers Network and we have found common cause with asylum seekers in their demand for a right to work.

As with Larkin, our task is to promote fairness at work and justice in society with decent homes, healthcare and jobs for all.

This is an edited version of a speech by SIPTU Deputy General Secretary, John King, at the annual commemoration for Jim Larkin at Glasnevin Cemetery on Thursday, 2nd February.

No community worker to be left behind

By Scott Millar

REPRESENTATIVES of the 'Valuing Care, Valuing Community' campaign met Department of Social Protection (DSP) officials at the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) on 2nd February.

At the meeting, a pay rise was offered to some community workers, but SIPTU representatives made it clear all of its members in the sector must be covered in any agreement.

Following the meeting, ICTU released an update stating the DSP had offered to increase pay by 3% over the course of 2023 and to discuss a mechanism for future pay determination. This proposal was largely in line with 'Valuing Care, Valuing Community' campaign demands that workers are paid the terms of the Building Momentum agreement and the setting up of mechanisms where members' future terms and conditions of employment could be negotiated.

However, the DSP made it clear the offer would be applied to workers in Community Employment Schemes, Tus, the Rural Social Scheme, and Job In-



Community workers on the picket line in Castlebar on 22nd September 2022

itiative but not to workers in the Local Area Employment Service.

SIPTU Community Sector Organiser, Brendan Carr, said: "There has been a degree of movement by the Department in that it has accepted its role in ensuring that workers in this sector receive pay rises and is willing to discuss how pay will be determined in the future."

"However, there is also an attempt by the Department to divide

some workers in the sector from their colleagues in relation to its pay proposal. SIPTU representatives will not accept such a position and remain completely committed to securing pay rises and other improvements for all members across the community sector.

"The SIPTU Community Sector will be meeting to establish the next stage of the 'Valuing Care,

Valuing Community' campaign and evaluating the proposals from the Department of Social Protection. There has been movement by the Government on these issues due to the commitment of union members in the community sector to the campaign, including its well-supported days of industrial action during 2022."

He added: "SIPTU represen-

tatives remain completely committed to the campaign for improvement in pay and conditions that will benefit our members, their families and wider communities. It should also be noted that the HSE has committed to engaging in a process to deal primarily with workers employed in Section 39 organisations."

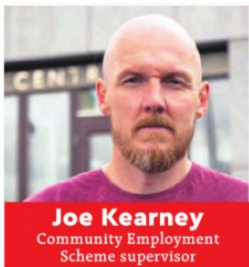
SIPTU representatives remain completely committed to the campaign for improvement in pay and conditions that will benefit our members, their families and wider communities

My last pay rise was in 2008

I work in Navan in county Meath. A big reason why I got into this line of work was due to growing up in a working-class area in Tallaght.

I would have seen a lot of substance misuse within my community. That was a big driver for me to become involved in community work. I always wanted to work with people. I started off working in youth work and gradually moved into the area of drug addiction.

When you work in the drugs field, you have to have qualifications, you've got to have a third-level education and then there's a lot of professional development to learn about the different approaches that are out there to best help the



Joe Kearney
Community Employment Scheme supervisor

clients.
The drugs problem has actually got a lot worse with people presenting at younger ages. We have people entering treatment from 18 years up. We have people that are in their mid-50s and older. I've worked personally with people in their 70s. As a Community Employment

supervisor in a rehab scheme. I have responsibility not just for the running of the programme, I am also the group facilitator, the key worker and a counsellor.

There are a wide variety of things that happen on any given day. We're with clients every day doing various activities. It can be a stressful but also rewarding job where you can feel you're making a real difference to clients' lives.

"The last pay rise I received was in 2008. Fifteen years later and it's getting really tough now to survive, especially with inflation and fuel costs.

Our fuel and travel rates have not been increased in those 15 years either. It is getting really tough to put food on the table.



David Twomey, a principal social worker at the Western Care Association, joined dispute over pay



Geraldine and Grace, basic instructors with Ability West, on the picket line in Castlebar

'Valuing Care, Valuing Community' campaign representatives are scheduled to meet with officials of the Department of Social Protection on 2nd March.

Community Scheme supervisors have their say

More than 700 Community Scheme Supervisors from across the country responded to a survey carried out by SIPTU to find out their main concerns in relation to their work and the future of the sector.

Respondents included union members, of both SIPTU and Fórsa, and non-members. The number responding to the survey was 730 out of approximately 1,200 workers in the sector, over 60% of CE Supervisors across the country. It was described as a "phenomenal response showing the level of engagement by these workers", by SIPTU Sector Organiser, Brendan Carr.

The survey emerged from meet-



Community sector and Section 39 organisation workers march in Dublin on Tuesday, 3rd May 2022.

Other key issues highlighted was the lack of access to appropriate training and personal development in line with the range of their responsibilities



Conor Mahon
SIPTU Sector
Committee

“The survey and its findings are a critical tool in strategically directing our National Committee and SIPTU on the issues that directly impact the sustainability of community employment.

The number of respondents and depth of information provided gives a strong mandate to our

Committee and will clearly guide the campaigns Committee who created the survey in responding to the challenges faced by the 950 or more schemes that cater for over 25,000 participants annually. These schemes underpin all facets of the community and voluntary sector. Their viability is critical

to the sector. The principle cog in the system, the CE Supervisor, my colleagues, deserve the acknowledgement - both financially and in terms and conditions, for the responsibility the role entails. As the survey portrays, this far outweighs what the Department of Social Protection acknowledges.”

ings of the SIPTU national CE supervisors committee and the SIPTU Strategic Organising Department which was eager to ascertain the real concerns and a national mandate to develop campaigns which will be supported by the vast majority of CE Supervisors.

The data from the survey highlighted the integral role that CE Supervisors have within their communities, providing key supports to sport clubs, with more than 60% involved in this activity. They also provide meals on wheels, tidy towns, disability services, early years care, family resource centres and many more integral services for communities across the country.

SIPTU Organiser, Clem Shevlin, said: "While the survey showed how important these workers are to their communities, it is also starkly indicated the pressures they are under. A major issue that stands out from the survey is the frustration among these workers about a lack of recognition and respect concerning their roles. More than 80% felt that the title supervisor does not properly reflect their role and would prefer to be

referred to as managers."

He added: "Other key issues highlighted was the lack of access to appropriate training and personal development in line with the range of their responsibilities."

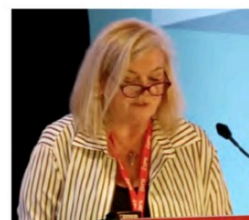
Another key aspect of the survey were questions relating to operational matters. This revealed a raft of measures that the Department of Social Protection should undertake to protect the sustainability of the schemes, their development and to enhance the experience for participants.

SIPTU Organisers will be holding information meetings both in person and online with CE Supervisors across the country to further build momentum on these issues. If you would like further information on the survey and other aspects of the work of the SIPTU CE Supervisors National Committee please contact bcarr@siptu.ie

Nobody else would have been treated like this

"I'M a proud community worker in the Dublin 12 area. We really need the Government to recognise that it's just unfair the community sector is on its knees. We haven't had a pay increase in 15 years.

Seriously, I don't care what background you're from, I don't care where you work, there's nobody else other than the people in the community and care sector that



Linda Scully
SIPTU Community
Sector President

can actually say they haven't had pay rise in 15 years. We've had no respect, no proper response from the Government until we took strike action last year.

If necessary, in 2023, we will escalate the industrial action associated with the 'Valuing Care, Valuing Community' campaign until we get the Government's attention, and they sit down with our union and collectively bargain."

Artificial Intelligence – friend of the worker or optimised exploitation?



By
John Cleary

THE future is already here – it is just unevenly distributed. So wrote William Gibson in the dystopic cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* in 1984.

Back then, Artificial Intelligence was a strictly sci-fi concept – a futuristic technology that would change the world in ways we could not imagine. Fast forward to today, and AI is rapidly becoming a reality in many aspects of our lives, including the world of work.

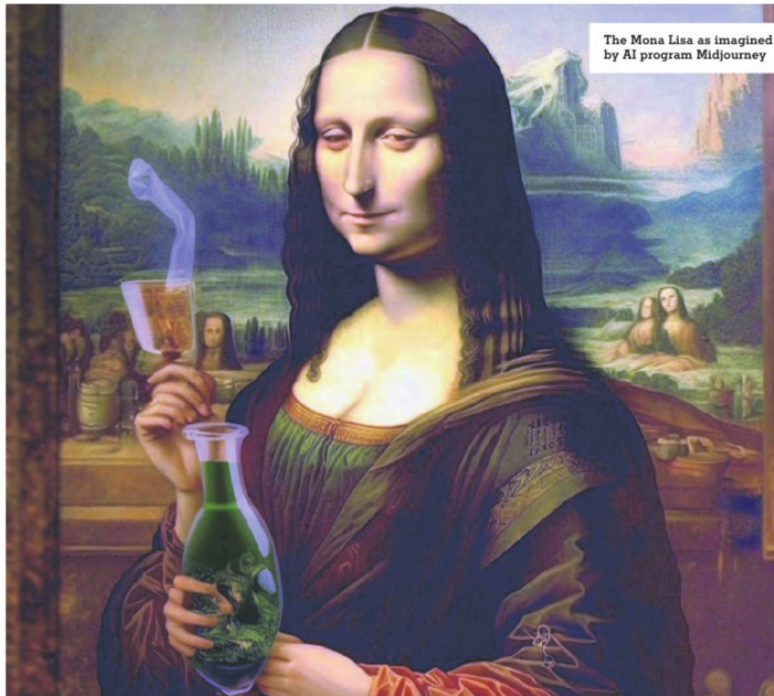
2022 was a tipping point for real-world useful applications of AI, from text to image generation tools like Midjourney and OpenAI's Dall-E 2, which can generate astonishing images on demand from a simple text prompt, to the revolutionary ChatGPT, the chatbot that can generate graduate-level essays, business plans, scripts, articles and even poetry on demand.

These tools have been hailed by business leaders as promising a productivity boom, by automating many tasks which, until now, required highly educated and well-trained human workers to perform. Unfortunately, the uneven distribution of the benefits of this technology threatens to be even worse for workers than Gibson predicted.

As Professor William Spriggs, chief economist at leading US trade union AFL-CIO warned recently: "If you make workers more productive, workers are then supposed to make more money.

"Companies don't want to have a discussion about sharing the benefits of these technologies. They'd rather have a discussion to scare the bejesus out of you about these new technologies. They want you to concede that you're just grateful to have a job and that you'll pay us peanuts."

Even the way this latest generation of AI tools has been developed has arguably involved massive exploitation. Take Dall-E2 and Midjourney, for example. While the images produced are "original", these AI models were trained using millions of images scraped from the internet, which were produced by real artists, animators and graphic designers who were not paid for their work and received no credit. ChatGPT



in its decision-making. This can lead to discriminatory outcomes, leading to a lack of diversity in the workplace and perpetuating historical inequalities. This is a significant concern as it can lead to further marginalisation and exclusion of certain groups and reinforce existing power imbalances in the workplace.

A major challenge to regulating these AI tools is that they remain worryingly opaque, even to their creators. Inputs and outputs can be compared but, fundamentally, most AI systems are "black box" – even if the company wanted to tell you why an AI made a particular decision, it cannot say.

That is why it is crucial that the trade union movement is at the forefront of the conversation about regulating these tools. We can't stop the future, but we can try to make sure it is distributed fairly and to everyone's benefit.

John Cleary is an advocate with the SIPTU Workers Rights Centre

and similar bots have similarly learned their abilities from text scraped from all over the Net. Many of these artists and writers are now suing the developers of these applications, but it seems likely that the genie is out of the bottle. Millions of workers have

unwittingly been part of training their artificial replacements.

One of the most worrying modern developments is the use of AI in recruitment and interview processes. Companies such as HireVue promise an almost supernatural ability to analyse

CVs, conduct interviews and interpret the video results to find the "best fit" for a company.

But AI systems are trained on historical data which itself is contaminated by biases or discrimination, so the AI system learns to perpetuate these biases



What would James Connolly have thought about recent developments in AI?

According to ChatGPT:

James Connolly was an Irish socialist and political activist who lived in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, so it's difficult to know exactly what he would think of recent developments in AI. However, based on his political beliefs and writings, it's likely that Connolly would have had concerns about the social and economic implications of AI and its impact on workers. He was a strong advocate for workers' rights and was critical of the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few, and so he may have worried about the potential for AI to further exacerbate these inequalities.

On the other hand, Connolly was also a firm believer in the transformative power of technology and saw it as a tool that could be harnessed for the benefit of society. He was a strong supporter of the idea that technology should be used to improve the lives of workers, and so he may have seen the potential for AI to make work easier and more fulfilling for people.



Wider pay gap for migrants exposed



By Yvonne O'Callaghan

In a recent report published by the ESRI on 'Wages and Working Conditions of non-Irish Nationals in Ireland', it found that while non-Irish nationals earned 22 per cent less per hour than Irish nationals, East European workers earned, on average, 40 per cent less than Irish workers in the period 2011-2018. For every €1 an Irish worker earned, a non-Irish worker earned 78 cents.

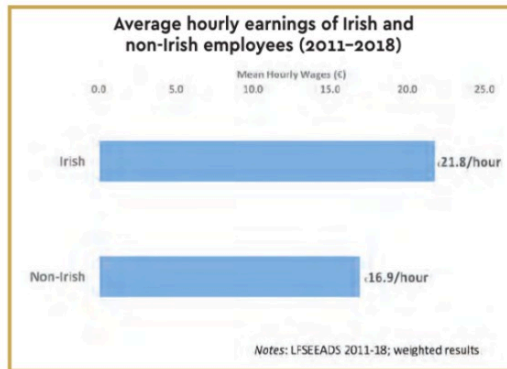
According to the ESRI, African nationals, whose employment rates are low, earn on average 14 per cent less than Irish nationals. Non-Irish women experience a double earnings penalty: for being female and for being a migrant. Non-Irish women earn 11 per cent less than non-Irish men, who in turn earn 18 per cent less than Irish men. This means non-Irish women earn 30 per cent less than Irish men.

The authors of the report concluded that while Ireland has robust anti-discrimination legislation, specific measures to combat labour market discrimination may be required in addressing the needs of

non-Irish nationals. In this respect, the current development of an anti-racism strategy in Ireland is vital and job quality, including wages, should be a priority for migrant integration policy and incorporated into the successor to the Govern-

ment's Migrant Integration Strategy 2017-2021.

Speaking at the launch of the report, SIPTU Organiser, Barnaba Dorda said: "The worrying findings of the report on the migrant wage



The worrying findings of the report on the migrant wage gap underscore the importance of union membership

gap underscore the importance of union membership. While joining a

trade union can play a crucial role in reducing the wage gap, the Government must also improve collective bargaining rights for workers represented by unions. Moreover, increased representation of migrants in managerial positions will foster more inclusive and trusting workplaces. The public sector has a responsibility to lead by example and demonstrate the value of migrant workers by employing them and supporting their career progression."



A chara,

The Moore Street Preservation Trust is hosting an urgent public meeting on 23rd February 2023 in Liberty Hall, Dublin at 7.00pm.

This meeting comes at a very crucial time in the campaign to save Moore Street:

An Bórd Pleanála is considering our appeals against the Dublin City Council grant of planning permission to developer Hammerson which would destroy much of the 1916 Battlefield Site.

If our appeals are turned down - and we do not know when the decision will be announced - it may be necessary for the Moore Street Preservation Trust to take urgent and costly legal action.

The National Monument, Numbers 14-17 Moore Street, last meeting place of the 1916 leaders, is owned by the State but the Government has failed to properly conserve it and to deliver the museum which was promised for 2016! The buildings remain empty and vulnerable.

Hammerson has taken a judicial review case against Dublin City Council challenging the decision of City Councillors to add additional key Moore Street buildings to the Record of Protected Structures.

But there is an alternative to all this. The Moore Street Preservation Trust has a master plan for the considered regeneration of this area into 'An Cheathrú Chultúir' - a cultural quarter. Seán Antoin Ó Muirí, architect, will present the Master Plan. The adoption of this plan would preserve the buildings of

the site, develop a 1916 revolutionary trail and provide living and business space for this part of the city.

A new film about Moore Street, by award-winning filmmaker, Seán Murray, and featuring renowned actor, Stephen Rea, will be premiered at the meeting.

We are asking you to attend this meeting to help us ensure that the Battlefield Site is preserved and developed in a way which befits what the National Museum of Ireland has describes as the 'most important historic site in modern Irish history'.

We look forward to seeing you in Liberty Hall.

**Is mise le meas,
James Connolly Heron**



Why we must resist the Far Right

By Yvonne O'Callaghan

TRADE unions and the Far Right are opposites. Not only because of trade unions' history and proud tradition of opposing the Far Right and the politics of hate in the past, but because of what trade unions stand for today.

We believe we're stronger united than divided. So when employers use one group of workers to undercut another, we fight it. But the Far Right pit workers against each other, dividing by race, religion, gender or any characteristic they can.

Symbolism is important in their rhetoric. Images often include the national flag, and their narrative is filled with references to nationalism, patriotism, and narrow definitions of 'Irishness', used to polarise and to 'other' communities, creating a sense of 'them and us'.

The Far Right seeks to build their base by aggravating feelings of disaffection, resentment, and alienation from decision-making processes particularly in communities with experience of long-term poverty, inequality and marginalisation.

During Covid, their focus was on agitating frustration about restrictions, lockdowns and compulsory mask wearing, and on misinformation about the vaccination programme.

Trade unions, above all else, believe in solidarity: we seek better lives, social justice and opportunity, for all working people. The Far Right often exploits public discourse to portray trade unions as separate from workers and part of the ruling elite.

They often claim that they can be better trusted to represent the best interests of working people than trade unions. Some even campaign around traditional trade union topics such as fair wages and secure jobs.

The Far Right has an agenda, but it's not to help working people. Their real aims are to advance their own political ambitions. Where they are in power – as in Hungary, Poland, Turkey, Italy – or are influential, the Far Right has been quick to exploit a decade of crisis, austerity and insecurity.

There are clear links between exploitative economies and the abuse of workers' rights, and far-right rhetoric and increasing authoritarianism.



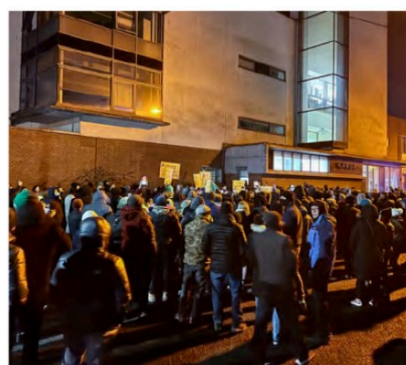
A large crowd of people and protesters who are part of the Anti Racism movement protest outside the GPO in Dublin calling for housing for all on 6th February, 2023. Photos by Rollingnews.ie



Dublin City Centre protest against asylum seekers coming to Ireland on 4th February.



Dublin Communities Against Racism rally on 28th January.



Residents and far-right activists gathered outside Finglas Garda Station, protesting against asylum seekers entering Ireland on 1st February.

and become a growing threat.

In several parts of the country, we have seen a recent rise in activity by far-right actors in creating fear in our communities by the targeting of direct provision and refugee centres over the last number of months. This has been coupled with a return to blatant in-your-face racism with divisive language. Those who are seeking to divide us are using racism to exploit fear, division, and reaction at every level of society.

Racism is a trade union issue and as such we must protect the rights of our members to safe and inclusive communities and working environments, free from racial attacks and targeting.

It must be recognised that there are people spreading lies and are using the fact that we need, proper resourcing of public services, safe homes, and decent work to turn us against each other and to fuel hate.

Many of these communities feel left in the dark, and are hurting for many reasons – often as a result of systemic under-resourcing. So when there's a significant moment in a community it can serve as a lightning rod for channelling unrest. From there it can quickly become weaponised by the Far Right and some politicians.

Communities must be resourced and essentially as unions it is imperative that we continue to engage with workers on what are the needs of local communities in order to thrive – rather than getting into supporting the claim that communities should be given the power to veto particular demographics of refugees and people seeking asylum.

Ultimately, we must keep the Far Right and extremist ideas out of our movement. The trade union movement was built on a simple idea of solidarity: uniting working people, standing stronger together, organising for Fairness at work and justice in society.

Battling the Far Right and right-wing extremism will not be easy. Perhaps most challenging is that the wrong approach risks reinforcing the far-right narrative. This is the consequence of political choices by government and not the fault of other working people.

Our priority is clear we must resist all attempts to divide working people whether that is in the workplace, communities or in politics.

A good story to tell as Marathon Trust ends its run



By Tadgh Curtis

When Augustinian priest Father Michael Mernagh rose to speak at a meeting in the Talbot Hotel, Stillorgan, on 13th January, he had a good story to tell...

The meeting marked the winding up of the Marathon Trust, a charity founded by Fr Mernagh in 1982.

For more than 20 years, the Marathon Trust has worked closely with the South African-based charity Resource and Development Foundation (RDF) to pioneer a range of social inclusion and anti-poverty programmes centred on community health, education, employment and learning networks across the Western Cape.

Following the collapse of apartheid in 1994, the RDF received logistical support and financing from the Liberties-based South Inner City Development Association (SICCCA), before the Marathon Trust took over the role.

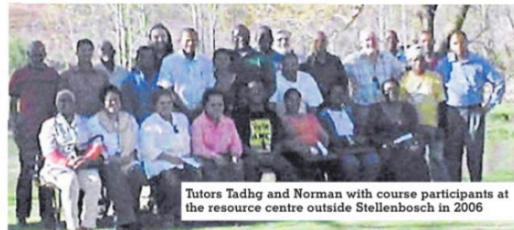
A key priority of the new partnership was to set up and manage a resource centre offering expertise in community development, research and networking, enterprise and skills development, job creation, organisational management and marketing, as well as promoting cultural, ethnic and religious solidarity.

The former training centre of the Christian Brothers near Stellenbosch was identified as an ideal location for the centre. With the agreement of the order, the RDF's Board moved its operational programme there and began organising major urban and rural social inclusion programmes.

In 2006, I was asked by then



Tadgh Curtis, Fr Michael Mernagh, and Norman Croke holding copies of the 'A Good Story To Tell' report



Tutors Tadgh and Norman with course participants at the resource centre outside Stellenbosch in 2006

SIPTU General Secretary, Joe O'Flynn, to become involved in the work in the Western Cape, after Fr Mernagh requested help from the union. I later visited the Western Cape, meeting with RDF officers, local trade union officials, and community leaders and subsequently developed a programme to identify, develop, implement and evaluate training which course participants could then pass on to their fellow workers and union activists. During the trip, I also visited a

local primary school, bringing along some footballs as gifts, but it soon became apparent that the children's needs were even more basic – teachers often had to break pencils into three parts so that each child had something to write with.

Back home in Ireland, I used to mention this fact during training courses for SIPTU College, and was often presented with hundreds of pencils on the final day of the course. I was also able to persuade managers of hotels, where

seminars were held, to donate substantial numbers of pencils for this good cause. Eventually, as a result of such tremendous goodwill, tens of thousands of pencils were shipped free of charge to South Africa.

Along with fellow tutor Norman Croke, I travelled back to South Africa in late 2006 to deliver a training course over a busy five days at the Stellenbosch resource centre.

The training was enthusiastically received by course participants, which included wine farm workers, union officials, NGO and community activists.

We split up the participants into two groups, and explained that each student would have to make a presentation on a topic of his/her choice to the entire group at the end of the week.

Despite some initial reluctance on day one, Norman and I worked individually with the students throughout the week, and in the end, each one stepped up to the mark and made a presentation to the group.

This was a major achievement for many of them who had never spoken before in public. The communal celebration as each student finished their presentation will live long in our memories.

Norman and I were presented with small mementos of our visit by the group – which we both treasure to this day.

And so 17 years on, Norman and I found ourselves in the Talbot Hotel to receive the final report of the work carried out over those 20 years by SICCCA, the RDF, and the Marathon Trust. The report acknowledges the unique role played by the Irish trade union movement in providing training and support. It states that SIPTU "in particular" was able to provide "high-quality training to the leaders of the key farm workers

committees bringing advanced European policy and practices to the programme."

The report further states that: "This training has and will continue to provide a new impetus and direction to farm workers in dealing with employers in the new South Africa."

Esme, the programme evaluator from South Africa, who also addressed the meeting, pointed out that SIPTU training was among the most valuable and highly-rated over those 20 years.

Unfortunately, the new South Africa continues to struggle with the challenges of unemployment

The report acknowledges the unique role played by the Irish trade union movement in providing training and support

and poverty. There is still a need for capacity building of workers in both urban and rural areas.

SIPTU's Education and Training Department has reduced in size since 2006 but from my delivery of the Trade Union Studies programme up to 2018, I know that there are many talented and skilled trade union activists who could make a real contribution in South Africa.

The final words of the 'A Good Story To Tell' report are relevant here: "Where there's a will, there is a way."

SIPTU Solidarity with Cuba Trip 2023

8 nights
30th Oct 2023:

Flights with Air Canada via Toronto (Luggage 23kg)
Dublin to Havana via Toronto
(Transfers included throughout)
Havana Airport to Hotel Sevilla (B&B)
(Transfers included throughout)
2nd Nov: Havana to Cienfuegos
Hotel Melia San Carlos (B&B) – 1 night
3rd Nov: Cienfuegos to Trinidad
Hotel Memories, Trinidad del Mar
All Inclusive – 4 nights
7th Nov – Trinidad to Havana Airport,
return to Dublin via Toronto,

2 Sharing €1820 each
Single Rooms €2050 each

Note all prices are only guaranteed at time of quotation.
Deposit payable by not later than 27th February 2023;
and the balance not later than 27th July 2023.
Delegation limit of 20 able-bodied people*.
For any further information and details contact
kmcglinly@tcd.ie, or drjack54@outlook.com or 087 126 5842

* People whose doctors believe they are fit to travel. Please note if you use a medical device or aid, it must be registered with the airline in advance of travel.

Connecting the communities of Ireland

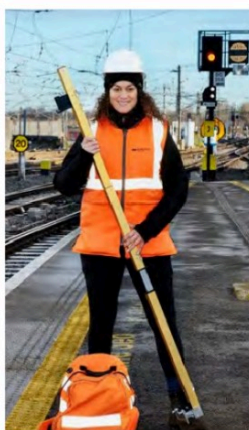
By Scott Millar

At Iarnród Éireann, customers are the heart of the business. Ireland's public service railway operates 4,915 services weekly, carrying almost one million customers. It brings people to work, to school, to appointments, to shop, to attend events and to meet friends and family.

Iarnród Éireann services connect and are connected to the communities they serve. The company employs over 4,000 people in a wide range of disciplines all around Ireland, from drivers to customer service officers, to engineers to craft workers.

The rail network is currently growing and major capital investment projects are underway, such as DART+, Cork Commuter Rail and the new National Train Control Centre. These projects will bring sustainable, frequent and efficient train services to existing and new communities. Sustainability is a key pillar of Iarnród Éireann operations, with the organisation committed to working hard on all aspects from biodiversity to diversity and inclusion.

It is a company that promotes hard work and individuality and provides great opportunities for progression. An example being the current Iarnród Éireann CEO, Jim



Meade, who started his career at the company as an apprentice fitter.

SIPTU NEC member, Iarnród Éireann worker director and train driver, Tommy Wynne, said: "It is to be welcomed that Iarnród Éireann has joined the Supporting Quality campaign. Over the years, the company has changed with the times and is a progressive employer which has always recognised unions and the benefits for everyone of effective unionised collective bargaining.

"It currently employs approximately 1,800 SIPTU members, a figure which has grown in recent years and we hope will continue to grow into the future. The progressive nature of the company was clear from the findings of its gender pay gap audit, which was slightly in favour of women workers."



Tommy Wynne

He added: "I have worked for Iarnród Éireann for 29 years. During that time there, has been an, ever increasing, focus on passenger and worker safety as well as new engagement with sustainability. This has seen investment by the National Transport Agency in new hybrid and electrical trains."

He added: "People are realising

that the railways are the transport of the future rather than the past due to their benefits for communities and the environment."

SIPTU National Rail Committee chairman, Gary Blake, said: "Workers in Iarnród Éireann have always placed a high emphasis on providing a quality, customer focused services while also ensuring the company provides good, rewarding workplaces. It is only fitting that we are now part of

the Supporting Quality campaign which shares those values with us."

For more information visit www.irishrail.ie

SUPPORTING QUALITY
Protecting Quality Jobs in Ireland
Promoting Quality Irish Products

ADD YOUR COMPANY TO THE SUPPORTING QUALITY FAMILY IN 2023

Email: fabiagavin@supportingquality.ie
www.supportingquality.ie

a joint initiative



endorsed by



Proud Supporter



Death toll mounts amid devastation



By Yvonne O'Callaghan

Just over a week on from deadly earthquakes, vital aid is being held up by disputes between government and rebel groups, as well as wider diplomatic quarrels. The UN has said at least 870,000 people urgently need hot meals across Turkey and Syria, and in Syria alone up to 5.3 million people are reportedly homeless. Turkey has said 80,000 people are in hospital and more than 1 million are in temporary shelters. The death toll is now expected to exceed 50,000 people.

On 6th February, two major earthquakes - measuring 7.8 and 7.5 on the magnitude scale - flattened buildings of all kinds and killed thousands of people across southern Turkey and Northern Syria an area larger than the UK in which around 22 million people live. Many of those living in the region are

minority groups, including the Kurds and those displaced by war in Syria and those who previously fled the ISIS regime in neighbouring countries.

The earthquakes have been far more devastating than they seem, and the information provided by the media just scratches the surface. As urgent rescue operations began to find those amongst buildings which crumbled to dust, the region experienced a further 800 aftershocks over the subsequent four days. Efforts have been hampered by the

Millions are homeless and have lost everything

bitter winter conditions and the wrecked infrastructure is making it difficult to get help to where it is most needed.

These are the conditions under which so many people - families to volunteers to crews



Pazarlık, where many of the concrete apartment blocks built as part of the AKP's construction boom were razed to the ground. Photo by: Alessio Mamo/The Guardian

from so many countries have been facing as they crawl under the unstable piles of rubble to try to save people. The destruction wrought by the earthquake has left some parts unreachable even for rescue teams.

In the early stages of the rescue efforts, the world Health Organization (WHO) said that it is difficult to truly estimate the number of those killed in the disaster and those missing, many trapped under the remains of buildings in which first responders were desperately trying to reach.

In the city of Gaziantep, one of the ten cities in Turkey that have been badly hit, local authorities estimated that 30,000 people were missing in one neighbourhood alone. Large



Rescuers carry a girl from a collapsed building following an earthquake in Diyarbakir, Turkey on 6th February, 2023. Photo by: Reuters



Baby born in rubble of Syria earthquake is named Aya, the Arab word for miracle



Erdoğan in quake-hit Osmaniye. The president toured affected areas but refused to accept criticism of the state's response. Photo by: Ruth Michaelson

Large portions of the city of Antakya are simply gone as high rise apartment blocks are now only ruins

ICTU letter of solidarity



8 February 2023

President DSK,

Presidentin KESK

Presidentin HAK-İŞ

Presidentin TÜRK-İŞ and KAMU-SEN (Associated Organisation)

Re: ICTU message of solidarity to ITUC Turkish affiliates related to the devastating earthquake

Dear comrades,

We are deeply shocked and saddened by the terrible news of the devastating earthquake that struck southern Turkey yesterday. On behalf of all trade union members in Ireland, we express our deepest condolences to our trade union sisters and brothers in Turkey and the many victims of this terrible tragedy.

We express our deepest respect for the rescuers and all those who are part of the rescue effort to save human lives, often at the expense of their own safety.

We are well aware of the dual burden that in these economically difficult times you are faced with the defence of workers' rights and jobs and the huge challenge to mitigate the consequences of this earthquake.

Please be assured of our solidarity in these tragic times.

Yours in solidarity

Owen Reidy
General Secretary



People warm themselves around a fire in Pazarcik. Photo by: Suhaib Salem/Reuters

portions of the city of Antakya are simply gone as high rise apartment blocks are now only ruins.

Millions are homeless and have lost everything now without shelter in winter conditions with just makeshift fires to warm themselves to in the streets. Many of those who have made it have very limited, or no access, to

to some four million people in Syria - was temporarily suspended, following damage to the access road. Without this border crossing through which hundreds of essential supply trucks are passing through every month, delivering significant amounts of humanitarian aid, more people will suffer unnecessarily.



A woman holding a child sits by a collapsed building as search for survivors continues in Hatay, Turkey, 10th February 2023. Photo by: Reuters

electricity, food and water.

So many people are looking for their loved ones. Even though Turkey is relatively well prepared for earthquakes, the available resources are dwarfed by the magnitude of the catastrophe.

In north western Syria the earthquakes wrought further devastation to a region already torn apart by years of war and the situation on the ground is deteriorating day by day.

The single corridor of cross-border international aid delivery from Turkey at Bab al-Hawa - operating under a United Nations Security Council mandate and providing humanitarian assistance

This area of Syria was already hard to access before the disaster, and largely reliant on humanitarian assistance. It is an area with very high numbers of displaced persons - there was limited electricity, clean water and a critically fragile health system before the quake. These are communities that have been living for over a decade in a perpetual conflict zone and have witnessed multiple atrocities. Many are living with life-changing physical and emotional wounds and have been displaced already multiple times.

Yvonne O'Callaghan is SIPTU Head of Equality and Policy

ITUC/ETUC appeal for solidarity with Turkish affiliates



PERC PAN-EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COUNCIL
CRE CONSEIL REGIONAL EUROPEEN
ВЕРС ВСЕЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЙ СОВЕТ
Bd. du Roi Albert II, 5, Bte L - 1210 Brussels, Belgium



Reference: P/LX/AL/DW
Date: 9 February 2023

Subject: Copy of ETUC's circular of 7 February regarding appeal for solidarity with Turkish members

Dear Colleagues,

we are sending you below the text of the ETUC's appeal, in case you haven't received it directly.

Brussels, 07 February 2023
• To All Affiliated Organisations

Re: Appeal for solidarity with our Turkish members

Dear colleagues, dear friends

As you know, several earthquakes have devastated the Southeast part of Turkey claiming officially the lives of at least 3,830 citizens while 20,534 are injured; but the World Health Organization has warned the toll may rise dramatically as rescuers find more victims. It's the strongest quake to hit Turkey since 1939 and big cities such as Adana, Gaziantep, Kahramanmara, Kilis, Diyarbakir, Osmaniye, anliurfa, Adiyaman, Malatya, or Hatay are critically affected.

Our 4 affiliates in Türkiye - Hak-is; Turk-is; Disk and Kesk - have many members in the concerned areas and are gathering all possible efforts to provide humanitarian aid to the trade-unionists and their families during this tragic period.

The ETUC supports the call for solidarity and in this regard, I am writing to appeal to you to contribute generously to the ITUC- AP Natural Disaster Fund to help support the relief efforts, any amount or pledge would be highly appreciated.

The ITUC-AP Bank Account is as follows:
ITUC - Asia Pacific DBS Bank Limited 12 Marina Boulevard Marina Bay Financial Centre, Tower 3 Singapore 018962
Account No: 003-945670-0 Swift Code: DBSSSGSG

On behalf of our affiliates in Türkiye, I thank you in advance for your solidarity and support.

Sincerely yours
Esther Lynch
ETUC General Secretary

Yours Sincerely,

Anton Leppik
PERC Executive Secretary
Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5 B - 1210 Brussels



In Syria, more than 3,500 deaths have been reported following the earthquake. This figure doesn't include those who have died in opposition-held areas of the country.

Over 60 dead in police crackdown as unrest spreads over the ousting of Peru's president



By Yvonne O'Callaghan

More than 60 people have lost their lives and thousands more have been injured amid escalating state violence and repression in Peru.

State police cracked down on protests following the ousting of President Pedro Castillo in early December.

Hundreds of people have since been arrested and trade unions, university campuses, rural workers' organisations and other civil society groups have been raided throughout the country.

Castillo was forced out after he attempted to temporarily suspend Congress in a bid to avoid impeachment for "moral incapacity" as a result of multiple corruption allegations brought by the country's attorney general.

He announced he would rule by decree under emergency powers, and called for new legislative elections. Within a matter of hours, his attempt to take over the country fell apart and he was charged with "rebellion".

The Peruvian Congress moved straight to an impeachment, voting



Protestors calling for the dissolution of Congress and new elections following the ousting of President Castillo (right)



Burning barricades at one of the flashpoint protests

overwhelmingly to remove him. Castillo's vice-president, Dina Boluarte, was sworn in as his replacement, while the ousted leader was transferred to Barbadillo prison on the outskirts of the capital Lima. The jail, sited on a military base, is

where former president Alberto Fujimori, now 84, is imprisoned. In 1992, Fujimori made a similar promise to "temporarily dissolve the Congress" and the Chamber was promptly surrounded by tanks as he assumed absolute power.



He went on to arrest journalists and opposition leaders, censor newspapers and TV stations, beginning an autocratic regime that would last for nearly a decade.

The illegitimate government of President Dina Boluarte is sustained by military repression and the far-right forces that dominate the National Congress, many of whom have been accused of corruption and who lack popular support.

Boluarte is also protected by powerful media conglomerates and business interests that support the violence against the Peruvian people's right to peaceful protest.

Castillo's own attempt to seize power did nothing to diminish the fury over his ousting which sent shockwaves through his strongholds in the rural Andes and across poorer neighbourhoods in Lima.

His supporters accuse the loathed Congress of staging a coup against their leader, a schoolteacher and the son of illiterate peasant farmers, and the first member of the country's impoverished rural poor to become president.

In the rural areas, and more recently in the capital, demonstrators have been demanding an end to violence and a way out of the crisis.

This includes the setting up of a transitional government, the dissolution of Congress by bringing forward general elections in 2023 and the convening of a Constitutional Assembly to put an end to the authoritarian and anti-democratic legacy of Fujimori's infamous constitution.

The trade unions in Peru are part of a large coalition of social movements and have been actively supporting these popular demands by joining peaceful mobilisations across the country.

Colombian Vice President Marquez pays official visit to Cuba

On Thursday 9th February, Colombian Vice President France Marquez began an official visit to Cuba to participate in the International Book Fair of Havana 2023, at which Colombia is the guest of honour.

"This visit is an invaluable opportunity to strengthen cultural ties between our countries and build alliances around common goals like regional integration, racial justice, gender equity, and peace," Marquez said.

Upon arriving in Havana, she will visit the Martin Luther King Memorial Center (CMLK), where she will meet with Afro-Cuban

social organisations. Afterward, she will go to March 13 Park to make a wreath in memory of national hero Jose Marti.

Marquez will also give a speech at the Havana Book Fair inauguration ceremony and will attend a representation of foreign and local arts groups in the Cuban National Theatre on Friday.

During her visit to Cuba, she will also sign a memorandum of understanding for cultural co-operation with Vice President Salvador Valdes and will meet with ambassadors of African and Caribbean countries, with whom she intends to strengthen diplomatic, economic, and



Colombian Vice-President France Marquez

cultural relations.

"Cuba is one of the Latin American countries that has most co-operated with Africa and the Caribbean, so it has a great number of embassies of these nations," Marquez said, adding that the Island has contributed a lot to promote peace in Colombia.

"Returning to Cuba as Vice President after having come a few years ago as a participant in the peace talks between the Colombian State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) is evidence of how we are realising our dream of lasting peace for our country," she insisted.

Remembering the Borstal Boy at 100



By
Donal Fallon

DUBLIN writer Brendan Behan was born 100 years ago on 9th February. From his earliest days, his radical politics combined with a literary flair to make him one of the great working-class storytellers.

Brendan Behan died, aged 41, after he collapsed in a Dublin public house in March 1964.

To theatre director Joan Littlewood, it was nothing short of a tragic waste of talent: "I was so angry with Brendan for dying that I felt like kicking that coffin."

Behan's struggle with alcohol, a battle he lost, is well-documented. Yet Behan is much more than all that, emerging as one of the most significant urban writers of 20th century Ireland.

Alongside plays like Shelagh Delaney's 'A Taste of Honey' and Bertolt Brecht's 'Mother Courage', Behan's work, Littlewood believed, belonged in her new Theatre Workshop in London, which was radical and sought to address social and political issues.

Brendan Behan was a child of the Irish Revolution, born on 9th February 1923 in a country still in civil war. His father, Stephen Behan, was an IRA Volunteer, house painter, and trade unionist, who first viewed his son through the bars of Kilmainham Gaol, held aloft by mother, Kathleen.

Home was Russell Street, in the shadow of Croke Park in the north inner city. Behan recounted that "I was born in a Georgian house that had gone to rack and ruin as a tenement, so I should know." What Behan omitted from the telling of the tale was that the home, and another beside it, was owned by his grandmother, Granny English.

Kathleen, the daughter of a grocer who had played her own role in the revolution as a member of Cumann na mBan, found the tenement landscape a difficult one in which to raise children.

During the preceding years she had served as housekeeper to Maud Gonne, and rubbed shoulders with visitors like W. B. Yeats. Kathleen had a deep interest in the topography of the city, walking her children endlessly and passing sites of revolution (1798, 1803, and, above all, 1916, were dates drilled into the minds of her young children) and of literature.

The Behans would move to Kildare Road, in the new Crumlin scheme on Dublin's Southside. Brendan, together with younger



Rebel heart: playwright and author Brendan Behan at his typewriter, pictured around 1955
PICTURE: Archive Photos/Getty Images

There was life throbbing in every vein of him. It is heartbreaking to see all that gaiety and all that bravery going under the soil at Glasnevin

brother Dominic (an author and collector of folk songs), would emerge as one of the earliest chroniclers of the new suburban experience. Graduating from the

ranks of Na Fianna, the still-teenaged Behan joined the IRA, an organisation that had spent the 1930s in ideological disarray, losing much of its left wing through a combination of splits and expulsions.

Drifting without a political agenda, the IRA launched a disastrous bombing campaign of British cities in 1939. Historian Desmond Greaves says: "The picture of Brendan Behan who came over to Liverpool at the end of 1939 with a suitcase of explosives is of a lively, irrepressible youngster of 16, whose mercurial impressionable manner concealed a real depth of purpose. Impressionable would be the word."

The young Behan's decision to

partake in this campaign would alter the course of literary history – landing him in the borstal system and later after an altercation with gardai to internment in Mountjoy for the duration of the war.

This provided the space to develop as a writer; and by his early 20s Behan's revolutionary career was largely over. Prison experiences would influence both 'The Quare Fellow', Behan's breakthrough play, and his autobiographical 'Borstal Boy'.

Behan's commitment to progressive causes remained – he signed nomination papers for Spanish Civil War veteran Michael

O'Riordan in the 1954 Irish general election.

In response to warnings from the pulpits that voting for O'Riordan was a mortal sin, Behan greeted O'Riordan on the street following the election with "well done Mick on the 295 mortallers"! It is perhaps most fitting to end with words from fellow-internee, the trade unionist Mattie O'Neill. Standing at Behan's grave, he said: "There was life throbbing in every vein of him. It is heartbreaking to see all that gaiety and all that bravery going under the soil at Glasnevin. His memory will be green as long as Dublin lies on the Liffey."

This is an edited version of an article by historian Donal Fallon that first appeared, along with image of Brendan Behan at the typewriter, in *Tribune* magazine on 9th February

OBITUARY Robert Navan

Principled and committed anti-imperialist

IN the first week of January 2023, Mount Jerome crematorium was packed to capacity as activists from around Ireland, including President Michael D Higgins, gathered to pay their respects on the passing of Robert Navan described by friends as "a principled and committed anti-imperialist".

Robert began his political engagement with progressive politics as chairperson of the Ireland-Nicaragua Solidarity Group (INSG), which was extremely effective in mobilising solidarity following the 1979 Sandinista Revolution. The INSG raised money to aid the Sandinistas as well as direct solidarity by sending volunteers to pick coffee in Nicaragua as part of the international brigades.

The INSG was central to the invitation to Sandinista leader, Daniel Ortega, to come to Ireland in 1989 and was key to securing the cream of Irish progressive culture to play at a packed-out concert to celebrate the historic visit in the



Man of culture: Robert Navan helped found the Progressive Film Club

National Concert Hall in Dublin.

After the defeat of the Sandinista revolutionary process, resulting from the counter-revolutionary activities of the "Contras", armed and trained by the US, Robert kept up his long commitment of solidarity with the people of central and Latin America and with the Cuban revolution. In this regard, Robert was a founder-member of the Latin American Solidarity Centre (LASC) in Ireland. Robert's life was a rich one. A man

of culture, with a love of music and film, he was a founder of the Progressive Film Club and of Club Sandino, which raised money for national liberation and anti-imperialist struggles. As a DJ, he brought Latin American and world music to an Irish audience and indeed to his family and many friends.

SIPTU Divisional Organiser, Adrian Kane, recalled Robert as a man who was "never shy of the struggle or the fight for justice".

He said: "I first got to know Robert in the early 2000s. I was organising a trip to Caracas and Robert was instrumental in putting me in contact with key people in the Venezuelan trade union movement and the Chavez administration. We would both visit Venezuela on a number of occasions over the next 20 years and during the turbulent years of the Bolivarian Revolution.

"He was a warm and witty man with an idiosyncratic streak. He had a great ability to stay above the destructive doctrinal arguments that all too often dominate left-wing discourse and to keep his eye on the prize.

"I also admired his loyalty to a cause. Robert ran the Irish Venezuelan Network virtually single-handed and remained true in his support for the Bolivarian Revolution long after its 'celebrity' status had passed.

"Anyone who had the privilege of attending his funeral service got an insight into his many sides, including Robert's wonderful sense of humour. His loving nieces and nephews shared memories of Robert's life and performed music while his nephew, Dara Clear, read a memorable poem (right) he wrote for his uncle.

"Robert was never shy of the struggle or the fight for justice and his entire life was a testament to that. He was always present when it mattered. We have lost a true and dear comrade and friend of the Irish and international labour movement. May he rest in peace." In her farewell song, Chiara Clear gave a beautiful rendition of the Kinks' "Thank you for the Days".

He will be sadly missed by his partner, Michèle Clear, his extended family and many friends.

Comrade – for Robert

To not wait to be asked.
To stand and be seen.
To shout down the jack boot and the gun.
To sing through burning tears.
Presente.

To carry the weight.
To raise the arm.
To hold the hand.
To clench the fist.
Presente.

To do the work.
To wave the flag.
To dig the trench.
To walk the path.
Presente.

To lead the cause.
To break the bread.
To lay the rose.
To stay the course.
Presente.

To front the march.
To carry the torch.
To play the tune.
To dance to the end.
Presente.

At the barricades,
By the rubble,
In the town hall
And the village square,
Beneath the writing on the wall,
They will say
"Presente. He was here."

OBITUARY Fr Micheál Mac Gréil

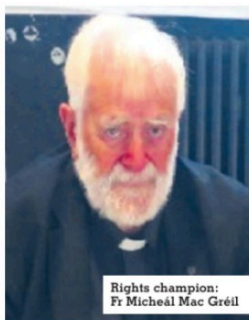
Blessed to have had Micheál as a comrade

IT IS with great sadness that I heard of the passing of Fr Micheál Mac Gréil, a former member and President of the Kildare Trades Council and Kildare Resource Centres.

My earliest memory of Fr Mac Gréil was in 1982. The late Sean Breslin, Branch Secretary for the Workers Union of Ireland based in Athy, and I contacted all the trade unions with membership in county Kildare to re-establish a trades council for the county.

We invited representatives of each union to meet with us to consider drafting a constitution for the Council at a prearranged meeting in the ITGWU Offices in Newbridge and in walked Fr Mac Gréil. He introduced himself as the representative of the Irish Federation of University Teachers.

It was difficult for me to suppress my surprise at meeting a cleric who was a shop steward, the lead organiser for the academic staff at Maynooth College. Fr Mac Gréil invited us to use the facilities of Maynooth College to launch the Kildare Trades Council.



Rights champion: Fr Micheál Mac Gréil

The first meeting of the Council included the late Sean Breslin, James Freeham and Paddy Donnelly (FWUI); Tom Crow, Seamus Bugge and Tommy Kenny representing the ITGWU; John Lynch (NUJ); Tim Weadick (TUI); Fintan O'Malley, Dan Sullivan AUEW, and Fr Micheál Mac Gréil (IFUT).

Fr Mac Gréil was to become a significant advocate as a member of the Kildare Trades Council on behalf of workers' rights in the county, championing many labour



causes, including the right of workers to union recognition and to improve workers' lives.

He was always at the forefront of union activism, a key participant in the trade unions' innovation in establishing the County Kildare Forum on employment representing all the key stakeholders in the county and offering the facilities of Maynooth College for seminars on perspectives of employment. He contributed to the setting up of a Joint Oireachtas Committee to

ensure that the county's TDs and Councillors were regularly briefed on the important issues facing workers.

During the recession in the 80s, the Council, with the guidance of Micheál, established training courses for the unemployed under the auspices of the local VEC that led to the setting up of the Kildare Resource Centres in Leixlip, Maynooth, Naas, Newbridge, and Athy. They provided assistance to the unemployed and their dependents

and promoted their social, personal and economic interest.

The Kildare Trades Council joined with Tom McGrath of ICTU in seeking state funding for the Resource Centres from Alan Dukes TD and Minister for Finance. It successfully sought FAS participation in delivering services to the unemployed.

On 8th April 2019, the Kildare Trades Council was relaunched through a partnership of 13 trade unions in Kildare.

Fr Mac Gréil travelled from his home in Mayo to offer his support and solidarity to workers in Kildare. In his unique and inimical soft-spoken style, he reiterated the need for a strong trade union movement to tackle discrimination, inequality, and workers' right to representation.

His comradeship, solidarity, commitment, guidance and energy will be sadly missed. May he rest in peace.

Ní Saoirse go Saoirse Lucht Oibre

By Norman Croke
Secretary, Kildare Trades Council

Ussoun Productions Presents

Mattress Mick

★★★★ THE MUSICAL ★★★★★

Premiering on the
27th & 28th April 2023

At the
**Liberty Hall Theatre
Dublin**
Time 7.30pm Tickets €21

Written and Directed by Josephine McCaffrey

Tickets available from
www.gr8events.ie/mattressmickmusical

Derek Warpeho & the young
WOLFE TONES

Saturday 22nd April 2023
Liberty Hall, Eden Quay, Dublin

Tickets available online with no booking fee from www.theyoungwolfe.com and Eventbrite.

THE
Ayoub
SISTERS
12 APRIL 2023

LIBERTY HALL
DUBLIN

BRITAIN'S BEST LOVER PSYCHIC LIVE ON STAGE
PSYCHIC SALLY

Liberty Hall, Dublin
MON 27 MAR 7.30PM
showplanr.com

THE BRITISH SUNDAY PAPER
"THE BRITISH SUNDAY PAPER AS TOLD BY..."
★★★★★ THE TIMES
MULBERRY?

TIM KEY

UK & Ireland
Tour 2023

TONY CANTWELL &
SARAH DANIEL BONDIE

GMTF LIVE

LIBERTY HALL, DUBLIN
Wed 22nd Feb 8pm
Tickets from ticketmaster.ie
With Some Very Special Guests

ANGELO DURO
MUSICO-PIANISTA
DUBLINO
23 APRILE

SONO CAMBIATO

NO SIDA
MUSIC

UNTHANK | SMITH
2023 TOUR

TUE 28 MAR
DUBLIN
LIBERTY HALL THEATRE

Debut album "Unthank and Everlasting" out Feb 17th
UNTHANKMUSIC.COM

CHARLIE CUNNINGHAM
UK/EU TOUR SPRING 2023

SAT 15 APR
DUBLIN, IE
LIBERTY HALL

TICKETS FROM CHARLIECUNNINGHAM.COM
SINGULARARTISTS.IE

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

Red card for Saudi 2030 World Cup bid



By Kevin Brannigan

AS the news cycle moves relentlessly on, a World Cup which concluded a week before Christmas already seems a distant memory here in the opening days of spring.

How distant will it feel come later this year when the bidding process for World Cup 2030, the next tournament which is up for grabs, officially opens?

Already the government of World Champions, Argentina, have launched a joint bid along with Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay, and possibly Bolivia, while Spain and Portugal will also launch a bid and Morocco – which had hoped to stage World Cup 2022 – is also expected to go again.

Saudi Arabia will also be bidding to host the World Cup in 2030. And if you thought Qatar was bad, wait until you hear about these guys...

While the country does have a legitimate (male) football culture – even before the recent arrival of Ronaldo – a report published in February 2023 by the European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights and Reprieve shows how the rate of executions carried out by Saudi Arabia has almost doubled under the rule of Mohammed bin Salman, with the past six years being among the bloodiest in the Kingdom's history.

Is FIFA and the football community set to again award this level of despotism with one of the world's greatest events?

Well, probably.

The normalisation by FIFA of the



Deera Square in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia – also known as 'Chop Chop Square' by western expats – where public executions used to be carried out

Saudi regime's cruelty continued in February with the organisers of this summer's Australia Women's World Cup, shocked to discover that FIFA had named the Saudi Tourist Board as an official tournament sponsor.

Until 2018, women were barred from entering Saudi Arabian football stadiums.

"We are very disappointed that Football Australia were not consulted on this matter prior to any decision being made," a spokeswoman for Football Australia, said in a statement. Football Australia said its leaders, and those of its World Cup partner, New Zealand Football, "have jointly written to FIFA to urgently clarify the situation."

With bin Salman back in the West's good books thanks to the energy crisis brought about by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it is now diplomatically inconvenient for NATO and NATO-adjacent countries, such as Ireland, to call out the Saudi regime.

So, what can we do? A lot of cynics – including Liverpool manager Jürgen Klopp – spent last winter asking those in vocal opposition to the Qatar World Cup, where they were years previously when the hosting was being decided.

It is now, with just over a year to go before the hosts are picked, that the Football Association of Ireland, Professional Footballers Association of Ireland and football clubs and

footballers of all age levels, need to be vocal in opposition to Saudi Arabia being granted the privilege of hosting World Cup 2030. Trade unions on this island can also take a vocal and visible lead in opposing Saudi Arabia's bid.

As reported by Polly Smythe of Novara Media before the first ball was kicked last Autumn, workers whose labour had been crucial to the \$220 billion World Cup project were evicted from their apartment blocks to make way for visiting fans. This was one of the last indignities visited upon the builders of the Qatari dream.

We must remember Qatar and use that memory to fuel opposition to the Saudi bid for 2030.



Saudi leader Mohammed bin Salman with Russian president Vladimir Putin. Executions have almost doubled under bin Salman's rule



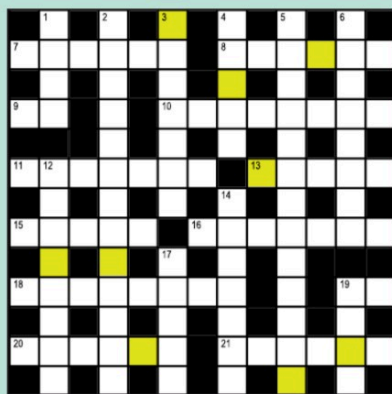
The number of work-related deaths of migrant labourers building Qatari football stadiums was a major point of contention in advance of last year's World Cup Finals

Liberty Crossword

PRIZE DRAW

To win a hamper to the value of €200 courtesy of MARSH

(see back cover)



ACROSS

- 7 Breathing disorder (6)
- 8 From the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural Mountains (6)
- 9 Hospital unit (2)
- 10 Medieval weapon (8)
- 11 City birds (7)
- 13 Ally (5)
- 15 Cowboy's companion (5)
- 16 Political colleague (7)
- 18 Birds and planes do it (8)
- 19 Alright (2)
- 20 Disputed peninsula (6)
- 21 White coating (6)

DOWN

- 1 Ruler opposed by the Bolsheviks (4)
- 2 Sometimes accompanied by lightning (13)
- 3 Prevents disease (7)
- 4 Fleshy, edible fruit (5)
- 5 Captured in battle (8,2,3)
- 6 Way of eating for babies and toddlers (8)
- 12 Can be gates, weapons etc. (8)
- 14 Some Bible believers can speak in them (7)
- 17 Capital of northern Italy (5)
- 19 Welcoming (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.

*Terms and conditions apply

The winner of the crossword competition in the December issue was Susan Rowe, Tallaght.

The answer was TRADITIONS.

le chéile cois life
Amhráin, Ceol agus Craic
le linn Seachtain na Gaeilge
March/Marta 15 7.30pm
Liberty Hall Dublin/
Halla na Saoirse BÁC

with/le The Dublin Lasses
Mick O'Brien *piob*
Máire Breatnach *fidil & amhrán*
Des Geraghty *flúit & amhrán*
Noel O'Grady · Jerry O'Reilly
• Seán Ó hEarcáin *amhrán*

Tickets/Ticéad: €15
(including booking fee/
táille áiríthinte san áireamh)
from/ó www.gr8events.ie

JOIN SIPTU

THE UNION FOR ALL WORKERS

SCAN ME!

TO JOIN SIPTU
www.siptu.ie/join

OFFERING GREAT VALUE FOR MONEY FOR SIPTU MEMBERS **Marsh****10% off Car insurance
15% off Home and Car insurance***when both policies are taken out together*

We will aim to beat your home insurance on a like-for-like basis. Your family and friends can also avail of these offers by quoting **SIPTU** when they get in touch.

Call **1800 200 200** or www.siptu.marshonline.ie

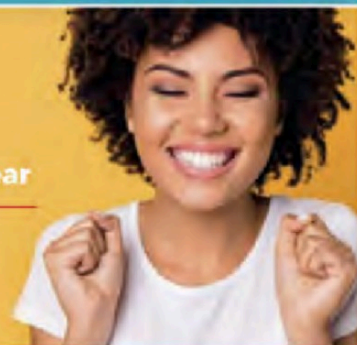
Subject to acceptance criteria, terms and conditions apply. The guarantee is based on a like for like basis and is subject to a minimum premium of €250 on home insurance. 10% discount on car insurance is subject to a minimum premium of €320.

**QuickCover.ie**
TRAVEL INSURANCE**+353 1 525 7901 | www.quickcover.ie**

Certain acceptance criteria and policy terms and conditions apply.
A.R. Brassington & Co. Ltd. trading as QuickCover.ie
is regulated by the Central Bank of Ireland.

**Annual Multi Trip
Worldwide
Travel Insurance**
from **€47**

For any queries you may have in these very unusual times, please feel free to call as we are open for business as usual and we are happy to help in anyway that we can.

**Make your money go further
with SIPTU member benefits****Frequent users Save €700** per year**Plus, you have access to free online learning
4,500+ courses 15 categories**
from hundreds of universitieswebsite: siptu.group-login.com