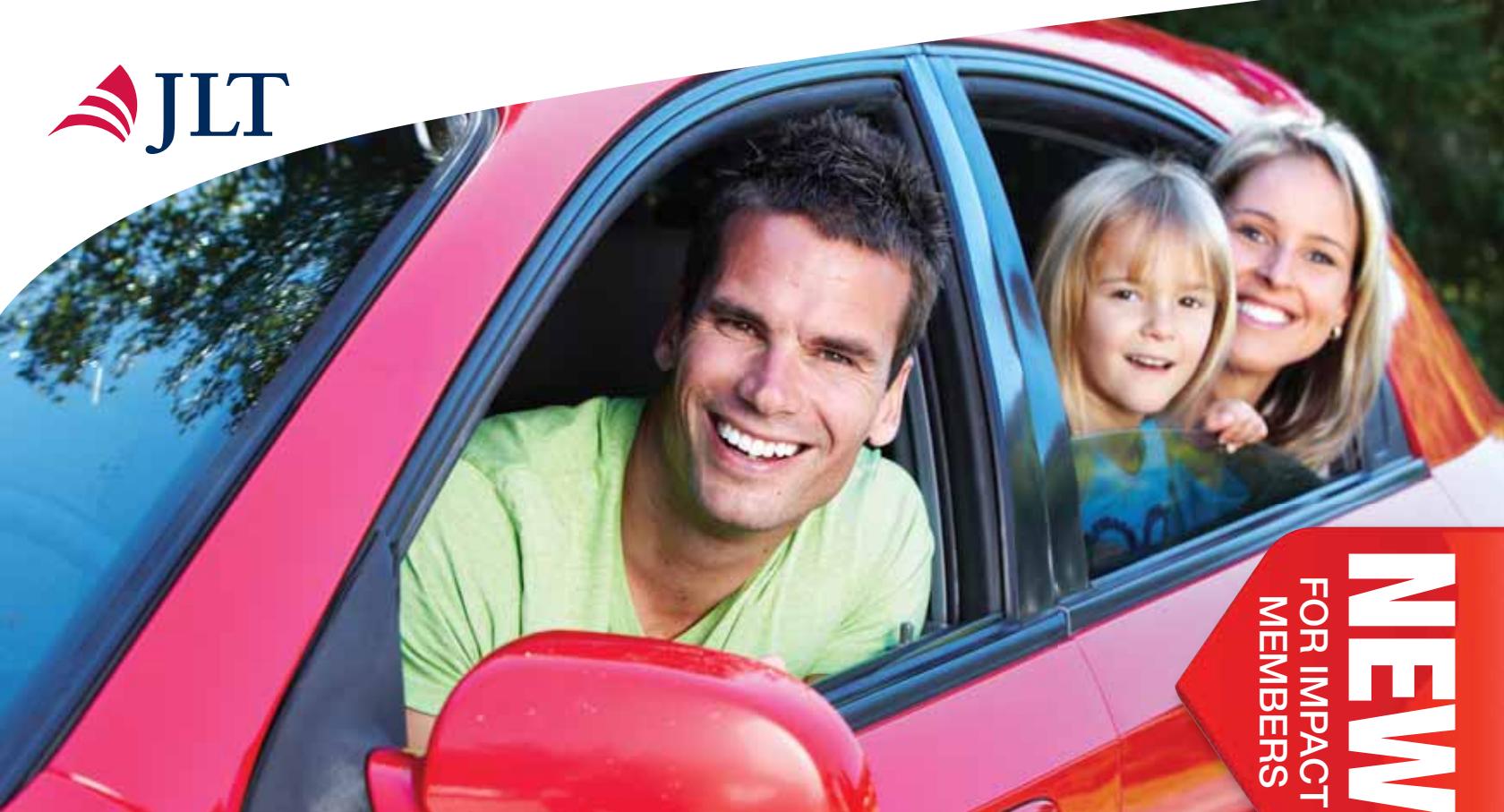


# work & life

ISSUE 36 • WINTER-SPRING 2017

# PAY



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## work & life

Winter-Spring 2017

### The Pay Issue

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# Pay – The Big Picture

IN THIS special edition of *Work & Life* we're concentrating on the issue of pay. The closing months of 2016 were dominated by a fairly heated discourse on public sector pay, with a revival of the sometimes lazy and incendiary brand of analysis we haven't seen since the peak of the economic crisis.

In our special feature on upcoming pay talks, Bernard Harbor observes that "for all its passion and volume, the November row between unions and Government was essentially about whether and when talks should take place." Bernard gives the background to this year's pay talks on page 8 and warns that delivering a fair deal won't be easy.

Making a welcome return to these pages is Tom Healy, director of the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI). Tom says it's time to talk about wages. Why? Because there's a little known secret that needs to be explored, namely that wages, as measured by real average weekly earnings, have not increased since 2008. Find out more on page 44, as Donal Casey picks up this theme in his latest cartoon, and debuts his first Donald Trump offering on page 39.

Lughan Deane has been doing what he likes to do best. Never happier than when he's digging deep through the research files, in this edition he delivers his findings on pay policy while national secretary Andy Pike looks at the gender pay gap.

Our guest contributor is Shane Faherty, who writes a compelling account of his experiences trying to navigate the world of call centre work following the completion of his PhD – and the imminent arrival of an addition to the family – while struggling to cope with soaring rent and an uncertain future.

Trish Callian finds inspiration in the work of *Dress for Success* Dublin, which promotes the economic independence of women by providing professional attire and interview preparation skills.

We also take a look at IMPACT's first training programme specifically designed to encourage and promote women activists. Find out more about INSPIRE on page 14, and read Martina O'Leary's interview with Health & Welfare divisional chair Maura Cahalan on page 4.

All that plus the usual mix of news, the IMPACT photo album, member profiles and stories of activism, along with movies, music, food, gardens and competitions.

We hope you enjoy it.



**Niall Shanahan**  
Editor

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Campaigns

Secure rents

The *Secure Rents* campaign was launched in October 2016 by IMPACT, SIPTU, Mandate, the Communications Workers Union (CWU) and UNITE, in partnership with the campaigning organisation UPLIFT. Our colleagues in the CPSU and the Financial Services Union (FSU) have since joined the campaign.

The campaign was developed in response to the skyrocketing levels of rent increases which were making affordability an issue for huge numbers of tenants. 750,000 people live in Ireland's chaotic and under-regulated rental sector.

In the absence of market intervention and regulation, property firm Savills have projected further rental increases of around 25% over the next two years. This follows the revelation, in the most recent Daft.ie report that annual rental inflation of 11.7% is running at its highest level since records commenced in 1993.

Many people involved in the campaign, and their families, are private rental tenants. The current rate of rent inflation is hitting their living standards, and crippling family budgets and disposable income.

Measures to cap rental increases in some areas, tabled by the Minister for Housing last December, are welcome, but they don't go far enough.

Our campaign has three clear policy demands:

- To provide stability and certainty for tenants by linking rent increases to the Consumer Price Index (CPI)

MY RENT COULD BE HOW MUCH?!?

WE NEED CHANGE IN THE IRISH RENTAL SECTOR. WE NEED

SECURE RENTS



SecureRents.com - #SecureRents



- To improve tenant security by revoking the automatic right of landlords to evict tenants purely for the purposes of sale
- To enable tenants to negotiate long-term lease arrangements by moving from the current four-year maximum lease term.

These demands echo the recommendations of the Cross-Party Oireachtas Committee on Housing and Homelessness as well as the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), with support from homeless charities, NGOs and other representative bodies.

Nearly 8,000 supporters have signed the petition at SecureRents.com, which includes a rent calculator tool to highlight the scale of the rental crisis. Hundreds of renters have told their story directly to the Minister via our website.

Our lobbying efforts continue into 2017, so please lend your support via SecureRents.com as we continue the campaign to achieve rent certainty and more secure tenancies.

Joe O'Connor  
Lead organiser, IMPACT.



# Good with people

*Maura Cahalan is the Cathaoirleach of IMPACT's health and welfare divisional executive committee (DEC). She is currently on full time release working on the Supporting Branches project within the union's health division. MARTINA O'LEARY has a chat with her.*

WHILE AN active member of IMPACT's Limerick Health and Welfare branch, Maura is a farmer's daughter (as she describes herself) from the North Tipperary village of Ballinderry. After studying to be an accounting technician in Limerick she made the county her home, although she still goes to her parents for Sunday lunch when she can.

Maura can talk for hours about the union, her Limerick branch and the Health and Welfare divisional committee, but when I asked her to describe herself she goes very quiet. "I'm not good when it comes to myself, I'm good when it comes to other people," she says. After a little reflection she says "I like to be involved. I'm motivated. I love meeting people, I love my union work, dealing with issues on the ground, and just discussing any concern they may have."

## Branches

Having worked in the health service for 21 years Maura is well placed to consult with branches within the health division on how they communicate with each other and the union centrally. Her role, as she sees it, is to help branches address the changes that are currently taking place within the HSE and hospital sector in relation to restructuring. ▶

"The public service is always changing, there is always restructuring in some section or another. IMPACT must be strong and flexible enough to make changes and move with the times and to ensure important decisions aren't being made without IMPACT being involved," says Maura.

"We need to be able to get into the head space to be able to adapt, no matter how many times the employer changes structures, we need to be flexible within our own union set-ups to change," Maura explains.

Maura eats and drinks her trade union work. So how did she get involved? "Through my boss, who was very active in the union. First he got me helping with the branch ballots, then he invited me to a branch meeting, all of a sudden I ended up as branch secretary. I was meant to cover a maternity leave absence in the Limerick branch. I've been the secretary ever since, I've been heavily involved over the last few years."

I asked Maura what she would say to members who are disillusioned about the union. "My approach is, if there's a problem I want to solve it. The only way to do this is to get involved. The only way to get workplace problems solved is by bringing it to your branch, and they bring it to the DEC. Let the issue be known and let the people who are able to solve these problems do so. The DEC is there to work for the branches. It's vital that branches become more involved with the executive members and are not afraid to approach them and make sure their issues are being addressed nationally."

"We're getting very positive responses from branches. The branches have had to deal with so much. There are new members from new employments coming into membership. We need to incorporate new staff into the branches, which will in turn help the branches build themselves back up again," she said.

## Social

Time is a precious commodity for Maura at the moment, apart from her trade union work, she is still studying accountancy. If she isn't catching up with her friends and family, she is curled up on her couch watching old movies, particularly from the 1950s.

"I've great family support and I've a huge network of friends. When I get a chance I love to go on holidays. I went to Rio for the Olympics, I saved and planned for a good four years. I've travelled a good bit, Vietnam, India, I'd love to go to Africa or I've never been to the Caribbean. I love seeing the different cultures. I don't really stick to the tourist trails. I love to see the indigenous elements of the various countries. I still have a lot of the world to see, the Inca trail in Peru is on the bucket list."

*"My approach is, if there is a problem I want to solve it. The only way to do this is to get involved."*

Sport used to play a big part in Maura's life, but not so much at the moment. "When you live in Limerick it's difficult not to be involved in Rugby. When I was younger I played camogie in Tipp, I was on the county team years ago. I came from a GAA culture in Tipp to a Rugby culture in Limerick."

## Personal development

"I've learned so much, and had so much fun, being involved in the union. I wouldn't have been great at public speaking, or interacting in big groups, I'd be more a one to one person, but IMPACT has allowed me to grow. I have to chair the DEC, which is daunting when you haven't done it before. As time goes by, you realise people only want their views to be heard, and you are giving them that opportunity. You get to meet new people, from different walks of life."

"From my own point of view, I never thought I would ever achieve something like this. And it just proves if you work hard, and have a bit of luck, you can aim for your goals. I would have been very shy when I was 18. IMPACT has opened up so much for me in relation to the rep training, the encouragement from all union staff, and the mentor's course *Step up*. It just gives you the confidence to move forward and believe in yourself," explains Maura.

"From an IMPACT point of view, I'd like to bring about effective change within the health area during my time as divisional chairperson. I want to get branches talking to each other and feeling they can reach out to me." ●

# Maximum wages and basic incomes

## The politics of pay beyond the living wage

LUGHAN DEANE looks at the range and scope of pay policy options across the globe, and digs deeper to find out more about the lesser known siblings of the minimum and living wage concepts, and the arguments for and against concepts such as the 'rising star' of alternative pay policy: the universal basic income.

ANY DISCUSSION on basic pay models tends to focus on the minimum wage and living wage concepts. The minimum wage is the lowest rate of pay that an employer may legally pay a worker. The modern conception of the minimum wage emerged from trade union campaigns in Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom during the 1890s. The minimum wage in Ireland currently stands at €9.25 per hour.

The Living Wage, a separate but connected concept, is a wage that makes possible a minimum acceptable standard of living. IMPACT is currently involved in the campaign by Congress and other civil society groups aimed at bringing about the introduction of a Living Wage in Ireland. It has been calculated that this amounts to €11.50 per hour.

While these are undoubtedly the best-known pieces of wage or pay policy, they have a few lesser-known siblings. These are often equally innovative but largely ignored, either because they're harder to implement or unpopular with the wealthier influentials whose income they could reduce. Here's a selection of some of the more interesting alternative pay-policy ideas:

### Maximum wage

A maximum wage is a legal upper limit on the amount of income any individual can earn. It's the perfect inversion of the minimum wage. The notion of stipulating a maximum wage can be traced all the way back to the Ordinance of Labourers in 1389. The Bubonic Plague wiped out so much of the European population that it caused a shortage in labour. This drove up the cost of employment and so King Edward III was forced to introduce a maximum wage in order to keep labour costs down.

The idea pre-dates that of the minimum wage. Advocates argue that the implementation of such a measure today would effectively put a cap on inflation, as prices could not increase beyond the buying-power of somebody on the maximum wage. They also claim that the maximum wage would prevent the potential devaluation of a currency by serving to limit the amount of a currency that could

reasonably be hoarded by any one person. Arguably, this would reduce wealth-inequality.

However, wealthier people could receive and hold as much capital as they liked so long as it was not technically earned as wages. Ultimately, the critics argue, all this does is move the excess wealth of the very rich out of the reach of income taxation.

These critics say that a highly progressive income tax model would actively redistribute wealth around society, whereas a maximum wage would not. Lobbyists on behalf of wealthy executives, meanwhile, claim that a maximum wage would serve to disincentivise success and hard work insofar as people's income would max out at a certain point.

There is currently a maximum wage in place in Cuba and Egypt.

### Maximum pay ratio

A maximum pay ratio fixes, as a matter of policy, the maximum rate of pay for society's highest earners as a certain multiple of the pay earned by the lowest or median earners. Generally, advocates of this measure argue that an executive-to-worker ratio of between 15 and 25-to-one would work best. In the absence of any official policy, the current average ratio of CEO-to-low-paid-worker pay is somewhere around 230-to-one. As it stands, executive compensation and worker pay may as well exist in two parallel universes. They are not, in any way, tethered to one another. Executive pay has increased 725% since 1965, whereas worker pay has increased just 5.7% over the same period. ▶

A well-designed maximum pay ratio is an elegant solution to the recent explosion in pay inequality. At once it curbs the worst excesses in executive pay while, simultaneously, ensuring that worker pay doesn't fall below a certain floor.

Some companies and organisations have tried implementing a maximum pay ratio. Grocery giant Whole Foods Market, for example, operates with a 19-to-one executive-to-worker ratio in place. The massive Mondragon Corporation in Spain, meanwhile, uses a five-to-one multiplier.

### Family wage

The family wage is a stronger variant of the living wage. It's a wage sufficient to support a family (the living wage model is based on a single individual). The concept of a family wage is rooted more in the traditional ideal of the 'nuclear' family, wherein one income is enough to maintain a whole household.

There have been attempts by advocates to introduce the family wage in several countries including Israel, Portugal, Spain and the UK. Pope Leo XIII issued a papal bull in 1891 calling for a family wage. Officially, the Catholic Church remains in support of the measure.

Actual implementation, however, has been limited to the point of virtual non-existence.

*"The main claim made in favour of the universal basic income is that it would eradicate poverty entirely."*

### Universal basic income

Universal basic income, also known as an 'unconditional basic income', 'citizen's income', or a 'basic income guarantee' is a regular salary-style payment made by a country's government to every citizen.

Proponents argue that the universal basic income is a simpler, more transparent way of organising social welfare payments. While the measure would see the state pay out a greater amount of money, there would be huge savings in terms of administrative costs, as the entire welfare system would function without a requirement for any means test.

It's also thought that a universal basic income could lead to a reduction in crime, which would save some money on policing and justice. The basic income might also replace or reduce the requirement for certain public services, such as housing and homelessness services, which would mitigate the cost of the measure. Social Justice Ireland suggests that the universal basic income would be affordable in Ireland if a universal income tax rate of 45% were introduced.

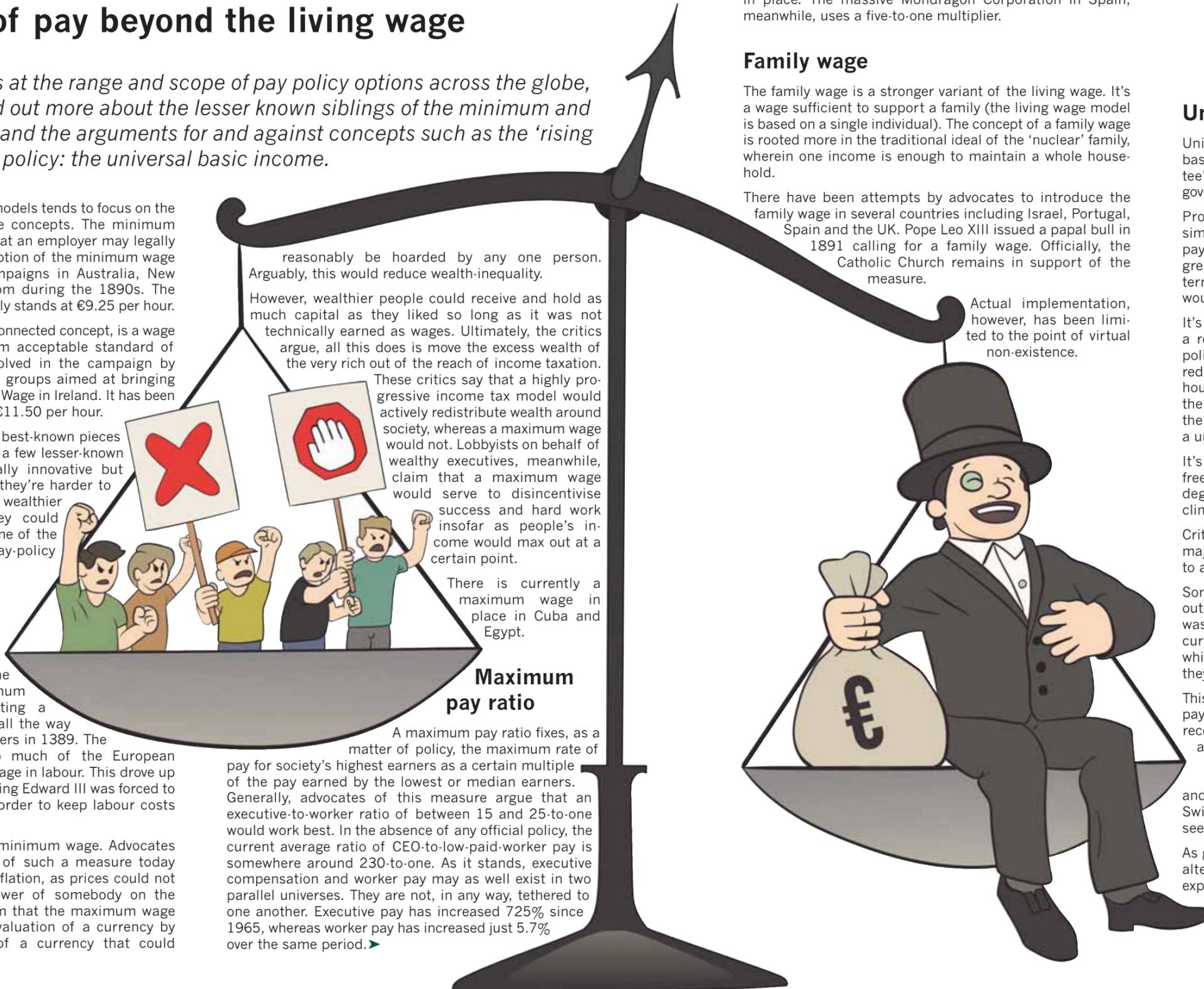
It's also claimed that it would allow people the time and freedom to engage in vital alternative work including higher degree studies, developing solutions to global issues like climate change, or the creation of art.

Critics argue that an unconditional payment would act as a major disincentive to employment which would, in turn, lead to a reduction in tax income for the state.

Some argue that the poorest in society would actually lose out as, given the cost of the measure, the level that payment was set at could well be less than the combined value of all current welfare benefits. Poorer people could be worse-off while wealthier people would be given a state-payment that they did not require.

This measure is, however, the current rising star of alternative pay policy and has enjoyed an increasing level of attention in recent times. There have been regional experimental trials of a universal basic income measure in several countries across the globe including in the United States, Canada, Namibia and India. Currently, France, the Netherlands and Finland are preparing limited pilot projects. Last year Switzerland strongly defeated a referendum that would have seen the measure introduced in full.

As global income inequality continues to soar, it's clear that alternative models, however challenging, do need to be explored ●



# All eyes on pay

*Unions have succeeded in getting public pay talks brought forward. BERNARD HARBOR gives the background to this year's pay talks and warns that delivering a fair deal won't be easy.*

FOR ALL its imperfections, Ireland's public service pay system has a coherence and basic fairness that's been highly valued by successive governments and by staff. Public employees are not all paid the same amount in the same way. But, by and large, comparable jobs attract broadly similar salaries regardless of where you happen to work.

What's more, while it has its modest number of high earners, the public sector is not burdened by the obscene gaps between boardroom rewards and shop floor pay that are now entrenched in much of the private sector.

Though hated, even the pay cuts of the 2009-2011 period (see timeline below) were 'progressive,' in that higher earners lost more than those on low and middle incomes. And the Lansdowne Road deal – the first agreement for almost a decade to put money back in people's purses and pockets – also favoured those at the lower end of the pay spectrum.

This basic fairness is underpinned by an approach to pay determination that, in good times and bad, treats everyone in broadly the same way. This is key to understanding the uproar that greeted last November's Garda pay awards.

By conceding that it would address the problem, the Government finally acknowledged this reality. Some commentators said it had chosen higher pay over tax cuts or improved services. That's a false representation. It's far more accurate to think of it as a choice between stability and chaos in both our exchequer finances and public service delivery.



Margaret Smith

## Balance

Nobody begrudges improved incomes for Gardaí. But the Labour Court recommendations upset the balance of fairness by treating one group significantly more favourably than the rest. After that, demands for accelerated pay recovery for the majority of public servants – those who had abided by the Lansdowne Road agreement – were inevitable.

The Government and most opposition parties rightly recognise the value of having a functioning public service pay deal in place. They know that the certainty provided by the Lansdowne Road agreement, and its recent predecessors, was arguably the main load-bearing wall in Ireland's economic and fiscal recovery. ➤



Photo: dreamstime.com

*The revised timetable for negotiations means that, if the talks are successful, new provision for 2018 pay increases can be included in next October's budget.*

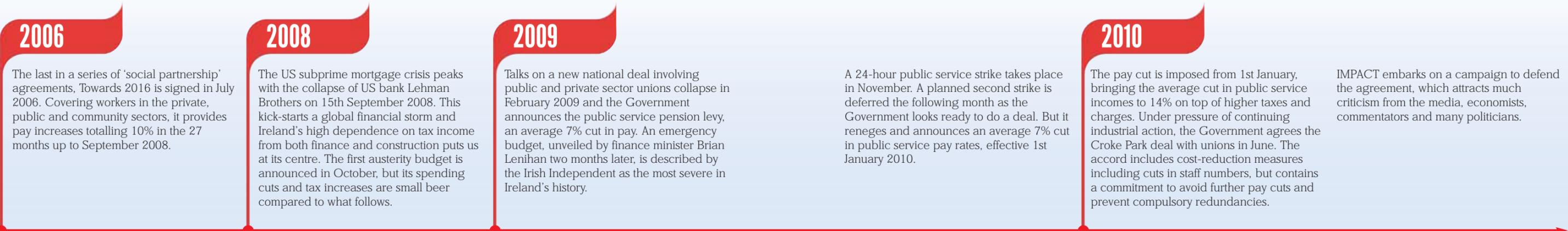
When the Garda awards put Lansdowne Road on life support, the Government simply had to respond to union pressure to prevent the deal – and the stability it underpinned – from collapsing.

By separating the Garda problem from the broader task of negotiating a successor to Lansdowne Road, Minister Donohoe's "two phased approach" has created the space for the

Public Service Pay Commission (PSPC) to do its work before the second – and, frankly, more difficult – exercise begins.

Since last spring, IMPACT has been calling for fast-tracked negotiations on a successor to Lansdowne Road. The Minister has now accepted that these negotiations should start in the first half of this year, rather than at some unspecified time next year. This revised timetable means that, if the talks are

continued on page 10 ➤





# Long wait for equal pay

*Long pay scales are forcing women to wait for far too long for equal pay. IMPACT national secretary ANDY PIKE reviews the most recent report on the reasons behind the pay gap, and says that job evaluation schemes represent a concrete measure to increase transparency and begin to address the factors that maintain the gender pay gap.*



THE RECENT publication of research into the gender pay gap for professional women (Morgan McKinley, *The Gender Pay Gap Ireland 2016*) highlighted the fact that the overall gap in earnings between men and women in Ireland stands at 35 per cent.

At the end of 2016, IMPACT highlighted that this means women must work an additional 67 extra days per annum to earn the same as men. However, beyond these broad figures the Morgan-McKinley research highlighted some interesting aspects of how the gender pay gap differs according to the type of work women carry out and the sector in which they work.

The report shows that if an equal number of men and women commence employment at the same time, only 24 per cent of women will progress to senior management level. Where women spend more than 15 years in the workplace in professional roles they are likely to be earning one third less than men in comparable jobs.

When looking at the gender pay gap by sector, professional women in financial services earn 29 per cent less than men, while those working in healthcare earn 12 per cent less. In the public and education sectors, meanwhile, the pay gap is estimated to be 22 per cent. The reason for these variations is the relatively high proportion of women working in certain sectors. The higher the proportion of women in the sector, the more women there are in senior posts.

## Flexibility

The report also demonstrates that the availability of flexible working arrangements is a major factor, as access to such schemes allows women to remain in the workforce. Some 3,000 new mothers are cited as leaving the workforce each year due to the high cost of childcare.

The report goes on to highlight the success of social policy in Sweden, where the gender pay gap has been reduced to 13.2 per cent. This is in no small part due to the provision of 480 days of parental leave alongside capped childcare costs of €132 per child per month. In general terms, 33 per cent of women across the EU work on a part time basis, and are subject to all the consequential reductions in earnings that entails. Just six per cent of men, on the other hand, have a part time working pattern.

The report vividly sets out the barriers facing women in professional jobs where far too few are able to progress to senior roles, and where time spent out of the workforce – and a lack of access to overtime and bonus schemes – conspire to maintain the gender pay gap. ▶

When we look at IMPACT members, 75 per cent of whom are women, we can see clear examples of where these, and other factors such as long incremental pay scales, combine to effectively restrict the career earnings of women.

## Longer pay scales

Within the Civil Service, the largest proportion of women work in jobs at the lower end of the pay system. These grades typically have long incremental scales. For instance the clerical officer scale has 16 incremental points and it takes 20 years to progress through the long service increments to the top of the scale. In contrast, the principal officer scale, where the majority of staff are men, has only seven points on the scale.

For many IMPACT members in the Civil Service the engineering scales apply. This includes solicitors and technical and specialist staff, such as analysts. The Engineering III scale commences at €32,300 and progresses to €62,700 through 15 increments. It takes 21 years to reach the top of the scale.

During the two decades it takes to reach the maximum salary, a man has a far better prospect of reaching the top of the scale, or increasing earnings far more quickly than a woman. The reasons for this are varied and complex with three of the main factors being time spent out of the workforce on extended maternity leave or career breaks, part time working which reduces earnings, and a lack of access to promotional opportunities. Research demonstrates that, on average, men tend to get promoted quicker than women.

## Challenge

Across the EU attempts have been made to challenge the use of long incremental scales on the basis that they indirectly discriminate against women. The most notable cases were taken by two women who worked for the UK Health and Safety Authority (the Cadman and Wilson cases). In successive claims they won the right to challenge the validity of pay scales with more than five incremental points on the grounds of both age and sex discrimination.

Any employer should be prepared to justify the use of long pay scales, as it can be challenged if the length of the scale does not reflect the time required to become proficient in the job in question.

Employers have sometimes successfully defended the use of such scales but do need to have some way of measuring the value of the jobs undertaken. This is usually done through the introduction of a job evaluation scheme which allows an employee to have their role objectively evaluated to ascertain if they are paid correctly.

## Job Evaluation

As we now start negotiating the next phase of income recovery, IMPACT has adopted a policy of seeking the introduction of job evaluation schemes across the public sector which would enable members to ensure that they are paid correctly and have certainty that their pay is based on objective criteria. That would be one concrete measure to increase transparency and begin to address the factors that maintain the gender pay gap.

In the longer term, shorter pay scales would give both men and women the same opportunity to reach their scale maximum as quickly as possible.

The current programme for Government contains a commitment to introduce more transparency in relation to the gender pay gap by compelling employers with more than 50 staff to conduct an equal pay audit, highlighting the earnings of men and women in similar jobs. Legislating for those provisions would be a positive step towards addressing the gender pay gap which remains stubbornly wide for women in low paid jobs.

As the Morgan-McKinley report shows, this is equally problematic for women in professional jobs across the public service ●

*“In the longer term, shorter pay scales would give both men and women the same opportunity to reach their scale maximum as quickly as possible.”*



# Taking inspiration

IMPACT's innovative INSPIRE training programme took place at a special event in Dublin last November. The programme, designed to prepare and encourage women in IMPACT to run for election to branch, divisional and national committees, attracted some 40 activists from across Ireland. NIAL SHANAHAN talks to some of the women involved to find out more.



IMPACT DEVELOPED the idea for this innovative training programme in response to the relatively low participation of women in the union's national committees. While 75% of IMPACT members are female, women account for just 22% of members of the union's central executive committee. Women make up a similar proportion of industrial staff, while only one of the union's eight most senior staff members is female.

There is a mixed picture on IMPACT's divisional executive committees, where female participation ranges from 5% to 70%. At local level, women currently fill almost 50% of branch chair, secretary and treasurer posts across the country.

"When I raised the question with our deputy general secretary, Kevin Callinan, he was immediately very supportive and got behind the initiative to bring this type of training into IMPACT," explains Margaret.

IMPACT lead organisers Linda Kelly and Julie Healy said the training programme was an empowering and energising experience for everyone involved.

Linda says a lot of the barriers are around self-confidence. "By running this training programme for IMPACT activists, we were trying to create a space where women would be able to think about getting more involved and for them to be able to consider at what level they'd like to be involved in the union."

## Confidence

Congress general secretary Patricia King opened the training and shared her own experiences, emphasising the importance of hard work and treating people with respect.

The training programme then kicked off with an introduction on the importance of female representation in politics from Hannah Deasy and Una Power of *Women for Election*, the organisation that developed the INSPIRE training programme.

Training presentations were also delivered by Dr Shirley Graham, communications specialist Orlaith Carmody and retired IMPACT official Christina Carney.

Una Power explains, "Our presentation highlighted issues that hold women back from running for office, and showed a correlation between representation in parliamentary politics and IMPACT's national and divisional officer roles. We also addressed the importance of gender equality in the decision-making process, and how women's voices cannot afford to be lost."

Una adds that lack of confidence has long been highlighted as a barrier that holds women back from running for election.

Dr Graham led the group through a session on developing confidence, working with the group on how they must understand their fears – and their strengths – to develop their confidence in any situation.

"I think this was the session people enjoyed most, and was probably the most unconventional, in trade union terms. One of the exercises involved getting people to time travel, to imagine themselves at 80 years of age, asking themselves what it was they wanted to have done with their lives, what

they wanted to have achieved. That was challenging but really brought everything to the fore," Linda explains.

## Communications and campaigning

Communications expert Orlaith Carmody looked at how to create and deliver effective messaging, with a focus on presentations and panel discussions. Una says that Orlaith stressed the importance of knowing a topic well and being able to speak to the individual audience, rather than learning a presentation off by rote.

The final training session focused on the practicalities and strategies of campaigning. Christina Carney is a well-known and highly respected retired IMPACT official, and remains active with the union. Christina explained the trade union's electoral process and talked about how to best focus campaigning, providing a deeper insight into the rules and procedures regarding nominations, and breaking down the process for the participants.

## Women together

When I ask Antoinette Carney, a member of IMPACT's Sligo branch, about her thoughts on the training, she immediately responds "It was great to have all the women together. I think we were all looking forward to meeting each other again. Most of us have met previously at conference or on training sessions. The opportunities to connect with other women activists are rare enough, so that was an important element of the day.

"There were also a lot of new people that I met for the first time, so it was great to meet new faces too," she adds. Antoinette has been an IMPACT member since she began her career in local government, and has been active in the union for the last eight years.

"When I joined IMPACT and got involved my main motivation was to see what I could do for the union and also to do my best. I'm always looking at how I can do more, and make a valuable contribution. While I've taken on a number of different roles locally within my branch executive, I've never gone forward for election to DEC. I wasn't exactly sure how to go about it, but I felt this training might help me to understand how I might do that.

"You might think you don't need confidence training, but with something like this, when you are stepping outside of what you think of as your comfort zone, in that situation we all need more training to deal with that.

"There was a lot of excitement in the room, and particularly due to the presence of Patricia King who is a source of inspiration to us all. She has a commanding presence and gave a great speech, but it's also clear she's very down to earth," says Antoinette.

## Demand

Linda told me what really struck her was that in her four years working with IMPACT it's rare she could count the number of men in the room on one hand. So often you're counting to see how many women are in the room, sometimes you don't have any, so that was strikingly different," says Linda.

Linda says the level of interest in the training programme was also quite striking. "The training was booked out within a day and we had a waiting list for places after that. People's passion to get involved was very evident, and I found it very encouraging.

"It's a resource that we really need to utilise and expand. So many women are involved in branches across the country, it's a real strength of the union, and we need to look at ways in which that strength can be replicated at national level," says Linda.

During our conversation Linda singles out IMPACT vice president Margaret Coughlan, in particular, for being a champion of the INSPIRE programme for IMPACT women activists.

Margaret says the training helped puncture some of the myths about women's participation. "We learned that it isn't all down to childcare and not being able to get time off, that the reasons are more complex and wide reaching, and one of them is that women often don't feel supported. People always point to the caring roles women take on, and that is a factor, but it is not the sole barrier," she says.

Margaret is delighted by the response and the demand for further training. "It was very well received, and we had a great group of women, huge enthusiasm and energy. There's no doubt in my mind that we'll see many of them go further in the union. Moreover, I was happy that IMPACT took the lead on this kind of initiative." ●



IMPACT vice president Margaret Coughlan was an early champion of the development of the programme, and had been concerned about the lack of gender balance in more senior union roles for some time. "All of the audit information from unions suggests it's a continuing problem. What is holding people back? What are the problems and how can we address them? That was my starting point.

# Always there for you

*Pat Bolger always loved attending his trade union's conference, both as an IMPACT activist and later as staff. So as he planned his retirement, he chose the final day of the 2016 IMPACT conference to make it official. Since then he's been enjoying his retirement and channelling his activism as President of the Dublin Trades Council. NIAL SHANAHAN spoke to Pat about his activism, his career and the passions that drive him.*



Photo: Impact Communication Unit

THERE IS always a twinkle of mischief in Pat Bolger's eye when he turns up at your office door. This is largely because Pat loves the collegiate atmosphere among his trade union colleagues and partly because he knows mischief can't be too far behind them.

His opening remark will almost always be "What kind of skulduggery are you up to today?" followed by his trademark chuckle. There is both friendship and warmth in that chuckle, it's impossible to maintain a bad mood in his presence.

Everyone who's ever worked with Pat knows that he's a man of many passions, not the least of which is his family, followed pretty closely by his passion for trade unionism. There's also his passion for history, Sherman tanks, Eastern European and Mexican cinema, almost anything about Latin culture...the list goes on, and the passion is infectious.

Pat began his career as a community welfare officer (CWO) in the old Eastern Health Board in 1985. He was assigned, initially, to the Traveller's unit which he enjoyed. "The work was demanding and a little bit crazy. We were available to people in a central office but we also visited people at home. We went out to the halting sites and small housing schemes and gave people their entitlements where they lived. We delivered the best service that we could to the people that needed it."

Pat continued working as a temporary officer for six years, which is how the grade was organised at the time. "I ended up in west Dublin providing leave cover. Eventually I was assigned a permanent post at the homeless unit in Benburb street."

## Family history

Pat grew up in what he describes as a trade union family, and a conventional left wing atmosphere. "My father was in the Labour Party until he died in 1975, my mother was very much a liberal. My father was a stereotyper in the Irish Press, and

was involved in trade unions all his life. All of my sisters were shop stewards, one was active in the hairdressers' union."

Trade unionism was integral to Pat's experience. "For example, I've an old friend in IMPACT, and the first time we met he was seven years old and I was 10. He lived down the road from our house, and I was delivering his father's strike pay."

Pat recalls the exact day he joined the union, 9th September 1985. "I was being trained in Summerhill Health Centre and went round on my lunch break to get an LGPSU membership form from (general secretary) Phil Flynn. I had young children and was relatively recently married, so while I didn't get involved in the union immediately, I went to all my union meetings instinctively."

## Issues

Pat was drawn into more active involvement because of the range of issues facing CWOs at the time. "Lots of people were on temporary contracts, there were concerns about workload measurement and issues about pay. For me the impulse came from there. Like everything else, you see something wrong in the job, you may not like it, you may know more about it than some alleged expert, so you get involved," he explains.

"I always saw the union as a blanket, it was always going to protect you and be there for you - that was always my experience - but I always felt you had to give something back, and that's why I got involved."

"By about 1990, just before IMPACT was formed, I'd gone from being a member that went to meetings, to becoming a regional officer. I became vice chair of the grade and did that for 15 years, up until I joined the staff of IMPACT in 2004."

## Dispute

By 1998, the growing number of asylum seekers became a ▶

pressing issue, as demands on the service put huge pressure on CWOs, and their concern grew for the people to whom they were providing assistance.

"We had plenty of experience dealing with people in crisis and in real need, but we were very short-staffed, there were huge queues of people at Mount Street, and this was documented on TV news at the time. We thought it was horrifying. We were under pressure, but for the people coming in it was really bad. It's bad enough being away from home, living in uncertainty and fear, and to be treated like that. We felt it was wrong."

The members took a stand. "We had a dispute, it went all the way to the Labour Court and we had a hands down victory." More staff were brought in to process claims and ease the long queues.

"The union has always been very active in working for the client as well as the members, particularly for those with experience in the care grades. These things are indistinguishable, it's not just about yourself, and the union's always been good on that."

## Full time

Pat had always enjoyed speaking at conference as an activist. "My happiest day was when I was able to take to the podium and introduce myself as 'Pat Bolger, staff' and I was always happiest sitting around the table at staff meetings with those people I had admired professionally. Peter McLoone was general secretary when I started."

"To be in the company of people who I'd seen do such great work was fantastic, and then of course the feeling of panic when I realised this kind of work was the challenge I was facing myself!"

Pat was assigned to the Civil Service which, he says,

was very tightly organised. "The Tax Officials branch (TOB) was a big branch. It was my first engagement with management as an official, in a row about outsourcing, a dispute that we won. I helped deal with the successful re-grading of two and a half thousand members in the branch out of general service grades."

The next big area for Pat was education. "I was on holiday and my wife said 'What's your new assignment like?' and I said it was great, in good order. I picked up *The Irish Times* on my way home. The headline said the State was going to halve the number of VECs. It led to a near four-year battle. That was the sharp edge of public service reform at the peak of the economic crisis."

## Passions

Since his retirement, Pat enjoys having more time for family. "Without support at home you can't be a full time union official, whether you're on the road or worrying about a Labour Court decision, the support at home is crucial. They make sacrifices, and I'm delighted now to have more time with my family. I love being able to talk

about movies to my eldest without having to run out the door, and my other son is helping me to understand the new Dublin that puzzles me," he says.

Pat is a member of the International Brigade Memorial Trust and the Trade Union Friends of Palestine and, since May, has been president of the Dublin Trades Council.

"The Trades Council is 130 years old, and has been continuously active. We're currently looking at emulating the One Cork project, reaching out to community and positioning ourselves as a civic group. I hope that'll be a project that I can help set up while I'm president."

Pat gives me one of his trademark bear hugs as we part after lunch and a long chat. The twinkle is still there, as he rambles into town in search of a little mischief ●



Photo by: Dornnack Walsh

Pat celebrates as he receives his Distinguished Service award at conference.

# Dressing for success

*Dress for Success was established in Dublin in 2011 and the charity is affiliated to the international not-for-profit organisation which aims to promote the economic independence of women by providing professional attire and interview preparation training. TRISH CALLINAN visited the Dublin operation to find out more about its unique mission.*



DO YOU look into your wardrobe sometimes, eyes glaze over with a twinge of guilt because of the items that you know you will never wear again? Maybe you experience a little more guilt where price tags are still attached? Maybe you spent a lot of money on a suit, coat or dress and you simply don't like it anymore, or it doesn't fit you, or your lifestyle? Or maybe they cost so little you wonder about the child who laboured in some sweatshop. They are too good to throw out, so you leave them hanging there in the hope that... someday. There is a variety of worthy, guilt-free, ways to give those clothes a new lease of life.

The registered charity *Dress for Success* Dublin is one of them. Established in Dublin in 2011 by stylist, broadcaster, author and designer Sonya Lennon, the charity is affiliated to the international not-for-profit organisation dedicated to promoting the economic independence of women, by providing professional attire and interview preparation training.

*Dress for Success* was established as an answer to the needs of low-income women who were seeking employment and self-sufficiency. Nancy Lublin established the charity in New York City in 1997 with a \$5,000 inheritance.

Working with three nuns from Spanish Harlem, they built *Dress for Success* New York into a vibrant organisation serving women from all over the city and boroughs. Now the charity is working in 140 cities across 19 countries.

In Dublin, they've supported almost 1,500 women in their search for work, with 57% of their clients having successfully found employment.

## A relaxed space

The work of this amazing organisation was new to me so I decided to investigate further. When I visited them it was at their headquarters on Liffey Street. I was brought up two flights of stairs to the second floor shop and met by staff members Deirdre, Elena and Raynedine. The large room was filled with rails and rails of clothes organised according to size. Two comfy cream coloured couches created a relaxed space. Over the familiar chime of a passing Luas, staff member Deirdre told me they need more space.

Why clothes? How important is dress to a person's sense of self-worth and dignity? "Very" the women tell me. "You see a huge difference in the women from the time they come in to the time they leave. They walk taller on the way out, they send us selfies of themselves on the way to their interview." The clothes and accessories are almost incidental. Deirdre tells me that we're all guilty of judging books by their covers. We all draw conclusions from first impressions, whether we like to think so or not.

*"Elena tells me that it's really all about having someone in your corner, someone thinking just about you."*

Money is tight. There's no advertising budget. It costs €50 to dress one woman. The money comes from corporate sponsors, philanthropic grants and donations. There is no Government funding currently. The day-to-day running of the service depends heavily on volunteer work. Marks and Spencer's supply rails and hangers. Deirdre tells me that "Boots are a great corporate sponsor – they give our clients makeup tutorials and free products."

The charity mainly helps women from disadvantaged backgrounds, though clients vary. Speaking to *The Irish Times* in 2015 Lennon said "There is no one *Dress for Success* woman. There's everything from school leavers to women with PhDs." The day before I visited they had dressed a woman with a PhD in mathematics.

What the women all have in common is that they have been out of work for a long time, and want to get back to work. A referral agency sends somebody to them and they make an appointment for career coaching and a fitting. They have 73 established partnerships with referral agencies across Dublin. *Dress for Success* provide the women with professional advice on how to approach the interview process. ➤



They do 45-minute sessions of interview coaching, including a mock interview, and mentoring with an experienced HR professional or career coach. This is followed by a 45-minute styling session, including fashion and advice for hair and makeup. If the client is successful at the interview she goes back to the charity and they provide her with some more items to build up her work wardrobe. Plus she keeps her interview outfit. All free of charge.

I asked them whether there was a *Dress for Success* house-style. Is there a certain look they go for? They told me that it depends on what they get in in terms of donations and on the sector that a particular woman is targeting. Overall they tend to stick to classic lines.

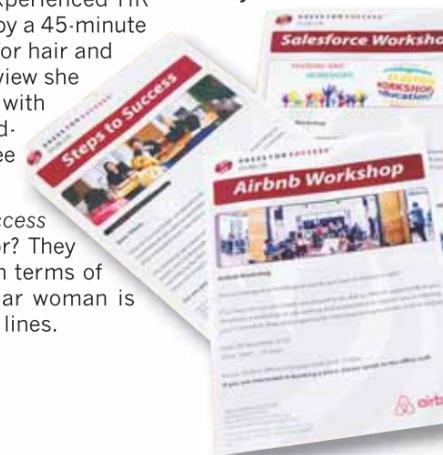
## A lot going on

First impressions are that *Dress for Success* is all about clothes and interview preparation. It turns out there's a lot more going on in this organisation. Throughout the year *Dress for Success* holds a variety of awareness campaigns, including political briefings on equal pay, an annual fashion sale, International Women's Day events, fashion shows and fundraisers.

They provide opportunities for upskilling through workshops. For example, they recently ran a workshop in conjunction with Adobe targeted at women who speak multiple languages and want to take up a role at a multinational firm using those skills. Working with particular companies allows them to prepare clients to target their resumes in a way that fits with the corporate culture in a particular workplace.

They also run a pop-up shop service. They own a van which allows a mobile unit comprised of volunteers, and a stylist, to visit communities around the city. The most recent pop-up was in Kilbarrack, Dublin where they met 20 women. The plan is to expand this service to other urban centres around the country.

Some of the workshops provided by Dress for Success



Where to next for *Dress for Success*? The vision is to extend pop-up services to other cities across the country (there are already offices in Cork and Derry). Deirdre also tells me that they are looking at bringing a hairdresser on board. "We've had some offers" she says.

So what can we do to help this empowering organisation for women returning to work? "We're always looking for clothes, especially very small sizes (6) and bigger sizes (16 upwards). There's a shortage of footwear too. Volunteer availability is also an issue.

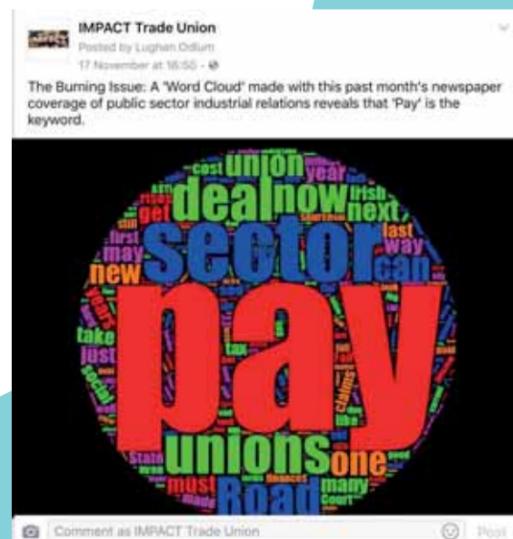
With demand such as it is there's no such thing as enough, especially for events and fundraisers. Skilled volunteers are particularly welcome: stylists, for example, or human resource management specialists who can help with interview preparation and mentoring. "Cash donations make the difference to any expansion of our services," says Deirdre.

**More details are available at [dressforsuccessdublin.org](http://dressforsuccessdublin.org). Follow on Twitter @DFSDublin or at [facebook.com/DFS-Dublin](https://www.facebook.com/DFS-Dublin)**

# The Social Network



Last year, IMPACT's social media audience continued to grow. The development of the union's online presence is a result of a deliberate effort to invest in new and emerging communications streams. LUGHAN DEANE and TRISH CALLINAN have compiled a selection of some of the most popular recent social media posts.



This graphic from November helped demonstrate what the gender pay gap means in day-to-day terms: that women effectively work for free for the final two months of the year.

Cover Story: the burning issue - a word-cloud made with recent newspaper coverage of public sector industrial relations.



We had a lot of activity on social media about staffless libraries. This particular post painted a bleak picture.



IMPACT's new Facebook archive-inspired cover photo was designed and compiled by Seán Davey, a transition year work experience student who spent a week with IMPACT's communications unit.



We made a short video of IMPACT official Una Faulkner explaining the precarious nature of contracts in the Early Years sector.



In November, IMPACT's deputy general secretary, Kevin Callinan, addressed the ACP rally outside Leinster House. He sent a clear message to the Dáil: 'we're getting organised, we're building momentum and we're coming for fair pay.'



IMPACT's new meeting room facilities get their first outing at the consultative council after its re-design and construction last autumn.



In October an interview with Anne O'Brien from Focus Ireland gave us an insight into the daily reality of work in the Community and Voluntary sector.



Follow IMPACT on twitter @IMPACTTU and on Facebook at Facebook.com/impacttradeunion.

# Confessions of a Call Centre Academic



*“Many of my younger colleagues received torrents of abuse from customers.”*

*Guest contributor SHANE FAHERTY writes about his experience of call centre work, where job security is non-existent and workers find themselves on the receiving end of customer anger on a daily basis.*

THE WEEK I submitted my doctoral thesis to UCC, in April 2015, my wife and I discovered we were expecting our first baby. I was 35 with twenty years work experience and eight and a half years of university education. The following week I was in the dole office. I didn't expect to be there. This should have been the most exciting time of my life.

However, the multiplicity of feelings I was experiencing was underpinned by exhaustion and uncertainty. When I tried explaining my situation tears welled up. The woman behind the counter told me to take my time. I told her I hoped this would only be a temporary arrangement. ▶

I applied for jobs: all sorts of jobs. I wasn't expecting to get an academic position overnight but I thought I would get something that was halfway decent that would utilise my skills and experience. I spent hours on some applications, days on others. I didn't even get an interview for any teaching or research positions but what was more surprising was my lack of success in applying for other work which I was more than capable of doing.

I got some occasional hours invigilating exams and doing instructional design work in UCC, but nothing that lasted more than a few weeks. I graduated at the end of October and, with our baby due in December, I needed any kind of work fast. I

applied for a temporary customer service role with Amazon in their Cork contact centre, which serves the UK marketplace.

## Dictatorship

You hear a lot of criticism of Amazon's treatment of their staff and my experience suggests there is much truth in these claims. Working for Amazon is like living under a dictatorship of algorithms, where human collaborators willingly do the dirty work. Everything is about metrics. Average handling time (AHT) is measured and so too are survey responses. Every customer gets a HMD, 'How's My Driving' survey, where they rate your performance. If responses to these aren't satisfactory you are taken aside and given coaching, possibly leading to dismissal.

If you are late, absent or don't return from your break on time you are given penalty points. Four points can lead to disciplinary action and dismissal. You are expected to empathise and apologise constantly. Your psyche is battered by always having to apologise for what other people, or the company, have done. It erodes your confidence and undermines your self-worth. Signs on the wall tell you to 'Bring the Wow!' and to give the 'best customer service in the world.'

Temporary contract workers are more likely to slip up than people in permanent secure positions. Agents in outsourced call centres in India, the Philippines and Jamaica often lied to customers or misadvised them. By lying to the customer in the short term they would get a better survey response, even if it created more difficulties in the long term.

Amazon delivery drivers are independent contractors getting paid per delivery. It was hardly surprising that the pressures placed on them meant some parcels were delivered to the wrong places or went missing. Callers were often angry. They shouted and screamed at you down the phone and you had to apologise and empathise. Many said 'I'm not saying it is your fault but...' before berating you. They felt angry and disempowered. They needed to lash out at someone and the only outlet they had was the person at the other end of the phone. You were seen as the representative of a major corporation rather than a lowly paid worker and therefore fair game.

I didn't get fired from Amazon, but I wasn't kept on in January when the Christmas rush was over. My daughter was born in December and I was late (by a couple of minutes) a few times, or was late back from breaks as I was on the phone to my wife. Therefore I had some points accrued and I was one of the first to be let go when 'ramp-down' came.

Every year, Amazon hires hundreds of agents. Half of these don't even survive training. By the time January comes a lot have quit or been fired. Of the remainder, a percentage are kept on and it is easy to weed out the people who didn't have good stats or weren't sufficiently enthusiastic.

## Struggling

Unemployed again I was happy to have time to spend with my new daughter. In a lot of ways those few weeks were a gift but there was the constant worry about money and employment. Eventually a difficult decision had to be made.

We had moved to Cork when I commenced my Ph.D. and now things just didn't seem to be happening for us there. I couldn't find any work, and we were struggling to pay rent and household bills.

We had considered moving to Dublin to be closer to our families and potential jobs but rents were prohibitive, to put it

continued on page 24 ▶

## Precarious work

*I couldn't find any work, and we were struggling to pay rent and household bills. All of a sudden it was possible to see how a family could easily become homeless.*



mildly. My parents' house, in Co. Meath within commuting distance of Dublin, had a granny flat which was vacant. We handed our notice in to our landlord and moved to Meath at the end of April.

The situation we were moving to was not necessarily our first choice but we knew we were lucky to have it. All of a sudden it was possible to see how a family could easily become homeless. On the one hand well paid and secure employment was becoming scarcer and scarcer and the cost of property was skyrocketing. I found myself shouting at the radio when government ministers talked about the 'recovery'.

### Race to the bottom

I really hadn't wanted to work in another call centre but events conspired otherwise. The week we moved I got a job with an Indian company called HCL providing customer service for Eir (formerly Eircom). HCL specialise in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) better described as yellow-packing or racing-to-the-bottom.

It was decidedly less organised and efficient than Amazon. The flipside of this was that it was less strict in terms of what you could say to the customers and in penalties for time-keeping, although the breaks were more or less the same.

The turnover of staff is huge and ninety percent of people hate the job. It is worth considering if you ever call up to complain to a customer service agent they probably hate the company more than you do. They have to deal with this company on a daily basis and suffer more at their hands than you ever do.

My colleagues were primarily young, in their late teens and early twenties, and mostly from Dublin. I felt too old and overqualified to be there. I worked for HCL for six months and every day it was a struggle. The fact I had a family was the only thing that stopped me walking out.

As with Amazon, I was actually very good at the job. I was able to talk to customers, understand the issue and resolve problems. My job was made easier by the fact I sounded older and more authoritative. Many of my younger colleagues

received torrents of abuse from customers, I did too on occasion but never to the same extreme.

### Grievance

As a call centre worker you have to deal with, on the one hand, your treatment by your employers and, on the other hand, your treatment by customers. Often their grievance is genuine. It can be the fault of the company or a mistake by an underpaid, under-motivated and undertrained staff member. Regardless, you are expected to sort out the mess and apologise.

While I worked for Eir they put their prices up for hundreds of thousands of customers. The extra money went to shareholders, but it was the customer service staff who had to deal with thousands of calls from disgruntled customers. You can be, and I was, disciplined for not apologising.

I was also brought to a disciplinary meeting for having been out sick on three occasions. The three incidents had taken place over a six-week period. I had a really bad cold that wouldn't budge and I got chest and throat infections as a result. The job didn't really allow an opportunity to recover. If you weren't working you weren't being paid.

If you were there you had to take calls and talking on the phone all day every day only made the infections worse. My disciplinary meeting took place on what transpired to be my last week with HCL/Eir. I presented my sick notes and argued my case and wasn't disciplined.

In November 2016 I finally got a breakthrough in my job hunt when I secured a job researching and writing policy for a public sector body. This is an 18-month contract but I am happy to say I love my new position.

However, the past year and a half has definitely left a mark. It was a financially and emotionally difficult time for my wife and I, but also a time of immense joy due to the arrival of our daughter.

I'm happy to have moved on but I don't think I will ever forget where I've been ●

*This is an edited version of a post on Shane's 'Modern Distortions' blog. Read the full version at [modern distortions.wordpress.com](http://modern distortions.wordpress.com)*

## International



# Letter from Colombia

I VISITED Colombia with the President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, as part of an Irish and British delegation last December. It was a genuine privilege to have been there during a momentous week when the Congress ratified the peace agreement between the government and FARC.

The euphoria surrounding the international media coverage of the peace deal masked the scale of the challenge that must be overcome if the aspiration is to become a reality. As the prospect of peace looms, paramilitary groups, often serving the interests of large landowning and economic interests, have stepped forward to fill the void spreading fear within communities.



Kevin Callinan with Catherine West MP and members of the Colombian Congressional Peace Commission.

We heard countless testimonies of assassination attempts, death threats, forced displacement and persecution of community activists and trade unionists. Worryingly, when we met with the army in the region of northern Cauca the colonels passionately rejected the claims, despite the evidence of our own eyes just a few hours beforehand, and blamed the ELN, another insurgent group, even though its leadership has denied any presence in the area.



Since its founding four years ago the Marcha Patriótica, a political movement composed of a coalition of over 1,500 civil society organisations, has had 124 of its members killed including a number in the last fortnight. Two women were killed in Cauca while we were there. In a country of seven million displaced people, 3,000 murdered trade unionists and 60,000 'disappeared', it's easy to see how intimidation is used to control the population and stifle opposition.

On this island we know only too well that a peace agreement is not the end of the process. Continuous hard work is required to maintain momentum. The undermining of the agreement through the persecution of community and union leaders makes confidence-building measures imperative. Among these should be the release of political prisoners, such as CUT union leader Huber Ballesteros, pending the operation of the transitional justice provisions contained in the agreement.

The international community has a particular obligation to step up its monitoring of human rights abuses and to urge action to be taken now against the attempts by right-wing forces to thwart the agreement. International agencies, including the EU, should commit to remain in Colombia for an extended period, and care should be taken to ensure that monies from the funds associated with the agreement are directed to those organisations based in communities, and to the reintegration of the guerrillas into normal life. EU Special Envoy Eamonn Gilmore has an important role in this regard.

Finally, we would do well to reflect on the role of free trade agreements with countries such as Colombia and to insist on much more effective guarantees on the upholding of human rights and the protection of civil society leaders. The most recent EU-Colombia agreement fell short in this regard.

**Kevin Callinan**  
IMPACT Deputy General Secretary and ICTU Vice-President ●



# Set to a low simmer

*The early months of the year can often be the harshest. It takes a while for the darkness of the deep mid-winter to recede, and even then the Irish weather remains sharp and damp until May. These are the months during which we succumb to colds and other minor ailments, and during which we seek out those things that provide us with comfort. DANIEL DEVERY looks at a cooking method designed to engage your senses and help you survive until the Spring.*

THE DANISH rituals of *Hygge* (pronounced 'Hyuugoh') enjoyed a bit of time in the spotlight last year. Keen-eyed publishers spotted a gap in the market for guides on how to adopt the Danish methods for surviving the long, cold, dark winters. It seems to involve a lot of candles, log fires, woolly socks and jumpers and having your friends around for bonfires, hot chocolate and cake.

There's a logic in all of that, and no doubt many mental health benefits too. You can see why the Danes continue to be regarded as the happiest people in Europe. And while any number of bookshelves in Ireland now boast a guide on 'how to Hygge', something tells me we're not going to see a rise in bonfire and hot chocolate parties in Irish suburbs any time soon.

But that's okay, because I think the Irish have been getting their *Hygge* for a long time now through some of the more familiar rituals of the winter kitchen. For me, nostalgia plays a big role in all of this. I still remember the sensation of

arriving home from school, in a cold and rain-soaked duffle coat, to the smell of a bubbling beef stew, and the way in which my senses and mood were immediately lifted when it hit me.

As a child I became so accustomed to this sensation in the winter months, I was convinced I could smell what we were having for dinner while I was still making my way home on the smoke-filled bus. Imagination is a powerful thing.

### Chaudron de paysan

When I moved out of home and into my first flat, it was comforting stews and broths that I tried to replicate during the first winter in my own tiny kitchen. I enjoyed varying degrees of success, including some truly awful failures (my improvised tuna and peppers casserole recipe I will take to the grave, nobody needs to know). ▶

A recurring effort back then was a concoction I dubbed 'Cajun coddle' which consisted of chunks of rasher and sausage with onion, garlic, water, a stock cube and a pinch of everything from an eclectic souvenir spice rack from Tunisia. It had some merit, but hasn't been resurrected since about 1995.

The transformation of my efforts came with a gift of a *Le Creuset* cooking pot more than twenty years ago. These cast-iron, enamel-coated French cooking pots are the ultimate winter kitchen tool.

They're great for long, slow cooking, and I also use it to bake the sourdough bread recipe from the last edition of *Work & Life*. Throw in a few root vegetables, a cheap cut of meat (ideally on the bone), a few pulses or beans, some seasoning and a glug of cooking liquor (water, stock or even a splash of booze), then simmer on a low heat for a few hours.

Chop in a handful of fresh herbs at the end of cooking, maybe even a little cream, and you have a peasant's feast fit to make a king drool with envy.

### Investment

There's a growing range of this type of cooking pot coming on the market. They're a bit on the pricey side but a worthwhile investment. Built to last, the French make a virtue of passing theirs on to the next generation. However, I noticed recently that Aldi in the US have introduced a similar style of cooking pot, where they refer to them as 'Dutch ovens', for around \$30. Maybe they'll make their way here too.

Slow cookers have been quickly gaining popularity and are designed to cook soups, stews and casseroles the same way. I haven't tried one myself but friends and colleagues have been talking about how much they enjoy the convenience of preparing a few ingredients the night before, switching it on before they leave for work, and arriving home to a hearty supper. They range in price from as little as €25, but if you're thinking about buying one I'd suggest going for as much quality as your budget can handle.

### Weekends

This is the type of cooking that will fill your home with warm and comforting aromas. The food is stimulating your senses long before you sit down to eat. At the weekend, this approach allows you to assemble your ingredients and get the pot into a low oven early in the day. I try to cook double quantities so that there's a ready-made weekday meal that will only need a gentle re-heat.

Then you can head out for a walk in the park, divert to the pub for one on the way back, and arrive home to those amazing smells. Light a fire, pour a glass of something. You'll be more than ready to enjoy a hearty dish that's been bubbling away nicely, infused with lots of warming flavour.

Now that's what I call *Hygge* ●



## Chicken, leek, fennel & butter bean casserole

THIS is a very simple, slow-cook pot recipe. The long cooking time keeps the chicken wonderfully moist and tender. The pieces of smoked bacon are optional, the dish works just as well without them.

If you prefer not to portion up a whole chicken, a good craft butcher will happily do it for you. Alternatively, use three whole leg/thigh pieces and three breast/wing pieces on the bone. Chicken off the bone won't have the same flavour. I remove the skin from the larger portions of chicken, something you can also ask the butcher to do if you don't fancy doing it yourself.

### Ingredients

- 1 x whole chicken portioned for sauté (see [bit.ly/2gKlQll](http://bit.ly/2gKlQll) for a helpful video tutorial)
- 1 x bulb fennel, trimmed and base removed, roughly chopped
- 3 x leeks washed and thinly sliced
- 2 x carrots peeled and cut into thumb-sized chunks
- 1 x parsnip peeled and cut into thumb-sized chunks
- 1 x tin butter beans, drained and rinsed
- 4 x slices smoked streaky bacon diced (optional)
- 500ml water
- 250ml cream
- Black pepper

Place all of the prepared vegetables in the base of your pot. Add the water, butter beans, bacon and black pepper. Place the chicken portions in a layer on top of the other ingredients. Soak some greaseproof paper in water, squeeze out excess water and tuck loosely over the chicken before placing the lid on top. This will ensure everything stays moist.

Put into an oven at 100°C and set your timer for five hours. Just let it do its thing. When you take it out of the oven remove the paper, add the cream, bring it back to a simmer on the hob and season to taste. Let the pot rest for 20 minutes or so. Serve with potatoes or rice, and some steamed green vegetables (broccoli, cabbage or whatever you fancy) on the side.

# Springtime Herald

Resident gardener ITA PATTON writes about these delicate – yet sturdy – flowering plants that bring the promise of Spring.

A VERY keen gardening friend of mine has been described as a galantophile. No, this doesn't mean that he is a particularly brave and daring individual or that he always leaps to his feet to pull back chairs for his elderly friends. It means that he loves snowdrops – really loves them.

When you consider the joy that their deceptively dainty looking foliage, bursting through frost covered soil, brings us in early spring, it's easy to understand how someone could fall completely under their spell. Snowdrops deserve close examination. Lift up the nodding flowers to marvel at the purity of the white and notice the distinctive green markings on the inner petals. These green marks, when distinct enough, often lead to a unique cultivar name being applied. Also, getting close to snowdrops rewards one with a gentle spring-like, fresh fragrance that is too often missed.

## Milk flower

The scientific name *Galanthus*, which is usually derived from Latin, is in this case derived from Greek. Gala means milk and anthos flower, so the ancient name for snowdrops is "milk flower". The most common species of snowdrop, *Galanthus nivalis* translates to "milk flower of the snow".



Galanthus Hill Poe

Snowdrops belong to the same plant family as daffodils (Amaryllidaceae) and grow from bulbs that are similar, but in miniature. There are 19 species of snowdrop, most of which are native to Turkey and there are probably over 1,000 different cultivars.

Snowdrops are quite easy to grow, preferring a moist soil which has a high organic content, such as leaf mould. They thrive in woodland-like conditions with dappled shade or even full shade. Snowdrops can look great in a container, making it easier to admire their delicate nodding flowers.

As our winter weather has been getting milder, it's been noted that snowdrops can look a bit stunted with their flowers barely above the soil when they emerge due to the lack of a cold snap. However, in time the stems do extend.

A safeguard is to choose snowdrop varieties that grow taller, such as one which has broad, greyish leaves. One such variety is *Galanthus S. Arnott* with its large, rounded flowers on stems that can reach 30cm in height or *Galanthus Mrs. MacNamara* which was named after Dylan Thomas's mother-in-law who originally distributed this elegant, early flowering snowdrop. Of course there are many delightful double forms of snowdrops whose flowers look like they might burst, such as *Galanthus Hill Poe* and *Galanthus nivalis Flore Pleno*.



Galanthus Green Lantern

## Persevere

Snowdrops can take a year or two to become established, so don't be too disappointed if flowering is slightly sparse in the first year. They will bulk up well, spreading out year after year.

If you have the space and want to divide them the best time for transplanting snowdrops is as soon as they have finished flowering and are still "in the green". Remove any faded flowers and seedheads before lifting and dividing.

It's best to split into smaller clumps of 8 to 10 bulbs and plant these at about 30cm apart at the same depth they were growing before. For a more natural and random effect plant the snowdrops in groups of varying sizes. These clumps will look a bit sad and limp for a while but will pick up after a few days. Don't cut back the foliage, it's best to let it die back naturally. ▶

There are a few species of snowdrops which flower without leaves in autumn. The earliest of these is *Galanthus reginae-olgae* which was named after Queen Olga of Greece, and the flowers of which are almost indistinguishable from those of *Galanthus nivalis*. Personally, I find it difficult to associate snowdrops with mild autumn weather and colourful, falling leaves, so I opt to grow those that flower in spring.

There are some excellent gardens in which to admire snowdrops such as Primrose Hill in Lucan which is open for just three months of the year, February, June and July. The enchanting 16 hectare Altamont Garden in County Carlow is well worth a visit at any time of the year, but especially in February when swathes of *Galanthus elwessii* are blooming or one can spot *Galanthus Green Lantern* which was originally spotted by the late Corona North (former owner of Altamont) in 1980s growing in an abandoned garden in Co. Wicklow ●

"It's easy to understand how someone could fall completely under their spell."



Galanthus Flore Pleno

## Jobs to do

- ✓ Cover rhubarb crowns to force early growth and succulent pink stems. An old bucket will suffice.
- ✓ Check dahlia tubers in storage and water well if beginning to dry out and shrivel.
- ✓ Continue pruning apple and pear trees.
- ✓ Cut back woody stems of mahonias to encourage new growth.
- ✓ Clean and prepare seedbeds and apply a general fertilizer two weeks before sowing.

# A stellar pay gap

*The issue of the gender pay gap amongst actors has become an increasingly debated and contentious issue in the last couple of years. As part of our special issue on pay, MORGAN O'BRIEN looks at how Hollywood's leading women are throwing light on Tinseltown's stellar pay gap.*

AT THE 2015 Oscar ceremony, Patricia Arquette, who won an award for her performance in *Boyhood*, made explicit and forceful reference in her acceptance speech to the disparity in pay between men and women actors. The speech was significant in lighting the touch paper for other women to vocalise their experience of being paid considerably less than male colleagues.

The issue was crystallised when hacked Sony emails revealed that Jennifer Lawrence and Amy Adams, arguably two of the most prominent and bankable stars in contemporary cinema, received considerably less than their male co-stars for their work on *American Hustle*. A number of actors, including Ryan Reynolds, Bradley Cooper and Chris Evans, have also registered support for greater levels of transparency and equality in relation to pay.

Meryl Streep, perhaps the most consistently successful female actor of recent decades, has been strident in her support of this cause. Streep reveals she has frequently been paid less than her male peers. Streep also highlighted that behind the scenes, in terms of production and distribution, women remain underrepresented in the process of decision making in the film industry.

## Concern

But what is at the root of Hollywood's gender pay gap? The manner in which an industry perceives women can be viewed as a measure of their status within it, and the relative value placed on their role. This is the foundation of how such practices become normalised and accepted.

There is a range of relevant issues that might be explored in relation to representations of gender on screen. For example, there is considerable cause for concern about the range of roles women are allotted, the limited opportunities for women over 40, and the ways in which female characters are presented on screen.

A common touchstone for these debates is the Bechdel-Test, which uses the rule of whether a film includes at least two women who speak to one another about something other than a man. While not above criticism, the Bechdel-Test is instructive in highlighting ways in which women are frequently portrayed in narrow and limiting terms.

## Representation

Using empirical evidence, the annual study released by the USC Annenberg School for Journalism and Communication provides interesting data on the representation of gender in cinema. Over the last decade it has measured levels of inequality in relation to the levels and forms of representation of gender, race/ethnicity, LGBT status and disability. ▶



The most recent report, released last September, examines the 100 top-grossing films in American cinemas in 2015. The findings reveal that 31.4 per cent of speaking or named characters were female, with 32 per cent of the films assessed including women as a lead/co-lead in the main story. Behind the camera, the report reveals that, of the 1,365 directors, producers and writers, barely a fifth were women.

This is telling insofar as it highlights the relationship between women's limited role in film production and the manner in which women are narrowly presented as characters. The report also reveals that women are more likely to be presented in sexualised contexts.

## Ability

Such limiting forms of representations of women in film, therefore, might well be correlated with their restricted role in the process of production. Filmmaking, given the constituency of those in positions of power, is more usually telescoped through the male view.

This is equally related to perceptions that women don't have the ability to 'open' or carry a film in the same way as their male counterparts. This discourse can be seen as playing a role in the levels of pay for women actors, whereby their relative economic value is viewed as less than that of male performers.

While we may be less charitable or concerned about well-remunerated stars of the screen, the issue of what is equitable, in terms of Hollywood pay packets, is no different from the issue of equality of pay for any work.

The recent pronouncements by a range of high profile women in Hollywood, while often highlighting issues specific to the film industry, hold potential implications for fostering the wider debate about the continuing existence of gender pay gaps across multiple industries and sectors.

It's telling how, in the aftermath of Patricia Arquette's Oscar speech, a number of US states have passed equal pay laws. The opening up of public discussion of the continuing inequities in pay for women is to be welcomed, particularly where it draws awareness to it across various forms of employment ●

## Upcoming Releases

### Jackie (20th January)

Natalie Portman stars as Jackie Kennedy as she battles grief and deals with the aftermath of the assassination of her husband. While there have been plenty of films about JFK, Pablo Larraín's film puts the former First Lady centre stage.

### T2: Trainspotting (27th January)

This sequel to 1996's *Trainspotting* reunites director Danny Boyle and screenwriter John Hodge in adapting Irvine Welsh's novel *Porno*. The film follows the original cast twenty years on as Renton (Ewan McGregor) returns to Scotland to make amends with his former friends.



### Fences (3rd February)

August Wilson adapts his own play about the struggles of an African-American father in 1950s America for the big screen. Denzel Washington,

who also directs, stars alongside Viola Davis as a former baseball player trying to provide for his family.



### The Founder (10th February)

Michael Keaton stars in this biopic of McDonald's founder Ray Kroc, following his path from travelling salesman to

the creation of the iconic restaurant franchise amidst financial troubles. The strong support cast features Laura Dern, Linda Cardellini and Patrick Wilson.

### The Lego Batman Movie (10th February)

A welcome spin-off from the wonderful *The Lego Movie* sees Batman and Robin battle the Joker to save Gotham City. We can expect this to have



a somewhat less portentous and crepuscular tone than Christopher Nolan's recent live action series of Batman films.



# “The Boston gig has been cancelled...”

In his latest dispatch from the frontline of barstool rock criticism, **RAYMOND CONNOLLY** bemoans an instruction from his editor to write about his best and worst live gigs, while the editorial team share some of their live music highs and lows.

I'M NOTICING a tightening of the disciplinary regime around here and, while I'm not one to complain, I'm against it. This column has always been about inflicting free range organic satire upon the reader (him again!).

This time, however, my editor approached me with strict instructions: "Raymond, I want you to write about the best and worst gigs you ever attended, but you are not allowed write about The Who." Now that to me is like saying to a child "now love pick out your very favourite type of ice cream but I am giving you yummy Brussels sprouts instead." My counter shot to the editor was "you do something similar with no pretentious Joy Division guff." Childish I acknowledge, but his balloon truly burst.

I like Nick Hornby, not only because he's a great writer, but because his two obsessions in life are The Arsenal and music. In his brilliant novel *Hi-Fidelity*, a constant running theme is stuff like 'Five greatest break-up songs?' or 'Five best feelgood songs.' I draw reference to this because, unlike my editor, Hornby appreciates the value of choice, such an important aspect of life.

As London born American journalist Sidney J Harris said "our dilemma is that we hate change and love it at the same time. What we really want is for things to remain the same and get better." (Get on with it Raymond – Ed).

Being handed the choice to pick one best or worst gig creates the potential for crude exposure. It is only when the tide goes out that you learn who has been swimming naked. Any best or worst experience is derived from a number of ancillary factors beyond the actual experience itself.

Taking the above point into consideration the best gig (under the conditions imposed on me) simply had to be U2 at The

Phoenix Park on 14th August 1983. The massive crowd. The monster stage. How my world lit up as Bono and the boys ripped through songs like *I threw a brick*, *A day without me*, *11 o'clock tick tock*, *Gloria* and a whole range of other such abominations passing off as tunes.

The pleasure it gave me to turn to my mates and say "see, I was right. They are rubbish". And here was the proof. At 17, putting myself through a U2 concert to prove to all and sundry that they were awful was far more important than enjoying myself. When asked to justify why so many thousand others were electrified, my response was "populist gobshites". Not that I was opinionated or anything.

The best part of the gig was when the message came over the tannoy that after years of Olympic torture, Eamonn Coughlan had just won the gold medal at the world championships in Helsinki. On reflection, my editor's request has prompted an interesting vista whereby my best and worst gig occurred all at once.

In truth my favourite gig back then was actually at the RDS Dublin in November 1983 when August Darnell aka Kid Creole and his Coconuts brought the *Lifeboat Party Tour* to town and simply brought the house down in an atmosphere that even Morrissey would've enjoyed.

I can recall leaving the RDS that night in the November chill and rain feeling absolutely elated at what I had seen and heard. The brass sounds ringing in my ears and the bass line hooks providing a constant tune in my head, as I vainly navigated CIE's labyrinth of bus routes to get me back to Finglas and back down to earth ●

**Ian Faith: The Boston gig has been cancelled...**

**David St. Hubbins: What?**

**Ian Faith: Yeah. I wouldn't worry about it though, it's not a big college town.**

From *This is Spinal Tap*, Rob Reiner (1984)



## BEST AND WORST



### David Bowie

Dublin's Olympia Theatre 1997, touring his greatest hits and *Earthling* albums, it was a really great gig. My sister had never listened to his music before but became a Bowie fan that night. He had the whole theatre rocking to hits like *Starman* and *Rebel Rebel*. He had a great presence on the stage and it was great to see him in such an intimate venue. I spotted his wife Iman in the audience. Truly a night to remember. (Roisin Nolan)



### Leonard Cohen

This was one of his first performances, after many, many years. It was a particularly balmy mid-Summer Saturday evening on the grounds of the Royal Hospital, Kilmainham. I enjoyed it with some very close friends. He wowed his adoring, appreciative, attentive, fans that evening with his mesmerising and haunting voice and sang hits like *Suzanne*, *Dance me to the end of love*, *Marianne* and *Hallelujah*. For me his music will never die. RIP Leonard. (Trish Callinan)



### Shane McGowan

Vicar Street guesting with Sharon Shannon. The brilliance of the past was but a faded memory. "Shocking" is the word that springs to mind, both his physical decline, which was so sad to see, and his performance. Most of what he sang/spoke was inaudible. (Martina O'Leary)

### The Pretenders

The Brighton Top Rank on a cold January night in 1980. The Pretenders had impressed with their magnificent second single *Kid*. This was Peak Clash, and London didn't seem to be calling for perfect pop-rock just yet. Then *Brass In Pocket* saw Chrissie Hynde and the boys push ahead in the post-punk rush. It reached No.1 just days before the gig and suddenly this uncool outfit had filled the place to bursting. Chrissie soon had us eating out of her lace-gloved hand. Like Queen at Live Aid, they really put on some show that night. (Bernard Harbor)

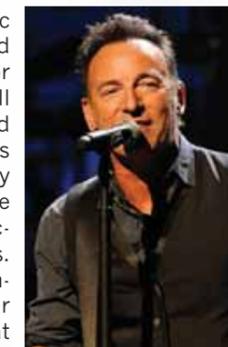
### Kate Tempest

One of 2016's finest album offerings was Tempest's *Let Them Eat Chaos*. Whelan's was packed, the show sold out. Backed by a tight three-piece band Tempest took the stage with a modest plea for the intimate moment between us all not to be disrupted by our phones. We obliged and she delivered a blistering end-to-end performance of the entire album. Lyrical dynamite within an electronic dystopia infused with humanity, hope and tenderness. It was possible to believe we were in the presence of real genius. (Niall Shanahan)



### Bruce!

Croke Park last year. Music riddled with emotion and energy, vital characteristics for rock music. The band rocked hard all through the concert, while being kind to their fans as they took up signs from the audience and took a lucky little girl on stage who had the privilege to get a chance to accompany the band on one of the songs. The only drawback to their performance was the poor quality of their speakers. But he proved again that he's one of the great rock legends. (Seán Davey, TY student, filed his report while on work experience with the IMPACT communications unit)



### Death & Decay

A 'Battle of the Bands' at Dublin's Voodoo lounge, invited by a classmate (one of the quiet ones who read thousand-page volumes about elves) after I asked, purely out of politeness, about a medieval-style insignia he had carved into the cover of his Geography copy. It transpired it was the logo of a local metal act. The dirge made me nauseous. It sounded like furniture being moved in the apartment upstairs or like a recording of a saucepan being dropped on a tiled floor played backwards. Awful. (Lughan Deane)



Winter-Spring 2017 solutions (From page 46)

1	2	6	7	8	5	9	3	4	4	2	5	6	1	9	8	7	3
8	7	3	9	4	1	6	5	2	8	1	7	3	4	5	6	9	2
5	9	4	2	3	6	1	7	8	3	6	9	2	8	7	1	4	5
2	3	7	4	1	9	8	6	5	6	5	2	7	3	4	9	1	8
6	5	9	3	2	8	4	1	7	1	7	4	5	9	8	2	3	6
4	1	8	6	5	7	2	9	3	9	3	8	1	2	6	4	5	7
3	6	2	5	9	4	7	8	1	2	8	1	4	5	3	7	6	9
7	4	1	8	6	3	5	2	9	5	9	6	8	7	1	3	2	4
9	8	5	1	7	2	3	4	6	7	4	3	9	6	2	5	8	1

Easy

Difficult

Autumn-Winter 2016 Crossword Solutions See page 46 for the competition winners from issue 35.

**ACROSS:** 9. Contrived 10. Aviva 11. Pronoun 12. Notice 13. UCC 15. Extreme 20. Entice 21 & 5D & 5A World Wide Web 22. Revokes 23. Courtier 25. Detach 26. Theme 27 & 18A. Work Serach  
**DOWN:** 1. Decipher 2. Consort 3. Barcode 4. Revenue 6 & 7. Beason Clinic 8. Academic 14. Creation 16. Rationale 17. Macbeth 20. Everest 21. Warder 24. Red Herring

## Travel and trips

# Art on the Arno

*There's far too much to see in Florence, the home of the Italian Renaissance. But BERNARD HARBOR never learns.*

ONE ONLINE guide to Tuscany's most famous city lists "two ice creams a day" as the second best feature of Florence (after its world-famous Uffizi gallery) and advises against trying to take in too many of the city's abundant artworks. That's one approach to this Renaissance treasure trove that I found hard to adopt.

This beautiful and walkable city is simply stuffed with must-sees for the art lover, and it's hard to avoid overkill as you attempt to take it all in. Although Florence is perfect for a city break, you have to make a huge effort to stop yourself racing past a conveyor belt of masterpieces as you try to get through the bare essentials.

This place is a magnet for tourists, which makes it hard to enjoy at peak visiting periods. In the summer you can queue for hours just to get tickets to the main attractions.

But I've visited three times now in either February or November. It's far more manageable at these times, although you'll have to fly into Pisa or Rome and get the train as there are currently no direct flights from Ireland outside peak season.

Sounds like hard work? Believe me, it's well worth it and I'd go back again in a heartbeat.

Florence is primed for people-watching and fine (though a bit pricey) for shopping. But it's the art and architecture that attracts around 16 million visitors each year.

### Superstars

The city was the home of the early to mid-Renaissance, before the action moved to Rome at the end of the fifteenth century. This pivotal period in the history of art brought perspective, humanity and reason to painting, sculpture and building and, for the first time, made superstars of their creators.

You can marvel at iconic works by Botticelli and Leonardo da Vinci in the top-notch Uffizi gallery – including the former's Birth of Venus and the latter's Adoration of the Magi – alongside masterpieces by Titian, Raphael, Caravaggio and very many more.

*"Enjoy the gelato, but don't expect it to wow you as much as the art."*

A reproduction of Michelangelo's David adorns the Piazza della Signoria (the much more impressive original is in the Galleria dell'Accademia along with his four incredible unfinished slaves), staring across at Cellini's blood-curdling Perseus and Medusa in the Loggia dei Lanzi.

Throw in scores of unmissable chapels and galleries (Santa Maria Novella, Santa Croce, San Marco, San Lorenzo and the Bargello, to name a few) and you'll soon be gagging for that gelato. Or even a pint – savour local craft beers in Archea Brewery (Via de Serragli).▶



Michelangelo's Statue of David



Uffizi Gallery

Unless you're feeling flush or flash, it's better to steer clear of the gelateria, cafes, restaurants and bars immediately surrounding the Duomo. I was advised to cross the famous Ponte Vecchio for much more reasonably-priced establishments on the other side of the Arno.

### Walkable

That's where I headed with my daughter last November, and we were served great traditional Tuscan food at lower-than-Dublin prices in the Gusta Osteria (near the Santo Spirito basilica) and the lovely Trattoria Sant'Agostino (Via Sant'Agostino). Sadly, we never made it to the Gelateria La Carraia (by the Ponte Carraia), though a local told us it serves the best ice cream in town.

I don't necessarily buy the idea that Florence isn't pizza country – the foodies say head south to Naples – but on previous trips I've had great, good-value pizzas at L'Pizzacchiere (Via San Miniato) and Il Teatro (Via Ghibelina).

All the places I've mentioned are walkable from the city centre, where

it's possible to get good and very reasonably-priced accommodation out of peak season. I recently paid just over €250 for two nights in a large and comfortable Airbnb apartment, which would have comfortably housed four or five depending on the sleeping arrangements. And all virtually under the gaze of David.

### Plan ahead

Plan what you want to see. Stick to the plan as much as you can. Savour what you're taking in and try not to rush. Also, bear in mind that you have to pay to get into most sights, which can add considerably to the cost of a trip (although there are significant reductions for EU citizens aged under 25).

Other tips? Enjoy the gelato, but don't expect it to wow you as much as the art. And don't be surprised if you're secretly planning the next trip before you leave ●

## My top five

*Picking five Florence favourites is a fool's game. So here goes...*

- 1 **BRANACCI CHAPEL**  
Adam and Eve's utter despair in *The Expulsion from Paradise* makes Masaccio's fresco one of the most moving artworks I've seen anywhere. Also check out his *Trinity* in Santa Maria Novella. Its treatment of perspective was revolutionary in 1427.
- 2 **SAN LORENZO: SAGRESTIA NUOVA**  
For me, Michelangelo's marble Medici tombs are the sculptural highlight of a city stuffed with amazing works. The master was commissioned to design this mausoleum and its tombs by Medici Pope Leo X. A place to savour.
- 3 **FLOODLIT DUOMO**  
My first ever impression of the city was disembarking from a coach outside Brunelleschi's floodlit cathedral dome, set aside Giotto's bell tower. This overwhelming wonder of fifteenth century engineering is impressive at any time, but magical by night.
- 4 **PALAZZO MEDICI-RICCARDI**  
Its tiny Cappella dei Magi, richly decorated by Benozzo Gozzoli's sublime three-walled fresco of the procession of the Magi, is the only Florence interior (aside from the Uffizi) that I've been to on each visit. Beautifully unmissable.
- 5 **DONATELLO'S DAVID**  
The first free-standing nude figure created after antiquity, Donatello's 1440 David beats Michelangelo's far more famous namesake. It's housed in the Bargello museum, where you can also glimpse Michelangelo's extraordinary Bacchus and a fabulous bronze Mercury by Giambologna.

# Meet the authors

*Fighting Words is a creative writing centre dedicated to developing the craft of creative writing for children, young adults and teenagers with special needs. Based in Dublin's north inner city and co-founded by the globally acclaimed writer Roddy Doyle, this unique organisation has launched an understated literary revolution of 70,000 children. TRISH CALLINAN talks to executive director Sean Love about this fascinating organisation.*

THE BOYS and girls from Scoil Mológa's third class could hardly contain their excitement as they passed through the 'magic doors' (a bookshelf on hinges) of *Fighting Words*, set in modern Behan Square, Russell Street in the shadow of historic Croke Park in Dublin's north inner city. The room was conducive to imagination and creativity with its book lined walls, bright orange and pink tables and curtains all set against a pure white background.

The kids sat on multi-coloured cushions on the timber floor, a detail which added a relaxed, den like feel. The prospect of becoming published authors, under the guidance of writing tutor Helene, illustrator Rory and typist Cara was becoming a reality, as they began to compose. "There's only one rule" Helene explained "no violence in the storyline. Apart from that, the focus is on originality and imagination". The straightforward formula worked well. Along with their class teacher I realised we were experiencing something unique, as the story of *The Man who turned into a chicken, then a chicken nugget* started to unfold.

*Fighting Words* is part of an international family of similar organisations around the world. Our own Lughan Deane took part in a summer writing camp at 826 *Valencia*, the original, San Francisco based project founded by novelist Dave Eggers, when he was a teenager. Having enjoyed the experience, he was quick to volunteer at *Fighting Words* upon returning to Ireland.

"My experience at 826 *Valencia* and, subsequently at *Fighting Words*, was instrumental in my decision to pursue an English literature degree at university. It instilled in me a deep interest in reading and writing that I still carry today. My current role in IMPACT's communications office is largely focused on writing, whether that's for *Work & Life*, the e-bulletin or the IMPACT website, and that's no coincidence."

## Teamwork

The Scoil Mológa teamwork developed as the kids democratically chose a main character – Bob – his wish list (to own the iPhone 7+), his fears (getting sold in a happy meal) and his best friend, a hamburger called Marla.

The character of cranky editor added a bit of fun, and a challenge, to the workshop. A shy girl plucked up the courage to suggest the book title *Chicken Trouble*. This was unanimously agreed by a secret, ballot (by closing their eyes and raising their hands). I could see her grow in stature as the title appeared on the projector screen. Everyone got their turn to add to the storyline, there was no space for a dominant personality, it all seems very fair.

"I get such satisfaction knowing that in over 70,000 people who have gone through these doors, no matter what difficulties they carry, not a single child has not engaged. Not a single child. With varying levels of ability, and languages, they all shine. That's how we know we're doing something right", volunteer Helene explains.

## Back story

With the constant chatter of the children, and occasional whoop of laughter audible in the background, co-founder and executive director Sean Love filled in the back story. "We opened *Fighting Words* in January 2009. Myself and (author) Roddy Doyle set it up. It was his idea. There was just the two of us at the time. We set it up because we believe creative writing is a critical part of every child's education." From the day they opened demand was colossal. Within the first month, their first year was fully booked.

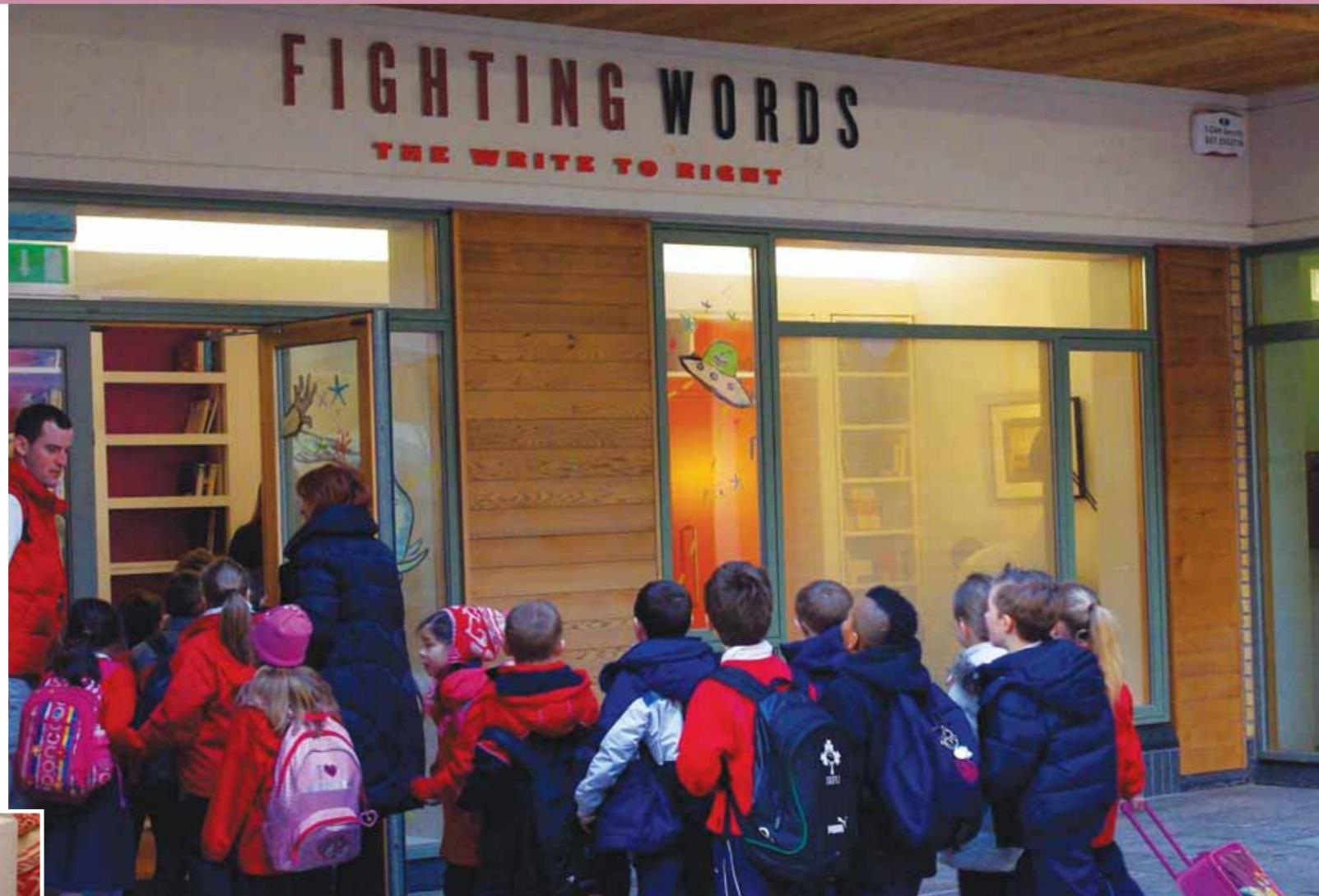


Children enter through the 'magic door'.

Now with a staff of four, and around 500 volunteer tutors, *Fighting Words* hosts about 10,000 students a year. Priority is given to children from disadvantaged areas but also special needs groups, youth groups, and children who come in as individuals in their own time. They also work with adults with special needs, intellectual disabilities or mental health issues.

Sean says "Where groups cannot come to us, we go to them. Juvenile detention centres, prisons, homes for the elderly, children's hospitals". All of their services are free. The only costs involved for parents are getting the children to the workshop. They're open seven days a week, almost every day of the year.

They opened their first regional base in East Belfast 18 months ago. By early 2017 there will be six *Fighting Words* outlets on the island of Ireland, including Castlebar, Glencree, ►



Fighting Words creative writing centre, Russell Street, Dublin.

Cork and Galway. It's proving a better use of resources to establish more permanent bases, where people can volunteer locally.

"Every child leaves here as a fully published author. Teenagers' books get published, and are on the bookshelves alongside known authors. We exist as a creative writing centre and it's clearly beneficial as a literacy tool, for teamwork and collaboration but, underlying all of that it's about building self-esteem and confidence," Sean explains. "All the kids who leave here are not going to become writers, but some of them will. It definitely opens up something in all of them that hadn't been seen before."

Sean reckons creative writing should be part of the formal educational curriculum. "It's empowering when people see their words typed up on the screen, they take ownership of it, and they take it wherever they want it to go. There's so much pressure on teachers to deliver for exams, and high points. Creativity isn't part of our current educational system because that's about rote learning and having a good memory." I agree with Sean. Every school in Ireland would benefit from these services.

## Resources and funding

Sadly, *Fighting Words* has to turn away more kids than they can take in, due to a lack of resources. They don't currently

receive any state funding and are almost completely dependent on philanthropic support. IMPACT's North Inner City fund has recently made a donation to their work. They could have hosted 350,000 people in those eight years, had they had the facilities and resources to do it. And those numbers are based on unsolicited applications, they don't even advertise because they are perpetually booked out.

Sean adds, "Now is the right time for the state to engage. It's been repeatedly highlighted by third level institutions, educational authorities and large employers that children are going on to college unprepared for third level, because they lack self-directed learning and motivation, and they're not prepared for critical or creative thinking". *Fighting Words* is a major contributor to improving teenagers' capacity to think and engage creatively and the freedom and opportunity to think critically.

Back in the writing den the young authors break briefly to eat their lunch. The atmosphere is positive, individual books are almost finished, the cover depicting the chicken in full colour, the back carries each child's photograph and bio and there's an original story in between.

Another chapter in this brilliant literary revolution is completed ●

# Health staff structures under discussion



Discussions on community health organisation (CHO) staffing structures below 'heads of service' level are expected in January, after IMPACT agreed arrangements for heads of service and general managers in the nine CHO areas last month. The union has told management that there can be no changes to reporting relationships until these have been agreed through talks.

Talks on staffing structures finally got underway after IMPACT insisted on a forum to deal with IMPACT grades. Prior to that, no discussions had taken place – even though the CHOs were being established – because other unions had refused to participate in an all-union forum.

The latest HSE reorganisation will see six new hospital groups and nine CHOs replace former HSE structures. IMPACT is also piloting new 'panels,' with representation from all branches in each of the HSE hospital and community health groups. This is to ensure that all branches and members are involved in decisions that affect them, even where the HSE organisations transcend IMPACT branch structures.

Read about IMPACT's pilot panels by downloading *Supporting Our Health Branches* from the IMPACT members' ebulletin 12th December 2016.

# Unions stress need to unwind FEMPI

The ICTU Public Services Committee (PSC) has said that unwinding the FEMPI legislation, which introduced pay cuts and the public service pension levy, should be the main objective of negotiations on a successor to the Lansdowne Road Agreement. Following union pressure, the talks have now been brought forward to the middle of the year, and are expected to start once the Public Service Pay Commission (PSPC) makes its report in the Spring.

IMPACT and other unions also say that other changes to working conditions, including some introduced under the Haddington Road agreement in 2013, need to be taken into account in the negotiations.

In their initial submission to the PSPC, ICTU unions say that, while international and public-private pay comparisons could inform public service pay policy in the longer term, the "timely negotiation of the pace and quantum of public service pay recovery" must be prioritised in the interests of fairness, and to "underpin industrial relations stability."

The submission also says that the outcome of negotiations must bring benefits to all public servants. This requires a more sophisticated approach than the simple removal of FEMPI which, in the absence of other actions, "would be of little or no benefit to those public servants on the lowest incomes."

The PSC argues that the 12% value placed on public service pensions when the Public Service Benchmarking Body last compared public and private pay rates in 2007 was "excessive." It also calls on the PSPC to take account of disimprovements in public pensions in recent years.

Reductions in pension payments, the introduction of a 'career average' scheme for staff appointed since 2013, and an increased retirement age mean that "the value of public service pension arrangements has declined substantially in recent years," it says.

The submission says any public-private pay comparisons are only valid if done on "a true like-for-like basis" of "the work of a grade in the public service and the work of an exact equivalent, or work of equal value, in the private sector." In any case, it says the immediate priority should be to unwind the FEMPI legislation rather than embark on comprehensive pay analysis at this stage.

The unions also say that any international pay comparisons must be made with similar jobs or like work, while taking account of the cost of living in various countries. They point out that no such study has so far been undertaken.

See our special feature on public service pay on page 8.

## STAY UP TO DATE

Stay up to date with IMPACT's latest news via [impact.ie](http://impact.ie), @impacttu on Twitter and IMPACT trade union on Facebook. Subscribe to the IMPACT members' ebulletin. Contact [info@impact.ie](mailto:info@impact.ie) for details.

# No cooperation with staffless libraries

IMPACT has urged local government minister Simon Coveney to meet worker representatives to discuss concerns over the expansion of 'staffless' libraries. The call came after the union's 1,200 library workers backed industrial action.

An instruction by IMPACT's Local Government Divisional Executive Committee not to undertake the work necessary to facilitate the rollout of staffless services in 23 libraries across the country commenced in December. IMPACT called its ballot in response to fears that the expansion of staffless libraries represents the 'thin end of a wedge,' which will ultimately lead to job losses and sharply limited library services to the public.

IMPACT national secretary Peter Nolan said there were also fears about health and safety protections for library users and workers. "Local authorities already treat libraries as a Cinderella service and, if this goes ahead, nobody seriously believes they will resist the temptation to save more cash by

replacing staffed libraries with the much more limited range of services available on a staffless basis," he said.

The union believes an unchecked drift to staffless libraries will, at best, fragment the service so that:

- Services in small towns and rural areas will become downgraded and predominantly unstaffed, with little or no access to specialist advice, educational courses or cultural events
- Poorer urban areas will be denied both extended opening hours and enhanced services based on modern information and communications technologies
- A relatively small number of 'middle class' urban areas may continue to enjoy relatively good services during core hours, with extended staffless opening times
- A previous pilot in three locations demonstrated that the vast majority of users continued to visit libraries during core, staffed hours.

Peter said: "These proposals will short-change communities. There'll be no school visits, no storytelling, no help to find what you want, no security presence, and none of the hundreds of educational and artistic events that libraries provide throughout the year. Everyone will lose out, especially the elderly, students and people from disadvantaged communities and backgrounds. Meanwhile, management's own data from the initial three pilots clearly demonstrate that the vast majority of us prefer to visit our local library during core hours when expert staff are there to help."



# INSPIRE training

IMPACT's innovative INSPIRE training programme took place in Dublin last November. The programme, designed to prepare and encourage women in IMPACT to run for election to branch, divisional and national committees, attracted some 40 activists from across Ireland. See page 14.

(L to R unless otherwise indicated)



The Inspire training day welcomed 40 activists from across the country (see if you can spot IMPACT president Pat Fallon)



Noreen O'Mahony, Patricia Fanning and Claire Keaveney



Antoinette Carney, Nuala Foley (Sligo)



Maura Cahalan, Karen Greene



Caitriona McElhinney, Marie Little (Donegal)



Hannah Deasy, Liz Fay and Una Power



Patricia King, general secretary, Irish Congress of Trade Unions



# IMPACT activist training and graduation

IMPACT activist training continues this year in Dublin, Sligo and Limerick. IMPACT hosted a graduation event for the latest group of trainees in December as they completed their Level 1 training.



IMPACT vice president Margaret Coughlan, Helen McDermott Galvin



Muireann O'Higgins, Elizabeth Butler



Sarah Begg, Jennifer Foran, Stephanie O'Brien and Eimear Codd



IMPACT vice president Margaret Coughlan, Kevin McAllister



Training session at Nerney's Court



Gene Kelly, Michael Ryan, Tanya Casey

# Training teamwork



Eleanor Treacy and Sarah Foley from the Carlow junior camogie team, winners of the Kay Mills Junior Premiership Cup, spoke to IMPACT's Carlow branch about challenges facing small counties and how small associations can make positive changes by working together.

# Caring – At What Cost?

IMPACT hosted a pre-budget briefing in September focusing on the community and voluntary sector, and presented the findings and recommendations contained in the union's Caring- At What Cost? research document.



Right: Senator Aodhán Ó Riordáin, Michelle Grehan (Dublin Rape Crisis Centre).

Top: IMPACT organiser Joe O'Connor, Michelle Grehan and Annmarie Shalloo (Homeless & Domestic Violence services, Western Region)



Photo: Conor Healy Photography

*Did you know that wages – as measured by real average weekly earnings – have not increased since 2008 in the Republic of Ireland? TOM HEALY of the Nevin Economic Research Institute digs deeper into Ireland’s ‘dirty little secret’ of pay stagnation.*

# We need to talk about wages

NEVER MIND the great leap forward in GDP in 2015, or the rapid and very welcome growth in employment, continuing to run at an annualised rate of close to three per cent. A release of data on wages is not accompanied by a major one-day media focus, such as happens in the case of employment numbers or, indeed, the announcement of pay talks.

The only regular official source of information is in the little known *Earnings, Hours and Employment Costs* survey (EHECS) conducted in each EU member state. The EHECS is a survey of enterprises about how much their employees earn, how many hours they work and what employers pay in terms of social insurance.

Predictably, the focus of any little public attention on the latest wage data is on the public sector, and especially particular sub-sectors within it, as well as comparisons with the private sector.

What do the latest data on earnings tell us? The most meaningful measure of wage movement, in my view, is average weekly earnings (AWE). Implicitly, it combines

information on hourly pay rates and number of hours worked. In gross terms (before deduction of taxes) average weekly earnings came to €706.90 per week in the third quarter of 2016.

The chart (right) presents the trend in AWE since January 2008. Nominal wages have not changed much since 2008, when the figure was €702.30. However, we need to factor in price changes. In other words, we need to consider what a given wage average will buy.

The reference I use is the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The chart plots this index since 2008 and, also, the value of ‘real’ average weekly earnings when the CPI is applied to the nominal figures.

It reveals remarkably little change in the overall level of prices over the whole period, with a temporary fall in prices in 2009 (triggering a rise in real AWE in that year), followed by a modest recovery in prices since then. Some goods and services have increased in price while others have dropped. ➤

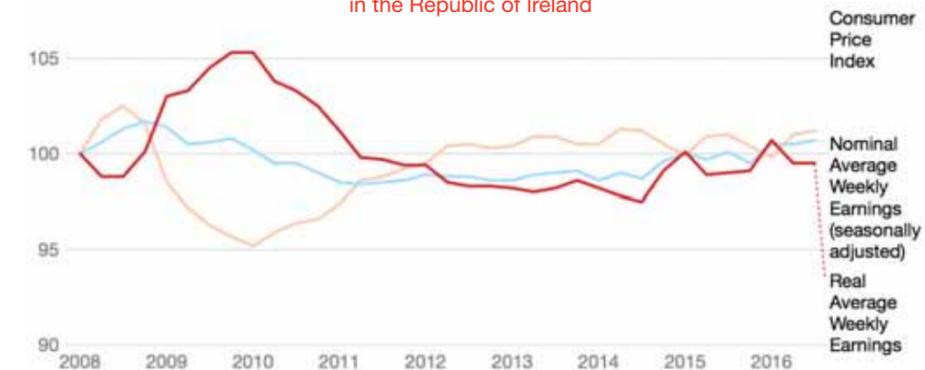
It’s surprising that wage trends receive such little attention in media discourse here. Following the Chancellor’s Autumn Statement in the UK last November, the director of the Institute for Fiscal Studies, Paul Johnson commented:

*“On these projections real wages will, remarkably, still be below their 2008 levels in 2021. One cannot stress enough how dreadful that is – more than a decade without real earnings growth. We have certainly not seen a period remotely like it in the last 70 years.”*

That wages, in the UK, have been stagnating in real terms has been a major focus of public debate there. Yet, in the Republic of Ireland, the statistics of wage changes receive remarkably little attention apart from the predictable obsession with the public-private gap.

There is very little discussion of trends in average wages across the entire economy, or of earnings dispersion within the public sector and within the private sector. There is even less discussion about trends in income received by households from self-employment or capital, such as income from property, rents, dividends and other investment sources.

**Trends in Average Weekly Earnings since 2008**  
in the Republic of Ireland



Source: Central Statistics Office StatBank Ireland EHECS [source code EH003]

Another approach to examining the share of income going to ‘labour’ and ‘capital’ is to focus, only, on ‘primary income’ received by households. Primary income is total household income before deduction of taxes on income and before the addition of social transfers.

Looking at CSO statistics for 2000-2014 and estimated or projected forward to 2015 and 2016, household income, other than from employee labour, shows much more volatility. This is especially evident in the course of recent years due to the huge economic shock of 2008-2010, followed by a slow and painful recovery for most businesses as well as workers.

However, the nature of the shock and its impact, as well as the distribution of recovery gains, have been uneven. Yes, non-employee income took a major hit in 2009-2010. However, there has been a rapid growth in household non-employee incomes since 2011, about which we hear very little in public discourse.

The projected growth in total employee compensation (which includes employer social contributions) in 2015 is set at 5.7% and in 2016 is set at 5.1% using European Commission figures.

These estimated growth rates will probably be higher than the final figures. Since employment is growing at an annual rate of three per cent, and there is no evidence that average weekly earnings are rising up to now, I reckon that total employee compensation is growing at less than the rate projected by the Commission in these two years.

However, going with the projected commission figures, we can calculate the employee labour share of total primary household income. The share of employee compensation has risen and fallen over the last 16 years. The share has been on a steady downward trajectory since 2009. On closer examination, it emerges that total non-employee income of households will come to an estimated €27.3 billion in 2016.

This compares with €21.3 billion in 2008 just at the beginning of the recent recession. By contrast, total employee compensation fell from €80.7 billion in 2008 to €78.4 billion in 2016.

The fall in employee compensation is related to two trends:

- A fall in employment over 2008-2016 (the 2016 level is still not quite back at the 2008 level yet)
- Stagnation in wages (or employee compensation) over the period as a whole.

Why, it may be asked, are wages stagnant, or even falling in some sectors, while pay settlement increases of 2-3% are typical across many sectors and occupations? This is an important question and deserves more careful analysis than is possible here.

Suffice to say that, on the basis of employment trends and earnings data, it seems that the average wage is being held down as a result of changes happening in the structure of the economy, as well as the composition of the workforce in employment. In particular, it’s highly likely that younger, less well paid workers, are gradually replacing retiring better paid workers.

This process of replacement seems to be outweighing the impact of pay progression in many employments where, for example, workers may receive increments linked to service or performance. This is at the root

of why average weekly earnings are down by approximately 1% in the Civil Service despite very modest increases, on average, in earnings in the year up to September 2016.

In conclusion, we are confronted with four challenging developments:

- Wages in the Republic of Ireland are stagnating despite a rapid recovery in corporate profits as well as household income from capital
- The recovery in wages reflects different pressures across the economy, with some sectors still falling but most stagnant or increasing modestly
- Where modest wage growth is happening recovery in the public sector still lags that in the private sector
- Total household income – before taxes and social welfare – is up by €4 billion from €102 billion to €106 billion since 2008. At the same time wages are down in absolute terms.

Houston, we have a problem! ●

*This is an edited version of a blog post ‘We need to talk about wages’ originally published in November 2016. For more of Tom’s analysis check out his weekly blog at [nerinstitute.net](http://nerinstitute.net) and follow @TomHealyNERI on Twitter.*

**PRIZE QUIZ** WIN €50

Just answer five easy questions and you could win €50.

YOU COULD have an extra €50 to spend by answering five easy questions and sending your entry, name and address to Roisin Nolan, Work & Life prize quiz, IMPACT, Nerney's court, Dublin 1. We'll send €50 to the first completed entry pulled from the hat.\* You'll find the answers in this issue of *Work & Life*.

**1. Which Spinal Tap gig has been cancelled?**

- a. Wisconsin
- b. Cleveland
- c. Boston
- d. Philadelphia

**2. What does Daniel Devery say is an essential piece of winter cooking kit?**

- a. A barbecue pit
- b. A *Le Creuset* cooking pot
- c. Oven gloves
- d. Frying pan

**3. Pat Bolger is president of...?**

- a. Kazakhstan
- b. The USA
- c. The Dublin Trades Council
- d. Cabra

**4. Donal Casey's Donald Trump cartoon also features...?**

- a. Mike Pence
- b. Ted Cruz
- c. Danny Healy-Rae
- d. Enda Kenny

**5. The Uffizi Gallery can be found in which Italian city?**

- a. Rome
- b. Naples
- c. Florence
- d. Milan

**The small print\***  
You must be a paid-up IMPACT member to win. Only one entry per person (multiple entries will not be considered). Entries must reach us by Friday 3rd March 2017. The editor's decision is final. That's it!

**PRIZE CROSSWORD** WIN €50

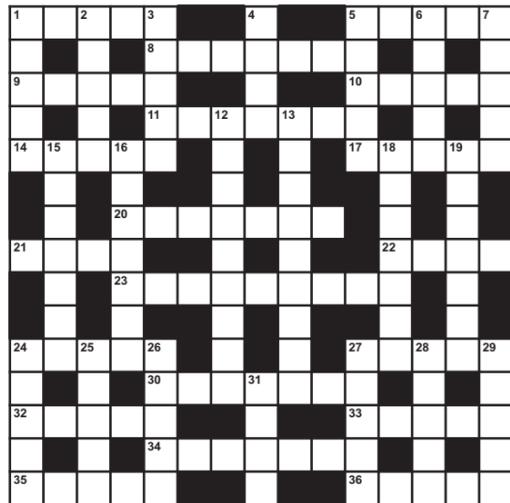
**ACROSS**

1. Started, commenced (5)
5. France's capital city (5)
8. US state (7)
9. Scottish island (5)
10. Piece of classical music with leading theme which returns from time to time (5)
11. Picturesque North Kerry village (7)
14. The final phase (5)
17. A person acting as a decoy might be termed a ----- pigeon (5)
20. Arnold Bax, Theodore Maynard and Wilfred Meynell, all three of whom wrote poems in praise of Ireland's 1916 Easter rising heroes, were natives of what country (7)
21. Small glass often used to hold medicines (5)
22. Could this comic video and TV character be a vegetable (4)
23. The Co Down village of Lisnacree "As Gaeilge" (9)
24. Ancient pre-Christian Ulster queen (5)
27. Pertaining to the Oriental continent (5)
30. The meat of the deer (7)
32. American river, scene of a famous battle which claimed the life of folk hero Davy Crockett (5)
33. An awaited Beckett character (5)
34. The public official investigates violent, sudden or suspicious deaths (7)
35. Carnivorous animal often referred to as laughing jackass (5)
36. Prior to 1916, this famed Sligo poet believed that romantic Ireland was dead and gone (5)

**DOWN**

1. Frederick Faust, author of novels of the Wild West, used the pen name Max ----- (5)
2. Irish Policeman (5)
3. It comes immediately before tenth (5)
4. Body part, a ---- of the law (4)
5. Pieces, acting roles (5)
6. See 10 across (5)
7. A multitude, often used to describe a great number of fish (5)
12. TW -----, Co Offaly poet, storyteller and translator (9)
13. Toothless animals (9)
15. The toatalor partial obscuring of one celestial body by another celestial body (7)
16. Latticework; it is sometimes used to support climbing plants (7)
18. Choice pieces of food or confectionery (7)

Win €50 by completing the crossword and sending your entry, name and address to Roisin Nolan, Work & Life crossword, IMPACT, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1, by Friday 3rd March 2017. We'll send €50 to the first correct entry pulled from a hat.



Crossword composed by Sean Ua Cearnaigh.

19. Islands of Pacific and adjacent seas (7)
24. In old Irish legend Oisín eloped to Tír na nÓg with this lovely fair-haired girl (5)
25. Reduce, extinguish (5)
26. Thomas Moore extolled this lovely Wicklow Valley (5)
27. Vexed, furious (5)
28. Mahatma Gandhi's country (5)
29. Observes, sets briefly down, written signs (5)
31. Ferrous metal used largely in the manufacture of tools (4)

**SUDOKU**

**HOW TO PLAY:** Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no maths involved. You solve it with reasoning and logic. Solutions on page 33.

			8					
8	7			4		6		2
5				6		7		
2	3		4	1				5
		9	3		8	4		
4				5	7		9	3
	6		5					1
7		1		6			2	9
				7				

**EASY**

4			6					
						9	2	
				8	7	1	4	
6	5					9		
1	4	5		8	2		6	
		8					5	7
	8	1	4	5				
5	9							
				2				1

**DIFFICULT**

**Winners!**

The winners from competitions in the autumn-winter issue were:

**Crossword:** Noelle Wade, Kerry. **Survey:** Matthew Power, Kilkenny.

**Quiz:** Olive Feeney, Waterford. **Books:** Linda Corcoran, Cork and Eileen MacNamara, Dublin.

**Lots more competitions to enter in this issue!**

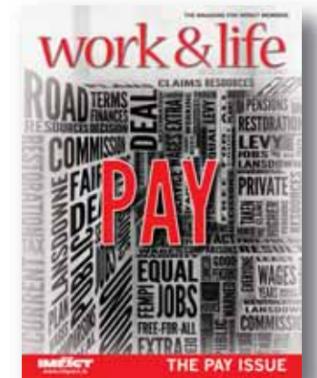
**WIN €100**

**How do you like *Work & Life*?**

WE HOPE you enjoyed this issue of *Work & Life*, the magazine for IMPACT members. We want to hear your views, and we're offering a €100 prize to one lucky winner who completes this questionnaire.

Simply complete this short survey and send it to Roisin Nolan, Work & Life survey, IMPACT, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1. You can also send your views by email to rolan@impact.ie.

We'll send €100 to the first completed entry pulled from a hat.\*



**The survey**

**1. What did you think of the articles in the winter-spring 2017 issue of *Work & Life*?**

Excellent

Good

Okay

Bad

Awful

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

**2. What did you think of the layout, style and pictures in the winter-spring 2017 issue of *Work & Life*?**

Excellent

Good

Okay

Bad

Awful

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

**3. What were your favourite three articles?**

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

**4. What were your least favourite articles?**

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What subjects would you like to see in future issues of *Work & Life*?**

1 \_\_\_\_\_

2 \_\_\_\_\_

3 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. What did you think of the balance between union news and other articles?**

The balance is about right

I want more union news

I want less union news

**7. Any other comments?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

IMPACT branch \_\_\_\_\_

**The small print\***  
You must be a paid-up IMPACT member to win. Only one entry per person (multiple entries will not be considered). Entries must reach us by Friday 3rd March 2017. The editor's decision is final. That's it!



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## Commercial membership services

IMPACT has facilitated the provision of a number of national membership services and discount schemes on behalf of its members. These include Additional Voluntary Contribution Schemes (Pensions), Life Assurance, Salary Protection in the case of illness and Car, House and Travel Insurance Schemes. A number of local discount schemes are also negotiated by local branches.

The Union uses the size and composition of its membership base and, where possible, competition between the various service providers, to seek the best possible deals for the widest possible sections of our membership. It is probable that the majority of members will get better value from these schemes than if they sought the same service individually. However, this will not be true in all cases and there will be occasions where individual members may, because of their specific circumstances, be able to get better value elsewhere. It is not possible always to ensure that all schemes will be accessible equally to all members and the scheme underwriters will not depart totally from their normal actuarial or risk assessment procedures and rules.

IMPACT does not make any claims as to the quality or reliability of any of these products/services and while advising members of the availability of the National Membership Services and Discount Schemes does not endorse or recommend any particular product or service. IMPACT's role is that of facilitator to ensure that such schemes are available to its members. All contracts are directly between the product/service provider and the individual member. IMPACT is not in any way a party to these contracts and will not accept any responsibility or liability arising from any act or omission on the part of the product or service provider. Neither IMPACT nor any member of its staff receives any fees or commissions or other rewards from these product or service providers arising from such schemes.

While IMPACT does occasionally provide such product/service providers with limited information regarding IMPACT branch and/or workplace representatives for the purpose of advertising such schemes, the Union does not make any personal data relating to individual Union members available to them for any purpose.

The Union requires that product/service providers agree to ensure that all such schemes comply with all lawful requirements including the Equal Status Act 2000.

Advertisements for agreed membership services will have an  logo on them.

Some of the companies providing agreed membership services may offer other products or services (that are not as a result of any agreement or arrangement with IMPACT) directly to IMPACT members. The Union has no role whatsoever in relation to such products or services. Likewise, other product or service providers may make offers directly to IMPACT members through advertisements in the Union newspaper or otherwise. These do not arise as a result of agreements or arrangements with IMPACT and the Union does not ask members to consider availing of such products/services and accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any such offers.

The product/service providers with which IMPACT has agreed the provision of membership services and/or discount schemes are as follows:

**KennCo Insurance.**

Travel Insurance – all Divisions.

**Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd.**

Car Insurance – all Divisions.

AVC Schemes – all Divisions, excluding Municipal Employees.

Salary Protection and Life Assurance – Local Government, Health, Civil Service, Education and Services & Enterprises Divisions.

**Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT) Ltd.**

Car Insurance – all Divisions.

House Insurance – all Divisions.

December 2004

**DISCLAIMER (Approved by CEC 10th December 2004)**

# You're better off in IMPACT

**IMPACT**

IMPACT members can save a lot of money through a wide range of financial benefits provided or negotiated by the union. Some of these are free to all IMPACT members. Others are optional benefits, available only to IMPACT members, which can mean savings on insurance, salary protection, additional pension coverage and more.

## IMPACT members are entitled to\*

- €5,000 personal accident insurance
- €5,000 specified critical illness or death benefit
- Spouses now covered for death benefit too
- Free legal help in bodily injury cases
- Free 24/7 legal advice helpline
- Free 24/7 confidential counselling helpline
- Free 24/7 domestic assistance helpline.

## Members can opt to avail of IMPACT-facilitated financial benefits

- Car insurance
- Home insurance
- Travel insurance
- Additional pension benefits
- Salary protection and life cover.

## IMPACT members can also apply for

- Gaeltacht scholarships for their school-age children
- Industrial relations scholarships
- Benevolent grants for members in financial distress.



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