

Ceardchumann Teicniúil, Innealtóireachta & Leictreachais

fusion



Official Magazine of the Technical, Engineering & Electrical Union (TEEU)

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Important
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Issues

Stress
in the
Workplace

Youth &
Women's
Forums

Labour
Law
Issues

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Happy New Year to all Members

As we emerge from a very depressing recession, it is time for all members to take stock of the industrial landscape surrounding them, grasp the opportunity to improve their employment conditions and work together through the Union to restore and improve their living standards.

What's all the talk about a fight back?

Pay has been stagnant for the last seven years with some sectors having to endure pay cuts while other sectors have achieved all be it marginal increases mainly in the PharmaChem, Medical Devices and the ICT sectors. Throughout this period, costs continued to rise for goods and services while a body of additional direct and indirect taxation has been imposed on our members, financially crippling them and their families.

We are in a period of "Free Collective Bargaining". This means we are free to serve pay claims on employers and the TEEU is encouraging our members to do so in profitable employments where it is believed that there is an ability to pay on the part of the employer. Our officials have been reporting numerous recent pay successes mainly in the manufacturing sector.

IBEC and ICTU have agreed a *National Protocol for the Orderly Conduct of Industrial Relations and Local Bargaining in the Private Sector*. Consequently, there is an expectation by employers that they are open to pay claims. Indeed IBEC has publicly stated that they anticipate that the majority of their employer members expect to implement pay increases in their companies in 2015. Additionally, Ged Nash, Super Junior Minister of State for Business & Employment also declared 2015 the year of the pay increase.

All of these statements came after the TEEU Biennial Delegate Conference in late November 2014 when we signalled a National Claim for a 5% Pay Increase in economically viable companies.

Concessions During Recession

In the Public Sector and in some employments in the Private Sector, our members were put under pressure to accept pay cuts and/or reduced conditions of employment including pension changes as part of a survival plan or whatever explanation was given by their employer at the time. Now that we have emerged from recession the time has come for redress.

In the Public Sector the Government has lifted pay restrictions for some categories; of course this does not include TEEU members, this needs to be challenged now.

We all need to understand that in the Private Sector we are no longer shackled by National Agreements and are therefore free to bargain without restriction. Therefore, it strikes me that as part of the Trade Union Fight Back in whatever sector our members are working as part of any claim under the current Free Collective Bargaining arrangements our claim should

include, in the first instance, that the loss of any pay and/or conditions be restored immediately.

Construction/Contracting

Following the loss of the registration with the Labour Court of Registered Employment Agreements - REA's (sectoral collective agreements), as a result of the Supreme Court decision in May 2013, there has been a concerted effort by some employers to diminish pay, travel time, sick pay and pensions. Some vulnerable members have been taken advantage of by being forced into bogus self-employment or employment through spurious employment agencies on terms and conditions far less than their entitlement under the relevant National Collective Agreement.

So, the time has come for everyone to stand shoulder to shoulder and fight back for their entitlements. If in any doubt or if you become aware of any employer not applying the full entitlements to our members please call the TEEU 24 hour Help Line 01-8719 903.

TEEU Solidarity Links Across the Globe

The TEEU has moved from being regarded as a small craft union to a significant force not only in Ireland but across the globe. Our contribution to international affairs and the influence that we have brought to bear on such issues as the apprenticeship system at home and across Europe is well recognised. Our recent association with the Global Power Trade Unions (electrical) and the United Association already established in the US, Canada, Australia and now Ireland (mechanical), coupled with a number of likeminded unions considering transferring their engagements to the TEEU has undoubtedly strengthened our influence with both Government and employers. The Union is now on a steady course of being a well-respected force that defends and improves the lives of our members and their families.

I wish to sincerely thank our President, Trustees, EMC/NEC officers, branch officers and committee members, shop stewards and all our many activists who work tirelessly on a voluntary basis for the Union in the interests of our members, as well as our officials and staff for all their dedication and hard work throughout 2014.

Finally, I wish you and our colleagues, families and friends good health, peace and happiness throughout the year ahead.

Eamon Devoy
Eamon Devoy, General Secretary.



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THANKS

I would like to thank Pat Guilfoyle and his assistant Collette Collins, the previous editorial team for producing Fusion over the past 14 years and bringing the magazine this far.

Thanks to Frank Keoghan General President, Sean Heading Regional Secretary and Tamara Harte Personal Assistant for their support and assistance in producing this edition of Fusion.

I trust you will enjoy reading it.

Eamon Devoy, General Secretary

FRONT PAGE STORY: TEEU blockade of the Grangegorman Dept. of Education site Dublin, to highlight exploitation and secure workers entitlements on this publicly funded project.

Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC 2014)



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The TEEU – Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC 2014) was held in the Newpark Hotel in Kilkenny in November 2014. With a combination of Branch Delegates, Shop Stewards, Youth and Women Forum delegates along with international guest speakers from across the globe there was a combined total of 170 people in attendance.

Eamon Devoy, General Secretary in his opening remarks to Conference made the following points:

THE STATE OF OUR UNION

The TEEU was never in a stronger position than it is today as we emerge from the depths of a national depression. Our membership is growing significantly, our finances are on a sound footing and our relationship with other unions at home and across the globe has strengthened our organisation exponentially.

He revealed the union had lost 9,500 members largely due to the collapse in construction as a result of the crisis. However, he went on to say that membership is growing significantly, due in the main to the organising activities of the Union's full-time officials.

He said many employers had taken advantage of the recent crisis by cutting members' term and conditions of employment but that the time has come for a "fight back" and the union was never in a stronger position to support its members as

we emerge from the depths of a national depression.

There were 37 motions (including three emergency motions) considered by the conference that were grouped under the five strategic objectives of the Global Union IndustriAll - Building Union Growth - Fighting Precarious Work - Ensuring Sustainable (Industrial) Employment - Confronting Global Capital - Defending Workers Rights.

The three emergency motions that were adopted were:

STUDENT SERVICE CHARGE TO APPRENTICES

This conference is concerned at the application of a Student Services Charge to Apprentices. These charges vary from €916 to €1,576 for different Apprenticeships during phases 4 & 6 while attending educational institutions.

This despite the fact that:

- Apprentices are employees not students
- the student services available to students are not available to apprentices
- monetary supports available to students in financial difficulty (student grants)

The TEEU disputed the establishment of these charges, met with the Minister for Education & Skills and subsequently attended a series of meeting with Department officials. However, no reasonable outcome was forthcoming.

In the light of the above this conference resolves that unless a satisfactory resolution can be found with the Department within the next 3 months, the EMC/NEC shall hold an Special Meeting with a view to serving notice on all employer organisations that the employers should bear the charges being imposed on apprentices, while keeping in reserve the possibility of consulting our general membership to take whatever action is deemed necessary to bring this matter to a satisfactory solution

WATER CHARGES

The TEEU calls on the Government to abolish the proposed water charges with immediate effect and will campaign to achieve that outcome while supporting the ICTU call for a constitutional referendum to retain water in public ownership in perpetuity.

MIGRANT WORKERS RIGHTS IN QATAR

Conference condemns the exploitation of migrant workers in Qatar.

Qatar is a government that takes no responsibility for workers' rights.

40 billion dollars of infrastructure is forecast to get Qatar ready to host the 2022 World Cup. Qatari own estimates are that 500,000 extra workers will be needed in the run up to the World Cup.

Conference calls on the government to make representation to the Qatari government and FIFA



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8



4



5

over the exploitation of migrant workers and calls on the Qatari government to implement the ITUC recommendations for migrant workers in Qatar. I urge conference to support this motion.

Other motions included:

JOBBRIDGE, GATEWAY, INTERNSHIPS AND OTHER FORCED LABOUR SCHEMES

Conference has identified the serious exploitation of young workers, including youth members of the TEEU, at National level. The Youth Guarantee Scheme funded by the EU is intended to assist young workers gain meaningful employment, instead our youth members face "sanctions" from the Department of Social Protection for refusal to participate in forced labour schemes including cuts to their weekly payment.

However, the infraction doesn't stop there. When a young person undertakes an internship or other placement on these scheme, often displacing permanent workers on reasonable pay and conditions, their payment can equate to as little as €3.75 per hour for up to 48 hours per week.

The TEEU must support all opposition to this government's attempts to place the unemployed and newly qualified workers, graduates and professionals into dead-end jobs at inferior rates of pay. These schemes undermine our hard-won rates of pay and conditions of employment and

are just profit enhancing mechanisms for unscrupulous employers.

Given that youth is the future of this Union, the Branch calls on the BDC to instruct the EMC/NEC to oppose all forms of forced labour schemes, in their entirety.

STRATEGIC ACTION AGAINST NON-COMPLIANT CONTRACTORS

The Dublin No. 10 Branch calls for the continuation of Strategic Action against non-compliant Contractors in order to protect the National Collective Employment Agreement for the Mechanical Contracting Industry (MEBSA) and should it benefit from new legislation to enable its registration as an employment order that every effort is made to ensure that this Union is the driving force behind compliance with its terms.

MOTION ON PRIVATISATION

Conference notes with concern the recent Greyhound Recycling dispute and the damage inflicted on unionised workers and their families. Conference calls on the EMC/NEC to pursue with Government the reversal of the devastating effects of privatisation on working people and their families. Calls on Government to desist from any further transfers of our National services and resources into the hands of the private sector, whose only objective is profit at any cost to the workers concerned.

HOUSING

Conference calls on the EMC/NEC to pursue with Government the current housing shortage in order to benefit our members, not only in the construction of new housing developments, but also in the provision of quality homes for workers and their families, who suffered at the hands of the austerity measures introduced to benefit those better off in our society.

That the TEEU should adopt a motion requesting the Government to start a social housing programme as a matter of urgency, as many craft persons can no longer afford mortgages or mortgage insurance protection so as to buy or build their own home.

The TEEU - Executive Management Committee met on the 18th December 2014 and agreed an implementation plan to give effect to the various motions agreed at the conference.

- 1 Eamon Devoy, General Secretary TEEU.
- 2 Delegates voting at BDC.
- 3 Ambet Yuson BWI.
- 4 Eamon Devoy welcomes Richard Bruton.
- 5 Conference in action.
- 6 David Begg addresses Conference.
- 7 Orla O'Connor, National Women's Council.
- 8 Terry Urbanek UA.
- 9 Andrew McGuinness, Lord Mayor of Kilkenny.
- 10 Laurie A. Shedrick, UA and Breda Swift, Waterford No. 1 Branch.
- 11 Jim Pavsic UA.



9



10



11

WORKSHOPS



TEEU - ORGANISING WORKERS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



TEEU – BDC Conference Workshops - Friday 21st November 2014 - Newpark Hotel Kilkenny

WORKSHOP

1

THE TRADE UNION FIGHT BACK (Global, National & workplace by workplace)

At a Global level (through IndustriAll to which the TEEU is affiliated) five (5) key strategic objectives have been identified:

**Building Union Growth / Confronting Global Capital /
Defending Workers Rights /
Fighting Precarious Work /
Ensuring sustainable
Industrial Employment)**

Across the world the neo-liberal employers agenda is taking hold and hard won benefits are being constantly eroded - let the fight back begin!



Marion F. Hellmann
Deputy General Secretary
Building Workers International
– International Perspective



Sally Ann Kinahan
Asst General Secretary –
National Perspective



Eamon Devoy
General Secretary, TEEU –
The TEEU's Perspective

Motion - The Trade Union Fight Back (Subsequently adopted by Biennial Delegate Conference)

The Trade Union fight back supports the strategy adapted by the TEEU negotiation team and EMC, to date in defence of our members and calls on this BDC to mandate the EMC/NEC to place the critical matter of defending and improving the Terms and Conditions of our members across all sectors of our economy, including the public service at the top of the TEEU agenda.

- Any further attempt to erode the pay and conditions of our members will be vigorously resisted,
- Any reduction to terms and conditions conceded during the recession should be restored,
- Improved remuneration must be the central focus having regard for the long pay standstill throughout the recession while many forms of direct and indirect taxation have been imposed.

WORKSHOP

2

NEW RIGHT TO BARGAIN LEGISLATION (valuable in every workplace?)

The right to bargain was first introduced in Ireland in 2000. It provided the opportunity to pursue employers who were unwilling to engage in collective bargaining and provided a legally enforceable mechanism to have successful claims implemented. Following the Supreme Court (Ryanair) Judgement this mechanism was by and large dismantled. However, as part of the current Government's manifesto an undertaking was given to implement legislation to restore these mechanisms.



Esther Lynch
Legal Officer ICTU



Anthony Kerr
Barrister at Law

Motion 19 - New Right to Bargain Legislation (Subsequently adopted by Biennial Delegate Conference)

Conference re-asserts its concerns regarding the absence of adequate legislation to provide the legal right of collective bargaining by Trade Unions to the standards set out by I.L.O. Conventions no. 87 & 98 and the European Court of Human Rights Rulings.

Conference demands the fulfilment of the Government's commitment to enact the legislation as promised in its programme for government before the end of 2014.

WORKSHOP

3

NEW EMPLOYMENT ORDERS TO GUARANTEE PAY ARRANGEMENTS

(replacing REA's)

Since the Supreme Court (McGowan) Judgement in May 2014 many employers have embarked on a race to the bottom in terms of the pay and conditions of workers, including the blatant use of bogus self-employed and spurious employment agencies. Now legislation has been enacted to overcome this problem by restoring minimum pay, sick pay and pension but not other conditions of employment.



Esther Lynch
Legal Officer ICTU



Michael Green
Asst. Principal Officer,
DJEI



Brian Nolan
National Construction
(M & E) Official

Motion - New Employment Orders to Guarantee Pay Arrangements

(Subsequently adopted by
Biennial Delegate Conference)

To put pressure on the government to enact the legislation for the new REA's / JLC's taking into account the Union's role in a monitory enforcement as soon as possible.

WORKSHOP

4

THE FUTURE OF PENSIONS IN IRELAND

(What needs to be done?)

As the days go by, more and more employers are shirking their responsibilities to workers' Pension Schemes which in the vast majority of cases form part of a collective bargaining agreement in relation to their conditions of employment.



Frank Keoghan
General President TEEU



Paul Kenny
Pensions Ombudsman



Rachael Ryan
Legal Rights Official,
SIPTU

- Are your Pension benefits guaranteed or a mere promise that need not be fulfilled?
- have you already been told that your pension scheme is too expensive?
- do you know where your money is being invested?
- can you exercise any control over this?

Motion - The Future of Pensions in Ireland

(Subsequently adopted by
Biennial Delegate Conference)

This conference pledges to mobilise with the objective of rolling back regressive developments in pension schemes in co-operation with other unions by means of industrial, educational, political and community activity.

WORKSHOP

5

WORKPLACE RELATIONS REFORM PROGRAMME

(Changes you need to know about)

There are significant changes underway in relation to third party processes, such as, the EAT, Labour Court, Rights Commissioners. New processes are also being introduced that incorporate a new Mediation and Arbitration Service. (Learn how to access these and what is expected of you when you do so)



Padraig Dooley
Deputy Director, NERA



Kevin Foley
Director of the Conciliation,
Facilitation and Mediation
Division of the LRC



Anna Perry
Deputy Director of the
Conciliation, Facilitation and
Mediation Division of the LRC

Motion 8 - Workplace Relations Reform Programme (changes you need to know about)

(Subsequently adopted by Biennial Delegate Conference)

We call on conference to endorse and support the new Workplace Relations Commission and encourage employers where we have members present to co-operate with the processes and procedures within it. Familiarity training with the new Workplace Relations Commission, it's structures and procedures for TEEU Full-time Officials, Staff, Shop Stewards and Branch Officers is also required.

We also call on Conference to put forward representatives from the Union on the Workplace Relations Commissions board and consultative bodies should such vacancies become available.

SOME PENSION ISSUES



Minister Noonan said that the Pensions Levy was a temporary measure when he introduced it in 2011 but the Levy has netted €675m for the exchequer this year alone; more than the original projected €500m per year from water charges. The coalition raised the Levy from 0.6% to 0.75% for 2014. In most cases, as well as paying the Levy, an average worker starting a pension at age 35 will be at least €1,000 per annum worse off on retirement.

The Levy exacerbates the poor performance of funds and has reached a cumulative percentage of 2.55%. Many pension funds could not absorb the Levy and it is being passed on to the pensioners as a permanent diminution in benefits.

The Levy was an iniquitous imposition and is particularly so now when interest rates are at an all-time low and the Pensions Authority is directing pension investment policies towards sovereign bonds. This Levy and its arbitrary introduction are a major disincentive to people taking up pensions, contrary to Government policy of expanding pensions' coverage.

In Budget 2015, the Minister undertook to abolish the Levy next year but the Government could continue with the pension levy because it has faced little popular opposition, in spite of its costing pension savers an average €2,500 each per year and €2.2bn being taken out of pension schemes over the last four years. The coalition has already reneged on a promise to abolish it in 2014.

It's effectively a tax on savings. If it was coming out of your bank account, there would be a lot more uproar about it. So, this time there must be widespread and sustained protests demanding its abolition, should it be continued.

Pension protection is also in the news arising from the ECJ case Waterford Crystal vs. the Minister for Social Protection (2012). The Court found that the Irish government had not adequately protected the worker's pension scheme but left the exact level of protection to be decided by the Irish High Court. In the event, the workers are to be congratulated, having achieved 100% of their entitlements through negotiation, to be funded by the taxpayer, though, unfortunately, some had predeceased the settlement.

This leaves other workers in a similar situation relying on The Social Welfare and Pensions Act 2013 (No. 2), enacted since the ECJ Waterford ruling, which has set the level of obligation at 50% of pension benefit – just 1% above that already rejected by the ECJ in a British case. If the Waterford workers had proceeded to the High Court, it was clear that 49% would have been insufficient, as a British scheme offering this level of protection was previously rejected by the ECJ, while 90% would seem sufficient, as this level is offered by the current British scheme.

Now, it seems that workers in a similar situation must rely on the resolve and resources of themselves or their union to proceed to the High Court in the hope that the Court will act on the ECJ ruling. The government may choose to then head off a judgement having general application by settling with the workers in question as they did in the Waterford situation, though it has to be emphasised that this would most likely only apply in a case of double insolvency – pension and company and that it is not clear whether it would apply only to cases where the insolvency occurred prior to the enactment of the 2013 Act.

The Social Welfare and Pensions (No. 2) Act 2013 ("2013 Act") came into force on Christmas Day 2013. It introduces two new wind-up priority orders and expands

the type of benefit reductions which the Board may direct under section 50 of the Pensions Act 1990.

In a funded defined benefit scheme, if the funding of the scheme is not sufficient to satisfy the Funding Standard, the trustees may apply to the Pensions Authority for what is referred to as a "Section 50 order". Under such an order, accrued benefits relating to members' past service (excluding pensions currently in payment) can be reduced. Benefits will be distributed in the following order of priority:

1. *Additional voluntary contributions ("AVCs") and transfers in of AVCs; and defined contribution ("DC") benefits and transfers in of DC benefits.*
2. *Pensioner benefits (excluding post-retirement increases), in accordance with the following limits: (a) if the annual pension is €12,000 or less, 100% of the pension; (b) if the annual pension is more than €12,000 and less than €60,000, the greater of €12,000 and 90% of the pension; and (c) if the annual pension is €60,000 or more, the greater of €54,000 and 80% of the pension.*
3. *50% of active and deferred benefits, excluding post-retirement increases.*

The other big hit has been Pension 'reform' through which the State Pension (transition) was abolished at the start of the year. Previously those with sufficient stamps would have received this pension between their 65th and 66th birthdays, subject to conditions.

The next phase in the roll-out of the government's pension policy will be to increase the eligibility age for the State Pension from 66 to 67, which will happen in 2021. In 2028 the eligibility age will increase to 68.

There was no political debate; no public consultation and no cost benefit analysis of the measure. Nor was there consideration of the significant labour market issues involved, nor to issues of fair play, while over the years, successive reports, have rehearsed spurious demographic and other arguments to attack the modest public pension entitlement of workers.

Now, a fifty-nine year old private sector worker, who started work at sixteen and who has had circa 15% of their income paid in PRSI since then, will lose circa €24,000 (two years' State pension). Such a person will now get their pension at age 67 after fifty one years in work (2021). In today's terms, using the average industrial wage as a benchmark, circa €362,000 in PRSI contributions was paid on this worker's behalf during his/her career.

Making major pension changes in such an ad-hoc way is not just a cruel injustice to individual workers; it is a denial of the right of legitimate expectation. Most defined benefit schemes integrate benefits with the State pension, whereby the rules may provide that a multiple of the single rate contributory State pension payable at age 65 is offset from salary to arrive at the pensionable salary.

From this year, in such cases, the off-set would be zero (as no State pension is now payable at 65) and a larger scheme pension could become payable than that which might have been funded for. Most schemes could not afford to off-set this and so the pension for that year would be short by the amount of the transition pension.

One alternative might be to negotiate a fixed-term contract for the period beyond retirement age as in a recent IBEC survey, 78% of employments had a normal retirement age of 65 - but only 7% intended to change their normal retirement age to 66. The union has already successfully negotiated such contracts in a number of employments

Frank Keoghan, General President TEEU





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Saying **YES** to a new chapter in Irish history

In a previous life I worked in a national newspaper. By the way of things journalists tended to mix with journalists, printers with printers and the fitters and electricians socialised together.

Save for the Christmas party we seldom mixed outside our immediate circle. For the night workers that meant we did not really mix with the predominately female clerical or advertising staff. The night desk, the case room and the workers were distinctly male domains, with plenty of pints and laddish banter between shifts in the necklace of pubs around middle Abbey Street: the Oval, The Batchelor, Briody's, the Horse and Tram and the Sackville.

Now and again borders would be crossed and the sub editors, on a break from the first edition, would be joined by a fitter or an electrician drooping for a swift pint or more in those less health and safety conscious days.

On one such occasion a colleague was stunned to find me chatting with a craft worker who I knew separately from the social circles in which we, outside of work, both mixed. George not his real name, was the apparent personification of a macho, beer swilling, heterosexual.

Neither George nor I explained that we shared mutual friends from the Dublin gay scene but my colleague managed to join the dots back at the office.

He certainly had no doubt about my sexual orientation "but one of the lads?"

Even an enlightened, right on liberal like my friend found it hard to accept that George was gay, simply because he did not live up to the stereotype. Are there really gay electricians? Fitters? Printers? Carpenters? He'd obviously never seen the Village People doing the YMCA!

I recall that episode because in the current, largely open society in which we live it is too easy to forget that only two decades ago many felt it necessary to conceal their full identity.

For my part I never "came out" of the closet, I emerged at my own pace without drama and without feeling the need to explain myself. I was lucky to find acceptance but also to be able to withstand the casual homophobia which was part and parcel of everyday life. Others were not so lucky and endured physical and mental torture.

I never wanted to be identified by my sexual orientation - I still don't see it as a big issue but in the face of discrimination it behoves those of us who can take a stand to do so.

As we prepare for the referendum on civil marriage equality the Irish trade union movement can be proud of the role we played in bringing about profound change in Irish society towards LGBT men and women.

At the launch of the SIPTU LGBTQ network in Liberty Hall that role was emphasised with the viewing of the film "Did they notice us at all", a documentary researched with characteristic attention to detail by Edmund Lynch.

The work of pioneering trade unionists such as Kieran Rose and the late Chris Robson serves as a reminder of the role of individual unions, of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions and, more recently, the ICTU. GLEN, arguably the most effective LGBT campaigning group, has its origins in the trade union movement.

I was enormously proud to propose the Congress motion supporting the concept of civil partnership on behalf of the Executive Council and in 2014 am proud to have helped secure Executive Council support for the Yes campaign in the referendum.

The introduction of civil partnership has been a milestone on the road to full equality for gay and lesbian men and women. Yes, it has been about rights and responsibilities, about legal protections and entitlements but in a sense the importance of civil partnership lies in the way in which it has brought about a deeper appreciation of the value and meaning of same sex relationships.

Throughout the country barriers were broken down as couples were joined by sometimes sceptical families, friends and neighbours at civil partnership ceremonies, which inevitably proved to be wonderful community occasions.

The sun continued to rise in the morning and set in the evening, the sky miraculously did not fall, despite the dire predictions of those who set their face against any form of legal recognition of same sex unions.

For trade union members the civil marriage referendum presents a challenge and an opportunity. The opinion polls suggest a massive percentage in favour of marriage equality but that may well lead to complacency.

Elections are won by those who go out and vote, not simply by those who respond to random opinion pollsters.

The No campaign will be committed, well resourced and will attempt to portray the referendum as being about redefining the very concept of marriage and the family.

Those who seek a Yes vote are not anti-family and are not attacking the institution of marriage. It is precisely because of the value placed on marriage by our society that many men and women in same sex relationships want the opportunity to commit themselves publicly to each other on an equal basis to their brothers, sisters, neighbours and friends.

Those who currently enjoy that right are not being asked to surrender anything. Some gays and lesbians will opt not to get married, just as many heterosexuals prefer the option once endearingly called "living in sin". The referendum is about choice.

The campaign will not be won by party political campaigns or even by dint of hard working civic society groups and trade unions but by the active engagement of citizens. Many unions, my own included, do not take part in direct political campaigns but as individual members we can join with the broad coalition currently being co-ordinated by GLEN, ICTU and Marriage Equality.

Union members, their families and their neighbours form a great network which can help shape history. What better way to begin the celebration of the 1916 centenary than by writing a new chapter in Irish history.

Seamus Dooley is a board member of GLEN, the gay and lesbian equality network.



Seamus Dooley, NUJ Irish Secretary

IRELAND AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

At least 40,000 Irish people were killed during the First World War. Thousands more were wounded, in many cases bearing the scars for life. Over 200,000 men and women took an active part in a conflict which touched every town and village in Ireland. It is right that those who suffered and died because of the war should be remembered. But we should not glorify their sacrifice. The First World War was fought by imperial powers, for imperial interests. 'Plucky little Belgium' invaded by Germany in 1914, was one of the most brutal colonial powers in Africa. The Russian Empire, one of the major Allied powers, was a far more dictatorial regime than that of Imperial Germany. Hundreds of thousands of colonial subjects of the various empires fought in the war, but there was never any question of them being consulted as to their opinions on the matter. Ireland went to war as part of the United Kingdom, because of decisions made in London. There was no Irish parliament to rubberstamp 'our' participation. The leaders of both Irish unionism and nationalism made conflicting promises to their supporters in order to convince them to support the war. The Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers, on the brink of fighting each other in the summer of 1914, were now promised to the war effort by their leaders. Edward Carson hoped that UVF participation would guarantee unionists escaped Home Rule, while John Redmond gambled that a display of Irish nationalist loyalty would guarantee its implementation. Thousands of Irish men paid for these political calculations with their lives.

When war began the first to be called up were reservists (ex-soldiers). These included over 1,000 members of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union. As Jim Larkin's *Irish Worker* lamented in August 1914 'some of our best comrades are leaving the North Wall to fight for the glory of England.' Many of these men had been left unemployed following the Dublin Lock-out. Another thousand Transport Union men were in British uniform by 1915 with one battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers even nicknamed 'the Larkinites'. At the beginning of the war recruits to the British Army

came from a range of social backgrounds. But by 1915 the British War Office was complaining that 'recruiting (in Ireland) is slow and almost entirely confined to the towns'. Even in wartime for working-class men the army meant a pay rise, a chance to learn a trade and a separation allowance for wives and families.

And class mattered. British enlistment officers complained that 'a much larger number of recruits could be obtained from the (farming and commercial classes in Ireland) if it were not for their reluctance to enter upon their training with recruits from the labouring classes. This class prejudice is probably much more pronounced in Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom'. One Irish officer explained that the 'ranks' was 'not a very pleasant place for men of education and refinement to be huddled together with men who had probably not washed for a couple of months. He came to the conclusion that there was a large number of men who did not join because they did not care to be mixed up with the corner boys'. Not much evidence of shared sacrifice there.

Another factor in the decline in recruitment in Ireland were the losses suffered at Gallipoli and elsewhere during 1915. Many people became more receptive to the arguments of those who had denounced involvement in the conflict. Both James Connolly and Jim Larkin had opposed the war from the beginning. In August 1914 the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party had warned that 'the working-class will, as usual, supply the victims that the crowned heads may stalk in all their panoply of state... Irish women, it is you who will suffer most by this foreign war. It is the sons you reared at your bosom that will be sent to be mangled by shot and torn by shell; it is your fathers, husbands and brothers whose corpses will pave the way to glory for an Empire that despises you; it is you and your children who will starve at home if the produce of Irish soil is sent out of this country'.

James Connolly was deeply disappointed at the failure of the European labour movement to effectively counter the war. He had hoped that 'rather than slaughter each other for the benefit of kings

and financiers' the workers of Europe would rise up against their rulers. When this did not happen Connolly argued that Ireland could 'yet set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shriveled on the funeral pyre of the last war lord'. In October 1914 he chaired the first public rally of the Irish Neutrality League, an alliance of socialists, trade unionists, republicans and pacifists. Throughout 1915 the INL organized dozens of protest meetings and distributed anti-war literature, despite strict censorship and harassment from the authorities. Anti-war feeling was growing before the Easter Rising. But in its aftermath masses of Irish people rejected any participation in the war. Thus when the British Government threatened conscription in 1918 they met furious resistance.

This resistance was led by the trade unions. On 20 April 1918 1,500 union delegates met in Dublin and backed a call for a general strike. The strike, on 23 April, involved

skilled and unskilled workers, men and women, and members of Irish and British-based unions. It paralyzed most of the economy. Hundreds of thousands signed an anti-conscription pledge. The unions had also drawn up plans for boycotts, passive resistance and industrial espionage if conscription was introduced. The *Irish Times* suggested that 'it was the voice of Labour, not the voice of religion or politics, which yesterday stopped the wheels of industry... We think that April 23rd will be chiefly remembered, not as the day when Nationalist Ireland proclaimed her spiritual and moral isolation, but as the day when Labour found itself'. This is one aspect of the war we *should* surely celebrate. If conscription had not been stopped then thousands more Irishmen would have died at the front. Irish trade unions had warned of what war would mean in 1914 and four years later played a major role in preventing more Irish people being victims of it. 100 years on that is something to be proud of.

Brian Hanley, *Historian*

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The 'Secret Service Unit' of Michael Collins

Operation in Irish Craft Unions

In the autumn of 1919 a 'Secret Service Unit' was set up by Michael Collins with the aim of securing key positions in the Irish trade union movement for committed separatists. Its other objective was to 'smash up' British rivals. IRA and IRB members in Dublin were specifically assigned to this objective.

Some members of the group subsequently submitted virtually identical statements with their applications to the Free State government for pensions as IRA veterans. Here is a typical example from Joseph Toomey, the District Delegate of the British based Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), the largest British craft union:

'I was a member of an Intelligence, or Secret Service Unit under the control of the Chief Intelligence Officer, the late Michael Collins. This Dublin Unit was under the direction of Martin Conlon. What was called the Labour Board was formed under this Unit; and about the Autumn of 1919, I was detailed for special duty on this Labour Board by orders of the Army Council.

'Our duty was to use our influence in our various Trade Unions, and in the Labour Movement generally on behalf of the Republic; to get hold of men in important key positions, such as Power Stations, Railways, and Transport Dockworkers, etc; and most important of all, to undermine the Amalgamated and Cross Channel Unions, and where possible to organise a breakaway from these Unions, and establish purely Irish Unions instead; manned, and controlled by men with Republican and National tendencies, in other words we were Republican Agents within the Trade Union movement. This was regarded as very important work both by the Army Council and the Dáil at the time.

'We were in direct communication with Michael Collins, both as Minister of Finance, and Chief Intelligence Officer of the Army, and on different occasions were supplied with financial assistance to carry on the work. As members of the IRA our work was directed on those lines, and under orders the same as ordinary members though more rigidly

controlled. We worked under active service conditions, and our Company Officers were instructed to excuse us from ordinary parades, while still retaining us on the Roll of the Company, and were thus liable for mobilisation at any time.'

Martin Conlon, the man put in charge of this unit, was a Dublin Sanitary Officer and member of the Municipal Employees Trade Union, a forerunner of IMPACT. He was also on the IRB Supreme Council, as was his deputy, Luke Kennedy, an electrician.

The unit was given the cover name of 'Labour Board' and established at an IRB meeting chaired by Collins' financial confidante Joe McGrath TD. Besides Conlon, who was appointed as Chairman, another IRB man and senior Volunteer officer, Patrick McGurk was appointed Secretary. The Board quickly recruited a provisional committee from craft union activists in the Irish Volunteers, Sinn Féin and Irish Citizen Army to establish the new union.

Official negotiations between this wider committee and Dáil Éireann took place with Countess Markievicz as Minister for Labour and the Secretary of her department, Diarmaid Ó hEigeartaigh, another IRB man.

On Sunday, 9th May 1920 these efforts bore fruit when a packed meeting of craft workers was held in The Abbey Theatre, Dublin, to establish the Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry Workers Trade Union (IES&FTU). It recruited the aristocracy of labour and by the end of the year had 4,500 members. The once dominant, British based ASE had shrunk to 1,762 members in what would become the Irish Free State. As Kennedy put it bluntly in his Pensions Application, 'We smashed up most of the English Trades Unions in Ireland at that time'. Things were different north of the Border. The IES&FTU made no inroads in Northern Ireland.

One of the mysteries of the IESFTU in its early days was how it was funded. The deeds on the premises occupied by the SED at 10 Lower Abbey Street were provided as collateral for a mortgage on the IESFTU's new offices at 6 Gardiner Row (where its successor the TEEU still resides). By coincidence, another tenant in Abbey Street was George Moreland Cabinet Makers, a front for Michael Collins' 'Squad'. Once Collins died at Béal na



mBlath in August 1922 the only person who might have shed light on the subject was Joe McGrath but he never divulged details of Collins' myriad financial transactions. His role in the finances of the republic are worthy of closer attention. Dismissed by the accountancy firm of Craig Gardner for participating in the Easter Rising he was recruited as Finance Officer by the Irish Transport and General Workers Union, an ideal position for laundering other funds. By 1923 he was the new State's Minister of Industry and Commerce, as well as one of its leading businessmen.

In his Pension Application Kennedy states that the ITGWU 'was not very favourable to us at all. As matter of fact from the start of our Union they accused us of being a political union and do so still'. The record suggests otherwise with the ITGWU playing a leading role in having the IES&FTU accepted into the Irish Trade Union Congress and Labour Party and working closely with it in the engineering strike of 1921.

In fact the most striking feature of the IES&FTU was its lack of politics beyond a simple desire to 'smash up' British rivals. It soon fell prey to the splits and demarcation disputes that plagued craft unions at the time. But its birth is indicative of Collins' extraordinary ability to control and manipulate any group he saw as either a threat or a potential asset to his objectives.

Further Reading:

Martin Conlon W24SP10720

Luke Kennedy W24B860

Joseph Toomey WMSP 34 REF 2175

Eamon Devoy and Padraig Yeates, 6 Gardiner Row *Irish Craft Unions in a Time of Revolution*

Padraig Yeates, 'Craft workers during the Irish Revolution', 1919-1922, *Saothair* 33

Padraig Yeates, *A City in Turmoil: Dublin 1919-1921*, Chapter Five

TEEU going from local action to global action

On Sunday, May 9th, 1920, a public meeting was held in the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, for craft workers interested in setting up an Irish based trade union. Fitters, turners, boiler makers, moulders 'and kindred workers' packed the hall to hear the debate. It was a time of great change and political turmoil in Ireland, and many of the men involved in launching the new union were heavily involved in the Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army and Sinn Féin.

Most craft unions in Ireland at the time were British based and they had little sympathy with, or understanding of the problems facing Irish members. They were reluctant to support what they regarded as 'political' action, such as the general strike against conscription. There was also resentment among Irish craft workers at the ease with which union cards were being issued in England because of the 'dilution' of many crafts between 1914 and 1918, when semi-skilled and unskilled workers were employed in engineering to meet the demands of a war economy.

Countess Markievicz, the first woman to be elected to the British House of Commons, had become Minister for Labour in the new Dáil Éireann government that had declared an independent Irish Republic in 1919. She had been calling for a consolidated Irish craft union since her release from prison in 1917 for her part in the Easter Rising. Now she worked with members of British based unions such as Jack Redmond, who was District Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers and Joseph Toomey, the District Delegate of the ASE, to create the new union, which was called the Irish Engineering, Shipbuilding and Foundry Trades Union (IES&FTU).

Although initially based in the engineering trades, the IESFTU held discussions with Irish based members of the Electrical Trade Union and most of them joined in June 1920. The IES&FTU also accepted plumbers, blacksmiths and other trades. It developed a good working relationship with the Irish Transport and General Workers Union (now SIPTU), but fell prey to demarcation disputes among its own members, always the curse of craft unions. In 1921 a row between the electricians' and the plumbers' sections about who should carry out

cable jointing took six months to resolve.

At the Inchicore works of the Great South Western Railway, where the union had its largest single concentration of members, a row erupted when the iron moulders' section objected to being represented by a brass moulder. Their delegate said they 'were determined to see that the moulders acted according to rule'. His members were particularly concerned because 'for over 20 years the [iron] moulders had been scab proof and were probably the only section which had proper control over their apprentices'. Ironically in many workplaces, including Inchicore, relations between the warring sections had been better when they were represented by separate unions.

In August 1921 the IES&FTU changed its name to the Irish Engineering and Industrial Union (IEIU) and, despite difficulties elsewhere, it achieved a major breakthrough with the negotiation of the first working rule agreement with the Dublin Master Building Trade Employer's Association. This became the precursor of the National Joint Industrial Council (NJIC) for the Electrical Contracting Industry, which negotiated minimum rates for the sector until the Irish Supreme Court declared Registered Employment Agreements were unconstitutional in May 1914.

Meanwhile the economic recession in 1921 saw the IEIU involved in a series of rearguard actions to defend pay and conditions that severely strained unity of action between different trades. It was also divided politically between members who supported the pro-Treaty or anti-Treaty sections of Sinn Féin, as well as those who wanted the union to support the Labour Party, which was the political wing of the Irish Trade Union Congress (ITUC).

The IEIU executive did not allow civil war politics to intrude on its business but in 1922 the GSWR men broke away to form a new Irish General Railway and Engineering Union, which later became the National Engineering Union (NEU). In 1923 the majority of electricians, who continued to have demarcation disputes with the plumbers, left to form the Electricians Trade Union (Ireland), to distinguish themselves from the British ETU. However a

significant minority of electricians remained in the IEIU.

These splits were perhaps inevitable. The idea of a dedicated Irish craft union might never have emerged but for the national revolution and the work of enthusiasts such as Countess Markievicz, Jack Redmond and Joseph Toomey. By 1923 it must have appeared premature but the most striking aspect of the splits is not the usual wrangling over demarcation lines or accusations of poaching, but the fact that members of these warring groups did not return to the British unions. Having once tasted freedom they did not intend to relinquish it.

The IEIU and ETU(I) continued to work together on the NJIC to establish basic rates for craft workers, as well as in the state power company, the ESB. When the ITUC split in 1945 it was the Congress of Irish Unions president Michael Mervyn, of the ETU (I), who chaired the working group that drafted reunification proposals, resulting in the creation of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in 1959.

In the 1960s the IEIU and NEU began talks on a merger and adopted a joint rule book as early as 1966. However it was not until 1976 that they reunited in the National Engineering and Electrical Trade Union (NEETU). Negotiations on a merger with the ETU (I) began in 1988 and within two years led to the formation of the Technical Engineering and Electrical Union, showing that lessons had been learnt from the earlier merger talks. The TEEU is now the largest craft union in Ireland. After seventy years the vision of the founding fathers had finally been achieved. If it was a long learning process it finally resolved the problems that had bedevilled the crafts for generations. Today the TEEU is uniquely positioned to lay the basis for international co-operation not alone with the British unions from which it had sprung, but similar organisations across the globe.

Padraig Yeates,
Labour Historian and Author



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The Hilti logo is displayed in white capital letters on a red rectangular background. The background of the entire advertisement is a black and white photograph of a person wearing a light-colored work glove, using a red and black Hilti SF 2-A cordless screwdriver to work on a metal perforated plate. The screwdriver is positioned diagonally across the frame, with its handle in the foreground and its tip pointing towards the upper left. The person's arm and part of their torso are visible in the lower right, wearing a red and black striped shirt. The overall scene is industrial and focused on the tool's application.

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Stress is part of modern life and the twenty first century workplace. A certain amount of stress in our lives is fine, even advantageous, making us more alert and aroused, more focused on the task in hand and ready to rise to challenges. Too much stress has a devastating impact on many aspects of life including health and well-being.

The negative effects of stress are experienced when the demands we are under outweigh the resources that we can draw upon. It's not simply the amount of stress that is the problem; our own perceptions of our ability to cope play a part. When we perceive that the pressure we are under is too much for us to cope with we feel stressed. Remember too that what can be a source of stress to one person can be a challenge or even something enjoyable to another.

The modern workplace provides many sources of stress including work overload, frequent changes, role conflict or lack of role clarity, relationship difficulties, lack of training, poor communication and unresolved problems.

Non-work related stressors cross the home-work interface and are experienced as stressful in the workplace. Someone stressed about money or health worries will be stressed at work. In turn workplace stressors are still felt when a person returns home.

Encountering stressors leads to the release of stress hormones which enhance alertness and increase blood pressure and heart rate - the fight or flight response. Long term or repeated exposure to stressors impacts on many areas of the body and brain leading to the symptoms of stress.

Physical symptoms are broad and include fatigue, physical weakness, muscle spasm and backache. Cardiovascular and breathing symptoms may occur including accelerated heart rate, high blood pressure and a tendency for rapid shallow breathing. Migraine and tension headaches and conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome, chronic fatigue syndrome and night time teeth grinding are all linked to stress.

Behavioural changes include withdrawal from friends and family, emotional or

aggressive outbursts, loss of appetite and energy and changes in sleep pattern with restless or agitated sleep.

Emotional symptoms include emotionally volatility, depression, a sense of dread and increased feelings of anxiety and irritability.

Concentration, problem solving and decision making abilities can be negatively impacted. Under stress people become more accident prone. In essence our limited 'thinking resources' are commandeered to deal with the stressful situation leaving limited attention for day to day activities

Recognising the symptoms and sources of your own stress is important if you are to manage it. This isn't as easy as it sounds; sometimes the real sources of stress are not obvious. We often overlook how our own thoughts, feelings or behaviours induce stress. Keeping a 'stress diary' and noting what causes stress, how you feel and act and what you do to help yourself feel better puts you in a good place to start developing healthy coping mechanisms.

Healthy Coping Mechanisms

Help is available, don't suffer alone, talk to someone.

Who you speak with depends on the source of your stress. Work related stressors may be helped by talking to your line manager, HR department, team members or your union. MABS, the Money Advice and Budgeting Service, are an excellent source of non-judgemental help with financial stressors. Family, friends, your GP and various help-lines are other excellent sources of support.

Change is an important coping mechanism, try and change the stressful situation you find yourself in but you can also try and change how you respond to stress.

Two tactics for changing the situation are to **avoid** stressors which are unnecessary in your life and to **alter** those that are important and central.

Avoid spending time with acquaintances that make you feel stressed; only meet when you feel you can cope with them. **Avoid**

becoming overwhelmed by all the things you have to do, pare down your to-do list and eliminate unnecessary tasks.

Important and central sources of stress need to be attacked and **altered**. Seek help for financial stress to **alter** that situation. **Alter** stressful work situations by talking to your manager or colleagues, explain the problem and see what can be changed. Relationship stressors can only be **altered** by voicing your concerns and talking with those involved.

If the stressful situation cannot be changed then focus on trying to change how your respond to it. Changing your attitudes and expectations can help you **adapt** to the situation and regain your sense of control. Can you reframe the situation and see it from a different perspective? For instance if heavy traffic stresses you but cannot be avoided then turn it around and try to see it as 'me' time a space to enjoy your favourite music.

Acceptance of what cannot be prevented or changed is a difficult but important part of coping with stress. Acceptance, forgiveness and moving on are healthier than trying to control the uncontrollable; it frees us of negative energy. Sometimes this can be helped by talking with a trusted friend or counsellor.

Exercise reduces cortisol, one of the stress hormones, so regular exercise or even just getting out walking on stressful days can be helpful. If you can do this in green leafy spaces all the better as research shows that spending time in green leafy spaces also helps reduce cortisol.

Build activities that help relaxation into each day. Rhythmic exercise, yoga, deep breathing exercises, tai chi, meditation, listening to music and mindfulness are all excellent ways to relax.

Finally get a good night's sleep; it is nature's recovery time. Tips to improve sleeps include having a regular bedtime and night routine, keep your bedroom cool and get as much natural day light as possible and remove all light at night.

Isobel Butler, Organisational Psychologist

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LABOUR LAW

Collective Bargaining

If 2013 saw the celebration of the centenary of the 1913 Lockout, it nevertheless marked yet another year for workers without the legal underpinning of the right to collective bargaining - the issue at the core of the Lockout. Speaker after speaker at the last ICTU Biennial Conference, including TEEU General Secretary, Eamon Devoy, demanded long overdue action from the Coalition to implement the pledge in the Programme for Government, included under pressure from the Trade Union movement, to finally address this fundamental right.

Some light at the end of this century-long tunnel appeared in May when the Government announced plans for reform of Industrial Relations legislation, including the right of workers to engage in collective bargaining. This initiative was given further impetus by a complaint lodged with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and IMPACT.

In announcing their intention to move on this part of the Government Programme, the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (DJEI) said that proposals were:-

"to reform the current law on employees' right to engage in collective bargaining (the Industrial Relations [Amendment] Act 2001), so as to ensure compliance by the State with recent judgements of the European Court of Human Rights"

Among the key questions to be addressed are:-

- Definition of Collective Bargaining (by Trade Union or "Excepted Body")
- Procedure for Trade Unions (only) to bring a complaint to the Labour Court where the employer refuses to engage in collective bargaining
- Ensuring that internal/in-house "excepted bodies" are genuinely independent and free from employer influence
- New legal procedure of "interim relief" for workers dismissed for pursuing their rights under the proposed legislation.
- Similarly, enhanced protection for workers who are otherwise victimised for invoking their rights in this area
- Prohibition of inducements or "bribes" by employers to relinquish trade union representation
- Policies and Principles to be followed by the Labour Court in dealing with complaints.

However, it's early days yet and the Government is understood to be in a round of consultations on the matter. As always, the devil will be in the detail as proposals make their way through the legislative process.

Workplace Relations Bill 2014

Another piece of legislation making its way through the system, a bit further up the line, is the Workplace Relations Bill 2014.

Where proposals by the Coalition to reform the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2001 concerns the fundamental right to collective bargaining, this Bill deals with the machinery through which disputes and complaints in general are referred by workers.

There are currently five bodies which deal with workplace disputes and complaints, under both Industrial Relations (e.g. collective claims and disputes) and rights under Employment Law (e.g. Unfair Dismissals Act): - Labour Relations Commission, Rights Commissioner, Labour Court, Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) and the Equality Tribunal. Some of these also hear appeals - for example the EAT hears appeals from the Rights Commissioner on a range of rights under employment law.

It is proposed under the 2014 Bill to replace these five bodies (and also the National Employment Rights Authority - NERA) with just two: - a new Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) and a reconfigured Labour Court.

The job of the WRC is proposed to be to offer early intervention/mediation on complaints about (legal) employment rights in the first instance, and failing that, adjudication by Adjudication Officers, who will include present Rights Commissioners for the balance of their term of office.

The Labour Court is proposed to be expanded from the current three to four "divisions" (grouping of chair/deputy chair plus employer and employees representatives who hear cases) and they act as an appeal court from the decisions of the Adjudication officers.

However, Industrial Relations disputes will be dealt as currently with the existing Industrial Relations Officers (IRO's) transferring across to carry out conciliation and the Labour Court hearing and issuing Recommendations on IR disputes.

Other changes proposed include new enforcement and compliance procedures, uniform time limits (6 months) within which

complaints and disputes must be referred and a new system of appointments to the WRC and the Labour Court. However some other issues such as representation remain to be clarified.

At the time of writing, the Bill is at the report stage in the Dáil and is expected to be completed by early 2015 with implementation shortly thereafter.

While it has been stressed that there will be no change at all in worker rights under existing employment laws, it remains to be seen how effectively the proposed new law will operate in practice to deal with workers' complaints and disputes in seeking to vindicate those rights.

"Whistleblowing"

One important law which did make it through in 2014 is The Protected Disclosures Act 2014 which has been acknowledged by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation & Development (OECD) as the strongest "whistleblowing" legislation in Europe.

It is arguable that had such legislation been in force earlier it might have assisted in deterring some of the instances of corporate misconduct and their disastrous consequences for our society with which we are all too familiar. Indeed some years ago at the height of the "boom", ICTU representatives argued for its introduction into Company law in particular, as well as for greater duties on company directors to comply with the law, but unfortunately they could get little or no support at the time.

Now, following sustained lobbying by the ICTU and others such as Transparency Ireland, the Act in place affords protection from day one for all workers (including contractors, agency and work experience) who are threatened with, or actually suffer detriment by their employer for "blowing the whistle" on wrong-doing.

The type of wrongdoing covered under the Act includes such activity as criminal offences, failure to comply with the law, threats to Health & Safety, misuse of public funds, public mismanagement, environmental damage and miscarriages of justice.

Key to attracting the protections of "whistleblowing" law is that the worker concerned must have a reasonable belief that the allegations they are making are true and must go through the procedure laid down. This means that the worker must convey their concern to the employer (internal disclosure), legal or trade union

adviser, a Government Minister or other prescribed person/body.

There must also be a reasonable belief on the part of the worker that they will be victimised or penalised, as well as one that the employer would conceal or destroy evidence, or because they had taken no action on a complaint about the matter in question.

If these basic criteria for a “protected disclosure” are met then, the employer cannot penalise or threaten to penalise the worker. If the employer does proceed to penalisation in threat or actuality, then the worker can make a complaint to the Rights Commissioner, the Labour Court, or, if dismissed, can apply to the Circuit Court within 21 days of the sacking, for an injunction seeking re-instatement or re-engagement in accordance with the terms of the Act.

This form of “interim relief” is an entirely new protection and one which was argued for by the trade union movement.

Finally, in event of a claim of unfair dismissal

arising from a protected disclosure under the provisions of the new legislation, a worker can bring a claim under the Unfair Dismissals Act. In those particular circumstances there is provision that the normal “cap” on compensation is lifted from two years pay to a maximum of five.

In summary, a law long in gestation but hopefully powerful in protection for worker “whistleblowers” covered by its provisions.

Transfer of Undertakings

Finally, among the raft of other developments and decisions during the year was one interesting “TUPE” case.

Stobart drivers, members of SIPTU and employed at Tesco’s Ballymun Depot succeeded in overturning a Rights Commissioners’ decision against them under Transfer of Undertakings law in a case described by the specialist Industrial Relations News as “Significant”. In ruling in favour of their appeal, the Employment

Appeals Tribunal (EAT) took the opportunity to summarise the law, citing the case as one encapsulating “all the elements” concerning the transfer of contracts. They noted, “inter alia,” that there did not have to be any direct link between the first contract holder (Keelings) and the second (Stobart), for a transfer to take place. They also noted that, despite the fact that the assets, i.e. depot, facilities, trucks were actually owned by Tesco, both Keelings and, following the transfer, Stobart, used those assets in the course of the contract and even in such circumstances “it is settled law that the transfer of undertakings directive would apply”. Accordingly they ordered Stobart to honour the drivers’ collective agreement and to pay compensation for any losses incurred by the failure to adhere to that agreement.

This decision of the EAT is regarded as a fairly comprehensive survey of the Transfer of Undertakings Regulations in the area of transfer of contracts from one operator to another.

(EAT Decision reference – TU29/2011 to TU46/2011)

Michael Halpenny, BL



Long standing members of the Limerick No 1 Branch Committee
Bro. John McDermot and Bro. Michael McNamara after receiving their scrolls from Bro. Frank Keoghan General President on behalf of the
National Executive Council to honour their exceptional contribution to the Union and its members over many years.

Members of the Wicklow Branch (sub-branch of Dublin No1 Branch) receiving their scrolls of honour for exceptional contribution to the Union and its members over many Years

L to R: Noel Masterson,
Kevin Doyle Tony Linton,
Frank Corr and Willie Walker.



REGIONAL REPORTS

Achievements

During 2014 there were considerable achievements in Region 6, including increases of between three and seven per cent over three to two years at companies such as Abbotts in Sligo and Medisize in Donegal.

We have also secured new staffing levels and the recruitment of apprentices at employments such as Thermo King, Galway and the maintenance department of Mayo General Hospital.

Nevertheless, the past year has also presented very real challenges on a daily basis. For example, Bord na Mona management created a 'lock-out' situation in response to our refusal to accept non-negotiated changes to our members' terms and

REGION 6 DARREN ERANGEY

conditions of employment and work practices. A return to work was negotiated with the assistance of the Labour Relations Commission and it is hoped to resolve the outstanding issues through the good offices of the LRC in the coming weeks.

Recruitment and Organisation

The TEEU has joined the JUMF (Joint Union Management Forum) for SAOLTA in the West and Northwest. As part of this Forum the TEEU in Region Six is currently setting up an internal sub group to look at the possibility of establishing Apprenticeship programmes within all the hospitals which are party to this group.

Plans

The Region has recently been given National responsibility for the Windfarm Industry. Going forward our main goal is to organise this sector so as to eradicate the huge discrepancies in the Terms and Conditions of employment, both within and between different companies. A long-term goal is the establishment of a Registered Employment Order for the industry once the promised legislation is finalised.

Promoting apprenticeships in all sectors where we are organised to address skill shortages that threaten to undermine economic growth.

Achievements

The year 2014 has seen a welcome increase in the number of Mechanical and Electrical contracting members returning to work and reactivating their membership in Region 5. In Limerick city two major construction projects are underway at the Regeneron and University of Limerick sites where we have organised.

The union represented members in Murphy International working on the Rural Aughinish Site in Co Limerick and successfully secured the correct MECA rates.

Pay and pension restructuring talks have successfully concluded with a number of manufacturing companies in the Mid-West and there are ongoing discussions with others. The average pay increase is 2% for twelve months, with most agreements extending over two or three years.

Recruitment and Organisation

The union has seen a growth in the use of agency workers and self-employment contracts. The TEEU found that Hays Recruitment, which was engaged by Kirby's on the Analog Limerick site, was failing to provide appropriate rates and pension entitlements for workers. Following a number of meetings these issues were resolved.

The problem of *bogus self-employment* has also been

REGION 5 SEAN HEADING

addressed. Many members take these contracts because they have no alternative. Companies use this employment practice in the full knowledge that they are transferring responsibility for PAYE/PRSI, Health and Safety and Insurance to our members, who are no longer covered by the Construction Workers Pension Scheme or enjoy the protection of Employment Legislation. We have even come across these bad employment practices on Department of Education and HSE construction projects funded by the taxpayer. We must remain vigilant and support members prepared to challenge this employment practice, which most of them want replaced by regular employment contracts.

Plans

The key challenges for the Region are improving union density and membership retention. The Region will be undertaking a card check in the coming weeks, as well as a mapping exercise in conjunction with Region 3 in Co Tipperary, to identify new recruitment and organising opportunities in the process.

Achievements

Increases have been secured for members in the Region across the whole spectrum of the economy, except for Construction and the Public Sector. The duration of pay agreements range from 12 months to 37 months, with two years being the most common. In the food sector increases have ranged from 2% over 12 months to 5% over 27 months with companies such as Danone, Pepsico Ireland, BASF and Glaxosmithkline. Among indigenous firms in the Refrigeration and Services sector 2% has been the norm to date.

Recruitment and Organising

A major infilling campaign has begun in all companies where we have membership and has resulted in significant increases to our numbers. Another important success has been the recruitment of members in the Wind Energy Sector, the most recent being Enercon. We succeeded in negotiating a Single Union Recognition and Negotiation Agreement with

REGION 4 PAT GUILFOYLE

Pepsico Irl
Cork and Glanbia in
Waterford at their new manufacturing plants.

Pensions

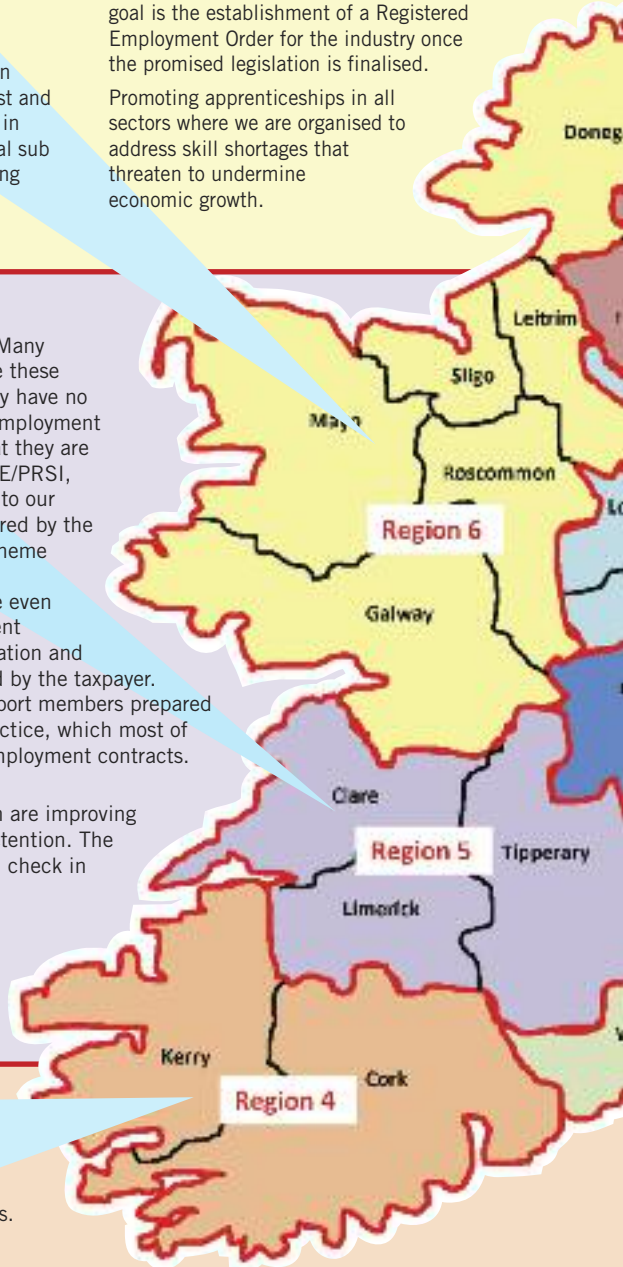
We continue to defend DB Pension Schemes and negotiate top end DC Schemes. In a Pension restructuring deal with Novartis, DB with less than 10 years to retirement will retain their benefits while those with more service will move to a DC Scheme for future service. The company has committed to making additional contributions to fund the new 'risk reserve' requirements of the Pension Authority.

Upcoming Challenges

2015 will be a challenging year for the Construction/Contracting sector as long promised legislation to replace the REA system has yet to be passed. When elected Chairman of the Construction Industry Committee of Congress (ICTU) last month, Regional Secretary Pat

Guilfoyle said he would make enactment of the legislation a priority, while working with other unions to take full advantage of the upturn in employment to recruit and strengthen our organisation in this sector. A new survey of pay and conditions is planned for the Pharma Chem sector by the Consultative Committee.

The TEEU moved to a new, purpose built office in the IMPACT Building on Father Mathew Quay, Cork. Records spanning over six decades were deposited in the City Archives to ensure the union's contribution to the social and industrial fabric of Cork and Kerry are not lost to future generations.



REGION 1 IAN McDONNELL

Achievements

Pay increases of up to 5.5% have been negotiated at workplaces over recent months with the norm equating to 2% per annum. Companies where increases have been negotiated include Premier Periclase in Drogheda, Abbott in Sligo, Mondelez in Dublin and Wellman in Meath.

New claims are being lodged as agreements run out with targets of 5% per annum in companies as old agreements run out.

These claims will include some companies where increases were secured as recently as last year. One of the largest has been at the Dublin Airport Authority for 6%. This has been made in conjunction with SIPTU and will be heard at the Labour Court in February.

Recruitment and Organising

The Region has organised members at new workplaces where the TEEU did not have a presence before. These include the maintenance section of the Westin Hotel Dublin and

Bristol Myer Squibb Cruiserath in County Dublin. While the announcement last year that the existing Cruiserath facility is to close by the end of 2015 the TEEU is now in a position to represent the workforce and defend members' interests in the challenging environment ahead.

Pensions

The changes to the Aer Lingus pension scheme were agreed last month and have come into effect from January 1st. Meanwhile pension negotiations are continuing at the Dublin Airport Authority and are expected to conclude early in 2015.

Future Plans

While Region 1 has a healthy and active membership, the task of recruiting and organising new members remains a priority that is continually impressed on shop stewards and other union activists. Our aim is to ensure we are well prepared to exploit all opportunities for improvements in pay, terms of employment and working conditions for members with every profitable employer as the economic recovery continues. Building union density and the stronger bargaining position that comes with it is the key ingredient in our industrial strategy.

REGION 2 ARTHUR HALL

Achievements

Pay increases have been negotiated for our members in Irish Distillers (at the Midleton and Dublin plants), Pfizers, Newbridge, MSD Rathdrum and Alstrom. After a three year battle, we secured the final phase of T16 for our members in Henkel and negotiated a further 6% three year productivity and performance agreement.

At Bord Gáis Éireann all employees have received very substantial dividends after the sale of their ESOP shares. Although Bord Gáis Energy has been privatised this has had little impact on our membership levels as the vast majority of them work in Networks, where we continue to enjoy significant growth.

New members have also been recruited across the Region. Firms concerned include Siemens Health Care. Meanwhile, all new Vestas Wind Energy employees have joined the TEEU. A rate of €28.60 per hour for Team Leaders has been negotiated.

The Lift and Escalator Industry has stabilised with companies concentrating on service and modernisation.

There are signs that new installations are increasing. Despite the loss of the Registered Employment Agreement, there have been no attempts to interfere with wages which are between 10% and 22% above the NJIC rates.

In the Alarm Industry, the Private Security Authority is currently considering the application of a licensing system to Alarm Engineers and appropriate qualifications.

Recruitment and Organisation

During the coming months the union has plans in the Region to recruit employees at Siemens Health Care who have yet to join the TEEU. The union will also be supporting members in the fight to prevent Local Authorities, the HSE and the Hospitals' sectors from outsourcing work.

Future Plans

The Region will be seeking new rates at Vestas Wind Energy for Supervisors, concluding pay negotiations at Diageo, RWEnpower, Avery Weightronix and Lagan Cement.

It will be concluding a new agreement and securing pay increases at the Bank of Ireland.

Also, it will be representing members being TUPE'd over from MITIE to Sodexo.

REGION 3 PADDY KAVANAGH

Achievements

2014 saw the first signs of economic recovery in the Region and a reactivation of Recruitment and Organisation, leading to increased membership.

Two large construction projects opened at the Glanbia facility, Belview, and the SSE Power plant, Great Island, New Ross. Following complaints from members employed by Archandas on the Great Island Site that they were paid €4.63 below the national mechanical craft rates, the TEEU intervened and secured the full rate with arrears for over 100 members. In addition the TEEU 'fight back' campaign against non-compliant contractors saw two pay cuts reversed through the threat of industrial action.

In the pharma and health sectors the Region secured pay increases worth two per cent per annum and significant increases in staffing rates at companies such as MSD Clonmel, Glanbia and Danone.

Diageo closed both its Waterford and Kilkenny breweries in 2014 but the TEEU took Dalkia, the maintenance provider, to the Labour Court and secured a doubling of the redundancy package and the application of

TUPE to two members, doubling their service calculation.

Unfortunately Honeywell Turbo Technologies announced over 70 compulsory redundancies last year but the TEEU secured agreement that these would fall mainly on management/non-union employees.

The TEEU is currently engaged in pay negotiations with Honeywell Aerospace, Medite, Rexam Beverage Can Ltd and HTT. Talks at the latter are taking place under the auspices of the LRC.

The TEEU has enjoyed a high success rate for members with the Rights Commissioners, Employment Appeals Tribunal and Labour Court.

Plans

A major project this year is to build on successes in 2014, including a new agreement at SmartPly in Belview where, in conjunction with SIPTU, we secured a Labour Court award of 5% over 30 months at SmartPly and engagement at this site is in progress. The TEEU will also continue its 'fight back' campaign against non-compliant contractors in the South East.

TEEU Women's Forum meets in Kilkenny

The TEEU Women's Forum, a network open to all TEEU women members, met at the 2014 Biennial Conference in Kilkenny to discuss the important topic of 'Overcoming Barriers to Equality and Career Development in the Workplace'. The forum meeting was addressed by a number of speakers who highlighted key issues of relevance to women today.

Orla O'Connor, Director of the National Women's Council, spoke about a resurgence of interest in equality for women and highlighted challenges and priorities to be addressed in the fight for gender equality.

The disturbing findings of a recent EU survey that found one in five women experienced some form of sexual or physical violence were outlined and it was proposed that women in Trade Unions can help make this issue of gender based violence a mainstream priority to tackle in the coming year.

The continued male dominance of the political arena was highlighted and delegates heard the National Women's Council sees greater participation of women in local and national politics as being an important step towards gender equality. The women's forum itself provides an opportunity for greater involvement in union decision making and influencing and one of the outcomes of the forum session was the election of two women delegates to the TEEU National Executive.

Political decisions past and present impact on the economy and the forum heard research findings which highlight how income and gender inequality have been central to the impact of austerity which has had a disproportionate impact on women with children.

Other important issues addressed include the ongoing need to secure reproductive rights for women; the lack of affordable quality childcare accessible to all families and the need for greater flexibility and work, family and life balance. This issue of work-life balance was explored in greater depth by the final speaker who highlighted reasons why this should not simply be seen as a women's issue.

Esther Lynch, ICTU Legal and Social Affairs Officer, led a lively discussion on conflict in the workplace and the need to develop guidelines for raising issues informally in the workplace. Delegates were reminded that nearly every workplace policy states 'you should raise the issue informally in the first instance', however



often raising issues '*informally*' can give rise to a range of problems. Delegates agreed and highlighted challenges and problems they had experienced or witnessed. It was agreed by all that if people felt more comfortable and confident about how to raise issues early and informally problems might be solved sooner instead of escalating.

Guidelines would need to address three main steps:

- Preparing and planning for the discussion including reading up on the topic, speaking to the union and being clear about what you want to say and achieve from the discussion.
- Secondly guidance on how to start the conversation in a constructive and informal manner including the use of appropriate phrases, a problem solving approach and the use of active listening.
- Finally guidance on bringing the conversation to a close with an agreed, recorded outcome.

The forum strongly recommended that guidance such as this should be developed and adopted by the TEEU.

Sharon McGuinness, Assistant CEO Health and Safety Authority, explored gender issues in the Occupational Safety Statistics. The industries with the highest level of fatalities employ less women which obviously translates into a lower level of work place fatalities amongst women compared to men. Whilst analysis of the statistics on Occupational illness reveals similar patterns for men and women in some areas they also highlight much higher rates of stress, depression and anxiety amongst women compared to men. Recent Canadian and Danish research which has shown increased risk of breast cancer in nightshift workers was also alluded to.

Forum delegates felt central to empowering women in the workplace is to empower them in the TEEU both to join and become more involved. They recommended a number of proactive steps in this regard, in particular ensuring issues of concern and relevance to women's feature on the agendas of union management meetings.

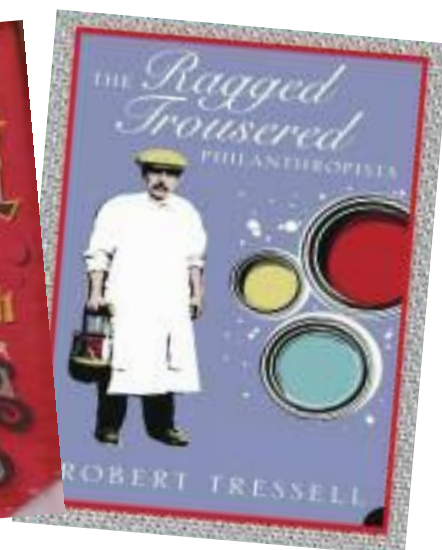
The HSA speaker highlighted that women are more likely than men to develop mental health illnesses related to workplace stress, bullying, work pressure and the conflict of caring and work demands. Delegates agreed that a strong, proactive stance must be taken in addressing the impact of mental health problems resulting from work place issues.

Delegates concluded that greater written guidance in the form of simple '*How to deal with.....*' would lead to greater empowerment of women members in dealing with many issues. Often members give up because they are so unsure about how to start and clear, simple written guidance on why they need to gather evidence and what that evidence should be would empower them to pursue the issue and feel supported in doing so.

To find out more about the TEEU women's forum or to get involved please contact: info@teeu.ie



The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists



Brian MacMahon, Robert Tressell, Dubliner: Author of The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists, Kilmacud - Stillorgan Local History Society, Dublin 2014. Information and sales: tresselldublin@gmail.com

The year 2014 was the centenary year of many important events, not least it was the centenary of the first publication of one of the most influential English books on socialist thought in modern times, *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*. This book was Robert Tressell's one and only novel, first published in a severely edited form in 1914. Since 1955 it has been produced in a format more in

keeping with the author's original manuscript. Over the years, such is its continuing popularity; it has been re-published not only in English but also in other languages and it has never been out of print.

Robert Tressell was the pseudonym of Robert Noonan, house painter and sign-writer who was born in Dublin in 1870, died in Liverpool in 1911 and buried in a pauper's grave. Robert Noonan worked in Hastings from 1901 to 1910; it is one of five Cities / Towns in which he is known to have lived. Hastings in the south of England is unique in that it is in the guise of "Mugsborough" that it was used as the town in his novel. Hastings as a community is very well aware of this aspect of the town's history and has a very active Robert Tressell Society.

Brian MacMahon's book is very well researched and in 10 concisely constructed chapters, it should maintain existing interest and to perhaps create new interest in the R.T.P. book and its author, placing an emphasis on his birthplace. The utilisation of a skilled family historian, Fiona Tipple was a very positive approach to assimilating sources in this sector relating to the Noonan-Croker-Zumbuhl family history and is typical of the researched based information contained in this book. It should be remembered that the R.T.P. core message is about condemnation of existing systems/ injustice's/inequality, etc. Brian quotes relevant passages from the R.T.P. itself and from critiques and tributes that have been made over the years since the books first publication.

To conclude, this book is a very good and informative read with new well-researched information, it serves to remind us that in some respects R.T.P. is as relevant now as it was when first written. It should be noted that profits from the sale of this publication go to Barnardos.

John Gibbons

John Gibbons is a retired member of Dublin No.2 Branch, having worked in the Irish Lift and Escalator sector. A shop floor union member and activist for most of his working life, currently he is a first year history student in UCD.

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- 4 Secure your full Legal Rights at Work as a minimum
- 5 Improve your Pay and Conditions at Work
- 6 Have a voice in your workplace
- 7 Access our Education and Training opportunities at work or if you're unemployed
- 8 Access our Comprehensive Legal Aid and Advice Scheme
- 9 By providing information and support through one of 6 Regional Centres, 28 Branches Nationwide, Website and Publications
- 10 Negotiate professionally and successfully with the assistance of our team of Full Time Officials



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Hospitalisation cover (following accident – 24 / 7 cover)	€300 per week for up to 13 weeks
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NATIONAL POWER & RAIL

The economic collapse visited on this country by casino capitalism fuelled by greedy speculators supported by an unregulated and irresponsible banking sector imposed seven years of austerity on working people. These austere measures included cuts in public spending affecting the most vulnerable in our society and cuts in pay and terms and conditions for workers across the public and private sectors.

Our members have also suffered increases in direct taxation and indirect taxation i.e. Universal Social Charge, Property Tax and proposed Water Charges which further decreases their take home pay, reducing disposable income affecting their ability to meet mortgage repayments, rents and education charges etc. It is now time to fight back and end this cycle of austerity.

ESB workers have not had a pay increase since 2009 and have had pay cuts in that time.

Workers in Iarnrod Eireann have not had a pay increase since 2007 and have suffered a pay reduction to be restored after twenty five months.

An agreed pay pause, in ESB, expired in March 2014 after which the

unions lodged a claim on the Company for a 3.5% increase in pay per annum for the next three years.

The Company is attempting to link the pay claim to proposals it has regarding a "New Reward Model". The model concerned allows for so called "market facing" terms and conditions with individual market based contracts for all staff in due course.



The Company is quoting Section Six of the "Cost Base Agreement" covering business integration to legitimise its proposals however, the proposals are clearly outside the scope as contained in Section Six of this Agreement.

The integration of ESB subsidiary companies into the ESB parent company, thereby creating one single ESB, will as a consequence require negotiations around common terms and conditions of employment and this is allowed for in Section Six of the

agreement. However it is the Unions' position that subsidiary companies' staff be assimilated into the parent company on terms and conditions commensurate with core ESB staff in due course.

As far as the pay claim is concerned it is a stand-alone claim standing on its own merits, and must be addressed as such.



Jimmy Nolan
National Organiser Power & Rail



The Unions will consider all avenues open to them to progress the two issues separately, i.e. the pay claim and business integration, to a satisfactory conclusion.

As already mentioned workers in Iarnrod Eireann have had their pay cut for twenty five months and have not had a pay increase since 2007. It is this Union's intention to vigorously pursue a pay increase for our members in this Company when that period of time has elapsed.

ESB Worker Director Elections

It is with great pleasure we announce that Sean Kelly was re-elected to the ESB Board.

Sean was this Union's candidate in the recent elections and was elected on the first count, topping the poll. His next term of office will commence in January and we wish him well in his efforts to represent the interests of ESB workers.

TEEU Publications for Shop Stewards and Members



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Relationship with other Unions - International /EU Activity

Relations with other Trade Unions (domestic)

ICTU - Construction Industry Committee



The working relationship with the majority of the unions at the CIC at both national and local level has never been stronger. The exception being Unite, the British based union who constantly refuse to accept the established Spheres of Influence of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The TEEU has just been through a bitter battle with Unite following their attempts to organise electricians in the Electrical Contracting Industry, which we won and that ended in a signed undertaking by Unite that they will desist from organising electricians in the Republic of Ireland in future. They have since organised members of the bricklayers union and despite the strict Spheres of Influence rules within Congress, they have refused to return the members concerned to BATU. This recently placed the other unions affiliated to the CIC in the position of having to refuse support for an application for an ICTU all-out picket.

UCATT (NUSMWI) (Carpenters, Painters & Sheetmetal Workers Union)



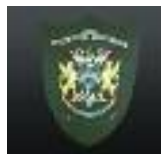
A number of meetings have taken place between the TEEU EMC Negotiation Team, UCATT President and General Secretary (UK) and Irish representatives of UCATT to discuss the possibility of a transfer of engagements of the UCATT members in Ireland to the TEEU.

These negotiations are taking place at two levels:

- ☐ With the Executive Council of UCATT in London in relation to the financial aspects of the potential transfer.
- ☐ With Irish representatives on the detail of how both organisations would merge e.g. structures, staffing, rule amendments etc.

In the meantime representatives of the Irish membership of UCATT has made known to representatives of their London based Executive Council, their preference to transfer their membership to the TEEU.

OPATSI (Plasterers Union)



The Executive Council of OPATSI has also expressed an interest in transferring their engagements to the TEEU. A presentation on TEEU structures has been made to members of their Executive Council, the feedback is extremely positive and they have sought a formal meeting to explore options.

BATU (Brick and Stonelayers Union)



Notwithstanding the fact that BATU have engaged in negotiations on a potential transfer of their engagements to SIPTU, our working relationship on the ground has never been stronger with our officials working closely together.

Energy Services Union (ESB Officers & Staff Association)



The ESU has held separate meetings with SIPTU, TEEU and Unite, to explore their options for an amalgamation or Transfer of Undertakings to one of these three unions. We are awaiting feedback on their intentions in this regard.

SIPTU (Services, Industrial, Professional Trade Union)



A Trade Union Federation (TUF) was established between SIPTU and the TEEU 10 years ago. It comprised three elements:

- ☐ To improve the Level of Services to members;
- ☐ To improve the organising ability of both unions;
- ☐ To foster friendly relations between the constituent unions.

This was coupled with a Spheres of Influence Agreement and a disputes resolution mechanism which, while not used recently, has stood the test of time.

Throughout the last 12 months there have been several meetings between SIPTU & TEEU about closer co-operation in a number of areas. The most significant recent outcome is an agreed Single Table Bargaining Protocol in the manufacturing sector in all circumstances involving threatened plant closures, proposed pay or remuneration cuts and/or collective redundancies.

International /Global Protocols, affiliations & Co-operation

IndustriALL (Global Union)



In the last 18 months TEEU has affiliated to IndustriALL Global Union which is an amalgamation to a number of inter-national federations including the International Metalworkers Federation. IndustriALL represents 50 million workers in 140 countries in the mining, energy

and manufacturing sectors and is a force in global solidarity, taking up the fight for better working conditions and trade union rights around the world.

IndustriALL challenges the power of multinational companies and negotiates with them on a global level. IndustriALL fights for another model of globalisation and a new economic and social model that puts people first, based on democracy and social justice.

We participated recently at their Executive Council meeting in Geneva and in their Lift & Escalator Industry Conference in Vienna.

Building & Woodworkers International (BWI)



Representatives from BWI and the TEEU have been working closely together since Ambet Yuson, General Secretary supported our Global Power Trade Union Congress in Dublin in September last year.

I had the privilege of being a guest speaker at the BWI European Conference held recently in Dublin. The TEEU was also represented last month at the ILO Conference in Geneva. The object of this meeting was to ensure that major contractors working on the FIFA stadium in Qatar, including contractors from Ireland, are prepared to embrace appropriate terms and conditions of employment including best practice health & safety standards on the contract. The unions from each country of origin were also present to mark the contractors and ensure future health & safety standards are implemented and maintained.



Global Power Trade Union Congress

The first ever Global Power Trade Union Congress was held in Dublin in September of last year through a tripartite arrangement between the Australian ETU, the Danish Dansk EI-Forbund and the TEEU. Being in Dublin, the majority of the organisation fell to the TEEU and it turned out to be a great success. There were representatives from 35 organisations right across the globe. This included such countries as New Zealand, Australia and Russia on one side of the world and Canada, USA and Mexico on the other, with many European countries also participating.

Since then we have had successful campaigns, in the lift industry in Australia and elsewhere, the power industry in Greece and have achieved the release from jail of the members of the Executive Council of the Mexican Electricians Union.

The Second Global Trade Unions Congress was held in Denmark last September sponsored by Dansk EI-Forbund and some of the achievements included mapping the industry from a technology perspective, considering many specific health

and safety issues, renewing relationships and building new relations with further likeminded electrical unions across the globe.

United Association of Plumbers, Pipefitters, Steam Fitters Sprinkler Fitters, Service Technicians and Apprentices of the US, Canada and Australia



Having established international links with our electrical union colleagues across the globe, how we might connect with our mechanical counterparts became a consideration. However, in September this year an unexpected solution crossed my desk.

I was contacted by Ms. Anne Anderson, the Irish Ambassador to the United States, based in Washington DC seeking to confirm that the TEEU is the union that organises Plumbers here in Ireland. She then introduced me to Bill Hite, General President of the UA. After considerable dialogue both Brian Nolan, National Construction Official and myself were invited to Chicago as guests of the UA at their Tripartite Conference that was comprised of 450 Delegates representing client companies, contractors and the union with delegates from US, Canada and Australia.

In Brief:

- The United Association has been in existence for 125 years and organises all mechanical trades, such as plumbers, pipe fitters, sprinkler fitters, welders and HVACR technicians.
- The UA represents 387,000 members in the US and Canada while the Plumbing Employees Trade Union (PETU) from Australia attended as an affiliate.
- 280 Local Unions in U.S. alone: 330 Training Centres in U.S. and Canada (encompassing 8,000 Welding Booths) (an additional 8 Training Centres in Australia) and 60 Portable Training Rigs (mobile training trailer units) throughout Canada and the United States.
- They employ 10,000 trainers and have an annual training budget of circa. \$250 Million per annum.
- All members are employees of the union and are hired out to contractors under a Standard of Excellence Agreement.
- The wage rates vary between \$46.70 to \$90 per hour and the union operates exemplar pensions, medical and mortgage schemes for their members.

- The Union runs their own 5 year Apprenticeship Programme.

The UA promote extremely high standards of training and are keen to promote these standards throughout the trades internationally.

They are anxious for the TEEU to establish strong links with the UA and sent a delegation to our recent BDC in Kilkenny, comprised of Bro. Terry Urbanek, International Representative assigned to General President Hite, Sister Laurie Shedrick, National Coordinator for Health & Safety and Bro. Jim Pavesic, Asst. Director of Training all from the US and Paddy McCrudden from the PETU in Australia.

Since then a Federation Agreement has been negotiated between the two unions based on the policies and objectives of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), these include global organizing, up-skilling workers to meet future skill needs and ensuring good occupational health and safety. These policies and objectives form the basis of our future relationship between the UA and the TEEU.

As part of this Global Federation Agreement a Joint Venture Training Company will be established the detail of which has yet to be negotiated and agreed.

Eamon Devoy
General Secretary



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PROUDLY STANDING TOGETHER

The TEEU has long been recognised as Ireland's Largest Craft Union representing Mechanical & Electrical Craft workers throughout the Construction & Contracting Industries and never have two groups of Workers had so much in common.

Mechanical & Electrical Craft workers along with their Apprentices have always worked together on sites (very often in the same company) and now they are standing together to protect their rates of pay as prescribed by their National Collective Employment Agreements.

Every day we receive calls from Union members who want to take a stand against a Contractor, Sub-Contractor or a Recruitment Agency because they are not paying the correct rate, travel or Sick Pay/Pension and Death-in-Service entitlements.

The Union gives the commitment to stand alongside these members until We successfully achieve our aim of protecting the National Collective Employment Agreements and the Workers to whom they apply.

The fight back needs to continue to grow and the key component to this is ensuring that all Mechanical & Electrical Workers and especially their Apprentices are in the Union. The TEEU proudly profess that Union Craft workers are the best and you should ensure that the worker beside you is in the Union too. If they are not in the Union, we have to ask what are they and what do they stand for?

Here are four things you can do to play your part in protecting your Agreement;

1. Make sure that All Your Colleagues are members of the TEEU or tell them to join today (www.teeu.ie)
2. Consider playing a bigger role in the Fight Back through our Mechanical or Electrical Consultative Committees (Email; construction@teeu.ie).
3. Report any Contractor, Sub-Contractor or Recruitment Agency that does not offer employment on the terms of the National Collective Employment Agreements for the Mechanical & Electrical Contracting Industries so that we can tackle those job offers that are less than the

Union Agreement (Confidential Hotline 01-8719 903).

4. Contact the Union to let us know if you are Unemployed so that We can tackle jobs offering terms and conditions that are less than those prescribed by the National Collective Employment and get you back to work the Union way.

Finally, YOUR role is crucial to overcoming the attempts by Rogue Employers to undermine your Union Agreement and when you stand up against a non-compliant Employer be

sure of one thing "that as Union members, We proudly stand together".

For more information on the Mechanical & Electrical Contracting Industry contact:

Brian Nolan
National Construction
Tel: 01 8719 911
Email: brian_n@teeu.ie



MEBSA – Mechanical Contracting Rates of Pay.	ENJIC – Electrical Contracting Rates of Pay	Construction Industry Rates of Pay.
1st Year Out of Time €20.63	1st year out of time €20.74	Craftsmen €17.21
2nd Year Out of Time €20.92	After 1 years' service €21.01	Construction Operatives
3rd Year Out of Time €21.06	After 2 years' service €21.15	A 97% €16.69
4th Year Out of Time €21.18	After 3 years' service €21.26	B 91% €15.66
5th Year Out of Time €21.31	After 4 years' service €21.38	C 88% €15.14
6th Year Out of Time €21.42	After 5 years' service €21.49	D 80% €13.77
		16 Years 40% Grade D €5.51
		17 Years 50% Grade D €6.89
Apprentices	Apprentice	Apprentices
1st Year €5.73	1st Year €6.22	1st Year €5.73
2nd Year €8.61	2nd Year €9.33	2nd Year €8.61
3rd Year €12.91	3rd Year €13.48	3rd Year €12.91
4th Year €15.49	4th Year €16.59	4th Year €15.49



Members being presented with QQI/FETAC Level 6 Awards Industrial Electrical Systems at their company: ICS Europaks, Limerick

From L to R: Sean Heading TEEU Education & Training, Pat Fogarty Managing Director, recipients: James Burke, Justin McSweeney and Patrick Kenny, accompanied by Colm Loughlan Maintenance Manager.

The Union secured a 5% increase in basic pay for the members' who successfully completed this course and for their co-operation with revised work practices.

RED CARD FOR FIFA

No World Cup without Workers' Rights

At the request of the General Secretary I was privileged to have participated on behalf of the TEEU in the ILO and BWI Conference on Working Conditions of Migrant Workers in Qatar which was held at the ILO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland on Wednesday, 22nd October, 2014.

The objective of the conference was to utilize the platform of the ILO and the framework of the ILO international standards for trade unions and multinational companies operating in Qatar to work together co-operatively to find concrete and realistic solutions to improve the labour standards of migrant workers in Qatar.

The Qatari Ambassador to Switzerland also participated in the conference

The Unions that attended expressed their dissatisfaction at the lack of progress by the Qatari government in ensuring the implementation of the Contract Provisions as drawn up by the ITUC and Human Rights Watch. The Delegates also called for the implementation of the ITUC recommendations on the Rights of Migrant Workers in Qatar.

Pat Guilfoyle

How FIFA and the 2022 World Cup can be a catalyst for change

Qatar is a government which takes no responsibility for workers. 140 billion of infrastructure is forecast to get Qatar ready to host the 2022 World Cup. Qatar's own estimates are that 500,000 extra workers will be needed in the run up to the World Cup.

Frequent contacts with Qatar authorities since late 2011 have shown no political will or progress towards Qatar implementing labour-related commitments of the Qatar National Vision 2030, reform kafala and ratify a further fourteen ILO conventions.

FIFA has said it expects international norms of behaviour from all hosts and expects that the FIFA World Cup can trigger positive social change in Qatar, including improving the labour rights and conditions of migrant workers. On 21 November 2013, FIFA called on "economic and political leaders to join the football community in contributing to ensure that the International Labour Organization's core labour standards are introduced quickly, consistently and on a sustained basis in Qatar."

What Qatar is Not Doing

Qatar's response to public criticism and to official contacts over the past three years has been piecemeal, anarchic and focused on public relations:

Despite public promises, there has been no change to the kafala law;

There have been no moves to bring legislation into line with international standards on freedom of association and collective bargaining;

Qatar has refused to work with reputable international labour hire companies, whose involvement would help to clean up the exploitative, chaotic and abusive way in which migrant workers are recruited in sending countries;

"Workers Charters" promoted by Qatar in the media over the past year have made no difference – the death toll is increasing and exploitation is still rampant;

Qatar has announced plans to re-house 28,000 migrant workers in better accommodation – i.e., 2% of the migrant workforce. Previous initiatives of this type have faced years of delays due to ineffective planning processes – getting a permit for a skyscraper is much more easy than for a labour accommodation facility; and

"Qatar has the financial means to support important reforms and effectively implement a wide range of measures."

Gabriela Knaut, UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.

Qatar has implied in its public relations that it has been holding discussions with the ITUC on its "Charters". The ITUC rejects this mischaracterisation of its efforts to engage in serious dialogue with Qatar.

Recommendations for Migrant Workers' Rights in Qatar:

- End the kafala system;
- Introduce laws to allow freedom of association and collective bargaining for all workers in Qatar;
- Put in place effective grievances procedures;
- Clean up the recruitment system and work with responsible international recruitment agencies; and
- Ensure a minimum living wage, and end the race-based wage discrimination which is rife in Qatar.



TEEU Youth & Apprentice Forum

The Youth & Apprentice Conference was attended by 30 participants from across the membership in every region of the Union making this the best attended Y&A Forum to date.

For the overwhelming majority of these participants this was their first involvement in the Y&A Forum and the conference benefitted greatly from their presence.

The Y&A Forum were brought through background and history of the group along with the need for on-going participation of our current Y&A members and new recruits.

Alan Douglas delivered a presentation on the current efforts of the group in relation to campaigns within the TEEU (Axe the Tax on Training Campaign) and he gave some details on other campaigns within the trade union movement (We're not leaving and ScamBridge) all of which are directed towards Youth employment issues. Alan also explained about the TEEU role within ICTU Youth.

Martin McMahon (SOLAS) delivered his presentation on the apprenticeships system and the impending changes through the curriculum review before outlining the

Conference 2014 Report

post apprenticeship options that are now available. He made some time for questions and answers which the group availed of.

A round table discussion took place with the group on the future efforts and needs of the Y&A Forum with several outcomes;

- The TEEU should continue the fight against the unjust student charges being applied to apprentices and the Y&A Forum should assist in its success.
- We should increase the level of information and contact with Y&A members of the Union in order to educate them on the Union.

- The Y&A Forum should meet regularly as a group in 2015 with a view to highlighting issues or participating in events of interest to Y&A Members that should be supported.

Note; 21 of the Group forwarded their details so that they could become involved regularly.

Following the discussion, nominations were sought from the group for the positions of Chairman and Secretary of the Y&A Forum.

Following the nominations of Bro. Alan Douglas and Bro. Chris McCormack they were unanimously endorsed by the group as Chairman and Secretary respectively.

Bro. Douglas and Bro. McCormack will represent the Y&A Forum on the NEC.

We then broke for lunch and in the afternoon we brought the group to the Kilkenny Activity Centre where the group took part in team building exercises including a paint ball competition.

Some of the group attended the Conference dinner that evening.

The group are currently formulating a schedule for 2015.



Team building exercise (drilling) at Youth and Apprentice Forum



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Calling all TEEU Elected Health & Safety Representatives

PLEASE PRINT:

The TEEU in conjunction with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the Health & Safety Authority (HSA) is planning some significant safety initiatives in 2015.

If you are an elected Safety Rep and wish to keep abreast of these developments please complete the attached form and return the:

**Education & Training
TEEU Head Office
6 Gardiner Row
Dublin 1.**

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

COMPANY NAME: _____

COMPANY ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE NO: _____

EMAIL: _____

NUMBER OF WORKERS REPRESENTED BY YOU _____

HAVE YOU UNDERGONE
SAFETY TRAINING BEFORE WITH THE TEEU

YES ☐ NO ☐

OTHER YES ☐ NO ☐

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN
ATTENDING A TRAINING COURSE WITH THE TEEU

YES ☐ NO ☐

ANY ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: _____

TEEU CONCERNED ABOUT EROSION OF HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTECTION

As the European Trade Union Congress expresses concern at the erosion of workers' health and safety protections, the TEEU's general secretary, Eamon Devoy has expressed concern for the future of Health and Safety in Irish workplaces.

At European level the concerns are driven by the proposals of a European Commission appointed body, the High Level Group on Administrative Burdens, chaired by a conservative German politician, Edmund Stoiber and the European Union's Programme for Regulatory Reform (REFIT). Following the publication of a REFIT report, the European Commission announced its intention not to proceed with proposed health and safety directives for musculoskeletal disorders and display screens, the hairdressing sector, environmental tobacco smoke and new carcinogens and mutagens directives.

In Ireland, trade unions are concerned at the cuts in the Health & Safety Authority's (HSA) budget grant – down by over 30% since 2009 – and the cut in the Authority's staff from 197 to just over 150. The result has been a dramatic drop in the number of inspections, with just 11,500 inspections being carried out in 2014. This compares to over 16,000 inspections in 2008. The number of inspections planned for 2015 has yet to be announced.

Speaking at the recent National Irish Safety Organisation annual conference, Eamon Devoy said that "without inspection there is no health and safety". He said that the cuts do not auger well and he is "more concerned than optimistic" about the future for health and safety.

Accidents: causes, consequences and cost

Up to the end of November, 49 people were killed in workplace accidents. While farms, a sector in which 27 people have died so far this year, are by far and away the most dangerous workplace, so far this year seven workers have been killed in construction site accidents.

Last year (2013) 47 people were killed in workplace accidents, 11 of them in construction. Two of the deaths were the result of direct contact with electricity. A year never goes by without a fatality linked to electricity. As Mr Devoy said at a recent safety meeting "Each year we (the TEEU) lose at least one member as a result of a workplace accident".

Fatalities are just the tip of the accident iceberg. Every year over 6,000 accidents are reported to the HSA. However it is estimated

that only about 50% of accidents in which workers are absent from work are reported. Every year over 11,000 occupational injury benefit claims are made and the Central Statistics Office Quarterly Household Survey for 2012 reported that there were over 17,000 workplace accidents and over 27,000 cases of work-related illnesses in which workers were absent from work for four days or more.

The top two causes of accidents are manual handling, which accounts for about one-third of all reported accidents and slips/trips/falls, which account for about 20% of accidents. The HSA's analysis of the reported accident figures shows back injuries are the most common

outcome of workplace accidents, followed by finger and leg injuries.

While industrial relations disputes attract huge amounts of media attention and comment, the fact is that the number of days lost due to workplace accidents and work-related illnesses far outstrips the number of days lost due to industrial relations disputes. Central Statistics Office figures for 2011 show that 1,186,641 workdays were lost because of work-related accidents and illnesses. While 14,965 workdays were lost because of industrial disputes in 2013, over the period from 2006 to 2012 the average number of days lost each year because of industrial disputes was 11,924.

Occupational health and safety is clearly a far bigger problem for businesses than industrial disputes. The HSA estimates the cost to the Irish economy at €2.8bn. What the figures do not take account of says the HSA's chief executive, Martin O'Halloran, is the human cost. As he puts it "families are deprived of the loved ones and experienced gravely changed economic circumstances".



Community service orders

The great fear of the European Trade Union Confederation is that the body of legislation introduced to protect workers from workplace injuries and illnesses will be repealed. At a recent trade union seminar in Rome there were calls for updated legislation on carcinogens, mutagens and musculoskeletal disorders. In Ireland the concern is that cutbacks will impact on inspections and that health and safety standards will fall.

During 2014 only one new significant measure to protect workers' health and safety was enacted. The regulation, the European Union (Prevention of Injuries in the Healthcare Sector) Regulations 2014, is intended to protect healthcare workers from what are known as 'sharps' injuries. The Biological Agents regulations were repealed and brought up to date by the Biological Agents Regulations 2013, which were adopted at the end of 2013.

Every year the HSA prosecutes employers who breach health and safety regulations. A prosecution under the provisions of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 and regulations made under the Act is the ultimate arm in legal toolbox for protection of workers' health and safety. The purpose of prosecution is two-fold: to punish offenders and deter others from offending.

In recent years the courts have handed down a number of suspended prison sentences, but more recently the courts are beginning to impose community services orders on those found guilty of offences.

In a recent case, which arose following an accident in which a bar worker, who was travelling in a goods lift in a pub, was crushed to death, a director of the company who owned the pub and a shareholder in the pub (who played an active role in the management) pleaded guilty to charges of recklessly placing at risk the safety of workers. One man pleaded guilty to a charge linking his conduct to the death of the bar worker. Each man was ordered to do 200 hours community service. It is interesting to contrast this sentence in a case involving a death, with the sentence in a case in which a businessman who defrauded the Revenue of over €600,000 was ordered to carry out 220 hours of community service.



SCRAP TTIP NOW!

Over recent years, an expanding web of regional and bilateral agreements, have been built on World Trade Organisation (WTO) rules to construct investment regimes which enforce the right of corporations to pursue maximum profit while removing and undermining restrictions which seek to regulate corporate activities in the interest of public health, worker and consumer health and safety, public services and the environment.

These agreements confer on transnational capital powers to directly challenge the democratic right of governments to regulate and to legislate in the public interest. The latest proposed treaty to embody these investor ambitions is the EU-US trade deal known as the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

The primary aim of TTIP is not to stimulate trade through removing tariffs between the EU and the USA, as these are already at minimal levels. The main goal of TTIP is, by the admission of the parties, to remove regulatory 'barriers' which restrict the potential profits to be made by transnational corporations on both sides of the Atlantic.

Yet these 'barriers' are in reality some of our most prized and hard-won social standards and environmental regulations, such as labour rights, food safety rules, regulations on the use of toxic chemicals, digital privacy laws and even new banking safeguards introduced by the EU to prevent a repeat of the 2008 financial crisis.

In addition to this deregulation agenda, TTIP also seeks to create new markets by opening up public services and government procurement contracts to competition from transnational corporations, threatening to introduce a further wave of privatisations in key sectors, such as health and education. Most worrying of all, TTIP seeks to grant foreign investors a new right to sue sovereign governments in front of ad hoc arbitration tribunals for loss of profits resulting from public policy decisions. A notorious example is that of the French services provider suing the Egyptian government for increasing minimum wages, thereby reducing its expected profit margins.

This 'investor-State dispute settlement' (ISDS) mechanism effectively elevates transnational capital to a status equivalent to the nation-state itself, and threatens to undermine the most basic principles of democracy in EU member states. But even if the ISDS provision is removed, TTIP poses a grave threat to the welfare of citizens in the EU and US at many levels. That is why the largest union in the world,

IG – Metall is opposing it, as is AFL-CIO in America.

TTIP is therefore correctly understood, not as a negotiation between two competing trading partners, but as an attempt by transnational corporations to open up and deregulate markets on both sides of the Atlantic in order to further accelerate the transfer of wealth to the richest 1%.

The treaty is being negotiated under conditions of the strictest secrecy. Corporations draft and share the negotiating texts, but MEPs and national legislators are denied access in the name of national security. On the basis of leaks, we know that TTIP would build on existing trade and investment rules by incorporating the most toxic elements of the existing thousands of treaties and granting expanded powers to transnational capital to challenge public interest policies and practices, eliminating or putting at risk rights for which workers and unions have struggled over many decades.

A recent International Labour Organisation (ILO) study, which unfortunately does not cover Ireland, shows that TTIP would lead to a *reduction of the labour share* (the share of total income accruing to workers), reinforcing a trend that has been a defining characteristic of both the EU and US economies over the last four decades. The flipside of its projected decrease is an increase in the share of profits, indicating that proportionally there would be a *transfer of income from labour to capital*. The largest transfers will take place in UK (7% of GDP transferred from labour to profit income), France (8%), Germany and Northern Europe (4%).

TTIP would also lead to a *loss of labour income*. France would be the worst hit with a loss of 5,500 Euros per worker, followed by Northern European Countries (-4,800 Euros per worker), United Kingdom (-4,200 Euros per worker) and Germany (-3,400 Euros per worker). This would be coupled with serious *job losses*. The ILO calculates that approximately 600,000 jobs would be lost in the EU. Northern European countries would be the most affected (-223,000 jobs), followed

by Germany (-134,000 jobs), France (-130,000 jobs) and Southern European countries (-90,000).

The Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) report for the EU Commission was unable to predict any net impact on employment levels from TTIP, but did recognise that at least 1.3 million EU workers would lose their jobs as a result of the labour displacement arising from TTIP under the Commission. CEPR calculates that TTIP will cause at least 1 million people to lose their jobs in the EU and USA combined.

Stop the TTIP!



Based on these findings, the Commission's own internal impact assessment acknowledged that there would be "prolonged and substantial" adjustment costs as a result of the displacement of labour caused by TTIP. At a time when unemployment rates in Europe already stand at record levels, the Commission further recognised that there are "legitimate concerns" that those workers who lose their jobs as a result of TTIP will not be able to find other employment.

With these concerns in mind, the TEEU passed a resolution at its Biennial Conference in November, calling for the scrapping of TTIP.

We need trade, and trade needs rules, but we don't need these rules. Proposals to tinker with the detailed language of these treaties ignore their fundamental purpose - that of advancing investor rights over social needs. So please raise the issue in any organisation that you are part of whether it's a political party, a residents' association or a civil society group. Tell your friends about it. There will be some aspect of the treaty that would affect them directly or some issue in which they are interested. Inform yourself further on the issue - there's lots of material on the web. Time is short but we can stop the TTIP - the stakes could not be higher.

Frank Keoghan, General President TEEU

HILL-WALKING FOR PLEASURE - SAFETY ON THE HILLS

The Irish mountains are always open and they're free, so you can enjoy them at any time of year and there's a hill to suit every age and level of fitness. But as more people take to the hills, there is a danger that a casual approach might lead to accidents. Particular care should be taken if you venture out in bad weather, or more likely, the weather changes while you're out there. You can stay safe by being well prepared and knowing some basic outdoor skills.



On the Twelve Bens in Connemara.

It is imperative that you check the weather forecast before you do any long walk and get the most accurate, localised information. An ideal source is the Norwegian website www.yr.no backed up by the Met Éireann forecast. The weather can be very changeable, sudden and extreme on high ground.

If the weather turns bad, it can be fatal to be up there, especially if you are ill-equipped or alone. So you should come down to lower ground as soon as you can. Always let your head rule your heart! Remember, even a twisted ankle can slow or disable you sufficiently in bad conditions to induce hypothermia

The author interrupted while checking his compass!



The best option for people starting out hill-walking is to choose your days carefully when there's settled weather and begin with a few less challenging, shorter walks before you tackle anything serious. An alternative is to join a walking club – there's a list of clubs on the Ireland Walking Guide website – in order to become accustomed to the vagaries of mountain weather before venturing out on your own.

It will give you an opportunity to avail of training, such as a map and compass course and you'll also pick up the local skills and knowledge of more experienced walkers, especially if you're just getting started; as well as getting to know some popular routes that you can walk again.

It sounds obvious, but people still get into trouble on the hills because they don't take essential gear with them such as:

- ✓ Walking boots with good ankle support. These are essential. Always wear clothing suitable for the outdoors and carry spare warm clothes at all times. Jeans and cotton should be avoided (they will not dry, causing loss of body heat and energy).
- ✓ A waterproof jacket and over-trousers, warm hat and gloves are essential, irrespective of the weather on starting out. Walking socks may cost €20 but they're worth it!
- ✓ Carry a rucksack for spare clothing, food and a hot drink for the walk plus some spare energy snacks such as chocolate or energy bars.
- ✓ Maps, map case and compass; and know how to use them!
- ✓ Remember, don't rely solely on a GPS device,
- ✓ charged mobile phone,
- ✓ small first aid kit, whistle, and a head torch (with spare batteries).
- ✓ plastic survival bag.

If you're thinking of going onto higher ground, set off early; best have more time than you need, you don't want to run out of time to complete your route - especially if conditions take a turn for the worse. It gets dark earlier, often as soon as 4-5 pm in winter and it can often take longer to get down than it does to go up. If you are walking alone:

- ✓ Tell others where you're going and your estimated return time.
- ✓ Leave contact details.
- ✓ Don't rely on being rescued, it's up to you to be prepared and keep yourself safe.

Walking with others is the safest way of tackling higher ground, but there are still some rules to group walking parties including:

- ✓ Don't split up, keep together; obey the leader if there is one
- ✓ Walk at the pace of the slowest, weakest group member.

It may be worth joining a walking or rambling group where you'll pick up local skills and knowledge of other more experienced walkers, especially if you're just getting started. You'll also get to know some popular routes that you can walk again.

If you are alone, always remember that the temperature decreases, even on a fine day, by 1 degree Celsius for every 100m of ascent. It's always colder the higher you climb, so watch for signs of hypothermia:

- ✓ Disorientation
- ✓ Shivering, tiredness and exhaustion
- ✓ Pale complexion, and loss of circulation in hands or toes
- ✓ Discarding of clothing even if it's cold

If you suspect hypothermia, you should prevent further heat loss and gradually try to get warm, insulate from the ground, seek shelter, put on extra dry clothing, eat high energy foods and seek help as soon as possible. And, no alcohol!

In case of a serious accident or emergency dial 999 and ask for the Gardai first then Mountain Rescue. Give as much detail as possible such as; current location, casualties, rescue hazards, equipment available. Remember, Mountain Rescue is a voluntary service and should only be contacted in a genuine emergency.

Some providers do not give mobile cover over extensive areas of mountain, so you may need to raise the alarm by:

- ✓ Whistle – the signal for rescue is six long blasts in a minute, stop for a minute, then repeat 6 long blasts.
- ✓ Torch – same sequence of flashes as whistle blasts.

Don't just give a few blasts - you need to continue because rescuers can use whistles and torchlight as a direction finder. It can take several hours for your alarm signals to be recognised and for mountain rescue to reach you, so keep warm, stay calm and try not to panic.

Going into the mountains is exhilarating, but you need to be prepared for sudden changes in weather, have the right gear, and know what to do in an emergency. The Mountaineering Ireland website has a very good section on hill-walking so, don't be discouraged; get out there!

Frank Keoghan is General President of the TEEU and a hill-walker. He is a hike leader with the Hill-walkers Club and the Irish Ramblers.

THE ECONOMY –

where is it at and where it is going?

After more than six years of austerity, 2015 marks an important new beginning for the Irish economy. As an overdue recovery begins to take hold, a number of challenges remain as does the need to learn from mistakes of the past and avoid a repetition of some failed policies and choices previously made.

In our latest commentary on the Irish economy, the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) has pointed towards a continuation of solid Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth in 2015 and 2016. We anticipate that the overall level of activity in the economy (GDP) will increase by 3.4% in 2015 and 2.7% 2016; growth rates that are considered to be strong in the context of past performance and relative to that being achieved by other European economies. Looking behind these headline figures, we expect growth to be driven by a recovery in spending by households – an area of activity in the domestic economy that has been depressed since the emergence of the economic crisis given the effects of successive increases in taxes, decreases in earnings, cuts in welfare and increases in charges.

A recovery in domestic spending, coupled with a slow recovery in investment levels across the economy, are also having welcome, and overdue, effects on the numbers employed and unemployed. In 2015 we expect employment to increase by more than 2% (between 35,000 and 40,000 new jobs) with a similar effect occurring during 2016. Simultaneously, unemployment continues to fall, although our expectation that it will equal 9.6% of the labour force (all those who are or could be at work) in 2016 will still mean that is stands at double the rate recorded before the crisis.

Economic growth, recovering consumer spending and labour market improvements are all assisting the government's finances. The country is still borrowing money each year, with a budget deficit (the excess of spending over income) of 2.8% of GDP likely in 2015 and 2% in 2016. However, the size of this borrowing has been greatly reduced over recent years and for the most part the borrowing is now paying for worthwhile investment projects which will boost growth and pay for themselves in the long run.

Of course after the dramatic events and changes of recent years, it is important to remember that Ireland is entering into a new phase of its development – rather than just getting back to where we were prior to 2008. Apart from the fact that the economy and society we experienced across most of the 2000s was unsustainable (and crashed with significant consequences for us all), there are features of Ireland in early 2015 that are results of the crisis and mark out a different context for many of the policy choices ahead.

Among these, in no particular order, are the legacy of a much increased national debt which now stands at over €210 billion and derived from the collapse of the taxation system as the economy collapsed in 2008/09 and the decision to rescue almost all of the commercial banks. Relative to 2007, the national debt has more than quadrupled and in 2015 more than €5 billion is being spent on paying interest (servicing) that debt. The crisis has also left us with a big unemployment problem, and in particular a large long-term unemployment problem where a cohort of workers have been without work for more than 12 months. While many will return to work as the economy picks up, there remains a group of workers with lower levels of skills who will need focused retraining and assistance to move from long-term unemployment and get back to work. Without targeted and well-resourced policy initiatives we risk recreating the long-term unemployment problems of the 1980s.

Emigration and the loss of, in particular, young people across the country has been another legacy. It has been estimated by the CSO that a net 80,000 native Irish people have left our shores to work abroad in recent years. Overall, the numbers emigrating have been much higher as workers from various parts of the EU returned home as the economic crash unfolded. Building a recovery, and a society, that is attractive for these emigrants to consider returning to also has to be a priority.

Within households, austerity and the economic collapse has also left an impact with high debt levels for some and widespread challenges for many households to make ends meet. Indeed CSO data suggests that more than one in four households are cutting back on some of the basics. These households have also been impacted indirectly by the continued cuts to public services in health, education and elsewhere over recent years.

All of this implies that we have some choices to consider as Ireland recovers during 2015. Most of all, we have to realise that as both an economy and a society that we cannot go back to the situation we were in a decade ago. While for some that was 'a good time', for us all it was the foundations of a difficult and far-reaching collapse whose legacy will remain with us for some time. Overall, that implies the need to build a better Ireland – one with deeper economic and living standards roots. Hopefully during 2015 we will, as a society, begin to think more about what that model of a new Ireland might look like. As a trade union supported think-tank the NERI will be one of the players setting out our thoughts on that new and more sustainable Ireland.



Dr Micheál Collins is Senior Research Officer at the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI). The Institute, with offices in Dublin and Belfast, is a research organisation which, at its core, has a vision of the achievement of a better, fairer society. It aims, through the provision of world-class research and analysis, to contribute towards the construction of alternative perspectives and possibilities that will lead to the creation of an economy that works for society. It is supported by a number of unions affiliated to the ICTU including the TEEU. Latest reports and publications are available at www.NERInstitute.net

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is a measure of the value of all the activity in the economy on an annual basis. While not a perfect measure, increases in GDP signal that the economy is expanding/growing.

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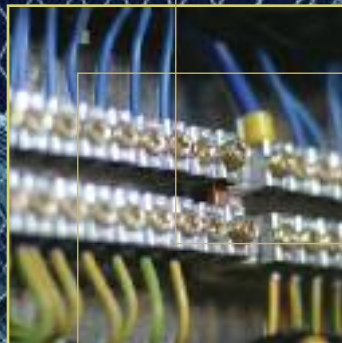
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Course Title: **TEEU Stage I – QQI Level 5**
Venue: Head Office, 6 Gardiner Row, Dublin 1
Dates: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 March 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Regions 1 & 2. Learners who successfully complete this course will be awarded a QQI Level 5 award in Trade Union Representation Skills.

Course Title: **TEEU Stage I – QQI Level 5**
Venue: TEEU, Regional Office, Cork
Dates: 20, 21, 22, 23, 24 April 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Region 4. Learners who successfully complete this course will be awarded a QQI Level 5 award in Trade Union Representation Skills.

Course Title: **TEEU Stage I – QQI Level 5**
Venue: TEEU, Regional Office, Limerick
Dates: 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 May 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Region 5 & 6. Learners who successfully complete this course will be awarded a QQI Level 5 award in Trade Union Representation Skills.

Course Title: **TEEU Stage I – QQI Level 5**
Venue: TEEU, Regional Office, Waterford
Dates: 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 September 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Region 3. Learners who successfully complete this course will be awarded a QQI Level 5 award in Trade Union Representation Skills.

Course Title: **TEEU Safety Representation**
Venue: TEEU, Head Office, 6 Gardiner Row Dublin 1
Dates: 30 April, 7, 14, 21, 28 May 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Safety Representatives, Safety Committee members, Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Region 1 & 2.

Course Title: **TEEU Safety Representation**
Venue: TEEU, Regional Office, Cork
Dates: 6, 13, 20, 27 May, 3 June 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Safety Representatives, Safety Committee members Committee, Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Region 4.

Course Title: **TEEU Stage II Workplace Negotiation Skills – QQI Level 5**
Venue: TEEU, Head Office, 6 Gardiner Row, Dublin 1
Dates: 14, 15, 16, 17 April 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Regions 1&2. Learners who successfully complete this course will be awarded a QQI Level 5 award in Workplace Negotiation Skills.

Course Title: **TEEU Stage II Workplace Negotiation Skills – QQI Level 5**
Venue: TEEU, Regional Office, Limerick
Dates: 6, 7, 8, 9, October 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Region 5. Learners who successfully complete this course will be awarded a QQI Level 5 award in Workplace Negotiation Skills.

Course Title: **TEEU Stage II Workplace Negotiation Skills – QQI Level 5**
Venue: TEEU, Regional Office, Cork
Dates: 3, 4, 5, 6 November 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Shop Stewards and Branch Officers from Region 4. Learners who successfully complete this course will be awarded a QQI Level 5 award in Workplace Negotiation Skills.

Course Title: **TEEU Organisers Course – QQI Level 5**
Venue: TEEU, Head Office, 6 Gardiner Row, Dublin 1
Dates: 12, 13, 14, 15 May 2015
Who should attend?
 TEEU Shop Stewards and Branch Organisers/Officers, from Regions 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6. Learners who successfully complete this course will be awarded a QQI Level 5 award in Organising Skills.

APPLYING FOR A COURSE PLACE:

Shop Stewards, Safety Representatives/Committee members and other workplace representatives must forward their name, contact details and the course they wish to attend and the contact details of the person in their employment to whom the union should write to seek their paid release to **Sean Heading** at training@teeu.ie. Courses will only go ahead if a minimum number of Representatives (8) have confirmed and secure the appropriate release from their employer. TEEU Education and Training will provide all course materials, lunch and refreshments.

EXPENSES:

The TEEU will arrange and provide overnight accommodation for Workplace Representatives who are selected and invited to attend courses outside of their Region. Standard rail and bus fares will be reimbursed to those Representatives who attend a course in a city in which they don't work or live on production of tickets. Representatives who travel by car may claim the value of the relevant rail or bus ticket.

Further information:

For further details of these courses and other education and training for TEEU Workplace Representatives please go to www.teeu.ie or contact your Regional Office or Branch.



Apprenticeship Programme

The SOLAS Apprenticeship programme is developed and delivered in partnership with Industrial Partners, Education and Training Providers and the Department of Education and Skills.

- An excellent career choice for all concerned with progression options
- Internationally recognised qualifications

For details on how the Apprenticeship Programme can help you, contact any ETB Training Centre or visit www.solas.ie