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WATERFORD PENSIONS

Waterford win makes case crystal clear



Victory! Waterford members celebrate, but know fight must go on

Members affected by the long-running Waterford Glass pensions' justice fight have won a significant milestone victory, which has brought a sense of optimism to the town.

The European court of justice ruled in April that the Irish state was obliged to protect former Waterford Glass workers' pensions in the wake of the company's insolvency. This was a milestone result indeed – but the struggle to secure pension justice, not just for former Waterford Glass workers, but for thousands of workers facing an insecure retirement, continues.

The case was taken by Unite on behalf of 10 former workers at the iconic factory. Speaking after the decision, Unite regional

secretary **Jimmy Kelly** said this was a “crucial case not only for Unite but for the trade union movement as a whole”, and pointed out only as members of a trade union could workers successfully seek legal redress in such cases.

Jimmy said it was now up to the government to come back with proposals on how they propose to comply with ECJ decision. He said, “The ball is now in the government's court. They can wait until the matter is heard again in the high court, or they can come and talk to us. Either way, the European ruling is crystal-clear – it's up to the state to protect Waterford Glass workers' pension entitlements.”

IRELAND RECESSION

MABS staff caught in 'turf war'

Since the recession started, the money advice and budgeting service (MABS), has provided struggling households with a lifeline in the face of crisis debt. So when over 120 Unite MABS workers heard MABS offices could be facing closure as the result of a bureaucratic turf war between the citizens' information board (CIB) and the MABS management forum – they were stunned.

Unite regional officer **Dermot Mahon** explained, “The citizens' information board has threatened to withdraw funding

from those MABS companies who do not sign up to proposed new service level agreements. MABS workers and their clients are being used as pawns in a petty bureaucratic squabble.

“For many households, MABS services are all that stand between them and financial despair”.

Unite has called on the CIB to immediately withdraw its threat of funding cessation and to publicly reassure MABS staff, service users and local communities, that no MABS office will be forced to close as a result of this dispute.

NI CHILDREN POVERTY PLUNGE

Unite said the latest institute for fiscal studies report on the explosion of child poverty will leave “a dark stain on Northern Ireland and the UK.”

Commenting on the report, which says tax and benefit reforms introduced since April 2010 will mean one in four NI/UK children will be living in poverty by 2020, is a national disgrace, said Unite’s **Eugene McGlone**.

Unite regional co-ordinator and ICTU president added, “A respected think-tank, in a report commissioned for the NI Assembly, has come to a disturbing conclusion that the change in welfare payments will plunge one in four Northern Ireland children into relative poverty.

“We’re in the 21st century and now seem to be returning to the dark days of the 19th century. The IFS findings are an indictment on the Con-Dem government policies and the Assembly for imposing them. We will witness an explosion of child poverty and this will leave a dark stain on Northern Ireland the UK for many years to come.”

Evidenced by the report’s findings, Eugene attacked the Con-Dem government’s social welfare policy as an attack on the poorest in society.

“They are blindly following policies to protect the City of London financiers while condemning the nation and its national interest, its people, to penury and hunger.”



Warning – Unite child poverty alert

Poots sorry for care home crisis

Unite condemned Northern Trust’s decision to close elderly care homes and accused its claim of consultation “as a farce”. This criticism followed a number of health trusts in NI announcing they were to close all state-run elderly care homes under their control under the “Transform your care” proposals.

This led to a barrage of public opposition, with Unite in the forefront – leading to Assembly health minister Edwin Poots calling a halt to the planned closures.

“In reality though this is just a delaying tactic,” believes Unite regional industrial organiser, **Kevin McAdam**.

The local health trusts claimed after consultation they had taken the decision to close all their elderly care

homes while the transforming your care (TYC) document had called for the phased reduction of at least 50 per cent of homes under their control.

Kevin attacked the TYC policy as ‘privatisation through the front door’.

“All the trusts will operate a policy of refusing referrals to the homes and they will be re-designated for respite care only. The decrease in referrals, funding and resources means the homes will be unsustainable to keep open. It seems this service will be removed from the NHS elderly health care privatised.”

Unite has opposed this change and along with other trade unions and has made this clear through its response to the TYC consultation. The fight continues.

Growing our future



Paul Reynolds

Recent anti-austerity demonstration in Dublin

Following the massive rejection by public sector workers of the Croke Park II proposals, the LRC process is in danger of dividing in order to conquer the strength of collective resistance of unions to government cuts. Trade union members have made their position clear through democratic ballots, and we should all respect that decision.

Now is the time to move on and end austerity in Ireland. We need to grow ourselves out of the crisis, lifting people out of poverty, deprivation and arrears. It can start now with three simple steps.

The first step is a sustained and substantial investment drive to create thousands jobs in the short-term while increasing productivity in the long term. Investment in broadband, a modern water and waste system and energy conservation will create thousands of jobs while modernising our infrastructure. But the best investment we can make is in people – early childhood education, skills retraining, literacy training, life-long learning, etc. People and a modern infrastructure is the key to recovery.

When the government cuts spending, tax revenue falls, unemployment costs rise, and economic growth is cut, resulting in few savings. There is no need to proceed with the

spending cuts in Budget 2014 – we will still hit our fiscal targets. And by abandoning the cuts, employment will rise and incomes will grow.

The third step is to implement ‘smart’ taxation. Budgets that take money out of the pockets of low-average income earners only perpetuate the economic stagnation. That’s why it’s smart to increase taxation on high income groups, reduce wasteful property tax reliefs, and unproductive activities. This budget’s policies would only have a minimal impact on the domestic economy.

Unite’s programme of investment, an end to austerity cuts and smart taxation can launch Irish society in a new direction – away from austerity and stagnation, towards growth and national recovery.

We need a new debate – about how we improve our public services; how we provide social protection for all working people; what kind of investment will lead to a modern, dynamic economy. Unite wants to engage with all sections of society wanting to pursue this new growth agenda. Together we can make Ireland work again.

Jimmy Kelly

UNITE ACTION



May Day parade – Unite Community members sector join the Belfast May parade for the first time



Occupation – Unite members at Garrivan & O'Rourke occupy the company's Belfast office in a row over non-payment of wages

Organising wins at Quinn Group

Unite in Northern Ireland has secured two major recognition agreements within the Quinn Group. The Fermanagh-based company has confirmed publicly that, for the first time in Northern Ireland, a union representing employees has been given recognition.

Unite has been given recognition which will allow it to represent employees of the Quinn Group on all matters affecting employment terms and conditions.

A spokesperson from the Quinn Group confirmed to the Fermanagh Herald that union recognition has been given to 36 drivers in the glass division. The newspaper also reported Unite was seeking to acquire members in another 'glass' unit. The good news continued in April when the 'glass' workers voted overwhelmingly for union recognition.

Unite regional industrial organiser **Philip Oakes** said the result was exceptional news for both the union and its new members. "We've been working hard to recruit in a number of Quinn group sectors and the vote was a massive endorsement of the union's efforts."

Unite regional co-ordinating officer, **Eugene McGlone**, said for many years

employees at the Quinn Group had joined the union as individual members.

More employees then sought to join the union in an organised way, "since the advent of the economic decline in the south and its impact on the Quinn family, particularly their loss of control of the companies".

Eugene reported, "We decided to

assist the workers organise into Unite and, initially gained over 60 per cent of the Glass factory's drivers into Unite. We pursued a recognition agreement for this group of workers, and this was agreed by the industrial court."

He added, "The company now accepts this and we are in the process of agreeing a full trade union recognition agreement."



Learning winners – Unite assistant general secretary Diane Holland (left) presents DHL Mallusk employees Maureen Reynolds and Debbie Hunter with the union learning rep of the year award. Also pictured is Clare Caulfield, Unite union learning tutor

X-case law could exclude poorer women

In the wake of the Savita Halappanavar case and the debate surrounding X-case legislation, Unite and SIPTU have joined with the ICTU women's committee to demand the new legislation makes abortion accessible in practice as well as in theory.

Commenting on the draft legislation, Unite equalities organiser **Taryn Trainor** expressed particular concern low-income women could be financially excluded from the process. Taryn was speaking at a public meeting in Dublin, organised by the Action on X campaign.

Taryn said, "Unless the legislation is substantially amended, the likelihood is those women who are able to do so will continue travelling to Britain for a termination, while those who are unable to travel for medical or financial reasons will be forced to jump through the different hoops envisaged by the proposals."



Need help? Contact Unite Ireland, Belfast Regional Office 26-34 Antrim Road, Belfast, BT15 2AA. Tel: 02890 020418 or 15 Merrion Square, Dublin 2 Tel: 01 6611063