

THE

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UNION POST

NEWS YOU CAN USE

APRIL 2011



MARCH 26 DEMOS PICTURE SPECIAL P12-15

Think the EU/ECB have your interests at heart?

DON'T BANK ON IT!

THE primary objective of the EU and ECB is to protect the European banking system, Congress general secretary David Begg has claimed.

He told delegates at the PSEU conference in Galway on April 15 that those voices from Brussels calling for greater austerity were not "distinterested actors" in determining who shouldered the burden for the financial crisis.

Rather, he suggested, they were "not without responsibility" themselves.

French and German banks had a €900bn exposure to "peripheral" EU economies but this amount was now being reduced.

This meant that bondholder exposure to Irish banks had declined at the same time as ECB emergency funding to the Republic had risen.

They were, Mr Begg told delegates, "getting out under covering fire provided by the ECB". **FULL STORY PAGE 3**



CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY

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CROKE PARK AGREEMENT

Don't penalise teachers and pupils over population growth

CHILDREN and teachers must not be penalised because of a growth in the school-going population.

ASTI general secretary Pat King insisted that education was a "vital public good" and was "key to economic recovery".

He said: "Teachers are very aware of the extent of Ireland's economic difficulties, but children and teachers cannot be penalised because the school-going population is increasing at second-level."

Mr King pointed out that second-level teachers had agreed to work 33 additional hours per year under the Croke Park Agreement – a



King: 'Vital public good'

total of more than 900,000 hours across the sector.

They had also made "a lasting contribution to economic recovery", he said, by agreeing to other arrangements under the deal that represented "sig-

nificant productivity" against the backdrop of a further 500 teaching posts being lost in 2011.

The implementation of the Croke Park Agreement follows two years of savage cuts in the sector including the loss of up to 1,000 second-level teaching posts, a moratorium on middle management posts in schools, and cuts to school funding.

Mr King admitted: "This is a difficult time for many school communities as well as individual teachers.

"In addition many young teachers are finding it difficult to get any sort of work in teaching."

€900m saved each year through Croke Park deal

A TOTAL of €900m is being saved each year through implementing the Croke Park Agreement, it has been revealed.

The savings, generated by public service staff cuts and redeployments, were outlined by Croke Park implementation body chair PJ Fitzpatrick at the Industrial Relations News conference in Dublin last month.

This is on top of €1.8bn saved each year through pay cuts, the pension levy and public service reforms.

But Mr Fitzpatrick also signalled further substantial savings in the years ahead.

This means that under the IMF-EU deal agreed last November, there will be almost 25,000 fewer public

servants by the end of 2014, compared with the end of 2008.

The Croke Park implementation body claims 75% of those cuts will have happened by the end of this year.

But new programme for government outlines plans for even larger staffing cuts.

Mr Fitzpatrick claimed the €900m saved each year followed a 16,000 fall in public service employment between March 2009 and March this year.

Most of this was related to the ongoing staffing embargo, although 2,000 workers left the health service last December through early retirement and voluntary redundancy schemes.

Primary teachers delivering million extra hours over deal

THE Irish National Teachers' Organisation has claimed primary school teachers in the Republic are delivering more than a million additional work hours each year – at no added cost to the state – under the provisions of the Croke Park Agreement.

General secretary Sheila Nunan insisted the deal had in effect given the state "more than a thousand teachers for no cost" at the same time as it was cutting up to 700 primary teaching jobs.

She said: "Primary teachers have stepped up to the mark in terms of Croke Park. Every-one in a primary school is



Nunan: Greater flexibility

doing more for less."

Ms Nunan made her comments after Communications Minister Pat Rabbitte warned that public service workers' pay could be cut again unless

significant savings could be made from the agreement which is to be reviewed next month.

She said: "There are fewer teachers teaching more children and delivering a better service. There is no slack to pick up in primary education."

Ms Nunan pointed out that primary schools were implementing redeployment procedures which would pose huge challenges for many existing teachers.

She added that the union had shown greater flexibility in management duties and agreed revised disciplinary procedures.

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EU/ECB's primary objective is to protect Europe's banks

CONGRESS general secretary David Begg has claimed the EU and European Central Bank are "not without responsibility" for Ireland's current crisis.

He made his comments to delegates at the Public Service Executive Union conference in Galway on April 15.

Mr Begg said Congress had informed IMF/EU/ECB officials at a meeting at the Department of Finance on April 11 that there were "limits" to the "political acceptability" of austerity before warning that these limits were "close to being exceeded".

He continued: "I make this point because the people from the EU and the ECB who are dic-

tating the terms of our existence are not without responsibility [for the crisis], nor are they disinterested actors in determining who bears the burden of austerity."

Mr Begg claimed this was because the primary objective of the EU and ECB was to protect Europe's banking system and noted that French and German banks had a €900bn exposure to 'peripheral' economies like Ireland.

He pointed out that bondholder exposure to Irish banks had declined while ECB emergency funding had risen.

As a result, Mr Begg claimed these bondholders were "getting out under covering fire provided by the ECB".

Congress had outlined to IMF/EU/ECB members how Ireland had to "fight for some justice" and could not carry the burden of debt and austerity being laid upon it without causing serious damage "to our quality of life" and "a generation lost to unemployment and emigration".

Mr Begg stressed the need for a renegotiation of the deal and warned that otherwise Ireland was "heading for a disorderly default".

He told delegates: "Continuing with the fiction that we can stay with the package is the triumph of hope over everything we know from the history of financial crises."



Picture: Congress

Begg: Disorderly default warning



Road to Westminster: Visteon pensioners Tom Irvine (Belfast Plant), John Hickey (Basildon Plant), Gerry Campbell (Belfast Plant), Gwyn Bailey (Enfield Plant), John Elvins (Swansea Plant) and Ron Hutson (Basildon Plant) outside 10 Downing Street. Picture: Unite

Visteon pensioners bring their case to Number 10

FORMER Visteon employees from Belfast joined colleagues from Basildon, Enfield and Swansea earlier this month in a protest march over pensions in London.

Hundreds marched from Unite HQ in Holborn to Westminster on April 1 where a delegation drawn from the four factories handed in

petitions addressed to PM David Cameron and Deputy PM Nick Clegg. The protestors worked for Ford until 2000, when ownership of the plants was transferred to Visteon UK.

Pensions belonging to the workers were also transferred to Visteon, although many employees had been paying into the Ford pension scheme

for more than 30 years. These pensions were devastatingly affected when Visteon UK went into administration forcing the closures of the plants in April 2009.

The Visteon Pension Action Group has called on Ford to take responsibility for its former workers' pensions.

Troika thought EROs and REAs 'were going'

CONGRESS president Jack O'Connor has warned the trade union movement will resist any attempt to dismantle wage setting mechanisms.

He also outlined his suspicion that the previous government had indicated in talks with the EU/IMF/ECB "troika" that Employment Regulation Orders and Registered Employment Agreements would be discontinued.

The revelation follows a meeting between Congress and troika representatives at the Department of Fi-

nance on April 11. Mr O'Connor, who is also SIPTU general president, said: "It is quite clear from the disposition of the representatives of the troika at the meeting that they were operating on the basis of a belief that they have an agreement with the previous government that these mechanisms would be eliminated."

"This is further supported by the IMF country report of December 2010 which refers to sector specific minimum wage agreements with a

view to their elimination. If this is true, it amounts to nothing short of a scandalous betrayal of hundreds of thousands of the lowest paid, most vulnerable workers in the country which is all the more shocking as it was disingenuously concealed from voters before the election."



O'Connor: Suspicion

EDUCATION CUTS

Schools already operate on shoe string budgets

ASTI general secretary Pat King has warned the Irish government further cuts to staffing resources in second-level schools would severely threaten the future prospects of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable pupils.

He made his comments while addressing a special conference of principals and deputy principals in Athlone on April 6.

Mr King told delegates that as leaders in education they should make no apology for opposing further education cuts.

He said: "Many schools are working hard to find creative and innovative ways to improve the educational experiences of young people despite having fewer resources.

"However, it is a fact that education cuts have had a serious negative impact on schools.

"Schools are struggling to deliver a quality education for all students and further cuts will be the last straw for many schools.

"This is why we must make no apology for insisting that schools are protected from further cutbacks."

Mr King pointed out any debate on funding must acknowledge schools were already operating on a shoe string before the economic crisis.

He added: "Throughout the Celtic Tiger era, Ireland continued to languish at the bottom of OECD league tables for investment in second-level education as a proportion of GDP. This is the context in which the education cuts were implemented."

ATL: Many pupils locked in poverty

NEARLY eight in every 10 UK teaching staff have students in their schools or colleges living in poverty, a new survey by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers has found.

The study found the same percentage of respondents claimed students living in poverty come to school tired while another 73% said they arrived in class hungry.

Among sixth form and further education students, a lack of confidence was cited as the most significant impact of poverty – by 77% of staff in further education and 70% of staff in sixth forms.

ATL general secretary Dr Mary Boustead said: "It is appalling that in 2011 so many children in the UK are severely disadvantaged by their circumstances and fail to achieve their potential.

"What message does this government think it is sending young people when it is cutting funding for Sure Start centres, raising tuition fees and making it harder for local authorities to provide health and social services.

"The government should forget empty rhetoric about social mobility and concentrate on tackling the causes of deprivation and barriers to attainment that lock so many young people into a cycle of poverty."

Unions must focus on jobs and social protection

UNIONS must focus on jobs, decent work and organising if they are to challenge the devastating impact of the world economic crisis, ITUC chief Sharan Burrow, right, has said.

She made her comments at a meeting of the executive board of the International Transport Workers' Federation in London on April 14.

Referring to the "bitter crisis of unemployment and inequity", Ms Burrow highlighted how millions of workers – especially women – were now desperate for work.

Shock at AIB jobs blow

IBOA general secretary Larry Broderick has called the announcement that 2,000 jobs at AIB Group will go by the end of 2012 an "outrageous blow to staff".

He claimed members of staff were in "a profound state of shock" at the number of job losses set out in the banking group's restructuring plan revealed earlier this month.

AIB has already shed around 2,000 jobs since the onset of the financial crisis in autumn 2008.

Mr Broderick said: "Once they get over the initial shock, I am certain our members will be very angry that they are being made to pay the price.

"They are in no way responsible for the bank's disastrous predicament. But it appears that many of them will now be sacrificed in a crude attempt to resolve it.

"These staff are more than collateral damage – they are hard working men and women with families who are facing a very bleak future with few immediate opportunities for re-employment within the financial service sector in this



Picture: IBOA

Larry Broderick: Seeking clarification country." Slamming the lack of detail contained in the April 12 announcement, Mr Broderick added: "IBOA will seek much greater transparency and clarification about the bank's precise intentions in the interests of both staff and customers."

ICTU: Eirgrid transfer won't 'release value'

CONGRESS has queried the value for money aspect of some of the proposals contained in the McCarthy review into semi-state companies.

Giving a "preliminary response", Congress general secretary David Begg said that while he agreed with the Review Group's conclusion that ESB and Bord Gáis should remain in public ownership, he disagreed with the recommendation that these assets should be transferred to Eirgrid.

Noting that such a transfer "runs counter" to prevailing practice in Europe, he added: "No value will be released by this transaction and it may even end up costing money." On proposals to dispose of non strategic state assets – such as licences, Bord na Móna and Coillte – Mr Begg noted that many of these

were already highly leveraged and that "any net return would be minimal".

He concluded: "The correct retention of regulated network assets in public ownership means that there is little of significant value left to sell.

"Moreover, the experience of privatisation of telecommunications assets with the Eircom debacle has been very bad, as evidenced by the poor quality of broadband infrastructure in this country."



Review Group leader: Colm McCarthy

She said: "We intend to make jobs and social protection the fundamental demands of the trade union movement."

Pointing out that collective bargaining rights were being eroded across the world, including in the US, she added: "We're under attack and the only way to fight back is to organise."



Picture: TUC

Friday 29 April – Trade union rights in Ireland & EU
TEEU HQ, Gardiner Row, Dublin
12.30pm - 2.30pm

Lecture and discussion with Prof Keith Ewing, King's College London and Congress general secretary David Begg
Limited booking: visit www.ictu.ie/mayday or call 01 889 7777

Tuesday 3 May
Is there a fair resolution to the EU debt crisis?

INTO HQ, 35 Parnell Sq, Dublin
12.30pm - 2.30pm

Talk and discussion with ETUC general secretary John Monk and Congress general secretary David Begg
Limited booking: visit www.ictu.ie/mayday or call 01 889 7777

Wednesday 4 May
The EU competitive pact and the attack on wage
IBOA House, Stephens St Upper, Dublin 8
12.30pm - 2.30pm

Talk and discussion with ETUC's Ronald Janssen and Congress general secretary David Begg
Limited booking: visit www.ictu.ie/mayday or call 01 889 7777

May 5 - May 7
The Larkin Hedge School

A lively festival of music, song, poetry, dance and literature hosted by the Clé Club over three days and venues – only €20 for a festival pass

FOR FULL DETAILS ON A WEEK OF EVENTS CLICK:

MAY DAY 2011

DUBLIN SUNDAY, MAY 1

PUBLIC DEMONSTRATION

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ASSEMBLE PARNELL SQ @ 1.30PM

Organised by DCTU. All welcome.

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<http://www.ictu.ie/mayday>

Tuesday 26 April – Labour History Walking Tour
5pm – Assemble Custom House Square

Renowned labour historian and celebrated author John Gray will lead a walking tour around the cathedral quarter area.

Friday 29 April, 7.30pm
SHIP (Shared History Interpretive Project) and ICTU Inaugural Connolly Memorial Lecture.
Dockers Club, Pilot St, Belfast

Through music, verse and words Francis Devine, Irish Labour History Society, will recall the lives and contributions of James Connolly, Winnie Carney and other labour activists and will explore their legacy in relation to current economic and societal realities

Saturday 30 April, 1pm - 5pm
Family Diversity Festival,

Writers Square, 1pm-5pm - FREE
After the May Day march, join us for a family afternoon of diversity, music and entertainment.

Wednesday 4 May 2011, 6pm
INTO presents the 2nd Annual Vere Foster lecture
Linenhall Library, 6pm - FREE

Vere Foster - The Man Who Paid Women to Go Away
Speaker: Dr Ann McVeigh, Public Records Office Northern Ireland
For further information contact INTO 028 90 331831

BELFAST SATURDAY, APRIL 30

MARCH & RALLY

ASSEMBLE WRITERS SQ, DONEGALL ST

GUEST SPEAKERS

Jack O'Connor
President, ICTU

Grahame Smith
General Secretary
Scottish TUC

Avril Hall Callaghan
NIC Chairperson

SPEECHES 12 NOON
MARCH OFF 12.30PM

AND LOTS MORE... FOR FULL DETAILS ON A WEEK OF EVENTS CLICK ON:

http://www.ictuni.org/uploads/67b098da-831b-4ef7-ba01-f5111705d2bc/2011%20May%20day%20festival_Layou%201.pdf

HEALTH

Work over 11 hours a day and increase coronary risk

WORKING more than 11 hours a day pushes up your risk of heart disease by 67%, a new Medical Research Council-funded study has found.

Researchers from University College London based their findings on more than 7,000 civil service employees whose health had been tracked since 1985.

Prof Mika Kivimäki, who headed the study team, said: "Considering that including a measurement of working hours in a GP interview is so simple and useful, our research presents a strong case that it should become standard practice."

Over the course of the study, 192 of the those who took part suffered a heart attack.

The findings showed that those civil servants who worked 11 hours or more a day were more than half as likely again to have a heart attack than colleagues who clocked up fewer hours.

And adding working hours to other heart risk factors – such as high blood pressure – made the researchers' predictions far more accurate.

The research suggests that if GPs were to add working hours to their usual list of heart questions, they might spot 6,000 more of the 125,000 people who suffer heart attacks in the UK each year.

Prof Stephen Holgate, who chairs the MRC's Population and Systems Medicine Board, added: "This study might make us think twice about the old adage 'hard work won't kill you'.

"It's crucial that we invest in long-term studies like this one which has been running for over a quarter of a century, to test our preconceptions about what really is good or bad for our health.

"Tackling lifestyles that are detrimental to health is a key area for the MRC, and this research reminds us that it's not just diet and exercise we need to think about."

Tackle mental ill health stigma

ASTI vice president Brendan Broderick has called on schools to tackle the stigma attached to mental health by nurturing an open and inclusive environment for both students and teachers.

He made his comments at a seminar attended by the union's equality officers on April 2.

Mr Broderick said teachers facing mental health challenges must be given the same support as those facing other types of ill health.

He told delegates: "Teaching is a challenging job. The evidence is that mental health issues can be a hazard for teachers, more so than for other professions.

"It is essential that this is recognised and that teachers are supported by their employers in looking after their mental health and in dealing with mental health issues that may affect them during their careers."



Pictures: Kevin Cooper/Photoline

Lone piper plays lament outside Belfast City Hall during the rally attended by thousands on April 6

Thousands at tribute to murdered officer



THOUSANDS of workers have paid tribute to murdered PSNI officer Ronan Kerr standing in silence as a lone piper played a lament.

The April 6 rally in Belfast city centre was organised by Congress to demonstrate the trade union movement's utter revulsion at the callous killing.

NIC-ICTU vice chairperson Pamela Dooley told the 7,000 office workers and shoppers gathered outside City Hall that the trade union movement sent its deepest condolences to Ronan's mother Nuala and the entire Kerr family.

She said: "Here today, in Ronan Kerr's name we pledge to strive for a society where the hurt of the



Picture: PSNI

Callous killing: Constable Kerr past is given proper expression though truth and justice and to build a future where no-one, especially our new generations, will ever again believe that violence has any place in build-

ing that future."

On April 3, Congress' Northern Ireland Committee called on all armed organisations to accept the will of the people and disband completely.

Assistant general secretary Peter Bunting said Constable Kerr's murder was an attack on "a brave public servant" and therefore "an attack on every worker who serves the community and works towards a better future".

He added: "The assassins targeted Constable Kerr because he was Catholic, and that makes this a sectarian murder, deliberately aimed at intimidating one section of the community."



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SPECIAL NEEDS

UTU fears cuts to SEN provision

SPECIAL school teachers in Northern Ireland fear their safety could be compromised by budget cuts.

Speaking before the Ulster Teachers' Union conference in Newcastle, Co Down, on April 8, general secretary Avril Hall Callaghan flagged up a recent study of teachers in special schools.

This revealed that three-quarters had to cope with disruption on a daily basis while one in five faced intimidation and a further one in 10 had actually been attacked.

Ms Hall Callaghan said: "The survey was carried out among colleagues in England but sadly it reflects the experiences of our members here in Northern Ireland too.

"Being abused or assaulted should never be tolerated in any workplace, yet it appears that there is a certain endemic level of abuse being directed at teachers working in specialist settings as well as an unspoken understanding that such behaviours are to be expected as part of the job."

She added the situation had been compounded by the Special Educational Needs and Inclusion Review which has increased the number of SEN pupils in so-called mainstream classrooms.

"Inclusion only works if all children in the class are receiving the best possible experience.

"If a child with special needs has a one-to-one classroom assistant, their time in mainstream schools can work very well.

"Our fear is that cuts could affect that support, without which a teacher could struggle to give that child the support it needs – as well as the other 30 in the class."

Children pay bailout price

THREATS to cut resource teaching hours to special needs pupils is a matter of grave concern to teachers, the INTO has claimed.

General secretary Sheila Nunan said that while primary school teachers supported the full integration of special needs children, additional resources were needed and warned that "unsupported integration will not work".

Ms Nunan cautioned: "Calls to do more with less should not extend to special needs children."

Acknowledging an increase in demand, she pointed out that this was related to more children with special needs – such as speech and language difficulties – being identified by speech therapists.

Ms Nunan said: "The challenge to policy makers and to society is to find the resources to support these children."

She added that the cuts were a direct result of the bank bailout and was clear evidence children were paying the price.

"The money paid to rescue the banks would fund the extra resource hours for children every year for more than 5,000 years."



Pictures: aflcio.org

We Are One protests focus on union rights Stateside

HUNDREDS of thousands of people – proclaiming the slogan "We Are One" – have taken part in more than a thousand events across the US on April 4, the 43rd anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King.

The key themes of this year's commemorations were the protection of collective bargaining rights, the right to a voice in the political process as well as respect for work and working America.

A selection of the events included:

- College students and professor hosted more than 175 teach-

ins across the country,

- Local congregations in Michigan, Maine, and Colorado took part in interfaith services, candlelight vigils, and rallies,

- International Longshore and Warehouse Union members in many US ports displayed Wisconsin flags in support of public sector workers in that state, and

- Mass demos in downtown Chicago and Manhattan's Time Square.

It comes against the backdrop of a nationwide assault on basic union rights at state level.

AFL-CIO president Richard

Trumka said: "What started in Wisconsin has spread to every state across the country as working people stand together to say 'enough'.

"The immense activity this week is a direct result of the backlash provoked by overreaching governors and state legislatures.

"Working people's energy and commitment to coming together will continue until the priorities of many of our politicians are realigned to create jobs rather than undermine the middle class."



Unite slams Cam's immigration hype

UNITE general secretary Len McCluskey has accused David Cameron of using fears over immigration as a smokescreen to divert attention away from the faltering economy and attacks on public services.

The union also claimed an ongoing poll of 143,000 working people revealed immigration lagged well down the list of concerns shared by members of the public.

Tens of thousands of responses have been analysed and ranked by independent pollsters Mass I.

So far the list of concerns in order are: 1. Money worries; 2. Cuts to council services and NHS services; 3. Rising cost of living; 4. Stress; 5. Education; 6. Housing; 7. Job security; 8. Coalition government; 9. Defence; and 10. Immigration.

General secretary, Len McCluskey said: "David Cameron is stoking up fears over immigration to divert attention away from people's real fears about the economy and public services to give his government some cover ahead of the council elections.

"Tens of thousands of working people surveyed for Unite show that their main worries can be traced back to the impact the government's economic policies are having on this country.

"Working people are worried because they are struggling to make ends meet, they are seeing the cost of food and fuel going up, while their public services are being cut.

"Immigration is in fact ranked last as a concern – with the coalition government ranked as a greater threat to people's living standards."



Len McCluskey has hit out at British PM on immigration and claimed public more concerned at cuts to services



Pictures: Unite/TUC

NIPSA chief blasts NI politicians on tax

NIPSA general secretary Brian Campfield has blasted local politicians for acting as "cheerleaders for business" through their support for lower corporation tax.

He made his comments at a Union Learning event last month.

Mr Campfield said: "The UK government has reaffirmed its attack on ordinary people by maintaining its four-year austerity programme which will lead to the loss of thousands of public sector jobs at a time when the UK economy is struggling.

"Our Northern Ireland politicians are acting as cheerleaders for business by their virtually unanimous endorsement of even lower corporation tax levels for Northern Ireland.

"This would represent a free hand out to private companies with no commitments on the creation of additional quality jobs in the Northern Ireland economy."

Inflation is 'taking hold' in Republic

CONGRESS has warned that inflation is "taking hold" in the Republic's economy piling unsustainable pressure on working people and households.

Economic advisor Paul Sweeney, inset, was responding to figures contained in the latest Consumer Price Index showing that the annual inflation rate has shot up to 3% – the highest level since October 2008. The rate, which has been rising steadily for the last 18 months, was 2.2% in February.

Mr Sweeney said: "Despite massive spending cuts, severe austerity and deflationary policies, we have seen a strong upward rise in the CPI. Prices were effectively negative for some months, but are now rising rapidly.

"With on-going rises in oil and food prices, inflation is now taking strong hold in Ireland. In that context the interest rate rise by the European Central Bank is very unwelcome and is going to result in extra hardship for people all over the country. Working people are being squeezed on too many fronts. There is a limit to the burden of austerity that any society – or household – can tolerate."



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CWU's €50k for tsunami victims

THE Communication Workers Union is to make an upfront donation of €50,000 to victims of last month's devastating Japanese earthquake and tsunami.

The decision was taken at a recent meeting of the union's National Executive Council and follows numerous calls from individual members to the CWU HQ concerning the tragic events of March 11.

So far, a total of 14,000 people have been confirmed dead in the disaster with another 14,000

missing. A CWU spokesperson said: "Despite the economic crisis in this country, members were moved by the natural disasters that have struck Japan and indeed by the implications from those disasters due to the damage to the Japanese nuclear facilities.

"Those members asked that the NEC consider making a donation from the CWU Charitable Fund to the Japanese people and, in particular, to our comrades in the Japanese postal and telecommunications industries."

The CWU has also arranged that individual members of the union can make private donations to: **CWU Charitable Fund Savings Account No. 41147391**
Sort Code: 90-00-17
Bank of Ireland, 2 College Green, Dublin 2

The spokesperson added: "It's our intention to add individual personal donations to the lump sum agreed by the NEC and disperse it through unions in Japan to where aid is most needed."

NIPSA funds Tanzanian work drive

NIPSA helped Irish expats in the Tanzanian capital Dar es Salaam celebrate St Patrick's Day last month by launching an innovative trade union initiative to employ disabled people.

Irish charity Disability Aid Abroad – sponsored by NIPSA's Developing World Fund – helps disabled workers and employers design "support structures" in the workplace as well as providing on-going support and advice.

Research carried on in Tanzania last year revealed that less than 3% of disabled people were in paid employment.

The study found disabled women were the most disadvantaged group – not only in finding employment but also in having access to basic health care and education.

The two-year initiative to encourage the employment of disabled people is run in partnership with local union TUICO.

NIPSA assistant secretary Geraldine Alexander said: "Disabled people are the forgotten voice of Africa and women with disabilities are particularly vulnerable and marginalised in a country where disability is still seen as a social and cultural stigma.

"We are therefore delighted to be able to fund this project which will make a real difference to the lives of disabled people in Tanzania."



Leticia Paul, left, is a member of Mwanza Women's Clothing Co-operative – founded by Disability Aid Abroad.

Although severely physically disabled by childhood polio, she walks to work every day – a distance of three miles each way.

Through NIPSA's Development World Fund, Leticia has now set up a local disability advocacy group to lobby local government and employers to provide accessible transport and adequate employment disability adjustments.

More than £468,000 has been raised since the fund was set up in 1992.

In the main, this has come from NIPSA members contributing through Give As You Earn donations.

Picture: NIPSA

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TUC backs 'pound a day' drive for the world's poor

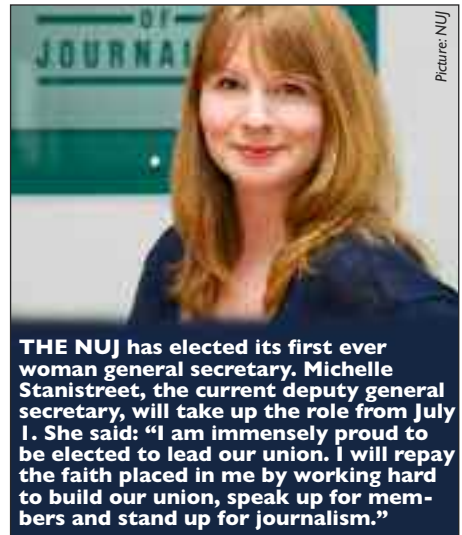
THE TUC, through its development arm – TUC Aid – has backed the Live Below the Line campaign aimed at raising awareness of the need for eliminating extreme poverty.

The World Bank defines extreme poverty as living on less than 1.25 US dollars (or £1/€1.15) per day. It is estimated that about 1.4 billion people in the world are living in extreme poverty.

From May 2 to May 6, the LBL is asking people to try and experience living on £1 – or €1.15 – a day to raise awareness and funds for charities working to end the injustice.

Participants will have a total of £5 – or €5.60 – with which to buy all ingredients for their meals. Sign up for the challenge at:

<http://www.livebelowtheline.org.uk/tuc>



Picture: NUJ

THE NUJ has elected its first ever woman general secretary. Michelle Stanistreet, the current deputy general secretary, will take up the role from July 1. She said: "I am immensely proud to be elected to lead our union. I will repay the faith placed in me by working hard to build our union, speak up for members and stand up for journalism."



Pictures: ETUC



McKeown: Jobs fears

UNISON to ballot its members over 'attack' on the NHS

UNISON regional secretary Patricia McKeown has called the McKinsey Report into the working of NHS in Northern Ireland "the greatest attack on our health and social system since it was founded 63 years ago".

The draft report sets out major changes to health and social care provision which the union claims could mean the loss of 10,000 jobs.

The report, published in February, had flagged up how the growth in demand for care coupled with inflation and a curb on spending would cause a significant funding shortfall by 2014/15 if services are maintained at the present level.

UNISON has said it will now ballot its members in Northern Ireland on strike action.

Ms McKeown said: "We do not come to this decision lightly.

"However, our members are declaring that they cannot continuously bear the strain of cuts which are resulting in significant job loss, stress and ill health, increased health and safety risk and distress at the growing inability to serve the public."

She added: "We are standing up for our public services and public service workers."



ETUC chief John Monks addresses the crowd in Budapest

40,000 protest in Budapest at EU-driven austerity policies

UP to 40,000 trade unionists took to the streets of Budapest earlier this month as EU finance ministers held a meeting in the nearby town of Gödöll.

The April 9 demo, organised by the ETUC along with its Hungarian affiliates, is part of a Europe-wide campaign against EU-driven austerity packages being implemented across member states.

A total of 45 trade unions from 22 European countries took part in the protest. Hungarian civil servants

joined French teachers, Polish miners and Greek transport workers – many carrying union flags and banners – as they marched from Heroes Square in the centre of the Hungarian capital to the Oktogon where union leaders delivered speeches.

An ETUC spokesperson, speaking before the march, said: "Many protests have taken place recently across Europe to express the anger of workers against austerity measures and to demand social justice.

"The policies implemented by Eu-

ropean authorities and national governments to deal with the economic crisis are essentially based on austerity measures and fiscal consolidation plans.

"These consist of sharp cuts to public spending, pressure to reduce wages and interference in the independence of the collective bargaining process.

"These social regressive measures are being taken at the same as scandalous bonuses continue to be paid to bosses."



THE Communications Workers Union has moved from its old offices at North Circular Road to new headquarters at Exchequer Buildings, 19-23 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2.
The main head office contact number – 01 866 3000 – is unchanged.

MARCH 26 DEMO



Taryn Traynor, of Unite, with ICTU's Peter Bunting and Jack O'Connor





BELFAST DEMO SETS A SHINING EXAMPLE

THE SUN shone brightly as 6,000 trade unionists and their families marched against the cuts through the centre of Belfast on March 26.

The march was held as up to half a million workers rallied in central London at the TUC's 'March for the Alternative'.

ICTU assistant general secretary Peter Bunting told a cheering crowd outside the City Hall: "A million feet are on the move, through Whitehall and Westminster, past the hedge

funds of Mayfair and the glass palaces of the banks, and they are telling the Con Dem cabal that there will be no silent assent to their plan."

Branding the Con Dem plan to "re-balance" the UK economy "half witted", he added: "Austerity means poverty for the already poor and the millions who are threatened by poverty, with frozen wages and inflation soaring and stealth taxes for those who cannot afford any more pain." **LONDON DEMO PIX P14/15**



Picture: Unite

John Freeman 1934 - 2011

John Freeman – one of the leading lights of the trade union movement in Northern Ireland – died on March 15.

A native of Belfast, he was born in 1934 between the Shankill and Crumlin Roads.

In the late 50s, he found work in Australia before returning home to Northern Ireland in the following decade. He got a job at Shorts where he became a trade union activist.

He was elected to the General Executive Council of the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (now Unite) before his appointment as Regional Irish Secretary in 1974 – at that time the union had 100,000 members.

John served in that role until he retired in 1998. During his time as Regional Secretary he was elected and re-elected on to the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and, in due course, served as its chairperson.

He also served with ICTU on its General Purpose Committee and, in 1995, was elected president. John brought the ICTU conference to the then newly-opened Waterfront Hall in Belfast in 1997.

He also represented both the Northern Ireland Committee and Congress on a number of bodies – both here and in Europe.

"These are the basic facts," said Unite's Regional Co-ordinator Eugene McGlone as he paid tribute to John at his funeral at Roselawn on March 21.

He added: "But they do not describe the man, his ideals or motivation.

"However, some hint of what this all means could be seen in the sympathy notice from the INTO which simply read 'Freeman, John, former president of the ICTU and Irish Regional Secretary ATGWU, progressive trade union leader during the long years of carnage:'"

"This," he added, "I think is the best place to try and understand what John stood for. It's easy to forget, as the INTO notice reflects, that for almost all of his tenure of office as Regional Secretary of the ATGWU, there was a bloody and vicious war being waged on our streets, in our places of leisure and work.

"People, some of whom were our members, were being killed for the work they did or were perceived to do.

"The Irish Regional Committee meetings of the union were frequently preceded by a minute silence as a mark of respect for the deaths of members, staff or relatives of members who had been victims of the 'carnage'. That was not a good place to be for a prolonged period.

"John's greatest achievement was that he managed to bring the opinion formers in the union along a path, a shared path based on class consciousness, which was a better way.

"Not everything he attempted was universally welcomed – how could it be, the union merely reflected our society,

"Ultimately, how successful he really was will be for history to determine, what is certain is that he did try to leave things better than he found them.

"His epitaph should, perhaps be the words of the Templepatrick Weaver Jemmy Hope which he had inscribed on the union banner:

*The right divine of Labour
To be the first of earthly things
That the worker and the thinker
Are manhoods only kings!'*



Picture: UTU

Scott: Unions unite call UTU delegates warned 'worst is to come'

ULSTER Teachers' Union past president Lexie Scott has warned "the worst is yet to come" in terms of cuts to education provision.

He made his grim prediction as UTU members discussed the issue at their annual conference in Newcastle, Co Down, on April 8.

Mr Scott, who is head at Gracehill Primary School, called on all school staff to unite to protect services offered to children in schools "from teaching to classroom assistant support, school dinners to school buses".

He told delegates: "We haven't really begun to feel the severity of the financial cuts yet as the Minister has been able this year to divert funding from capital projects into revenue.

"But whoever takes up that post after the May elections won't have that luxury and that's when services will really be under threat.

"Teachers are at the frontline of services delivered to children in schools, but for many families the availability of, for instance, free school transport or free school dinners is a financial lifeline too.

"Members of the UTU – and importantly, other unions whose members work within schools – need to unite in an awareness-raising campaign to safeguard those services to children."

PHOTOLINE

Experienced photographer specialises in campaigning photography for trade unions and NGOs.

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MARCH 26 DEMO



LONDON'S CALLING FOR ALTERNATIVE TO CUTS



TUC's Brendan Barber & Frances O'Grady head up demo





Picture: NIPSA

Graham: Rates set by the AA

Taxpayers Alliance blasted on mileage claims

NIPSA has hit back at the Taxpayers Alliance after it attacked the level of mileage payments to UK local government workers.

The organisation, which lobbies for lower taxes and greater efficiency in the public sector, claimed councils were wasting millions of pounds last year paying employees on average 16p above the then-HMRC-approved rate of 40p per mile.

Director Matthew Sinclair said: "Ordinary motorists who are feeling the pinch will be shocked that council staff are getting such a generous deal for their mileage claims. It simply isn't fair."

But NIPSA spokesperson Bumper Graham slammed the claims and pointed out the mileage rates were set independently by the AA.

He said: "The costs include all aspects of motoring costs – purchase, interest, depreciation, tax, insurance as well as the ever increasing cost of fuel. These rates reflect the UK average and in many respects the cost of motoring in Northern Ireland is much higher than the UK average."

"The Inland Revenue rate was set many years ago and is totally unrealistic, its introduction had nothing to do with motoring costs but was just another stealth tax."

The current mileage rate for 2011-12 approved by HM Revenue and Customs is 45p.



Picture: Amnesty International



REPORT Magodonga Mahlangu & Jenni Williams

Zimbabwe activists 'targeted'

IT has been reported that since February Zimbabwean police have launched a crackdown against human rights activists.

Those targeted in the latest wave of repression include members of WOZA. WOZA – the acronym of Women of Zimbabwe Arise – is an Ndebele word meaning 'come forward'.

The group has a countrywide membership of more than 75,000 women and men. It was formed in 2003 as a women's civic movement to provide Zimbabwean women, from all walks of life, with a united voice to speak out on issues affecting their day-to-day lives.

Members of WOZA have been repeatedly arrested over the years, while taking part in peaceful demonstrations against the worsening social, economic, and human rights situation in the country. Amnesty is particularly concerned about this recent escalation.

In one incident, on February 28, seven members of WOZA and Men of Zimbabwe Arise (MOZA) were arrested in Bulawayo and detained for two days.

It is alleged they were tortured during detention at Bulawayo Central police sta-

tion. It is understood that while in custody the detainees were also repeatedly asked for details of the whereabouts of Jenni Williams and Magodonga Mahlangu.

This is a change in fortunes for the pair, because on November 26, 2010, the Justice of Appeal at the Supreme Court ruled that Williams and Mahlangu had been wrongfully arrested and detained following a peaceful protest two years earlier.

The court also ruled that as a result of their arrest and detention, they had had their rights and fundamental freedoms violated and that the state had failed to protect them.

Yet this latest information from Zimbabwe seems to indicate a return to the persecution Williams and Mahlangu have been subjected to in the past.

Sources claim that since February WOZA activists have been threatened and assaulted by police officers, who have also obstructed their access to lawyers.

To demand that this reported harassment stops, take action here:

<http://action.amnesty.org.uk/eacampaign/clientcampaign.do?ea.dient.id=1194&ea.campaign.id=10087>



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74% against privatising blood services

UNITE has called on NHS Blood Service chief Linda Hamlyn to give a "copper bottomed" guarantee there will be no further privatisation of the service.

It comes as an independent poll of 18,000 people revealed widescale opposition across the UK to the move.

The poll, commissioned by the union, revealed 74% of respondents were against the privatisation of blood services.

Unite has warned the out-

sourcing of any functions "whether frontline or back office" will "contaminate" the whole of the service.

The Department of Health is currently leading a review into how the NHS Blood Service can cut costs.

It is understood Department of Health officials have talked to private providers as part of the review.

The union has repeatedly called for clarification, but both the Blood Service and the Department of Health

have failed to rule-out privatisation. Unite national officer Jennie Bremner said: "Whether it is the frontline or the back office, privatisation of any part of the blood service contaminates the whole of the blood service.

"It is totally wrong to allow private sector companies to profit from men and women who freely donate their blood to help others.

"The message is clear, the people of this country say no to blood money."



Pictures: NHSBT



Picture: MANDATE

Gerry Light: 'Double standard'

Don't use JLC review to hit the low paid

MANDATE has warned the review into Joint Labour Committees and Employment Regulation Orders should not be used to attack the wages of low-paid workers.

Around 240,000 employees – 100,000 of whom work in the retail grocery sector – have their wages and other terms set by JLCs.

Assistant general secretary Gerry Light said: "It is vitally important that the current review must be transparent and inclusive of the perspectives of all vested interests – not just the various employers' groups that have been campaigning to drive down the wage rates of low paid workers."

Employers' groups have argued the JLC structure is no longer needed because a statutory national minimum wage is in place.

Mr Light countered by accusing employers' groups of operating a double standard over wages set by JLCs.

He said: "During periods of economic boom, employers are quite happy to accept the wage rates set by the JLCs because they act as an effective ceiling on wages in sectors such as retail and restaurants.

"However, during recessionary times they are not prepared to accept the same wage levels despite the fact that they provide a very effective protective floor to ensure that low paid workers don't fall into poverty or are not exploited."

Workers Memorial Day

International day to remember those who have lost their lives due to work-related injuries or illness. This year the focus is on work-related suicide as job losses and debt put people under enormous pressure.

April
28
2011

**MOURN FOR
THE DEAD
FIGHT
FOR THE
LIVING**

APRIL 28

Labour History Museum, Beggars Bush, Dublin 10.30am-1pm

Speakers include Congress President Jack O'Connor; Ciaran Austin, Console, manager of the ILife service; Breffni McGuinness, Bereavement Expert and Author; Eamon Devoy, General Secretary, TEEU and Chair of Congress Health and Safety Committee.

No Booking Required



Sightsavers

Every wipe of his eyes takes Talla closer to blindness



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



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