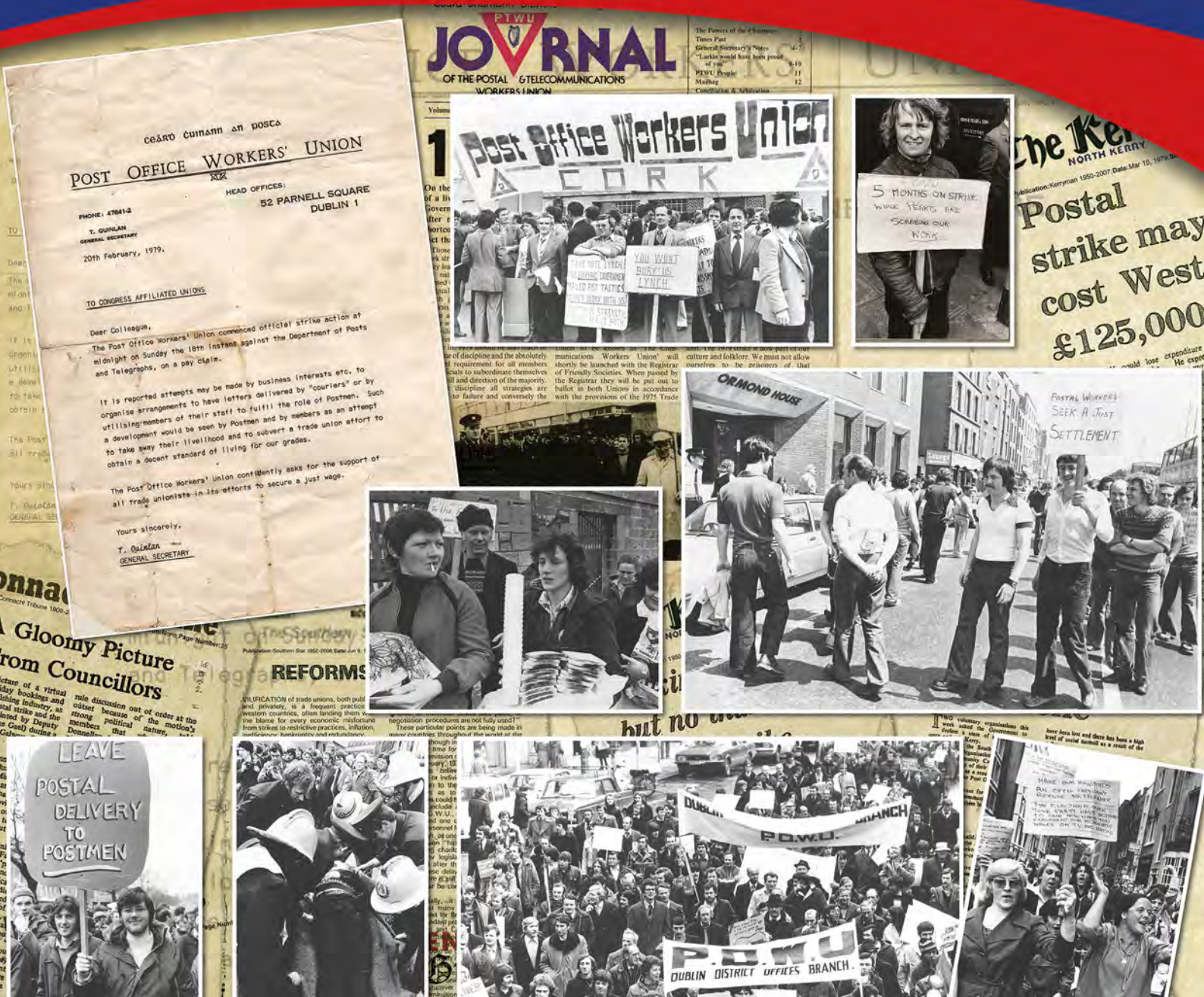




CONNECT

AUTUMN 2019 VOL: 21 NO. 2

40th Anniversary of the 1979 POSTAL STRIKE





CONNECT

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Editorial

Dear Colleague,

As we come to the end of the year, many members will be preparing for what is to come workwise over the next twelve months, in what is becoming an ever-changing world of work. For approximately one thousand former CWU members, it will be a year when a job, which they probably thought would be theirs for life, will be finished for them personally. There is no more difficult task for a Trade Union Official than to have to deal with redundancy situations, and it is even much tougher when that redundancy is compulsory.

Earlier this year, almost seven hundred members were left without a job, when eir decided not to renew its service contract with the call centre service provider, HCL Technologies. We were left with what was simply a business decision for the owners of eir to finish its relationship with HCL, as the new owners favoured bringing that work in-house. Bringing the work in-house resulted in jobs being transferred between Sligo, Limerick and Cork, which left no option for Dublin based workers to Tupe back to eir. HCL took the view that it had no responsibility to the staff left behind and that under those circumstances, the members concerned would only be entitled to statutory redundancy of two weeks’ pay per year of service. Eventually, the parent company, eir, under pressure from the CWU, assisted HCL in reaching what in today’s terms was a reasonable solution for the members concerned. Luckily most of those members have since been re-employed, given the buoyant job market in Dublin for many. Having said that, the whole episode certainly left a very sour taste in the mouth.

Then later this year, Vodafone Ireland decided to offshore its call centre in Waterford, which was operated by Rigney Dolphin. Once again, Rigney Dolphin took the view that the staff concerned (approximately 60), would only get statutory redundancy and, once again, through pressure on the parent company by the CWU, a reasonable solution was reached for the members concerned. Unfortunately, the job market in Waterford is not as buoyant as Dublin and those members had to leave their jobs with no guarantee of future employment.

In the last and final case this year, An Post finally announced that it would be closing the Cork Mails Centre, following a decision some years ago by the Labour Court. On this occasion, the closure is simply down to the fact that An Post now carries less than half of the letter mail it had carried in the past and that there was simply insufficient work for

four letter Mail Centres. The disappointment, hurt and anger felt by the members in the Cork Mails Centre would no doubt have been replicated, if one of the other Mails Centres had been chosen. There was a real possibility, in these circumstances that, without a closure of a Mails Centre, the rest of the business could well have been dragged down, as we are all more than aware that the future of An Post mainly lies in the packets and parcels business. Fortunately, your Union was able to secure one of the best exit schemes in the country for our members in the Cork Mails Centre, while at the same time, members who wish to stay with An Post have been guaranteed alternative employment within the Company.

As we face the end of the year, we will do so with almost a thousand members no longer a part of the CWU family. At times like these, one would question the value of Trade Union membership but in each of the above cases, your Union has been able to drastically improve the terms that were on offer to our members in those difficult circumstances. Without the Union, most of those members would have faced statutory redundancy and in real terms, would have been left in desperate circumstances. Of course, it is impossible for a Union to stop multi-nationals, in particular, and privately-owned companies, from making decisions purely based on their bottom line. At least we have shown that we can put sufficient pressure on them to ensure members affected in such circumstances get the best exit package possible.

If one takes the time to read the daily papers, you could easily become depressed with the unstable state of the world and politics in general. There are two issues, however, which could not be allowed to pass without comment.

The first issue has been the prominence given in the media to climate change and the impact of the young climate activist, Greta Thunberg. Her actions have helped lead to climate demonstrations, mainly by schoolchildren across the world. Indeed, we have seen this young activist embarrassing so-called world leaders with her accurate criticisms of their failures. Unsurprisingly, the corporations and governments largely responsible for climate change have done everything they can to undermine that young woman's efforts. It seems we are faced with older generations who feel no responsibility for the state in which they leave the planet for future generations. We have a cadre of people who do not want their world upset or, more particularly, their finances upset by something they choose to find trivial, such as the survival of life on earth. It should be noted however, that in supporting the

absolute necessity for drastic action to slow or halt climate change, it will not take governments long to come up with a solution that inevitably involves making the poor foot the bill. We will have to watch closely how our own government reacts to this global crisis, but given its past performance, I would say we should get ready to pay the tab for the multi-nationals and countries who are ruining our only home.

The second issue I feel obliged to mention is that of racism, which has been raising its ugly head on our small island over the past number of years. The racist flag-bearers who grow bolder by the day, seek to place all the ills of our society on immigrants. Most of these immigrants have seen their homes devastated by wars and famine, usually instigated by western world superpowers. It now seems it is the fault of these unfortunate immigrants that we have our housing crisis, an education crisis or a health service crisis. It never ceases to amaze me how ordinary working-class people can buy into the lies of racists and the establishment, whereby people who are newly arrived in this country are held responsible for the state that the country is in today. The fact is, many of the problems faced by our republic can be laid squarely at the door of those successive governments who have sold off the natural resources of this island and have saddled its people with almost insurmountable debt. Many political parties have refused to invest in health, education or housing and yet, despite this, our ordinary working-class communities are sold the lie that it's the fault of some immigrant who arrived on our shores a few months ago! This type of behavior is reminiscent of what happened in fascist regimes throughout the world. We need to realise that workplaces are becoming more diverse, as are our towns and cities, and it is up to every Trade Unionist to ensure that within the workplace, people of **all** races, creeds, and sexual orientation are welcomed and that we concentrate on facing the real enemy of capitalism in crisis rather than scapegoating our brothers and sisters with whom we have more in common than the ruling class spouting racist rhetoric.



*Steve Fitzpatrick,
General Secretary, CWU*

THE IRISH POST OFFICE DISPUTE (1979)



by Seán Scanlon

POST OFFICE WORKERS' UNION	
T. Quinlan	General Secretary
T. Harrington	Deputy General Secretary
P. L. Fitzgerald	Assistant General Secretary
S. Scanlan	Assistant General Secretary
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Colfer, J.	Maycock, T.C.
Dunne, A.J.	Molloy, K.
Gleeson, M.D.	Quirke, C.W.
Gorman, J.J.	Ryan, S.
Grimes, D.F.	Walsh, Miss E.
Holt, S.	Waters, E.
Jackman, J.R.	

IN JUNE OF 1978 the Irish Post Office Workers' Union lodged a claim for substantial increases in pay for all its members. The claim covered a wide range of workers which included Postmen, Patrolmen, Post Office Clerks, Postal Sorters, Telephonists, Cleaners, Storemen etc. The amounts sought ranged broadly from 30% for the Post Office Clerk to 37% for the Postmen. Included was a separate claim for equality of pay between Male and Female Telephonists. The total amount claimed for Female Telephonists was 51%.

The claim set out to restore relativities that once existed between Post Office Workers and people in comparable type of employment both within and outside the Civil Service and sought to bring Post Office pay into line with pay in good outside employment. It was also the contention of the Union that due recognition was not reflected in the pay of Post Office Workers, having regard to the unsocial, irregular round-the-clock hours of attendance, i.e. twenty-four seven-day week liability.

The Conciliation and Arbitration machinery that is used for considering such cases went into operation almost immediately. After a short while it was clearly evident to the Union that progress, if any, would be a slow and long drawn out affair. The rank and file became restless and for the first time in fifty years made

it quite clear to the National Executive of the Union and its leader, Terry Quinlan, that they were not prepared to sweat it out while the official side indulged in the usual semantics of dragging the claim through every stage of the slow moving negotiating machinery.

Branch Meetings were held throughout the length and breadth of the country. Members who had strayed from the fold for one reason or another came flooding back to renew membership of the Union. Everybody wanted to play a part. The cry went out from these well attended meetings that if stronger action was needed the members were now prepared to make the supreme sacrifice. There was a new and enlightened resurgence within the ranks.

A special delegate conference was held in Dublin in the month of November with Wages a priority. A further special conference was held in Dublin in January, 1979, at which it was unanimously decided that unless there was some evidence of a reasonable response to the wages claims, the 13,000 members of the Union would insist on taking to the streets. The Post Office was unbending and indeed in hindsight it can be said they misjudged entirely the determination of our members to carry out the threat of strike action.

The strike became a reality at midnight on the 18th February, 1979. The members tucked in their belts and prepared themselves for a long haul. The Government stood idly by for twelve long weeks hoping that the Post Office Workers would weaken and crawl back to work. The reverse was the case. The members of the Union became more determined as time went on and really took the bit between their teeth when they insisted on part of the claim being conceded as a condition of resumption.

The loud voices of the politicians shouted in defiance from the rooftops that no way could the Government be seen to give in to such demands. The members of the Union were not impressed. Never in the history of the Civil Service were negotiations conducted outside of the agreed procedures. As far as the members were concerned, there was always the first time.

As the strike progressed there emerged a wide range of strike breaking activities by "courier" agencies run by private operators. To curb such activities, the Branches organised "flying columns" in all major towns for the purpose of exposing the culprits. No one could match or outwit the long-established communications system employed by the members.

The Telephonists continued to man emergency services which kept the lines of communication open for

Postal/Courier Update

life and death calls, hospital and ambulance services, etc.

There was the particular case of "Operation Sheriff Street" where the Central Sorting Offices are located, which held the attention of the entire nation for three days. The adjacent "Fastrack" train services, which in normal times operates a carrying service from town to town, was observed to mushroom overnight into big business.

It came to light that firms were now prepared to pay anything up to fifty times the normal postage rates for conveying parcels of letters by way of this railway service. Despite the high charge it was only a station to station service, as distinct from the Post Office door to door service. Pickets were quickly deployed from Post Office buildings. An all-out effort was made to prevent an escalation of this particular service. The police were called out in force and for three whole days the members were provoked, pulled and dragged around the street. Those on picket duty were fortified with tea and sandwiches, supplied by local residents. Some forty picketers were arrested and charged in the courts with obstructive behaviour. No sentences were handed out, but feelings ran very high within the membership of the Union.

There were times when the police, decked out unnecessarily in riot gear, far outnumbered the picketers. It is interesting to note that at that stage the details of a substantial pay award to the police became known. Eventually tempers cooled, but only after an assurance was received from the Unions involved in providing the Fastrack railway parcel service that its members would not deal with any other than the normal customers of the service.

While all this was going on in Dublin, things were hotting up some 100 miles across the country in Athlone, which is the main distributing centre for Department of Education examination papers. Pickets were being maintained throughout the day to ensure that this work, which is normally transmitted through the post, should not be disposed of by any other means. It suddenly became known, however, that a large fleet of private cars were arriving from Dublin, manned by senior officials of the Department of Education and under cover of darkness, parcels of examination papers were being transported from Athlone to the various centres throughout the country. This brought about an all-night vigil by the strikers on the Department's Athlone premises. The strikers' efforts were once again thwarted when the Army was called out in force to handle the situation. The parcels of examination papers were loaded onto Army trucks and escorted out of town by a large force of Police and Army personnel. At this point a pay increase for the Army was announced.

Back at Union Headquarters messages of sympathy began to pour in from every area of organised labour and

indeed in some cases from the business community who were concerned over the apparent lack of initiative on the part of the Post Office.

Generous financial contributions were received from trade unions all over the world to mention just a few: The British Postal Union, Germans, Swiss, French, Canadian, Icelanders, Austrian and Japanese.

An appeal went out from the P.T.T.I to affiliated unions for support. The Irish Post Office Engineering Union made a special contribution to help with the day to day running of the Union.

These monies were utilised to maintain the affairs of the Union and also for the purpose of dealing with hardship and distress cases of which there were a great many. Weekly collections were made on every shop floor in Ireland. The Supervisory staff at the various Post Offices were especially generous.

Sympathy and support arrived from the most unexpected quarters, even from two very poor pensioners who wished to be associated with the cause by contributing two dollars each.

One case that should perhaps not go unrecorded is the one where a particular Government Minister of the day made arrangements with those on the picket line outside his own Department, to avail of soup and sandwiches each day in a local hostelry of which he himself was the proprietor.

All this helped to keep morale at concert pitch. A number of mass meetings were held throughout the country where the views of the members were expressed in public. There was never any weakening on the part of the members. One such meeting organised by the Dublin Branches attracted 3,500 people to the National Stadium. The meeting which had all the trappings and razzmatazz of an American Presidential Convention was addressed by the General Secretary, Terry Quinlan, and the President John Colfer. Representatives of other Unions were also present. A song appropriate to the occasion was written by "Budgie" Whelan (Postman) who gave it an enthusiastic airing to the accompaniment of a wildly cheering gathering of Post Office Workers that had come together from every corner of the country.

There was also the occasion of a march by the members through the streets of Dublin, proudly led by the Post Office Workers' Union Band in full regalia. The marchers were loudly cheered by people who stood on the sidewalks of O'Connell Street. The marchers themselves held their heads high in spontaneous reaction as they passed the General Post Office.

This was followed some weeks later by a solidarity march to the Dail (House of Parliament) organised by the wives and children of Post Office Workers. It was at this stage that a large body of the members went along as blood donors to Pelican House. This is a regular item in the diary of Post Office Workers and no strike was

going to interfere with it. All donations were gratefully received, and the exercise was accorded full coverage by the press which included a photograph depicting the donors in jolly and generous mood.

The Annual Conference of the Union was held in the sixteenth week of the dispute. The largest number of delegates ever to attend were gathered at Ballina, Co Mayo. Over 300 delegates representing every Branch of the Union were mandated to instruct the National Executive to continue the fight until such time as an equitable and just settlement to the claim was attained. There was no dissenting voice.

In week 17 negotiations behind the scenes were opened up. The Congress of Irish Unions took over as mediators on behalf of the Union while the Department of Finance acted on behalf of the Post Office. Strenuous efforts were made to bring the members back to work before money terms would be discussed.

The Minister for Posts and Telegraphs went on television and made an insipid and anaemic appeal to the members to return to work and "all would be well". The Executive stood firm. They were resolute in their determination that interim increases in the region of 16% should be secured before there was to be any resumption of work.

At this point a series of meetings were arranged. The 15 members of the Executive Committee of the Union and the 4 General Officers were subjected to severe tests of physical endurance as the meetings went on into the early hours of the mornings. This presented no real problem to people who were accustomed to working around the clock.

Donal Nevin and Paddy Cardiff, the two Congress Mediators were shuttled in and out of the various meeting rooms during the course of the negotiations. They did their job well despite the pressures from both sides.

After a period of 2 weeks the hard bargaining came to a head when an interim arrangement was arrived at where immediate increases ranging from twelve to fifteen per cent were granted. Equal pay for female telephonists which had been dragging on for 9 years was conceded with 5 years retrospection.

It was agreed that direct negotiations between the Post Office and the Union should commence immediately so that the original claims could be finalised without further delay.

A date for resumption of work was set. A decision of the National Executive was that all members of the Union should report together for duty at 9 a.m. on Thursday 28th June 1979. This historic message was conveyed to the members by the General Secretary by way of a National Broadcast.

The announcement was welcomed by the country as a whole. It should not go unrecorded that the National Press and the media were always fair and indeed more

than sympathetic to the cause of the Union in their reporting of the strike right throughout the campaign.

There was a prompt and punctual attendance on Day One. The task of clearing the backlog of work commenced immediately. Direct negotiations between the Post Office and the Union were got underway in pursuit of the remainder of the wages claims.

A new and enlightened approach to the wages problems was seen to be adopted by the Official Side. A separate working party which included 5 members of the National Executive was set up to examine and restructure the Post Office Clerk Grade.

Once again, however, the negotiations began to drag on. Tension was mounting on the run up to Annual Conference of 1980. A "final" offer was rejected by ballot of the members. Rejection had been recommended by the National Executive and endorsed by Annual Conference.

The fear of another work stoppage in the Post Office loomed large over the country. In the meantime, there had been a reshuffle of Government Ministers while there had been no change in the make-up of the 15-member Executive Committee of the Union.

It was for the purpose of appeasing the situation and re-assuring the Union that their high offices were readily available should the negotiations break down, that Albert Reynolds and Mark Killilea arrived by helicopter to address the Annual Conference at Castlebar. Promises were made which were later lived up to. At last we had two Ministers who were seen to be showing a genuine interest in the staff employed in their Department.

The Conference decision was the General Secretary should continue the negotiations which were concluded within the following months. A second National Ballot found favour with the members.

October 1980 heralded new and more realistic pay rates for Post Office Workers. The total increases which ranged from 25% to 30% were backdated to October 1979. This helped the members to get back on their feet and look forward to the future with hope and a newfound confidence in themselves.

The General Secretary had every reason to feel proud of what had been achieved. He had kept his members together throughout 19 weeks of the longest Post Office Strike in history and the rewards certainly justified the means. The fight is over, the dust has settled and industrial peace reigns again in the Irish Post Office.

In the light of how they conducted themselves and of what had been achieved, the members of the Post Office Workers' Union can be satisfied that they have given perhaps the most significant demonstration of Trade Union solidarity witnessed in this country since the foundation of the state.

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Wishing
all the CWU
Members and
their families a
Happy Christmas
and a Prosperous
New Year in 2020.

Driving for Work –

HEALTH GUIDELINES

In the last issue of Connect we highlighted the guidance issues by the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and the National Driver Licence Service (NDLS) on fitness to drive and we covered two of the risks they highlighted i.e. Fatigue and Medical Fitness to Drive.

The purpose of the guidance from the RSA is to make working drivers more aware of the main health issues that may affect them and, consequently, to improve their ability to drive safely.

Fitness to Drive

A driver needs to be both physically and mentally fit to drive. Drivers should inform their employer about any health issue or personal circumstance that may affect their driving. It is important to remember that fitness to drive can be affected by:

- a. Fatigue
- b. Medical fitness
- c. Stressful events
- d. Eyesight
- e. Alcohol
- f. Drugs
- g. Temporary illnesses
- h. How you look after your health

The RSA in conjunction with the Health and Safety Authority and An Gardaí has developed guidelines, Driving for Work – Driver Health Guidelines which can be downloaded from the Road Safety Authority's website www.rsa.ie.

Set out below is some additional detail in relation to other risks.

Stressful Events

Stress is a negative state, which involves to varying degrees, anxiety, fear and agitation. It comes about when a demand being placed on a person by a situation, a relationship or a specific task is not easily or properly met.

All areas of life can cause stress. Stress mainly comes from personal issues such as loss or threat of loss, fear and feelings of helplessness. Family traumas, relationship problems, financial worries and bereavement are amongst the most frequently cited causes of stress.

Driving is often cited as being stressful where traffic, weather, deadlines and rushing all combine to make a driver stressed.

Stress gives rise to varying reactions from confusion to anger. Stress also causes changes in hormonal and cardiovascular activity, which affects physical wellbeing. Increases in cortisone in the blood from a stressful situation raises blood pressure and can contribute to disturbing body sensations such as sweating, dry mouth, breathlessness and thumping heartbeat. Stress can result in a combination of mental and physical symptoms such as sleeping difficulties leading to fatigue and decrease or increase in appetite.

It is important to be aware of your own physical reactions to stress so that you can learn to control the bodily symptoms, understand and rationalise what is happening to you and try to reverse or control the dynamics.

The best way to deal with stress is to prevent it arising in the first place, as well as learning ways to recognise it and cope with it. For instance, increases in episodes of road rage may mean you should take time out and try to reflect on what are the other issues underlying your anger at other drivers. It is usually not just about 'other drivers' but about some frustration in your own mind. You can improve your ability to cope when it does arise by recognising it and being honest with yourself, resting, relaxing, reflecting and adopting new ways of calming yourself and finally recovering from stressful times when it is unavoidable. If possible, avoid those situations that cause you high levels of stress and minimise contact with stressful places, people and events.

Of course, it is preferable not to drive at all when in a heightened state of stress. When you are stressed your usual range of abilities and skills are diminished. Stressed people drive faster, with less care and attention and with higher levels of risk taking behaviour than non-stressed people. If you are upset, traumatised or angry do not drive. If you have to drive, concentrate more than ever on the road and the mechanics of driving. Wait until you arrive at your destination or finish your work to resolve the stress.

Eyesight

A driving licence holder or applicant must meet certain vision standards for driving as outlined in the Medical Fitness to Drive guidelines (Group 1 and Group 2). In many instances, this means the driver has to wear corrective lenses when driving. In addition, there are a number of visual disorders which may place limitations on the driver's ability to drive safely. The requirements for Group 2 drivers are more onerous than for Group 1 drivers.

You should have your eyes tested ideally at least

every 2 years by an optometrist or optician. If you have to wear prescription glasses or contact lenses for driving, make sure you always wear them when driving. Keep the glasses clean and scratch free. It is a good idea to carry a spare pair of glasses in your car and also a pair of sunglasses (whether prescription or not) to reduce the effects of sun glare.

Alcohol

Drink drivers kill and injure many people every year. The consumption of alcohol impairs judgement, makes drivers over confident and more likely to take risks. Alcohol slows down reaction times, increases stopping distances, impairs judgement of speed and distance and reduces the field of vision. Just one drink could be sufficient to impair driving.

In Ireland, the legal drink drive limit is 50mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. There is a lower limit of 20mg for professional (Group 2) and learner drivers. To get an idea of what this means in relation to consumption, we talk of standard drinks or units. One standard drink is 10 grams of alcohol. Your liver can only process roughly one standard drink per hour. One standard drink equates to ½ pint (284ml) of stout/lager/cider, a small glass of wine (100ml) or one small pub measure of spirits (35.5ml).

For the average male, one standard drink equates to roughly 20mg of alcohol per 100ml of blood. There is however a significant difference between individuals depending on your age, weight and gender and equating blood alcohol levels in relation to units of alcohol consumed is an inexact science. If a person drank four pints of beer, it would take roughly eight hours before the body was alcohol free. Clearly if you were drinking late at night, you could still be over the legal limit when driving early the next morning. Even if you are not over the limit, the presence of alcohol in the body combined with tiredness due to poor quality sleep as a result of drinking can impair driving.

The best advice is never ever drink and drive. If you drink at night and you are driving the following morning, only drink a small amount and make sure you have had at least eight hours sleep. Excessive alcohol consumption can lead to a number of health problems including dependence and addiction,

mood changes, stomach ulcers, and liver disease (fatty liver, alcohol hepatitis and cirrhosis). The recommended weekly low risk limit is 17 standard drinks for men and 11 for women with a number of alcohol-free days each week.

In addition to the guidance issued by the Road Safety Authority the National Driver Licence Service has also issued guidelines Alcohol and driving and a summary of these guidelines is detailed below:

Drivers should be aware that alcohol can impair

your driving. It can make you tired and affect your concentration which in turn will reduce your ability to drive safely. Drivers should also be aware as to how long it takes alcohol to leave the body. Many people underestimate this and as a result, their driving may be impaired, or they may be over the limit.

As a general rule, you should allow at least one hour for each unit of alcohol (for example, a glass of beer) to leave the body. However, it may take longer than that, as other factors – such as body size, or how recently you've eaten – can also have an effect. Never ever drink and drive. Any amount of alcohol impairs your driving.

Alcohol Misuse

If you misuse alcohol, you may drift into addiction. There is no clear line between misuse and addiction – one fades into the other. If you experience any of the following, then you may be misusing alcohol:

- disturbances of behaviour;
- alcohol-related diseases (liver, stomach, mental health problems, and so on);
- actions that cause you, your family or society harm, now or in the future.

Alcohol Misuse – Driver Responsibilities

Group 1 -

Driving a car, motor cycle or tractor

If you are a Group 1 driver, you must inform NDLS if:

- your doctor or other health professional advises you to stop driving because of your persistent alcohol misuse. You must do so until they confirm that you have achieved a minimum period of 3 months controlled drinking or abstinence. This assessment may also include blood tests.

Group 2 -

Driving a bus or truck

If you are a Group 2 driver, you must inform NDLS if:

- your doctor or other health professional advises you to stop driving because of your persistent alcohol misuse. You must do so until they confirm that you have achieved a minimum period of 1 year controlled drinking or abstinence. This assessment may also include blood tests.

Alcohol Dependence

Alcohol dependence is a condition that develops after repeated alcohol use. People who are alcohol-dependent will have experienced three or more of the following symptoms during the past year:

- have a strong desire to drink alcohol,

- have difficulty controlling their use of alcohol,
- persist in using alcohol despite the harmful consequences,
- have an increased tolerance for high levels of alcohol,
- have neglected other pleasures or interests.

Other indicators of alcohol dependence may include a history of tolerance, of detoxification(s) and or alcohol related fits.

What if I don't feel that my alcohol intake is a problem?

If you disagree with medical opinion, and don't believe you have an alcohol misuse or dependence condition, you can get a second opinion. You must stop driving until this second opinion has been completed.

What will happen if I still drive?

It is important to strike a balance between mobility and safety. If you continue to drive against medical advice, and evidence is found of this, it will affect your insurance, and the NDLS and An Garda Síochána will take action to remove your licence. It is important to remember that driving over the limit is a statutory offence and you will be prosecuted.

Drugs

Medicines

There are many prescribed and over the counter medicines that can make you feel drowsy and fatigued, impair your cognitive functioning or affect your emotional state. These include sleeping tablets, anti-depressants, tranquillisers, some medicines for allergies and hay fever and even some cough and cold remedies. Certain prescription and over the counter medicines may impair judgment and make drivers over confident and more likely to take risks.

Also, if different medicines are taken together, they may result in unwelcome side effects, so check with your pharmacist before combining over the counter medicines.

Check with your doctor or pharmacist whether the medicine you are taking is likely to affect your driving. If so, ask for an alternative that does not affect your driving or avoid driving altogether. Always check the label on the container and the patient information leaflet for any warnings.

Illicit Drugs

Illicit drugs such as cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy can affect drivers in different ways such as slower reaction times, aggressive behaviour, poor concentration, panic attacks and paranoia. Also, as the effects of these drugs

wear off, the driver may feel extremely fatigued. It is illegal to possess these drugs and they should not be taken. The best advice is not to drive if you are under their influence.

Medicines and Driving

It is an offence to drive or attempt to drive a vehicle while under the influence of an 'intoxicant' to the point that you cannot keep proper control over the vehicle. An 'intoxicant' includes alcohol, illegal drugs, and medicine, and any combination of drugs or combination of drugs and alcohol.

Drug Driving and the Law

In Ireland, we have a twin-track approach to drug driving:

It is against the law to:

- 1) drive under the influence of drugs (including prescribed drugs) where your driving is impaired to such an extent that you don't have proper control of the vehicle;
- 2) drive under the influence of certain drugs (regardless of driving performance) above specified levels. There are currently three drugs specified – cannabis, cocaine and heroin.

If you are found to have any of these drugs above the specified limits, you can be prosecuted for drug driving with no proof of impairment necessary. This is the same as the law where a driver exceeds specified alcohol levels.

New 'Preliminary' Drug Test

In April 2017, Gardaí were given new powers to conduct 'Preliminary Drug Testing' at the roadside or in Garda stations. This allows the Gardaí to establish checkpoints for testing drivers for drugs with similar powers to existing alcohol testing checkpoints. This system will allow Gardaí to test a driver's saliva for cannabis, cocaine, opiates (for example, heroin, morphine) and benzodiazepines (for example, Valium).

Drivers with medical conditions should continue to take their prescribed medications in accordance with healthcare advice and medical fitness-to-drive guidelines. These drivers should however be aware of how the drugs they taking might affect their ability to drive.

Medicines and Driving

Taking medication can both increase or reduce your ability to drive safely. Taking your medication as advised by your doctor can make driving safer and more comfortable in many medical conditions such as Parkinson's disease, arthritis, depression and attention-

deficit and hyperactivity disorder. It is important to take your medication as instructed by your doctor. It is also important not to stop taking your medication without advice, as unsupervised withdrawal of some medications (such as sleeping tablets and medications for anxiety) may also affect your driving ability.

However, some medicines can have negative effects, and the guidance from NDLS aims to tell you what those medications are and what the effects can be. Medications, listed by the NDLS that can have negative effects include:

- Medicines that are prescribed by your doctor
- Non-prescription medicines from your pharmacy (often called ‘over-the-counter’ medicines)
- Herbal medicines or supplements

If you take more than one medicine, or take any of them with alcohol, the harmful effects may be increased. It is an offence to drive while affected by medicines that reduce your ability to drive safely.

What medicines affect driving?

The following medicines have side-effects that may reduce your driving ability.

- Sleeping tablets
- Anti-depressants
- Sedatives, tranquilisers or other medicines for anxiety
- Some pain killers
- Some allergy or hay fever medicines
- Many cough and cold remedies (can cause drowsiness or poor co-ordination)
- Some anti-nausea medicines
- Some medicines for epilepsy
- Some medicines for high blood pressure or heart conditions
- Some medicines for diabetes

The above list is not exhaustive and if you are unsure you should check with your doctor or pharmacist to find out if your particular medicines risk affecting your ability to drive safely.

Medicines can affect different people in different ways, so it is really important to talk to your doctor or pharmacist about driving while using the medicine. You may need to take extra care when starting on some medicines. Your doctor or pharmacist may advise you not to drive at all until you see how the medication is affecting you.

In what way can these medicines affect my driving?

Some medicines can make you feel sleepy, dizzy, or less alert or can affect your co-ordination. As a result, your judgement and your driving skills can be affected. If you have any of the following effects from your medication,

your ability to drive safely may be reduced and you may be driving ‘under the influence’ of drugs.

- Sleepiness or feeling drowsy
- Slower reaction times
- Difficulty concentrating
- Dizziness or feeling light-headed
- Blurred vision
- Confusion
- Poor co-ordination
- Nausea (feeling sick)
- Feeling anxious, tense or aggressive

How do I make sure I drive safely?

Follow instructions

Always follow the instructions your doctor or pharmacist gives you.

Always read the label and information leaflet with the medicine. If there’s anything you don’t understand, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

Check with your pharmacist

If a medicine is prescribed by your doctor, always ask the doctor or pharmacist if the medicine will affect your driving. If it does, ask if you can take a different medicine instead.

If you are getting non-prescription medicines from a pharmacy, check with the pharmacist if the medicine affects driving. Be sure to tell them if you are taking other medicines, and ask if it is safe to drive when taking that combination.

Check your medicine

Always check if drinking alcohol could affect how the medicine works. Taking alcohol along with ‘impairing medicines’ is dangerous and could lead to greater impairment. ‘Impairing medicines’ are those that can have side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness, reduced co-ordination, impaired judgement and so on.

Remember that you may not always be aware if your medicine is affecting your ability to drive safely. Tell-tale signs include near misses, hitting the kerb, or having difficulty performing tasks that are normally easy for you to do. Ask your doctor or pharmacist about your medicine and the potential risk.

Never take medicines prescribed or recommended for someone else

If you feel unwell or think your medicine may be affecting your ability to drive safely, **don’t risk it – don’t drive.**



The Marriage Bar:

A Ban on Employing Married Women

The Marriage Bar required single women to resign from their job upon getting married and disqualified married women from applying for vacancies. They were in common use up until the 1970s, which means that there are women alive today with first-hand experience of the Bar. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions Social Policy Officer DR LAURA BAMBRICK explains the Marriage Bar and how Congress would like to hear from women whose contracts ended on marriage, in order to record their memories of this important part of labour history.

Women first became public servants on the 05 February 1870, when the Post Office took over the telegraph system from private companies. Five years later, 30 women were employed as clerks in the Postal Saving Banks, and as a rule married women were ineligible to be hired on permanent contracts and single women on such contracts were required to resign on marriage.

In 1890 women entered the civil service, as typists, on a trial basis. Within two years they were successfully employed in seven government departments. When, in 1893, the women typists campaigned to be made permanent this was agreed, but also that their contract would terminate on marriage. In place of their pension and to reduce the temptation not to marry, they would be paid a 'marriage gratuity' of one month's salary for each year worked, up to a maximum of twelve months.

For the government, the Marriage Bar was primarily a cost saving initiative – if women were forced to retire on marriage, they would not remain in the service long enough to rise very high in the salary scale. The Bar also reflected social attitudes that it was a husband's duty to support his wife and a married woman's place was in the home. Female civil servants differed in opinion on the Marriage Bar. Those employed in routine and low paid work were generally in favour whereas those employed in the higher ranks, as clerks and factory inspectors, were more likely to resent it.

During the First World War the total number of women employed in the civil service increased from 65,000, 90% of whom were in the Post Office non-clerical grades, to 170,000, in most departments performing every type of work. Despite this, at the end of the War the government strengthened the Marriage Bar by putting into law what had been a departmental regulation.

The Bar after Independence

Irishwomen's access to employment and equal treatment at work worsened following Independence in December 1922. Within the first year, legislation removed a widow's right to get back her civil service job on the death of her husband. From 1926 the Minister for Finance was given discretionary power to hire married women to the civil service, but only in exceptional circumstances and only on a temporary, non-pensionable contract. As in Britain, there was no formal Marriage Bar on temporary staff. In spite of this, resignation on marriage and the non-recruitment of married women was common practice in temporary posts, with the exception of office cleaners.

In 1941 the Local Government Act gave the Minister for Local Government the power to make regulations disqualifying married woman from applying for vacancies in local authority services. Although it had been practice since Independence that in order to qualify for jobs women had to be unmarried or widowed, it was only when a loophole was found in the Marriage Bar that the policy was made official to prevent a recurrence.

Back in 1936, Vera Carey was appointed Leitrim County Librarian. When she married four years later she submitted her letter of resignation as required in her contract. On the request of her employer she remained in the post until her replacement was found. In the meantime, Vera sought legal advice. Her solicitor discovered that while the 1924 Civil Service Regulation Act required women in the public service to resign from marriage it, mistakably, did not disqualify married women from applying for such posts. Vera applied and, being the most qualified candidate, was reappointed as County Librarian, despite local opposition. She

continued in her job until her retirement in 1974.

While private and semi-state employers were not legally obliged to apply a Marriage Bar, it was widespread practice to include a clause in letters of appointment to female workers that their employment ended once they married. For example, An Post, CIE, Aer Lingus, banks and, two of the largest employers, Jacobs Biscuits and Guinness Brewers all had Marriage Bars.

Abolishing the Bar

The ban on the employment of married women in the civil service and wider public and semi-state sectors was

not lifted until 1973, on foot of a recommendation of the Commission on the Status of Women and a shift in public opinion on working wives. Around 700 female civil servants had been forced to resign from their jobs on marriage in each of the preceding three years. They, along with all other former public sector workers affected by the Marriage Bar, now had the right to get back their previous jobs, but only if she could show she was no longer supported by her husband by reason of desertion, separation or ill-health! Marriage Bars in the private sector were finally abolished in 1977, when European law made it illegal to discriminate in employment on the grounds of sex and marital status.

While Marriage Bars were commonplace throughout Europe, America and beyond from the late 1800s, Ireland was one of the last countries to lift bans on hiring married women and dismissing women on marriage. This puts us in the unusual position of having women alive today who were personally affected by the Marriage Bar.

Congress is eager that these women's first-hand accounts of this important episode in labour history are documented for future generations. Together with RTÉ we would like to hear from women who had to leave a job because of the Marriage Bar. RTÉ will record a series of television interviews to broadcast a special programme from within its existing scheduled programmes if there is sufficient interest from women willing to share their experiences and memories of the Marriage Bar.

If you or someone you know would like to participate or would like to discuss the project you can contact either of the following:

laura.bambrick@ictu.ie / 01 889 77 77

or Christopher McKevitt of RTÉ at Chris.McKevitt@rte.ie

All correspondence will be treated with absolute confidence.

Get into print!

Anyone wishing to submit articles or photos to appear in the Connect journal, please, either:

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Impatience fuels the gig economy

Automation of nearly everything will crush workers clinging to the most precarious jobs

by Una Mullally © Irish Times online



Drone company Manna has announced it is partnering with Flipdish with a view to fast-food drone delivery by the end of the year in Dublin.

Photograph: Alan Betson

NOT SO LONG AGO, hiring a person to deliver something was a luxury. Couriers were the preserve of offices needing important documents sent somewhere fast. But now, many of us use a network of personal delivery drivers and cyclists to get what we want – a team of people at our disposal who bring food, books, grocery shopping and more to our doors.

The gig economy, a buzzphrase for the patchwork of work many people have to put together in order to survive, given how job security has decreased, is seen as both a symptom and consequence of a world in flux; where entire industries can crumble when undercut by digital change, where job titles are invented, bubbles inflated and money made and lost at neck-breaking speed.

Cities are moulding themselves to the gig economy. Eoghan Murphy talks about co-living (fancy hostels) for “workers”, a term to describe people with jobs that used to be vaguely socialist sounding, but now seems to apply to those in the tech sector. Along with temporary inbetweeny housing for temporary inbetweeny existences, co-working spaces are flourishing as more people exist in freelance, short-term contract work or in start-up businesses.

So much of the gig economy has been created by technology, yet so much of it will be erased by it too. Much of the temporary, transitory work that has emerged around digitally driven services and retail is a type of work that bridges a gap between job insecurity

and automation.

Fruit-picking robots, going into production in 2020, have a projected capability of being able to pick more than 25,000 raspberries a day

Last week, drone company Manna announced it was partnering with a company that operates food-ordering platforms – Flipdish – with a view to beginning fast-food drone delivery by the end of the year in Dublin.

Delivery industry

The delivery industry has exploded in recent years, a consequence of impatient consumers demanding convenience and immediacy, as well as the proliferation of options across food, retail and travel. People spend their days wanting things faster – internet speed, JustEat, MyTaxi, Amazon – and then lean into wellness culture to offset the rush.

When automation really starts to hit, it’ll be those who were already in insecure work who will be the first to fall, from seasonal farm labours to truck drivers to call-centre workers. British company Fieldwork Robotics has built fruit-picking robots, which will be going into production in 2020, with a projected capability of being able to pick more than 25,000 raspberries a day. Want to freak yourself out? Watch a video of the strawberry-picking capabilities of Agrobot.

Whether it’s Andrew Yang rattling off statistics about the havoc automation will wreak on the 3.5 million

*The “services”
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truck drivers in the US, where 80 per cent of all cargo is delivered by truck (the industry could save about \$170 billion a year with automation), or the collapse of high-street retail in the UK (85,000 jobs were lost in retail in the UK in 2018, 150,000 if you include the hospitality sector, and the number of job losses on the UK high street predicted for 2019 is 175,000), this new era of work has one more hurdle: getting rid of, as much as possible, the most inefficient, blunder-prone, expensive, unreliable, and occasionally troublesome element of all work: human labour.

A lot of innovation responding to people's impatience and demands seems to be about building up a brand with cheap labour and forsaking any responsibility over the rights of "workers", and then seeing what parts of it can be automated.

Flooding cities with convenience also has terrible knock-on effects. Many of these "workers" – although companies would prefer to see them as independent contractors who just happen to occasionally piggyback on their app – have been demanding liveable wages. The "services" being provided by transport apps, for example, are having a negative impact on how liveable cities, in particular, are.

'Freedom' from work

In San Francisco, Uber and Lyft have increased traffic delays by 40 per cent in six years, according to a traffic-impact study by researchers at the University of Kentucky. As New York city's subway crumbles and

commuters grumble, 29 per cent of all Manhattan traffic is now for-hire vehicles – that's 80,000 vehicles, two-thirds of which are using ride-hailing apps such as Uber.

Ordering fast-food has already transitioned to ordering from a kiosk rather than a human in outlets such as McDonalds. Bank workers often lobby customers in their queues to use a machine instead of a teller. Bank of America began opening branches without employees in 2017. Amazon says it will be at least 10 years (how reassuring) before their warehouses will be fully automated. Amazon Prime aims for one-day delivery times, with four hours

between an order being placed and it being shipped from a warehouse.

Volvo is already testing limestone-transporting autonomous trucks at the Brønnøy Kalk mine in Norway.

"Having technology work for us will give us freedom," the managing director of the mine, Raymond Langfjord, is quoted as saying on Volvo's website. "For example, the machines can work when we want to sleep."

The pursuit of automation becomes self-fulfilling; fewer people enter into jobs that will potentially be automated, and as a result the need for automation increases due to labour shortages. Soon that gig economy of delivery nixers (temporary, insecure, underpaid, and unprotected), viewed as a great way to top up one's earnings in a world of fragmented jobs, will be another footnote in this era's reimagining of labour. And if fewer people have jobs, then who's going to buy all those robot-picked strawberries?

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Pensions Update

CWU Head Office is in receipt of a number of queries from both serving and retired members in relation to the status of the An Post, eir and Vodafone Pension Funds. It is an opportune time to deal with those queries as, in each case, the CWU and respective companies are due to conclude reviews of the pension funds as agreed under the different Pension Accords, which were reached between 2012 and 2013. It is also useful to outline for members the different types of pension funds and a glossary of some of the language used in the pension industry.

Definitions

Defined Benefit Scheme

Under a Defined Benefit scheme, pension at retirement is calculated as a percentage of final salary multiplied by the number of years of service. The contribution rates made by the employer vary from time to time depending on the outcome of actuarial reviews. Employee rates if any are generally fixed.

In many Defined Benefit schemes the pension is either linked directly to wage/salary movements, or to cost of living increases, so that the members' standard of living can be wholly or partly maintained in retirement. In Defined Benefit schemes, more of the financial "risk" falls on the employer.

Defined Contribution Schemes

These types of scheme involve a set level of contribution by the employer and the employee. Contributions are invested for each member and it is normal for investment options to be provided. The pension amount will be unknown until very close to retirement and will depend on the amount of contributions, the level of investment return and the cost of purchase. In Defined Contribution schemes, where it is the contribution rather than the benefit that is defined, the "risk" falls more on the employee.

Hybrid Schemes

A Hybrid scheme is one which is neither a full Defined Benefit nor a full Defined Contribution scheme, but has some of the characteristics of each. In Hybrid schemes, the risk is shared between the employer and employee. As a result, Hybrid schemes may be of interest where a Defined Contribution scheme is not considered suitable and a Defined Benefit scheme is not felt to be a feasible or affordable alternative.

Integrated Pensions

An Integrated scheme is one where the pension payable, or the design of the benefit promise made, takes into account the Old Age Contributory Pension (or other similar contributory benefits) payable by the State. An

Integrated scheme looks at the Old Age Contributory Pension as part of the total pension package promised to employees on retirement. One reason for this is that both employers and employees make substantial social insurance (PRSI) contributions and these, in turn, entitle scheme members to Social Welfare benefits and this normally forms part of an employee's pension.

The most common method of operating an Integrated pension scheme is by "salary offset". This means that the employer will regard the Social Welfare benefit as taking care of pension rights in relation to a particular part of salary. Since this part of the member's salary is being "pensioned" by the Social Welfare pension, it is deducted from the member's actual salary, to arrive at a figure for pensionable salary. The occupational (company) pension scheme then provides a pension based on the pensionable salary figure. The two parts added together (i.e. the occupational (company) pension and the Social Welfare pension) then give the intended pension, based on the full salary.

Contribution Rates

For mainly historical reasons, some CWU members are members of different pension schemes depending on their start date in employment. In addition, some members now pay the Class A rate of PRSI while older members remain on the old Class D Civil Service rate. Members on the Class D rate have no entitlement to the State Old Age Pension unless they have ten years contributions in other employment at the Class A rate. Members on the Class A rate will be entitled to an Integrated pension as explained above.

In eir all members pay a pension contribution, while in An Post only the members who pay the Class A PRSI rate pay a contribution (of 4%). This generally applies to all staff recruited after 6th April 1995. In the case of eir and Vodafone, the old Defined Benefit schemes have been closed and replaced by Defined Contribution schemes.

The different schemes and contributions and benefits can be very confusing, and while members in the Defined Benefit schemes have representation through the Union Trustees, there is a need to have Trustees appointed to the Defined Contribution schemes.

There is also a debate concerning members in Defined Benefit schemes who pay the Class A rate of PRSI and also pay a percentage contribution, as to whether or not it is in their best interest to remain within those schemes. At present the Union is seeking actuarial advice on this.

Pension Accord

Following the financial crash, the value of the vast majority of Defined Benefit pension schemes collapsed. The result was that many of those schemes in Ireland –

Pensions Update

and indeed across the rest of the world – were closed. At the time the legislation surrounding pension funds would have meant that any closure of those funds would be conducted in such a way to ensure that all existing pensioners received up to 75% of the value of their pension, with the remainder of the fund being spread between those still actively paying into the pension fund and people who were awaiting pension having left the service previously. In those circumstances there would have been no future increases.

The deficits in all pension funds at that stage were, under new legislation, added on to the company balance sheets and put the actual survival of companies in doubt. Throughout 2012 and 2013 the CWU sought the best advice it could and entered negotiations with the three main companies on the future of those Defined Benefit schemes. The result of those negotiations are the Pension Accords which are still in effect today.

The key provision in those Accords was that future pension increases would be linked to either inflation or a pay rise, depending on which was lower. This provision has been the main reason for difficulties in achieving rises in pensions, as for the first time in living memory, inflation was at a minus and for many years there were no pay increases due to the austerity policies followed by the government. To make matters worse the Fine Gael/Labour coalition government introduced a Pension Levy on all private pension funds. Most working people will agree that this was one of the most destructive measures introduced by the government, in circumstances where they were supposedly trying to encourage people to pay into private pensions for their future. Cynical exercise or not, the Pension Levy heaped additional costs on to Defined Benefit schemes and that levy was further exacerbated when the Pensions Authority insisted an additional risk reserve be built into future funding proposals for Defined Benefit schemes.

There is a strong belief within trade union circles that, between the levy and the changes introduced by the Pension Authority, there seemed to be a concerted effort to shut down Defined Benefit schemes which placed much of the burden on employers and replace them with Defined Contribution schemes which placed all of the burden on the workers.

Up-to-Date Position

The good news is, because of the actions taken by the Union and the members, now all three pension funds are in a reasonable happy position as follows:

1. An Post Pension Funds

As part of the above Accord we agreed to quarterly reports on the performance of the Pension Fund. At the time of the ballot in 2013, the latest asset valuation available (31st March 2013) was €2.116 billion. The

liabilities at that stage were €2.357 billion, which meant that there was a deficit of €241 million. The deficit figure is the difference between the valuation of the scheme's assets and its liabilities at a particular moment in time. While the Pension Asset Valuation and the Minimum Funding Standard deficit figure may be calculated at regular intervals they should be viewed in the context of a multiyear.

As of the 31st June 2019 the asset valuation of the fund is €3.440 billion and the liabilities are €3.007 billion. However, from January 2016, in addition to meeting the Minimum Funding Standard, schemes are obliged to maintain a risk reserve. The risk reserve is 10% of the fund's liabilities less the amount of the fund held in EU Government Bonds or cash. This amounts to €215 million. This means that there is a Minimum Funding Standard surplus of €218 million. The assets figure includes the contingent asset of €72.5 million as part of the required Risk Reserve, which would only be applied if the fund was wound up.

In the event of the scheme winding up, under current legislation, the assets of the scheme would be first used to secure pensions in payment to pensioners, through the purchase of annuities. This does not provide for future pension increases. The remaining assets of the scheme would then be used to pay pension benefits to active (employees) and deferred members. The figures show that the scheme could be expected to meet the Funding Standard (including Funding Standard Reserve) at 31st December 2019. However, when the contingency asset is excluded, the position is in balance.

The scheme is very susceptible to market movements (i.e. changes in equity or bond markets). A relatively small adverse movement can result in a material change to the funding position.

1. eir Pension Funds

The current value of the fund is €4.2 billion. Prior to the Accord deficits stood at €840 million; these debts are now eliminated. Fund assets have been de-risked, e.g. 70% growth (65% equities, 5% property;) before de-risking, 43% growth at Sept 2013, 23% growth assets at 31st December 2018. The fund is more secure and less risky. Costs are contained, from €20 million per annum in years after the Accord down to €8.5 million per annum in recent years. Employer contributions for 2018 were €8.5 million. Overall the fund returned +1% in 2018 when many other funds returned negative returns and deficits increased.

The €4.2 billion fund, with 23% remaining in growth assets, is broadly in balance but is exposed to Brexit and other geopolitical uncertainty in 2019.

The next effective date of valuation is the 30th September 2019, at which time the funding and solvency position of the fund will be assessed.

Pensions Update

Pension Levy

In total €82.8 million has been paid from the eircom No.1 Fund in respect of the Pension Levy (2011-2015). The outstanding levy in the No. 1 Fund is €66.8 million. The levy is effectively a debt owed by its members. To repay the balance of the levy outstanding a further c.1.6% in future increases would need to be withheld from the membership (actives, deferred, pensioners).

3. Vodafone

The Vodafone scheme is currently meeting the standard. This scheme is a closed scheme with no new members and the number of active members is reducing

Reviews

In the case of An Post and eir the review process is almost at an end. It has been timed to coincide with the Triennial evaluation of the funds which can give us the most up to date information and will, it is hoped, allow for more pensionable increases.

In An Post all pensioners have received a 1.7% increase recently which was the inflation figure, but which is lower than the actual pay rise achieved. An Post is also awaiting approval from government on the payment of 2.5% pension increase for retired Postal Operative/Postperson grades who left the service before 2006 as a result of consolidation of 2.5% of the change allowance. This only applies to staff who retired before the 16th January 2006, as all staff who retired since would have received the benefit of the C&D Change Allowance in their pension, the first phase of which was paid from 16th January 2006 and amounted to 4.16% (83.6% pensionable).

In the case of eir there have been no pensionable pay increases whatsoever for pensioners, although the Company did provide for pensionable increases on the last pay round for existing staff. It seems at the time of writing that we will be forced to go to a third-party where we will attempt to try and resolve this longstanding issue. It has been extremely disappointing to see the attitude of the new owners of eir to the people who helped to build the Company.

Postal & Telecommunications Service Act 1983

The Union has been inundated with queries from our members as to why we do not use some of the provisions in the above Act to force the companies into fulfilling their obligations to their pensioners. The provision most quoted by these members is the provision that states that workers will be no worse off in relation to pay conditions and pensions had they remained in the Civil Service. During the negotiations on the Pension Accords it would have been open to the Union to test that legislation in the Courts. You will recall that at that time the government

had instigated drastic cuts in pay to all public civil servants and in addition had introduced pension levies on members of the pension funds of between 5% and 9%. If we had been successful in a legal challenge at that time it could have left us open under the wording of the Act, to being treated in the same manner as those public and civil servants. In that regard it was the view of the National Executive Council that to do so would have been a form of madness.

So why not challenge the Companies under the Act today? The answer to this question is very simple and was provided to the last Biennial Conference by our legal advisers. In simple terms, there is a mechanism for changing the P&T Act and that mechanism is through a Collective Agreement. In all cases relating to the Pension Accords a full ballot of all the membership was held and a Collective Agreement was reached between the Union and the Companies. Given those signed agreements, members of the CWU have agreed to those Pension Accords through a democratic process by quite considerable majorities and therefore the provision in relation to being treated no less favourable than you would be as a Civil Servant has been surpassed by the relative Collective Agreement.

PIE

PIE stands for 'Pension Increases Early' and it is a scheme that is in operation in a number of European Countries. In essence this scheme allows members going on pension or existing pensioners to reach agreement with the company on a once-off negotiated increase in pensionable pay. Once that figure has been agreed there are no further future increases in pensionable pay over and above what is already agreed with your employer. The main companies have engaged consultants to look at this scheme which, if eventually agreed, can only be signed up to on an individual by individual basis. It is expected in the next few months that we will have further clarity on the proposed scheme.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that anger is growing among pensioners of the main companies due to the lack of increases in their pension. Many pensioners find it hard to understand why this is so, given the lifelong loyal service to the respective companies. The Union expects to make progress through the review clauses in the coming months and if we are unhappy with that progress, we have the option of referring matters to a third-party and indeed to take any action we deem to be necessary. A full documented outcome of the upcoming reviews will be issued as soon as we have them and hopefully at that stage, we will alert you to any action we will be taking if it is deemed necessary to do so.



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THE BAD NEWS ABOUT WORKERS' RIGHTS - AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

Recently, in Geneva, the International Trade Union Confederation released to the world the results of its annual Global Rights Index. The picture it paints is not a pretty one:

- Trade unionists were murdered in ten countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey and Zimbabwe.
- 85% of countries have violated the right to strike.
- 80% of countries deny some or all workers collective bargaining.
- The number of countries which exclude workers from the right to establish or join a Trade Union increased from 92 in 2018 to 107 in 2019.
- Workers had no or restricted access to justice in 72% of countries.
- The number of countries where workers are arrested and detained increased from 59 in 2018 to 64 in 2019.

- Out of 145 countries surveyed, 54 deny or constrain free speech and freedom of assembly.
- Authorities impeded the registration of unions in 59% of countries.
- Workers experienced violence in 52 countries.

What can we do about this? First of all, let's make sure that every single member of our Union knows about this report. We cannot guarantee that the mainstream media will give it the publicity it needs. But if every single person who reads this message shares it with others, the impact will be enormous. **Please — share this information! Share the link to the ITUC Global Rights Index! Post it on Facebook and Twitter.** Together, there are millions of us. Together, we can reverse these trends and ensure that the rights of all workers are respected, no matter where they live.

2019 ITUC GLOBAL RIGHTS INDEX

The World's Worst
Countries for Workers



INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

In June the International Trade Union Confederation released to the world the results of its annual Global Rights Index

Introduction

*by Sharan Burrow, General Secretary,
International Trade Union Confederation*

Democracy is in crisis. The systematic dismantling of the foundations of workplace democracy and the violent repression of strikes and protests put at risk peace and stability. The 2019 Global Rights Index saw the use of extreme violence against the defenders of workplace rights, large-scale arrests and detentions.

The breakdown of the social contract between workers, government and business has seen the number of countries which exclude workers from the right to establish or join a Trade Union increase from 92 in

2018 to 107 in 2019. All regions in the world had an increase in exclusions of workers, with the greatest

increase occurring in Europe, where 50 per cent of countries now exclude groups of workers from the law, up from 20 per cent in 2018.

Worldwide, new technology has allowed employers to use various mechanisms to avoid paying minimum entitlements and exclude workers from labour laws. Recent technological leaps in the ways that work can be allocated and accessed has resulted in increased incidences of workers being denied rights under the guise of flexibility and as platform workers. Decent work is being affected and rights are being denied by companies avoiding rules and regulations.

No worker should be left behind because their employer chooses to adopt a business model that obscures employment responsibility or their government refuses legislation to enforce workers' rights. More and

more governments are complicit in facilitating labour exploitation or allowing the rule of law to be avoided because workers are forced to work in the informal sector of the economy.

The sixth edition of the ITUC Global Rights Index ranks 145 countries on the degree of respect for workers' rights.

Six-year trend data analysed in the 2019 Global Rights Index exposes the systematic attempts to undermine freedom and democracy. The ongoing attacks on the foundations of workplace democracy have seen the growth in low-wage insecure jobs. While the world is more than three times wealthier than thirty years ago, inequality is now an overwhelming global risk. More people go to bed hungry than have been lifted out of extreme poverty.

Eighty-five per cent of countries have violated the right to strike. All strikes and demonstrations were banned in Chad, while court orders were used to stop strike actions in Croatia, Georgia, Kenya and Nigeria.

Eighty per cent of countries have violated the right to collective bargaining. Europe, traditionally the mainstay of collective bargaining rights, saw companies in Estonia, the Netherlands, Norway and Spain seek to undermine or circumvent workers' rights.

Authorities impeded the registration of unions in 59 per cent of countries with state repression of independent union activity in Argentina, Algeria, Egypt, India, Panama and Paraguay.

The ten worst countries for workers in 2019 are the following: Algeria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Zimbabwe.

Brazil and Zimbabwe are in the ten worst countries for the first time, with the adoption of regressive laws, violent repression of strikes and protests, and threats and intimidation of union leaders.

Eswatini, Iraq, Sierra Leone, Thailand and Vietnam have all seen their ratings worsen in 2019 to category 5 (no guarantee of rights) with a rise in attacks on workers'

rights in law and practice.

The signing of the peace agreement between Ethiopia and Eritrea in July 2018 has led Eritrea's rating to move from the 5+ grouping of countries in conflict, to 5 (no guarantee of rights). Serious human and labour rights abuses are present in the country including the use of indefinite national service.

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) remains the world's worst region when it comes to fundamental rights at work. Egypt dissolved all independent labour unions, and Saudi Arabia continues to keep millions of migrant workers trapped in modern slavery.

Trade Union members were killed in ten countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Italy, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey and Zimbabwe; workers were exposed to violence in 52 countries. Worldwide, 53 Trade Union members were killed in 2018. In Colombia alone, 34 were murdered.

Attempts by countries to silence their people in an age of anger against corporations, politicians and governments who have failed to deliver for workers are on the rise.

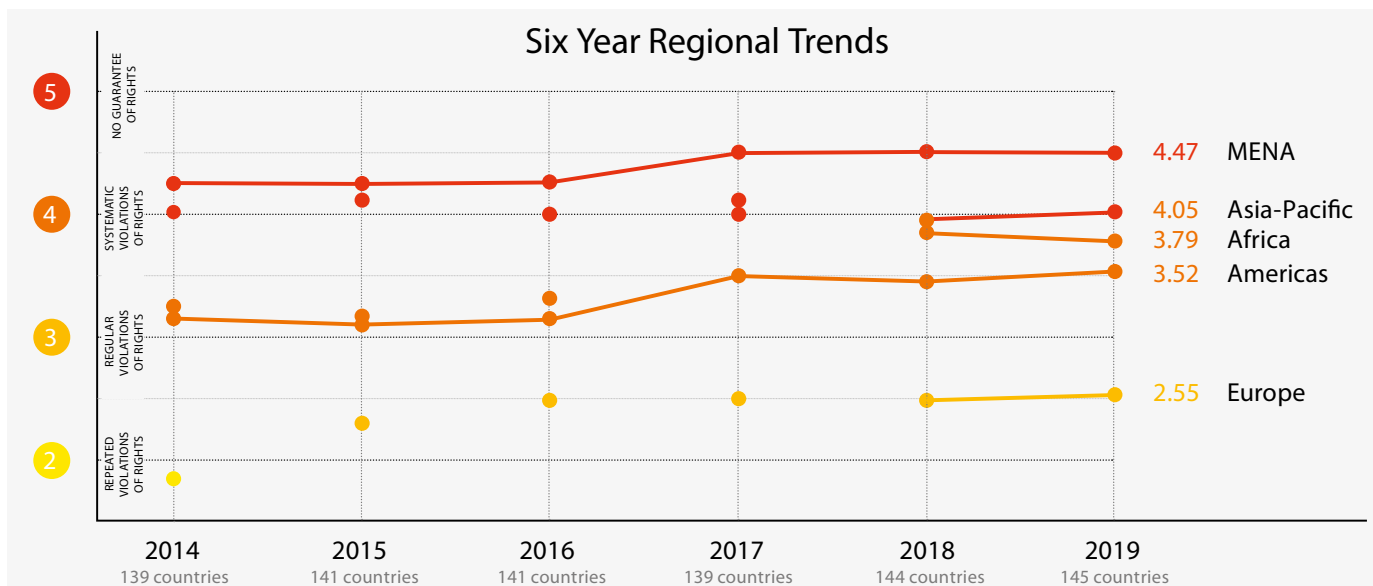
Fifty-four countries denied or constrained freedom of speech and assembly. Shrinking democratic space was witnessed in Hong Kong, Mauritania, the Philippines and Turkey.

Workers had no or restricted access to justice in 72 per cent of countries, with severe cases reported in Cambodia, China, Iran and Zimbabwe.

The number of countries where workers experienced arbitrary arrests and detention increased from 59 in

2018 to 64 in 2019. Mass arrests of workers were seen in China, India, Turkey and Vietnam.

Trade Unions are on the front lines in a struggle to claim democratic rights and freedoms from the corporate greed that has captured governments such that they act against workers' rights. We need a New Social Contract between workers, governments and business to rebuild trust as people lose faith in democracies. It's time to change the rules.



Companies Violating Worker's Rights

- Anlima Textile, Bangladesh
- Ashiana Garments Industries Ltd, Bangladesh
- Ryanair, Belgium, Portugal, the Netherlands
- Jasic Technology, China
- Croatia Airlines, Croatia
- Bimbo, Guatemala
- Northwest Transportation Company, Ecuador
- Bisco Misr, Egypt
- Ceramica, Egypt
- Majestic, Egypt
- TS Laevad, Estonia
- Tarkwa Mine of Goldfields, Ghana
- Ternium, Guatemala
- Tamil Nadu Rubber Corporation, India
- Haft Tapheh, Iran
- HEPCO, Iran
- National Steel Industrial Group, Iran
- **Dunnes Stores, Ireland**
- Kenyatta Hospital, Kenya
- Kenya Airways, Kenya
- Teachers Service Commission, Kenya
- Fu Yuen Garment Co Ltd, Myanmar
- Norse Production, Norway
- Prosegur, Paraguay
- AB InBev, Peru
- State Railway of Thailand, Thailand
- Sumifru, The Philippines
- NutriAsia, The Philippines
- TSTT, Trinidad and Tobago
- Goodyear, Turkey
- Renault, Turkey
- Istanbul Airport, Turkey
- Amazon, USA and Europe
- Uber, USA, Europe, India, South Korea, Australia
- Pouchen footwear factory, Vietnam

The ITUC Global Rights Index depicts the world's worst countries for workers by rating countries on a scale from 1 to 5+ on the degree of respect for workers' rights. Violations are recorded each year from April to March. Detailed information exposing violations of workers' rights in each country is published in the ITUC Survey found at survey.ituc-csi.org.

The 2019 Country Ratings

RATING 1

Sporadic violations of rights

- Austria
- Denmark
- Finland
- Germany
- Iceland
- **Ireland**
- Italy

- Netherlands
- Norway
- Slovakia
- Sweden
- Uruguay

Comparison with 2018 score:

All those listed in Rating 1 above have no change or new rating in 2019.

Description of Rating 1

Collective labour rights are generally guaranteed. Workers can freely associate and defend their rights collectively with the government and/or companies and can improve their working conditions through collective bargaining. Violations against workers are not absent but do not occur on a regular basis.

Europe

Conditions in Europe worsened in the last year due to an increase in violent attacks against Trade Union leaders and a growing trend of charging and sentencing workers for their participation in strike action. The average country rating increased to 2.55.



Violent attacks and murder of Trade Unionists

In 2018, Trade Union leaders were murdered in Turkey and Italy. In Turkey, Abdullah Karacan, president of the rubber and chemical workers' union Lastik-İş, was shot dead by a gun-wielding assassin on 13 November 2018. He was visiting workers at a Goodyear tyre factory in Adapazari. Two other union representatives were also wounded in the attack. In Italy, Soumayla Sacko, a 29-year-old agricultural worker and Trade Unionist from Mali, was killed in San Calogero on 2 June 2018 while collecting materials to help build the city of tents and shacks where he and his co-workers lived. For the last two years, he had been active in the Unione Sindacale di Base (USB) Trade Union and fought to improve the appalling conditions of labourers. In Kazakhstan, Dmitry Senyavskii, leader of the Fuel and Energy Workers' Union Karaganda Region local branch, was brutally beaten at his home in Shakhtinsk by two unidentified assailants.

Repression of strike action and protests

A number of strike actions were brutally dispersed by police forces, and protesting workers were prosecuted and sentenced for their participation in strikes. In Belgium, 18 FGTB members were charged for blocking a road during a protest. The president of the FGTB Antwerp branch was sentenced but no penalty was

imposed. Similarly in France, 5 CGT and FO members were summoned by the police for distributing flyers at a tollgate. The general secretary of CGT Lot was charged with “illegal occupation of public roads” and his trial scheduled for May 2019. In Turkey, 43 workers of new Istanbul Airport construction site were facing trial following a massive crackdown on their protest against deplorable working and safety conditions, in October 2018. The police violently dispersed the protest and took into custody over 400 workers. In Belarus and Kazakhstan, the authorities maintained their repression of independent unions, prosecuting and sentencing Trade Union leaders on trumped-up charges.

Erosion of collective bargaining

In many European countries, like the Netherlands, Estonia and Spain, companies of ten bypassed collective bargaining with unions and pushed for individual agreements directly with workers. In Norway, after a 35-day strike and the conclusion of a collective agreement to end the dispute, the owners of Norse Production, a salmon producer, bankrupted the company and established a new subcontractor at the same place and with the same management. None of the unionised workers from Norse Production were hired in the new company and the collective agreement was not renewed.

Violations of workers’ rights in Europe



Legislative Power

Law-making is an effective and powerful instrument for social transformation and the protection of labour rights. In the last year, several countries adopted progressive laws which further advanced workers’ rights and social progress. However, in other countries, governments passed regressive legislation that seriously undermined workers’ basic rights at work.

Positive legislative developments – Ireland, New Zealand

Ireland – Banning zero-hour contracts

On 20 December 2018, the Irish Parliament adopted The Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill, which aimed to address the challenges caused by the increased casualisation of work and to strengthen the regulation of precarious employment.

Under the legislation which came into force in March 2019, zero-hour contracts are outlawed, except in situations of genuine casual employment and where they are essential to allow employers to provide cover in emergency situations or to cover short-term absence.

The legislation also provides some important guarantees to improve the security and predictability of working hours for employees. Under the new provisions, employers must give employees basic terms of employment within five days and a new minimum payment must be made for employees called into work but sent home again without work. In addition, a new right for employees whose contract of employment does not reflect the reality of the hours they habitually work was also created, whereby employees will be entitled to be placed in a band of hours that better reflects the hours they have worked over a 12-month reference period. Finally, the text provides strong anti-penalisation provisions for employees who invoke their rights.

This piece of legislation, which is a major step in improving working conditions for workers on insecure contracts or working variable hours, is the result of a long struggle by Dunnes Stores workers and union activists who lobbied on the issue of zero-hour contracts for the last four years. Now, as a result of this legislation, thousands of workers will be able to apply to their employer after 12 months seeking a new contract with secure hours.



Workers from the Irish retail chain Dunnes Stores protest working conditions, including the company’s use of zero-hour contracts prior to the passing of a 2018 law banning this type of abusive contract.

Credit: NurPhoto/AFP



Results of CWU Survey of KN Group Members

Introduction

Here are the summary results of a recent survey conducted by the Communications Workers' Union of KN Group members. As the membership is dispersed nationally, the key focus of the survey was to identify issues that can be taken up on behalf of our members.

The survey was emailed to all KN membership and followed up with a text message during July 2019. There was a response rate of 54% overall.

The survey consisted of questions covering issues of rate card, pay, codes, fluid work, bonus, annual leave and work life balance. In addition, an open question was included to allow respondents to offer suggested changes that would make their job in KNIS better.

The CWU wishes to thank all of those who participated in the survey and for providing their feedback and comments. We look forward to addressing the issues you have raised with senior management.

Summary

The survey reveals that take-home pay has not increased for our members in the last year. This is worrying given that the recently introduced rate card changes promised the opportunity to increase overall take home pay and the promise of fluid work. In addition, our administration and management members indicate an increase in workload and stress. A high percentage of respondents viewed the bonus targets as unachievable. A bonus scheme is not worthwhile if it's targets cannot be achieved.

KNIS respondents viewed the rate card as easy to understand and a high percentage agreed that all job elements were covered. This is not to say that improvements/additions cannot be included and the CWU, on your behalf, will pursue this.

Our KN membership want a detailed breakdown of their work codes associated with their payslip. Many of our members have not had the potential to increase their pay due to the non-availability of fluid work.

91% of our Managers and Administration members have seen their workloads increase in the last year.

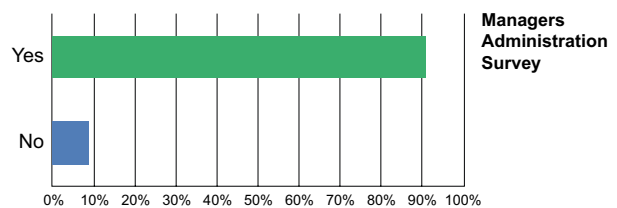
Regarding work-life balance and annual leave a high percentage of respondents agree that working in KNIS provides them with an opportunity to balance work and life outside work. The procedure for requesting leave was fair and annual leave entitlements are, in the main, 21 days per year.

There are a wide range of changes that respondents suggest that would make their job better. The changes

range from hourly pay to shorter working week. Also included is pay, sick pay, training, better communication, better work distribution/routing, private use of vans, bigger vans etc. The list is too long, but we will collate all the responses and include on our agenda with management.

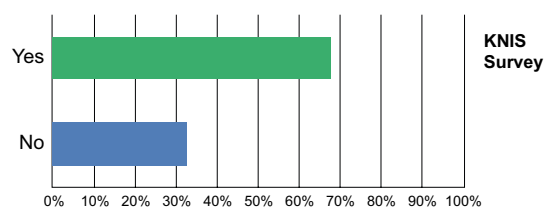
The survey shows that there is a willingness among members to become more involved in the CWU. This is important because we need to develop a structure that will ensure more effective communication and representation. It is vital we develop a structure that delivers for you. We also know that there are still staff that are not members of the union and therefore we would encourage all our members to promote the CWU with your work colleagues. Delivering on the findings of this survey is dependent on strong membership levels combined with a structure that listens and acts on our members concerns. Our aim is to make sure this happens.

Q3: Have your work responsibilities increased over the last year?



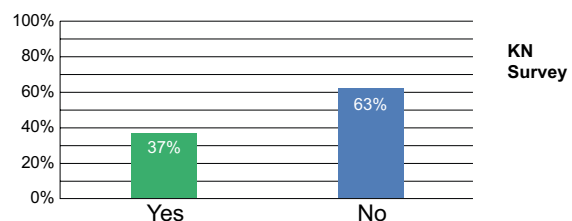
91% of respondents have taken on increased responsibility in the last year

Q10: Does working for KNIS provide you with an opportunity for a "Work Life Balance"?



68% of respondents see KNIS providing a work life balance

Q3: Do you find working on codes provides you with an opportunity to earn a reasonable wage?



63% have an issue with code work

eir appeals €10m burden of providing 'essential' services

Telco argues the regulator has left it with an unfair burden

eir is appealing a decision by the State's telecommunications regulator which requires it, and none of its competitors, to spend about €10 million a year on providing a raft of "essential services".

The telecommunications company has brought a High Court action against the Commissioner for Communications Regulation (ComReg), which rejected its request for funding support from its competitors to meet the €50 million costs incurred in providing a range of services between 2010 and 2015.

Some of those services include providing landline services to isolated households in the Republic, payphone services for those without mobile access and printed phone directories.

eir has argued that "it is unfair that it alone shoulders the cost of providing this essential service". It has asked ComReg to create a fund to ensure the costs of these services are shared across major operators according to their profitability and market share.

If the responsibility was shared by market share, eir would be on the hook for about 41 per cent, given its share of fixed-line revenues. That suggests that it wants its competitors, including Vodafone, Sky, Virgin Media and 3 to share a cost of about €29.5 million between them. eir says that ComReg has acknowledged that those companies "benefit from the connection of consumers to the eir network". But it adds: "ComReg has not accepted that all operators should pay their fair share for those benefits."

'CYNICAL PLOY'

In response to the appeal, Alto, the industry grouping representing alternative operators to eir, said: "We reject any position adopted by eir that the industry should fund it further. ComReg's findings of no unfair burden are clear and categorical. Any appeal by eir is a cynical ploy to seek further rent from industry.

"There is no unfair burden on eir and ComReg's expert evidences underpins this statement in spades."

eir chief executive, Carolan Lennon, said: "eir supports fully the goal of universal access to telecom services and the cohesion that this brings to society, particularly for the most isolated in society.

"The financial burden of supporting this goal is borne entirely by eir, rather than being spread fairly across all of the telecoms operators, as is the case in other countries."

In a statement, eir suggested that it invests more in its infrastructure each year than all of its competitors combined. Ms Lennon added that the company's main competitors, "which are multinational companies much larger and more profitable than eir, should also contribute to the costs of meeting this essential service".

ComReg declined to comment, as the court process is ongoing, but it previously said the cost of the scheme did not represent an unfair burden on eir. The case was listed to come before the High Court on June 24th.

eir'S APPEAL OVER €43M USP COST GETS FAST-TRACKED

By Tim Healy – © Independent Online

An appeal by eir against several decisions by the Commissioner for Communications Regulation (ComReg) concerning the firm's obligations to provide certain essential services has been admitted to the fast-track Commercial Court.

The appeal arises out of ComReg's decision not to provide funding for the costs eir incurred while delivering its universal obligations as the State's designated Universal Service Provider (USP). The services include providing pay phones, fixed lines in isolated areas and directory services.

In terms of financing the USP's obligations, eir is entitled to seek funding by making an application to ComReg for the establishment of a sharing mechanism where the net costs can be shared among all providers of electronic communications networks and services in the state.

In 2014, eir made several applications to get compensation for costs incurred due to its designation as a USP for each year from 2010 to 2015.

After a five-year delay, ComReg found in a decision published last April, that while eir incurred costs of €43m

in meeting its obligations, such costs did not represent an unfair burden to eir.

In its challenge, eir – now headed by Chief Executive Officer, Carolan Lennon, – claims ComReg made a number of significant errors in the manner in which it arrived at its decisions, and wants the court to set those decisions aside.

The alleged errors include that ComReg erred in its assessment of the extent to which eir's obligations constitutes an unfair burden.

It further claims that ComReg's decisions are discriminatory, unfair and disproportionate and that the regulator had breached its statutory obligations.

The application for inclusion in the commercial list was made by eircom Ltd, represented in court by Jonathan Newman SC. The application was unopposed.

3 Ireland Ltd also applied to the court to become a notice party to the action. The court also heard that Vodafone is considering if it is appropriate that it also becomes a notice party to the action.

The Judge adjourned the matter to next month.

The Interview: 'If we were Google or Facebook, there would be a statue up to our investors' - eir Chief

As debate rages over the National Broadband Plan, eir chief Carolan Lennon vows its investors are in it for the long-haul and have committed €1bn to Irish infrastructure, writes Adrian Weckler



In charge: Carolan Lennon, CEO of eir. Photo: Steve Humphreys

Adrian Weckler [AW]: Among all the talk of value for money and whether the National Broadband Plan is worth a €3bn subsidy, eir will take in close to €1bn from rental of its poles by the bidder. That's a nice pay day for eir, surely?

Carolan Lennon [CL]: I don't believe it is a great pay day. I accept that €1bn is a lot of money. But I think you have to look at how that is made up. Our prices are regulated. So the pole and duct prices are set by the regulator. And we're allowed to make just over an 8pc return on those. It costs €600 for a pole. There are 1.2 million poles in the intervention area. And over the course of this project, maybe every one of those poles will have to be replaced.

To give you an example, we had to replace 2,500 poles after Storm Ophelia recently. So there's a lot of money that goes into maintaining that network.

Currently, we have customers on our copper network in the intervention area, so the money that we get from them pays for the maintenance of that infrastructure.

But in the future, we won't have them because you have to believe that they will migrate onto the new fibre network that's being built by NBI [National Broadband Ireland, the name of the company set up by Granahan McCourt to act as the official corporate entity that rolls out the rural network]. So we won't have that revenue coming in. And we'll still have to maintain that network because NBI's fibre will be hanging on it.

So the reality is, when you do the sums from an eir point of view, the revenue that we're going to lose from

those copper customers migrating over the lifetime of this project is almost equivalent to the money that we're going to get from renting out our ducts and poles.

AW: But 8pc income over the next three decades is still a pretty good return. Did a calculation that this might be forthcoming influence your decision to withdraw from the National Broadband Plan, which might have been a lot more hassle?

CL: Well they [the NBP bidder] had a choice. There is other infrastructure they could use from other suppliers. The ESB has infrastructure. They have decided to use eir's infrastructure but they had a choice.

But I led our NBP programme. My background was the wholesale business [before becoming CEO]. We were absolutely determined to win this. I used to get teased because I wanted to win both lots [when it was two contracts].

I thought we were the best people to do it. We had the infrastructure, we know how to build in rural Ireland. For us to win that network competition would have given us the chance to upgrade our copper network in rural areas, to hold on to revenue from rural customers and to expand our wholesale offerings.

We were really excited to participate in that. But as the process went on, layer after layer of complexity got built into the process. This was particularly so for us as an ex-incumbent and a big wholesaler.

For example, there was a requirement that our wholesale business couldn't sell in the intervention

footprint and that we'd have to set up another wholesale function.

There were other things, such as the requirement that the SLA [service level agreement] for this rural network would have to be better than the SLA that exists in urban areas in terms of how quickly we repair a fault when something goes down.

So there was a risk for us that we'd agree to something in the intervention area and then suddenly it'd overhang the rest of your business on the cost.

When we started adding all those things up, there was no business case in the end for eir to participate in the NBP. For me, it was a very sad day when our [then] CEO wrote a letter to say we were pulling out.

I felt very disappointed because I felt we could win and do a good job in delivering it.

But having made that decision, we now have new shareholders on board who are long-term telco people.

We've been able to make decisions about where we're going to spend our capital, make our own plans, and get on with delivering those. We'll be finished our 300,000 rural rollouts at the end of June. And then our national fibre build starts in July. So we're not hampered or tied up into complicated processes.

And it's great, to be frank, to be paddling our own canoe and getting on with the things that we want to do. Of course, we'll support NBI and they will be using our infrastructure. And the revenue we lose from the copper customers migrating [to NBP fibre], we will get back on pole rental.

But we still need those people to maintain the poles and to do all that we've a thousand people working on our network and looking after it.

AW: What about alternative NBP solutions put forward by some, such as 5G?

CL: I think 5G can be a solution for some people. It's not, in my opinion, the answer to the National Broadband Plan. Because with 5G there will always be gaps. And the whole idea of the National Broadband Plan is not to have gaps.

AW: Are you surprised that the cost of the National Broadband Plan is what it has turned out to be, escalating from an initial estimate of €500m seven years ago to a €5bn network today with up to €2.6bn of state subsidy? Or do you think that roughly reflects what it actually costs to build that sort of fibre-to-the-home infrastructure to over half a million rural premises?

CL: €500m was never realistic. So to say it's gone up is not right. That €500m figure was an initial number that just went out, it wasn't cost-based. So to say it was ever really €500m is wrong. Am I surprised at the cost? No, I'm not. Very few other countries have said they'll roll out to 100pc of premises, they've often said 98pc or 97pc.

I know the department is doing this for the right reasons, that the ambition is for 100pc coverage. And if this goes ahead with fibre to the home, that would put Ireland at number one by a long shot and very hard to hard to catch.

But you'll find it's that last 5pc, those 50,000 to 100,000 homes, that are going to drive an awful lot of the cost. I think that's the debate.

To me, that's a political decision, a societal call. Is that kind of money worth it so that people can live and work where they want? It's not an economic call and it's not a business case. You have to take in the bigger picture about what kind of society we want and how that all works.

AW: What about take-up levels? There has been some suggestion that there is little demand for this level of high-speed fibre. In particular, critics point to take-up levels of 20pc in areas that have recently seen the rollout of such fibre broadband. Is that a low take-up level or is it decent?

CL: Definitely decent. You build networks for life, not for Christmas. These networks have to sustain us into the long-term. And households in rural Ireland that won't want broadband today will want it in 20 years or 10 years or five years. Whether because of a change of household or whatever.

So do I believe that for eir having a fibre-to-the-home network across the majority of our homes in the future will give us a sustainable position where we can be very competitive and cross urban? Absolutely, I do. And I want to have it before people want it.

So we're very, very happy with the uptake on our fibre-to-the-home network. It's well within our business case recommendations. And we've also found that of the take-up of homes we released in the first quarter, their uptake rate is now considerably ahead of the average. It builds. We're very happy with it.

AW: Were you surprised to hear Taoiseach Leo Varadkar say that the Government considered nationalising eir as a National Broadband Plan option?

CL: Yes. That would have been a bit of a surprise. There have been a few TDs who have said that from time to time. Any time there's a heated discussion on the National Broadband Plan, that has been a line that comes out. 'Let the ESB do it' is another line that comes out.

If there's one thing that frustrates me about being CEO of eir is that people often bring us back to privatisation [in 1999] and whether it was a good decision or a bad decision.

It was probably a bad decision, but it was a decision made by people way before me. And the team there in place today, the current investors and the current management team, are all about driving eir forwards

and have no say in the past. But it's just something that people tend to hanker back to.

AW: What about your own fibre plans? It's one thing for the State to be subsidising a fibre-to-the-home network in rural areas. But eir badly needs a similar standard in cities and large towns, surely, if you're going to compete with Virgin's cable and Siro's fibre.

CL: Yes. When you look at us in the cities, we're under-indexing. Our network market share across the country is 68pc. But in the cities it's 40pc. We simply haven't done as well in urban areas. So we need to have a product that people really want in the cities. And you have [Virgin] cable built out in the cities with no competition from eir because we weren't investing and that was previous shareholders who made those decisions.

Now we have an opportunity to address that and take back some share. Fibre to the home is, we believe, the future. Even if a gigabit isn't much use to most of us today, in the future that will definitely change.

The question for us is do we want to be building our network when it's changed? Or do we want to have our network built in advance so that we're ready for the change?

AW: With all the fibre we're now talking about, are we effectively looking at the end of the copper phone network in Ireland?

CL: Yes, pretty much. We will not need the copper lines that are going into houses. We know that copper limits us because with distance and quality. It's done its job. But we're regulated.

So we have started that process now to engage with the regulator and industry to ask what does a world without that copper network look like?

It also depends on how quickly people migrate off the copper network onto the fibre network. I think in the future that would be good for Ireland to have the vast majority of customers served by an all-fibre network. You get a lot less faults.

Copper loves lightning and we get a lot of lightning in Ireland. Copper isn't great with water, either. We don't have as many of those challenges with fibre.

AW: eir has just taken on €400m of new debt. The history of the company doing this in the past is well known and it worries people. Are we about re-enter a cycle of the company being over-leveraged, leading to challenges around capital investment and delivery of services?

CL: Absolutely not. Yes, we did go out into the markets to refinance some loans and bonds that we had. Since our NJJ acquisition, we've made an investment plan and are spending €1bn in capital. Those contracts have been signed. The fibre-to-the-home contract is signed and the mobile work has already started.

Since the [NJJ] acquisition, we've been able to take our net leverage down from 4.1 times ebitda to 3.7 times ebitda, even with that investment baked in. So we saw an opportunity to go to the market. And we were very well oversubscribed.

We got a much better rate than we have today and we were able to push out our time to repay by two years to 2026. All of which means we can get all our investment plans delivered and have seven years before we have to look at the balance sheet again.

Our plan for leverage is going to be three-and-a-half times to four. This will put us just above that level for the moment. But within 12 months, we'll be back in that three-and-a-half to four range.

But more generally, investors invest to make a return. As long as you're investing the right amount in your infrastructure and you have a decent leverage percentage compared to other European telcos, then this is all absolutely fine.

I'd love the dialogue for eir and investors and dividends to become the norm.

To be honest, that's a great result. For us to be able to go out and be as oversubscribed as we were, to get a better rate to extend it out by two years, I think shows a lot of confidence in eir and in what we're doing. It's never picked up like that. But that's the reality of it.

AW: Well, if it's not picked up like that, presumably it's because this company is still one of Ireland's most essential utilities. Maybe people are less interested in whether eir is making a handsome return for its investors than whether it's actually providing society with well-oiled, up-to-date infrastructure.

CL: I suppose so. But look what those investors are doing. They're committing one billion euros of their money to improve the telecoms infrastructure in Ireland. If we were Google or Facebook, there'd be a statue.

They [Xavier Niel and NJJ] picked Ireland. They've made those decisions and now we're doing those investments.

This has to be acknowledged. They could spend their money somewhere else. But they decided to spend it on fibre infrastructure in Ireland. And our previous investors, to be fair to them, decided to spend €250m of their own money on bringing fibre to rural Ireland.

When everyone else was just talking about it, we actually went and got on with it. So I think we've put our money where our mouth is. We take this risk. If no one goes on to that rural network, then it's my problem. As it happens, that's not the case, which is great. But it's still risk-return.

Our current investors have a long-term view and are going to hold eir to perpetuity. They have faith in eir and faith in Ireland which is why they're spending their money here.



10th September 2019

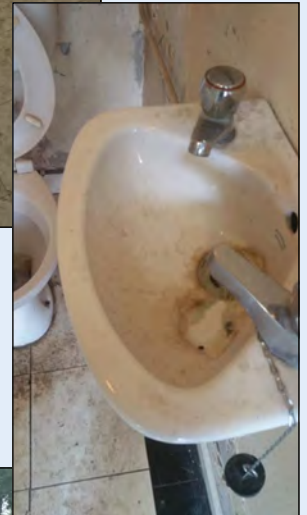
To: Scale A District Branch Secretaries
Re: eir Facilities- Cleanliness/Welfare and Health and Safety issues

Dear Colleagues,

When meeting Branch Secretaries recently, concern was expressed regarding the cleanliness and upkeep of eir facilities, including exchanges and AEHs. To progress this issue on behalf of our members, can I ask that each Branch conduct a survey of exchanges/RSUs/AEHs locations in their areas. I suggest that this survey contains description and photographic evidence.

As previously communicated, the Company highlighted the high levels of domestic waste at some locations and therefore, we would encourage members to refrain from leaving their own domestic rubbish on eir property.

John Clarke
National Officer



SOM/FLM Pay Agreement

Following difficult negotiations agreement was reached on Pay for our SOM and FLM members in eir for the FY19/20. The approach to pay agreed for this year is summarised below:

- The overall total pot allocated to the pay increase is 2.7% which is inclusive of the agreed transition payment.
- The maximum of the salary bands for FLM and SOMs will increase by 1.1%
- All in scope employees will receive the transition payment of €550 (as per JCC Agreed Report 628)

- Any increase which results in an employee's base salary being over the top of the band (FLM or SOM) will be treated as ex gratia payment (non-pensionable)

The agreement also includes a joint review in respect of the role profiles associated with SOMs and FLMs. The main reason for the delay was our position that we achieve a pay increase for all our members. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our members for their patience during these detailed discussions.

Pay Increase and Sunday Working Premium for eir Retail Shop Members

Following recent negotiations with the company the Union can now confirm that a premium for Sunday working has been agreed with senior management.

The agreed premium is 10% and this will apply to both salaried and non-salaried (hourly paid) staff and is applicable to the basic rate of pay for hours worked on Sundays.

This premium will apply for the next two years, in line with the remaining period of the current pay agreement and will be effective from September 1st, 2019.

This is in conjunction with the three year pay deal agreed with the company which, based on performance, should deliver an 8.1% increase over its three-year

duration.

Combined with the Sunday premium of 10%, this pay increase represents positive progress by the union members in their continued efforts to improve the terms and conditions in retail. We will continue to work together with the company to achieve the best outcome for everyone concerned and when the current three-year deal is concluded we will return to the negotiation table with your support to improve the Sunday premium.

These outcomes are only possible with the continued support of a strong membership base and it is important that all retail staff are members of the CWU.

Rigney Dolphin Redundancy Deal

Following a tendering process Vodafone Ireland decided to discontinue its contract with Rigney Dolphin with the result that a significant number of CWU members were facing either compulsory redundancy or, in limited cases, the chance to transfer to Vodafone.

For those members facing redundancy the key concern was that Rigney Dolphin had indicated that only the statutory minimum payment of two weeks per year of service would be available. The Vodafone Branch made it clear that this position would not be acceptable and that furthermore, the staff with less than two years' experience who would have no legal entitlement to statutory redundancy pay would have to be looked after as part of any negotiated outcome.

Following months of intensive negotiations, the branch successfully secured an enhanced redundancy package in May for staff with over two years' service and for members with less than two years an attractive pro-rata deal was agreed as follows:

- For staff with less than two years' service the following pro-rata payments will apply:

Length of Service	Redundancy Payment
Up to six months	3 weeks basic pay
Up to 12 months	5 weeks basic pay
Up to 18 months	7 weeks basic pay
Up to 24 months	9 weeks basic pay

- For those with over two years' service the following will apply:

Statutory redundancy payment plus 2 additional weeks (2 plus 2) per year of service, plus one week statutory. For example, if an employee has 5 years' service, then they will be paid 10 weeks statutory pay, plus an additional 10 weeks basic pay, plus one weeks' statutory pay (a total of 11 weeks statutory pay, plus 10 weeks basic pay).

The ex-gratia payments were based on the actual service worked up to the last day of work. For example, if a person has 3.75 years' service he/she would get .75 of the fourth year i.e. ex-gratia pay would be 2 weeks per year multiplied by 3.75 = 7.5 weeks' pay (2 x 3.75).

The deal was welcomed by the members who, in very difficult circumstances, had shown great patience and support for the branch. It is never easy when members have to deal with a redundancy situation but thanks to the hard work and dogged pursuit of a fair deal by the branch, a very tough and trying situation was made that bit easier. It should be noted that the branch also ensured that the company had to bring in a range of employers from the local area to provide a range of alternative employment opportunities to the affected staff as well as making sure that the appropriate EAP programmes were available.

Sadly, however the loss of this contract brings to a close the Rigney Dolphin section in the Vodafone branch along with the loss of some active members of the branch.

eir Direct Sales

The CWU would like to extend a warm welcome to our new members in eir Direct Sales.

At the beginning of this year, eir began insourcing their Direct Sales roles from CPM. Back office support and sales workers transferred their employment from CPM to eir under TUPE. Since then, a number of new staff have also been hired for the Direct Sales Team.

Over the last number of months, CWU Organisers arranged to meet these workers and explain the benefits

of union membership and invite them to become members of the CWU. We are delighted to report that the vast majority of these workers have made the decision to become CWU members and are now being represented by the Dublin No. 1 Branch.

The CWU Organising Department are continuing to meet new Direct Sales staff during their training and we look forward to welcoming even more new members to our Union.

Lufthansa InTouch Update

In May, CWU members in Lufthansa InTouch decided to refer their pay claim to the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC). This decision was made having exhausted all local stages of the Dispute Resolution Procedure as part of the framework agreement between the CWU and Lufthansa InTouch.

A Conciliation Hearing was held on the 4th of September. However, as the company maintained their position that they were not prepared to address the claim on salary based increases and salary ceilings, it was felt that conciliation could not progress the matter further.

The CWU have now referred the matter to the Labour Court and are awaiting a hearing date. As always, our members will be kept updated as matters progress.

Organising Training

In July, the CWU Organising Department, in conjunction with CWU Education Committee, delivered a one-day training course on Union Structures, Grievance & Disciplinary procedures and Union Inductions. In attendance were:

- Rachel Carton – Dublin No.1
- Kerri Cogan – PhoneWatch
- Charlotte Byrne – PhoneWatch
- Margaret O’Halloran – Cork District Branch
- Katie Moore – Cork District Branch
- Graham Ryan – PhoneWatch

The Union Structures module provides members with the knowledge of their own Branch structures and Committee roles, structures of the Union, Branch motions and the business of Conference. Grievance & Disciplinary training provides members with the skills to advise, guide & represent members on individual issues. For the concluding module, Union Induction training gives the Branch members the knowledge and confidence to speak to new members of staff on the importance of becoming a member of the CWU. It is vital that new staff understand the importance of joining the union at the beginning of their employment, ensuring that these workers are protected and union density remains strong.

It was a successful day and the CWU would like to thank all of those who participated.

NIGHTLINE UPDATE

In October, Nightline warehouse staff received the fourth and final instalment of a pay deal negotiated by the CWU in May 2018.

This pay deal was secured on foot of an organising campaign initiated in 2017. The campaign, supported by a high level of worker involvement, delivered a range of improvements to the terms and conditions of Nightline workers.

Although the pay deal was a significant win for workers, the Nightline CWU Committee continued to campaign for shift allowance and annual leave entitlements equal to that of their counterparts in UPS.

It is a welcome development that the company have now announced their intention to implement a shift allowance for those applicable in the first quarter of 2020 and the alignment of annual leave entitlements to the UPS Ireland entitlement.

The CWU also welcomes the company’s commitment to the harmonisation of Nightline workers to UPS contracts from the second quarter of 2020.

These are significant steps in the right direction for Nightline workers and the Union wishes to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of the Committee in their continued efforts.

Branch Officer Course

The Branch Officer course took place in Union Head Office and commenced on May 29th. We had high attendance from the Postal Sector with the course being open to Assistant Secretaries and Vice Chairpersons.

The aim of this course is to provide Branch Officers

with the necessary skills to carry out the role of Branch Officer given that they will be required, from time to time, to stand in for either the Branch Secretary or Branch Chairperson.

We wish the group well.



In attendance were:

Damien Roche (Ennis Postal),
Michael Shanahan (Roscrea/Birr Postal),
Arno Korthout (Kilkenny Postal),
Christy Grehan (Carrick-on-Shannon Postal),
Thomas Lawlor (Carlow Postal),
Matthew Doyle (DPAB),
Ciaran Reilly (Drogheda Postal),
Liam Keehan (DPDB),
Kyle Gavin (Mullingar DSU),
Michael Connolly (Tullamore Postal),
Malachy Rudden (Cavan Postal)
and Kevin Gaynor (Thurles Postal).

Treasurer Course

Our Treasurer Training course was held on May 30th. We developed new materials for participants this year which included the financial duties and representative

role of the Treasurer. We welcomed representatives from both the Postal and Telecoms sectors, and we wish them well in their role.



In attendance were:

Sean Boylan (Cavan Postal),
Anthony Cuddihy (PhoneWatch),
Flan Enright (Ennis Postal),
Yvonne Heffernan (Dublin No 2),
Margaret Hegarty (CMC),
John Lafferty (Sligo Area Postal Managers),
Paul Madden (Cork Clerks),
Enda Montgomery (Mullingar Postal),
Teddy Murphy (North Kerry Postal),
Dick Ryan (Thurles Postal),
Gerry Ryan (Ennis Postal),
Sylvia Smyth (Monaghan Postal),
Pat Teahan (Limerick District), and
Michael McKenzie (Sligo District).

Branch Secretary Stage 1 Training

Our five-day Branch Secretary Stage 1 course was held April 16th, 17th & May 14th, 15th & 16th of this year. All newly elected Branch Secretaries attend the Stage 1 course to prepare them for their role. This course is spread over two months which is a new approach to allow Branch Secretaries to get familiar with their role. During the training we covered the duties of the Branch Secretary, negotiation skills and other modules relevant to the role. Our thanks to the group for their participation.

In attendance were:

Michael Brophy (Castlebar Postal), Derek Byrne (Sligo District), Canford Danga (CWU Head Office), Stephen Elliott (Drogheda District – NFT Section), Conor Glancy (Sligo – Carrick-on-Shannon Section), Padraig Farrell (Drogheda – Longford Section), Ronan Murtagh (Navan Postal), Padraig Power (Wexford Postal), Frank Semple (Dublin No 2) and Richard Thompson (Galway District).



Committee Courses

As usual we held various committee courses during the year. These are held both on a regional basis as requested by branches and in head office by combining various branches for a course. Courses held for a specific committee can be tailored to suit the needs of the committee and are co-ordinated by the Branch Secretary. This then brings together established and new committee members to develop their role. For courses in head office a variety of committees come together which is a great opportunity to network. This year we covered topics on health and safety, grievance and disciplinary

procedures, equality and most importantly the role of the Union Representative. Our thanks to all the branches who participated.

Courses held to date were:

- Union HQ combined branches, April 26th,
- Athlone Mails Centre, May 17th & 18th
- Dublin Postal Delivery Branch, June 14th
- Dublin Postal Amalgamated Branch, June 28th
- Union HQ combined branches, October 3rd

Advanced Branch Officer Course

Advanced Branch Officer Training was held September 17th to 19th and we had a large group in attendance this year as the course continues to be popular. The

course covered topics such as political economy, communications and other relevant issues. Our thanks to Mel from Trademark for their continued support.



In attendance were:

Finian Boyle (Mullingar Section), Barry Carr (Mullingar Postal), Tom Daly (Mallow Postal), Sean Donnelly (Longford Postal), Padraig Farrell (Drogheda District), Matt Finnegan (Cavan Postal), Ciara Melinn (Union Head Office), Noel Mullaney (Monaghan Postal), Jerry O'Brien (Mallow Postal), John O'Shea (South Kerry Postal), Tara Ravenhill (Athlone Mails Centre), Dave Sheehy (Dublin Postal Clerks), Peter Smyth (Tullamore Postal), Richard Thompson (Galway District), Ray Timmons (Carlow Postal) and Michael Walsh (Galway District).

Branch Secretary Stage 2

Our course was held between June 4th to 6th of this year and we were delighted to welcome back our Branch Secretaries who completed the Stage 1 course. Those who attend Stage 2 and are in their second or consecutive term as Branch Secretary therefore this course builds on their experience in dealing with union matters and

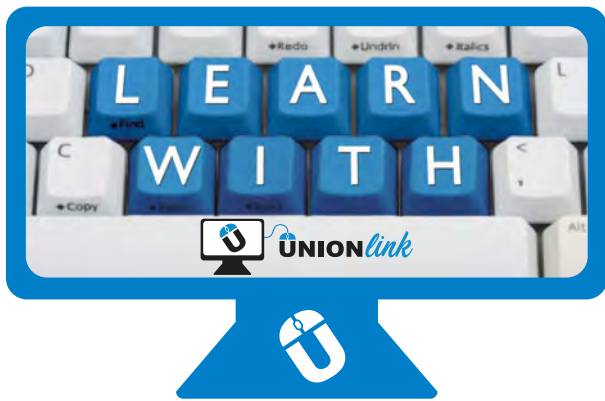
work-related issues on behalf of their membership. As part of the training, the group did a negotiations skills course in conjunction with new members of the National Executive Council.

We received great feedback from the course, and we wish the group every success in their continued role.

In attendance were:

Darren Clucas (Bray Postal), John Hickey (CMC), Noel Hogan (Birr/Roscrea Postal), Sean McDermott (eir Cork District), Hugh Quinn Donegal (SW Postal), Liam Ryan (Postal Maintenance Branch) and Paul Sheehy (Tullamore Postal).

Education Update



UNIONlink – Online Trade Union Training

The CWU, FSU and Mandate have come together to develop online learning courses that will assist our members and representatives in developing their skills. Through Unionlink, all members in our sectors have an innovative way of accessing a variety of courses. Education is an important part of the Union agenda: It not only enhances personal abilities, it also builds self-confidence. Unionlink assists members and representatives to create their own pathway to learning, while at the same time contributing to Union aims.

If you want to explore the online learning world, then Unionlink is for you!

How UNIONlink helps our Members

We believe that all our members should have the opportunity to develop their skills at a time and a place that suits them. With Unionlink this is possible as you can complete courses 24 hours a day, be it on your tablet, computer, laptop or smartphone. All courses are **free of charge** and are designed to be engaging and interactive.

Some examples of the types of courses that can be accessed are:

- Stress Management in the Workplace
- Mindfulness
- Understanding Trade Unions
- Sexual Harassment
- Whistleblowing
- Political Economy
- Getting to Know Your Computer

You can also download a Unionlink certificate, once you have successfully completed your chosen course.

Helping Members develop their skills

We have been assisting members and representatives to avail of learning opportunities for the last number of years. We can help you to develop your skills and create a greater awareness of courses that you might like to avail of through Unionlink. Unionlink supports a variety of e-learning courses. We have also set up partnerships with other learning providers to deliver a wider range of quality courses. This, in combination with our own expertise, has allowed us to establish a valuable online learning platform for all our members.

How UNIONlink helps our Representatives

To be a successful Union Representative, there are core skills that you must develop. As part of the Union Representative training package, you will have access to several online courses that will ensure that you are familiar with your role, which will then be developed further as part of the classroom training. This blended learning approach ensures that our representatives have every opportunity to contribute to their Union and make a difference to our members' working lives. The content of our representative courses reinforces the ethos of the Trade Union movement, while at the same time being an advanced way of representative learning.

Some examples of the types of courses for Union Representatives include:

- The Role of the Representative
- Organising and Recruitment
- Industrial Relations
- The General Data Protection Regulations
- Understanding Union Conferences

What do I do next?

- Go to our Unionlink website www.unionlink.org
- Register on Unionlink as a learner
- You will require a username and password to create an account
- Have your membership number at hand when creating an account
- Once your account has been confirmed by email, you can log in and select the course on which you wish to enrol
- Some courses require an enrolment key, which will be provided by your Union



Chairperson Training

This year our Chairperson training course took place between May 7th to 9th. All newly elected Chairpersons attend this course to learn about their role within their Branch Structure.

We cover other relevant modules such as grievance and disciplinary procedures, equality at work, health and safety and many others. We also pay focus on practical chairing skills and preparation for committee meetings and AGMs. Our thanks to all who participated.

In attendance were:

Owen Buckley (Ballinasloe Postal), Joseph Brennan (Sligo District), Rachel Dineen (CMC), Paul Dowd (Dublin No 2), Richie Doyle (Nightline), Damien Duignan (Sligo District), Mary Jacob (Limerick Call Centre Section), William Kenny (Drogheda Section), Aimee Levey (Sligo Call Centre Section), Sean McKenna (Dundalk Postal), James McKnight (Mullingar Postal), Alan McLoughlin (Cavan Postal), Stephen Neylon (Drogheda NRT Section) and Dermot O'Brien (Sligo Call Centre Section).



Equality Training

In attendance were:

Owen Buckley (Ballinasloe Postal), Paul Cleary (Birr/Roscrea Postal), Donie Curran (eir Limerick District), Pat Duggan (eir), Sean Connolly (Waterford), Richie Edgeworth (Dublin Postal Delivery Branch), Eamonn Healy (Wexford Postal), Eilish Kehoe (Enniscorthy Postal), Gary Langan (Dublin Postal Clerks), Aimee Levey (eir Sligo District), Heathcliff Maher (Portlaoise Mails Centre), Michelle Meeley (Castlerea Postal), Aaron Molloy (eir Sligo) and Paul Scanlan (eir National Managers Branch).



We were delighted to welcome a large group of new equality representatives. The equality representative is a support role to the Branch Secretary who can assist with equality related matters. This course is based primarily on the nine grounds of discrimination under employment equality legislation and deals with

such matters as work life balance, statutory and non-statutory leave, disability in the workplace etc. Equality Representatives make reports to their committee as required.

The course is open to elected Equality Representatives and we wish them every success.

UNI Europa – Area I – Women’s Committee Meeting



The meeting of Area 1 and members of our executive took place in April of this year in CWU head office. A number of UK and Ireland unions participated including FSU, Mandate, CWU UK and Prospect.

During the day we discussed what actions we would take from the 5th UNI World Women’s Conference which was held in 2018 in the Arena and Convention centre Liverpool.

Between us we covered many topics including empowering women, violence in the world of work, the role of women in STEM, digitalisation and its impact on women workers and we paid a particular focus on the campaigns of UNI Equal Opportunities and how we

can implement these in our own organisations. Laura Bambrick political and economic adviser with ICTU also joined us and gave an excellent presentation on the future of working time and she provided us with an update on the Employment (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2018.

Each Union also gave reports on the activities that they carry out in their own structures. This was a great opportunity to network and share ideas. We were then able to concentrate joint activities for the future. Overall it was a very successful meeting and we look forward to working together in the future.



***Our thanks to everyone
who joined us on the day.***

*CWU UK: Julia Upton
FSU: Margaret Browne
Mandate: Joan Gaffney
Prospect: Christine Bond*

*CWU IRL: Carol Scheffer, Deirdre
O’Hara, Deirdre Medlar, Margaret
Hegarty, Yvonne Heffernan
and Tara Ravenhill*

Guest Speaker: Laura Bambrick, ICTU

Breast Cancer Ireland - Lunch and Learn



In September we welcomed Breast Cancer Ireland to the CWU for a Lunch and Learn session on Breast Cancer Awareness. Breast Cancer Ireland outreach coordinators visit workplaces to educate women on this issue and what to watch out for. Where possible, a patient ambassador also attends to talk about their own experience.

Research is also a key initiative of Breast Cancer Ireland and we were amazed to hear of some of the cutting-edge developments in place to save women's lives.

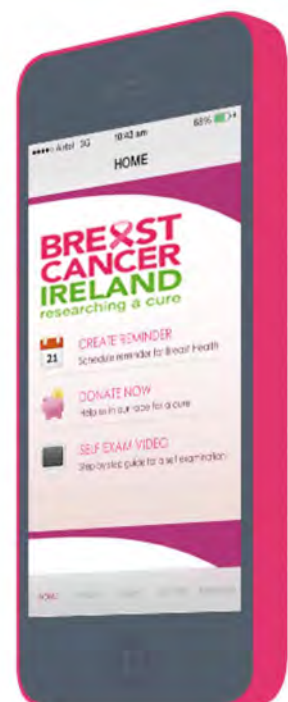
In attendance were head office staff as well as members of the executive and the feedback was very positive.

Speaking of the event, National Officer Carol Scheffer stated that "the lunch time session was most beneficial to the group as many of us were not aware of the signs and symptoms to look out for. The talk was very informative and very helpful." We would encourage all employers where we have members to use this service and promote Breast Cancer Ireland as widely as possible. Our sincere thanks to Adrienne and Ger for being with us on the day and for empowering us to look after our health.

Download the Free "Breast Aware" APP!

According to Breast Cancer Ireland "Knowledge and early detection are key. The earlier women know what is normal for them, if an abnormality should arise, it will be detected, treated, and the outcome more favourable."

In that regard we would ask our members to download the free Breast Cancer Ireland app "Breast Aware". Once you download the app you will receive, a discreet monthly reminder to your phone, a step by step video guide on how to perform a self-examination and guidance on the eight symptoms to be aware of for early detection.



For more information visit
www.breastcancerireland.com

Damien Tuohy Memorial Bench Function

A memorial ceremony took place in the Garden in CWU Headquarters, to unveil a seat in memory of the late Damien Tuohy, NEC Member and Galway Postal Branch. The President of the CWU unveiled the seat,

with Damien's wife, Margaret, and invited visitors, given the opportunity to take the time to enjoy the garden and remember Damien and the service he gave to the CWU during his time on the Executive.



Damien's wife, Margaret, admiring the memorial in his name.



The stone plaque commemorating Damien Tuohy.

President, Mike O'Connor, Vice-President, Willie Mooney, Steve Fitzpatrick, Damien's niece, Leona, and his wife, Margaret.



Galway Postal Branch with Damien's friend, Liam Conroy.



Headquarter's Staff with retirees, Gerry Bourke, Pat Compton and Liam Conroy.

Margaret and Mike unveil the Memorial Seat.



Ger Thompson and Deirdre Medlar present flowers to Leona and Margaret.



Dónal Corcoran Retires

Dónal Corcoran is pictured being presented with the Union Scroll by Branch Secretary, Hugh Quinn. The Donegal SW Branch would like to congratulate Dónal on his retirement following 30 years' service, and for his great support for the Branch throughout his time in the Post office. We wish him every success for the future.

George G. Kehoe Retires

Our colleague, George G. Kehoe, POC, retired recently after 47 years. He started out on his career on the 28th September, 1971, in Drogheda before finally retiring on the 28th September, 2018, from the Enniscorthy Office. In between, he served in Gorey, Youghal, New Ross and Wexford.

During his working life, George was an Officer of the Union for over 40 years. He was the Secretary of the Reception Committee for the 54th Annual Conference, when it was held in Wexford in 1977.

Upon transferring to Enniscorthy in 1979, he continued as a Officer of the Union. It was his Motion to Conference in the early 1980s that brought about the Sick Fund/Income Continuance Scheme in 1985.

George's retirement was marked by our Social Committee (of which he was a founder member in 1980, when it was first set up) with a function in the IFA Centre, Enniscorthy. The event was well-attended by his many colleagues past and present.



Matt O'Connor, Dickie Murphy, Fiacra Ryan, John Wall, George Kehoe and Matt Flynn.



Philip Aherne Retires

Philip Aherne retired in August 2019, when he was presented with the Union Scroll to mark the occasion. He was the Postman in Killavullen for 30 years. He will be missed for his great sense of humour by the people in the village and by his colleagues in Mallow DSU.

We wish him a long and healthy retirement.



Happy Birthday to **Fionnuala Ni Bhrogain** who recently celebrated her **40th Birthday!** Congratulations from all in headquarters.



Tom (Tosh) Kennedy Retires

Willie Mooney, Vice President, presents Tom (Tosh) Kennedy with his Union Scroll on his recent retirement.

Tosh can now dedicate his time to his love of horses and will definitely be seen in the Champions' Bar in Leopardstown, should you visit!



Ellen McAuliffe & Declan Hickey Retire

Pictured at their Retirement Party are Ellen McAuliffe and Declan Hickey, both of whom recently retired from the eir office in Roche St., Limerick. Their friends and colleagues wish them both a long and happy retirement.

You just never know!

A cautionary tale from the Mullingar & Enfield Branch



AS BRANCH SECRETARY of the Mullingar and Enfield Branch, I have always worked to represent my members to the best of my ability. I feel duty-bound to inform the general membership of our story and the importance of having protection against unforeseen incidents.

I always have been, and remain an advocate of the CWU. In years past, when a member suffered an accident, it was great that cover existed through the Union's In-Benefit Accident Scheme. This provided some financial assistance when a member may not have been able to work due to a broken arm or leg, or a slipped disc etc.

I accept that, in recent years, things have become more challenging and I agree with the reasons that the Accident Scheme could no longer be carried by the Union beyond January, 2019. I still believe there are members who don't know the Union cover has ceased and is no longer in force. I was aware that it was important cover, as a few of our lads benefited from it, but it is now up to each member to cover themselves under the alternative Voluntary Accident Scheme.

When you consider the price of the Voluntary Accident Scheme, there really is no reason why members shouldn't cover themselves and their families.

At the Spring seminar, Brian Halligan of Halligan Insurances spoke about the importance of the previous Union cover and that over €270,000 had been paid out to CWU Members in the last three years. Now that the cover is no longer in place, does that mean the accidents are going to stop happening? No! That realisation really brought it home for me, so when I returned to my branch, I asked the lads to join the Voluntary Accident Scheme and handed out a batch of forms that I got at the Seminar.

I won't lie to you; the lads didn't really have

much interest, but because a few guys in the Branch had claims paid under the Union cover, they stood up and vouched that it was a good cover to have.

Over the course of three weeks, I spoke to the staff in Mullingar, Enfield and the Sub Post Offices. I chased up the forms and yes, I did get a bit of stick from them! And that's okay, because in the end, 40 members filled out the forms and I got them covered from 1st May, 2019.

Job well done, you might say – and if that was the height of it, well I wouldn't be compelled to write this piece at all.

But unfortunately, you just never know in life, so it's with a heavy heart that I tell you that not long after that, something very serious happened to one of our members – the Chairman of our Branch.

I don't want to get into the details of the accident, only to say as I write this, that the situation he and his family find themselves in is very challenging and will remain so for some time. Everyone close to him, including myself, are praying for his full recovery.

Thankfully he joined the Voluntary Accident Scheme after the Spring Seminar and was covered since May. While it doesn't change the awful situation he and his family are in, the cover in place will continue to provide financial assistance to his family during this ordeal.

The day after the accident, I contacted Halligan Insurance on behalf of our Chairman. To be honest, they were on it straight away and could not have been more professional. I also contacted the Union Hardship Fund and when they heard about the seriousness of the accident, without hesitation they transferred a substantial sum of money to the family. This both brought peace of mind to his wife and family from that moment on.

I am writing this to all the Branches and their members, as I know first-hand, accidents can happen, and things can change in a flash. In the line of work that so many CWU Members find themselves doing daily, accident cover is something we should all have in place – particularly when the weekly cost is less than the price of a coffee.

Yours in solidarity,
Barry Carr
Branch Secretary
Mullingar/Enfield Postal Branch.

Terry Maguire Retires



Vice-President, Willie Mooney, presents Terry Maguire with his Union Scroll upon his recent retirement. We wish Terry all the best for the future.

Pat Hayes Retires



Pat Hayes, Postal Operative, Milltown Malbay DSO, who recently retired, is presented with his Union Scroll by Leonard Coote, Branch Secretary, Ennis Postal Branch. The members would like to wish Pat a long healthy and happy retirement.

Margaret Brennan Retires

After 25 years' service, Margaret Brennan recently retired from the Mullingar Transport Section. Margaret looked after drivers in the Cork region for most of her career. We know a lot of them will miss her and her "no panic or fuss" approach in sorting out their problems!

Margaret started in Kells in 1994, following which she then moved to Transport in Mullingar

from 2002 until 2019. She is a great Union person and served as Branch Treasurer with Mullingar Postal for a number of years, where she was also a great Committee person and always very helpful to the Secretary and Chairman.

All her colleagues would like to wish Margaret the very best in retirement with loads of health and happiness for the future.



Barry Carr, Branch Secretary, presents Margaret Brennan with her Union Scroll.

Joe Tobin Retires



Joe Tobin Mallow Postal Branch, retired on Friday 23rd March following 36 years' service. He is pictured here (centre) with his colleagues in Lismore, Fergal O'Brien and Ollie Linnane on his last day, where he received the Union Scroll in a presentation to mark his retirement.

All his friends and colleagues wish him a long, happy and healthy retirement!

Tuam Branch Retirement Presentations

Tuam CWU Branch marked the retirement of five Members recently with a Presentation Function in the Corralea Hotel.

Pictured front row (l-r): Pat Farrell (Tuam PO), Pat Farrell (Tuam DSU), Tommy Hynes (Tuam DSU), Karen Lowry (Tuam PO) who accepted the presentation on behalf of Mairead Coleman (Tuam PO) and Phillip McDonald (Tuam PO). Back row (l-r): J.A. Fallon, Branch Secretary, and John Tansey, Regional Officer.



Ray Kelly Retires

Ray Kelly retired recently, following 39 years of dedicated service. A presentation of the Union Scroll was made by Pat Dillane, Branch Chairman of Galway Area Managers' Branch, on the day of Ray's last day of service.



Antoinette Coen Retires

Pictured l to r: Paul Doolin, Transport Rep, Antoinette Coen, and Barry Carr, Branch Secretary Mullingar Postal. After 14 years' service, Antoinette Coen recently retired from the Mullingar Transport Section. Antoinette looked after drivers in Galway and Cork regions for most of her career. All the staff in Mullingar wish Antoinette the best of health and happiness in the future.



Brian Kelly Retires



Brian Kelly celebrating his retirement with work colleagues, past and present, from Boyle PO.

A party was held recently in Dodd's Bar, The Crescent, Boyle, to mark the retirement of local Postman, Brian Kelly.

Brian started out working on the buses in Dublin in the early eighties before he joined the Post Office in Sheriff

Street for a brief sojourn, where he traversed the streets of the capital delivering good and bad news. He then transferred to Ballaghaderreen and returned to Boyle in 1986. Double Deck Bus Drivers were not in big demand in Boyle at the time!

Johnny Boner Retires

A function was held in Brogan's Bar in Kilkenny recently, to celebrate the occasion of John Boner retiring from his role as Regional Officer.

Johnny is a lifelong member of the CWU serving at all levels, becoming President in 2001. He was joined by colleagues old and new. It is a testament to the man that so many people turned up on the night and joined in the celebrations. Johnny was also joined by this wife Maire, his children and grandchildren.



The Boner Family.

Johnny would often join his colleagues to watch his team play in Croke Park against Dublin and in the celebrations afterwards in Briody's. He will be sorely missed by all in headquarters and we wish him a long and happy retirement. P.S., Johnny, I want me flag back!

Shane O'Connor Go Karting An Post Perpetual Cup 2019



Result 2019	
Position	Name
1st	Dave Whelehan
2nd	Wayne Gilhooley
3rd	Trevor Thompson

There was a great turnout again this year by members of Mullingar Delivery Services Unit of An Post and friends, to commemorate our former friend and work colleague, Shane O'Connor (RIP).

This is the 10th year of this wonderful event. It was hosted by his friends and former co-workers, Mark "Ernie" Murray and Trevor "Trev" Thompson.

They have now honoured Shane through this event ten times with the winners as listed in the tables shown.

Trevor and Mark can take a bow for their hard and dedicated work and we hope to see more fellow co-workers take part next year, which will be the eleventh time the event will be run.

So, pencil your diary for the weekend around the 16th June, which will be Shane's Anniversary. Thanks to all that attended.

On behalf of the O'Connor family, we would like to thank all that supported this event in remembering Shane.

Previous Results	
Year	Champion
2010	Gordon Ward
2011	Gordon Ward
2012	Gordon Ward
2013	Gordon Ward
2014	Trevor Thompson
2015	Trevor Thompson
2016	Trevor Thompson
2017	Martin O'Connor
2018	Dave Whelan

Waterford DSU retirements



Kathleen Mahony, who retired from Dungarvan Office, being presented with her Union Scroll by Peter O'Dwyer.



Bill Goodison (centre), Waterford, who retired recently. He is pictured here at a Presentation with Anthony Horan (left) and Peter O'Dwyer (right).



Ian Verthage (right), Waterford, who retired recently. He is pictured here at a Presentation with Anthony Horan (left) and Peter O'Dwyer (centre).



Ann St Ledger (front row, seated), New Ross, who retired recently. She is pictured here at a Presentation with all her work colleagues.

Combined Cork Branches Retired Members Annual Get-Together



Dan Keneally & Martina O'Connell.



Timmy Butler & John Hickey.



Richard Barry & Pat Coyle.



Philip Clifford.



Andy Maher, Jarry Harte, Geraldine Maher, Steve O'Leary & Philip Clifford.



Dan Duggan, Pat Coyle & Cheryl Lucy.



Pat Hurley & Martina O'Connell.



Tom Holland, Larry Collins & Seán Buckley.



Martina O'Connell & Pauri Redmond.



Pat Lester, Martina O'Connell, Jim Barrett & Tony Medlar.



Dominice Twomey, Ralph Gordon & Tim Kelly.

Dublin No 1 Branch Retirements from City West



Rory Duggan presents Ray Maaliw with his Union Scroll.



Willie Meegan, Yemi Okeshola & Ivor Reynolds.



Colin Bray being presented with his Union Scroll by Ivor Reynolds.

Postal Clerks of Gorey Retail Office run Women's Mini Marathon for charity



Kevin Molloy, Secretary of the North Wexford/South Wicklow Branch, presenting a donation on behalf of the CWU to Lesley White and the Postal Clerks of Gorey Retail Office. The women, all members of the Branch, took part in the Women's Mini Marathon in order to raise much-needed funds for the local Ballycanew National School Autistic Unit. Also included in the photograph is Lesley's Postal Operative husband, Shane, and their daughter, Sophia who attends the unit. Well done to all concerned!.

Dublin Postal Delivery Branch Retirements



*Richard Flood (right),
Harmonstown DSU.*



*Paul Moles (left),
Ballsbridge.*



*Seán Buckley (left),
Finglas*



*Michael Lordan (right),
Ballyfermot*



*Alan Farrelly (right),
Churchtown*



*Matthew Walsh (left),
Ballsbridge*



*Brian Harnett (left),
Rutland Place*



*Eddie Mulhearn (left),
Blanchardstown*



*Brendan Doherty (centre),
Glenageary*



*Aiden O'Leary (left),
DSU 2*



*Terry Redmond,
Balbriggan*



*Michael Murphy (left),
Blackrock*



*Liam "The Bull" O'Faolain
(left), DCU 2*



*Eddie Hoare (left),
Blanchardstown*



*Dickie Carrick (R),
Baldoyle*

Dublin Postal Delivery Branch Retirements contd:



*Con Murphy (left),
Churchtown*



*Joe O'Connor (right),
Edmondstown*

Carrick-on-Shannon CWU Branch Retirement Presentation



Pic Credit Gerry Faughnan Photography.

Carrick-on-Shannon CWU Branch marked the retirement of four Members recently with a Presentation Function in the Bush Hotel.

Pictured front row (l-r): *Charlie Britton (Mohill DSO), Michael Tiernan (Mohill DSO), Mary Tiernan, Afke Peterson, Paul Martin Boyle (DSU) and Mary Beirne, who accepted the Scroll on behalf of her late husband, Frank Beirne (Carrick-on-Shannon DSU).*

Back row (l-r): *John Tansey (Regional Officer), Sean McKeon (Committee), Sean Murtagh (Branch Secretary), Seamus Sweeney (Branch Chairman), Larry O'Beirne (Joint Treasurer), Niall Daly (Assistant Secretary) and Hugh Galton (Committee).*

Eamonn Boyle ~ An Post Pitch & Putt Memorial Cup Mullingar DSU

There was a great turnout again this year by members of Mullingar Delivery Services Unit of An Post and friends to commemorate our former friend and work colleague, Eamonn Boyle (RIP).

This is the 12th year of this wonderful event and was hosted by his friends and former co-workers, Martin Little and Pat Rickard with the assistance of Joe Quinlan & Ger O'Connor.

Martin and Pat can take a bow for their hard and dedicated work and we hope to see more fellow co-workers take part next year, which will be the thirteenth time the event will be run, so pencil your diary for the weekend around the June/July next year.

The organisers would like to especially thank Collinstown Pitch & Putt Club for the use of the Course and especially Ena and Mary who capped off the evening with a lavish array of refreshments.

We would also like on behalf of Bernie Boyle and her family, to thank everyone who supported this event in remembrance of Eamonn.

Bernie Presents the Cup to Joe Quinlan Champion.



Portlaoise Retirements

Pictured from l to r:

Geraldine McManus (Committee Member), Theresa O'Shaughnessy (retired Auxiliary Postal Sorter), Stasia Flynn (retired Auxiliary Postal Sorter) and Dina Considine (Acting Branch Secretary, Portlaoise Postal Branch).

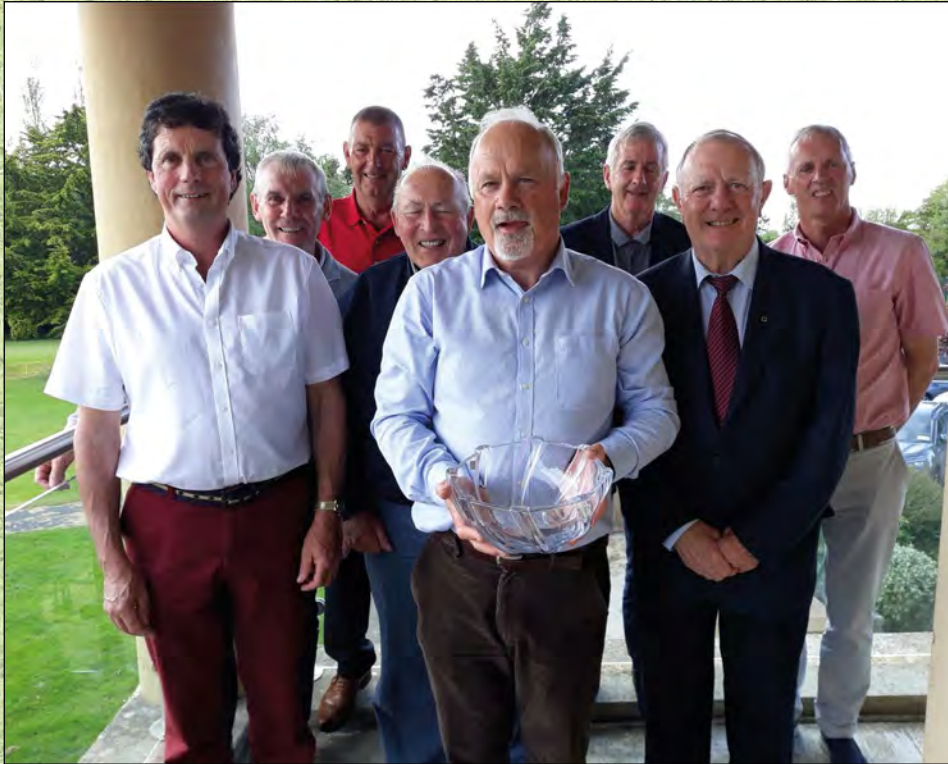


John Treacy Retires

John Treacy (HR/Administration Manager) received his Union Scroll and Badge following his recent retirement after forty-three-and-a-half years' service. The official presentation was made by Branch Secretary, Willie Kehoe, and Committee Member, Frank Aherne.



All Ireland eir Golf Championship 2019



*The Cork Team that took part in the eir golf championship 2019 in Ennis were as follows:
Front row (l to r): Michael Whelton, John Ahern and Willie Ring,
Middle row (l to r): Tony O Reilly and Noel Hennessy.
Back row (l to r): Seamus Goggin, Denis Moran and Dermot Hayes.*

Macroom Retirement Function



Cork District Branch – Macroom Section
A function was held in the Castle Hotel, Macroom to mark the occasion of the retirement of Francis Creedon, Matthew Hegarty, and John O' Mahjony. A large group enjoyed dinner and a get together of past and present colleagues organised by eir Macroom Social Club.

Shenanigans in the Dáil



Joan Collins, TD, makes her point in the Dáil.

Our beloved Parliament has been much in the news recently. In a wonderful example as to how we have our priorities backwards, the media was enthralled with the use of so called unparliamentary language by Joan Collins TD who is also a long-standing member of the CWU. Joan was responding on behalf of her constituency to an empty house following the recent budget. This budget did nothing for working class people and indeed added to their misery through the introduction of a so-called carbon tax. There were no meaningful solutions to the housing emergency other than to gift landlords one billion Euro of taxpayer's money. Measures to deal with health, education and policing were missing once again and I can only imagine the frustration Joan felt and she attempted to demonstrate the adverse impact on our people and missed opportunities of the budget. That frustration was evident when Joan made the statement that "They don't F*****g care!". The fact that both FG and FF have demonstrated this fact on numerous occasions was less newsworthy than the language used. Children having their meals on the street and homeless people dying on those same streets, alone, cold and hungry are more acceptable to this de facto coalition than the use of the most popular word in the English language.

Then surprise! surprise! several of our eminent TDs



The image of a five-year old child eating on the streets that sparked national outrage.

were caught red handed doing voter impersonation. It now appears that what is a crime for everyone else in the country is just one of those things for our glorious leaders. The old FF mantra of vote early, vote often is alive and well but whatever you do don't mention the F word.

Joan Collins has worked closely with the CWU in recent years particularly with Right2Water and Right2Change. She is responsible for putting forward the proposed change to the constitution on the ownership of water based on our ICTU motion and on the wording developed through both R2W and R2C. She has also championed positive changes to Labour legislation and has made herself available to the CWU whenever necessary. For example, when the CWU was dealing with the traumatic closure of the Cork Mail Centre, Joan took the trouble to ring me and find out all the pertinent facts. She then went on to defend our Union in the Dáil when we were being attacked by politicians who didn't even have the courtesy to seek our side of the story and I wish to publicly thank her for her support in difficult times. Joans help was in stark contrast to the behaviour of some Cork politicians who deliberately misled our members in Cork by feeding them misinformation while we were still in the Labour Court hammering out one of the best closure agreements in the history of the State.



Paul Scanlon Retires

On behalf of the CWU, Paddy McMahon presented Paul Scanlon with his Union Scroll, in City West Business Park recently.

Paul has worked with eircom for over 40 years in that time he made many friends with his colleagues along the way.

He will be sad to leave his friends & colleagues, but also realises it's a time to look forward to new beginnings.

Everyone wishes him the very best in the new challenges in his life and hope he enjoys a long and happy retirement.

Joe Jackman RIP

Joe Jackman was the Secretary of the Limerick Outdoor Branch of the POWU and came from a family with a long and honoured association with the Union. He first attended Annual Conference in 1966 and was elected to the National Executive Council in 1969.

In 1976 at the conclusion of the Annual Conference in



Limerick he was unanimously elected President of the Union and he presided as President at the 54th conference of the POWU held in Wexford.

Joe remained on the National Executive Council until 1982 and played a leading role in the 1979 Postal strike. He continued to be involved with the Union at Local level until his retirement

Dermot Smith RIP

Our dear friend and former work mate, Dermot, sadly passed away in June, following his brave battle with cancer.

Dermot was heavily involved in junior soccer since the mid 1970s. His vast experience was highly sought-after throughout schoolboy soccer circles.

He joined the Company back in the early 1980s, serving on several jointing



staffs throughout P&T, Telecom Eireann and eircom. Most of his final years in eir were spent maintaining and developing the core fibre network.

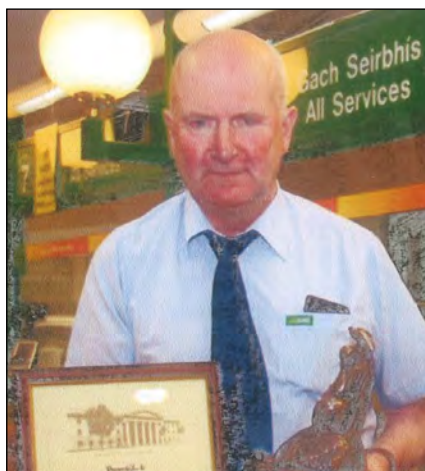
His sharp wit and humour will be sadly missed by his close working colleagues, may he rest in peace.

'Ar dheis Dé go raibh an h'anam'

Liam McGonagle RIP

It was with shock and great sadness that we heard of the sudden death of our friend and former colleague, Liam McGonagle, on Friday 23rd November 2018.

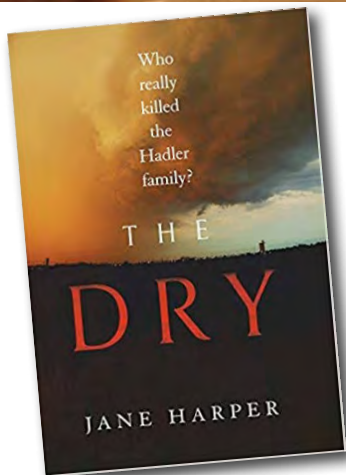
After working initially in Waterford and Castlebar, Liam was transferred to Letterkenny Post Office where he spent the next 36 years, until his retirement on 10th November 2016. He served many years on the Branch Committee and worked tirelessly



for the members.

On his retirement, he visited his former colleagues, regularly staying in touch. As well as attending to his post office work, Liam was also involved in a number of voluntary organisations in the community through the GAA at local, county and regional level. He was a quiet, unassuming man and helpful in any way he could. He will always remain in our thoughts.

'Ar dheis Dé go raibh an h'anam'



The Dry By Jane Harpers

Who really killed the Hadler Family?

The fictional town of Kiewarra near Melbourne Australia is caught in a severe drought. Aaron Falk comes back to the place where he grew up after the death of his childhood friend, Luke and his family. The parents of his friend ask him to look into the deaths, as they do not believe their son would kill his wife and child and then himself. So, Aaron as a financial agent starts looking into the farm accounts to see if he can discover a reason for the tragedy. He also teams up with a local Police Officer, Greg Raco, in an unofficial investigation into the Hadler killings.

In this small community there is also a mystery stretching back into the past. When they were teenagers, Luke and Aaron's friend Ellie died of drowning in suspicious circumstances and implications

were made when a note with Aaron's name was found on her body. It meant he had to leave town for good with his father. Aaron and Luke alibied each other, even though neither were together. The past impinges on the present. Did what happened years ago have anything to do with the present killings?

The story unpeels slowly with wonderful descriptions of desolate landscapes and vast expanses. The character of Aaron Falk is exceptional. I will be immediately reading Aaron Falk book two called *Force of Nature*.

This is a terrific story. It truly deserves all the accolades it received. (It won at least three notable awards in Australia and won the UK Crime Award 2018 – known as Gold Dagger Award). I found this a compelling read!

Quotes from the book:

"To look out and see not another soul between you and the horizon could be a strange and disturbing sight."

"The rumours were fed well...and grew fat and solid. They sprouted legs and heads, and they never died."

Edge of the seat stuff, when you get near the end and all is revealed

THE YEAR OF MAGICAL THINKING

By Joan Didion

In December 2003 the author's husband died suddenly of a heart attack. Both writers lived and worked side-by-side for almost forty years. The book is an account of the passage of weeks, then months following his death and how she comes to terms with his loss.

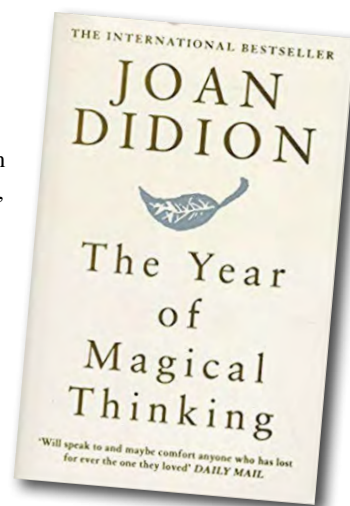
She simply writes: *"John was talking and then he wasn't. What I remember about the apartment on the night I came home from New York Hospital was its silence."*

To compound things, just before Christmas their only child, daughter, Quintana, fell unconscious from a serious illness and is in hospital. Quintana's story is continued in her book *Blue Nights*.

Her magical thinking is the surrealism of death for those left behind. The internal voice of things connected in a strange way like in a dream as you are trying to put the pieces back together. The lines are blurred between reality and what our mind is processing of what happens around us, like a shell-shock effect. She explores how it is possible to make that transition between having that person beside you one minute and then keeping the person alive though remembrance. Dealing with that connection that is still there, even though the person isn't physically there any longer: the traces of the dead, like their voice on the phone, words on paper, emails, the clothes they wore, photos. Her shock and numbness transmit through her writing. She analyses things when her whole world comes crashing down around her as only a writer can do and cope by putting

words on paper.

Joan Didion is an American icon who lived in Hollywood, writing screenplays, epitomising the Californian culture of the 60s and 70s in a time of great change. A journalist who wrote about a number of subjects like fashion and politics and injected her own personal analysis into it like a modern Hemingway. She brought issues to the forefront like gender equality. This is a powerful memoir beautifully written and full of comfort in times of loss.



Quotes from the book:

"A single person is missing for you, and the whole world is empty."

"Grief is different. Grief has no distance. Grief comes in waves, paroxysms, sudden apprehensions that weaken the knees and blind the eyes and obliterate the dailiness of life."

Full of comfort in times of loss!