2016 is a year of industrial action

The first third of the year has been especially busy for industrial disputes.

It has now been revealed that SIPTU retail staff employed at Tesco stores in the Republic of Ireland have voted to take industrial action. The company has failed to fully implement a Labour Court recommendation made in February, and instead, is trying to unilaterally enforce pay cuts and changes to work patterns across its workforce.

The Labour Court recommendation would have awarded retail staff a 2% pay increase, plus share bonuses. However, the new proposed pay cuts range between 15% and 35%. This would be effective as of Monday 18 April.

SIPTU’s Teresa Hannick said, “The failure of management to engage in meaningful discussions with our members regarding this issue and its refusal to attend a Labour Court hearing has left them with no option but to take industrial action”.

This comes alongside the announcement of more days of industrial action from Luas drivers. Although Transdev (Luas operators) have presented a new set of pay proposals, they were on average 10% lower than those suggested by the WRC. As a result, SIPTU served notice of five further days of strike, not including the two planned for later this month.

Transdev has said that for every day of industrial action, it loses €100,000, and it has warned workers that strike action could put their jobs at risk. However, they said that they were looking to deliver a “fair and balanced” solution to the problem, but one that is in line with public and private sector pay norms.

Dates for the industrial action on the Luas will be as follows:
• Work to rule on 17 April;
• Strike action on 28 April, and 4, 13, 20, 27 May; and
• Four-hour work stoppages on 24 May.

DCC plans for redevelopment will be put in place soon

Last year, it was confirmed that three Dublin City Council sites would be developed to hold 1,300 new homes. It is now believed that the plans for the first phase will be finalised within the coming weeks.

The first phase will begin on a plot on Coolock Lane, and will include 76 houses. Overall, the development will contain 655 homes, 30% of which will go to social housing. The rest will be made up of starter homes, private homes, and a new model of “affordable rental” homes. A spokesman for the council said the land “will be bought back to the councillors at a joint meeting of the council’s Housing and Planning SPCs [strategic policy committees] prior to being issued to the market”. It is assumed this meeting will happen in May.

The other developments are planned for sites in O’Deveney Gardens (Dublin 7) and Inchicore.
Reform needed for An Garda Síochána

The Department of Justice has proposed pay reform for members of the Gardaí. Their aim is to facilitate more flexible rosters and cut overtime spending.

It is believed may be push-back from the police force if adjustments are not made. The Department hopes that in upcoming talks with Garda Representative bodies, they can agree to keep things “cost neutral”.

They would like to move away from allowances for Gardaí working unsocial hours (night-time, weekends, back holidays etc), instead moving to a “shift wage”. They will also aim to rationalise nearly 50 other allowances currently paid to active member of the force.

President of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors, Tim Galvin said members were “angry and frustrated” with the lack of progress made addressing Garda remuneration mentioned under the Haddington Road Agreement.

This also comes alongside reports from major media outlets that most of the elite Garda units, including the one that monitors movements of terrorists, are understaffed.

The number of personnel National Surveillance Unit (NSU) targets serious crime, such as gangland crime, and terrorism, has dropped by a quarter. It would need another 24 officers to bring it to the ideal number of 100. This elite unit is trained similarly to the FBI and MI5, but has seriously suffered from budget cuts. According to the Irish Independent, “It is understood there is a shortage of expert officers in all the specialist forensic sections, including in fingerprints, ballistics, mapping and crime scene investigation.”

Homeless families will be included in Census 2016

The CSO has devised a system by which homeless families living in emergency accommodation on census night will be counted, acknowledged, and dealt with sensitively. This will be the first time a count of this type has been done by a census.

Census forms will be hand-delivered to homeless families. They will be the same form, with the same information, but enumerators have been embedded to take into account those who are currently out of their homes.

Deirdre Cullen, senior statistician on the census at the CSO, said, “If we didn’t capture this population we would be missing a whole new group of the population. The big challenge has been how to capture this sensitively.” She stated further that by having the forms collected specially, they would know which forms belonged to families in emergency accommodation.

The annual spring “rough-sleeper count” will also be taken into account, as it will happen on census night. Figures, however, may not include homeless families who, for example, are staying with family.
This week at Public Affairs Ireland

On the Blog

On INIS’ Annual Report 2015
Stephen Collins
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Modern treatment of drug use: moving away from criminalisation towards medicalisation?
Maureen O’Sullivan
Read here

Dáil Reform
Michael Williams
Read here

Protect your organisation from CEO Fraud
PAI editor Shauna Nimmo
Read here

Blacklisting
Macdara Doyle
Read here

Announcing PAI’s Masterclass #2

These morning briefings will explore topics that affect every organisation. They will take a high-level, focused approach.

Our next, Dignity at Work for HR Practitioners, will take place on Friday 20 May, from 9am to 11pm. Full agenda to follow.

Attendance is free for members — please contact Paula to book (call 01 819 8500 or email info@pai.ie). Registration for non-members is €125. To enquire about membership, please contact Joan or email jconnolly@pai.ie
Seanad Éireann nominations are underway. Please note the following dates for nominations:

Panel Members
• The period for nominations by Nominating Bodies will expire at noon on Monday 14 March 2016.
• The period for nominations by members of the Oireachtas will expire at noon on Monday 21 March 2016.
• The Seanad Returning Officer will sit for the completion of the panels on Wednesday 30 March 2016.
• The ballot papers will be issued to the electorate on Monday 11 April 2016.
• The poll will close at 11.00 a.m. on Monday 25 April 2016.

University Members
The period for nominations in the university constituencies will expire on Thursday 3 March 2016.
• The ballot papers will be issued to the electorate on Monday 21 March 2016.
• The poll will close at 11.00 a.m. on Tuesday 26 April 2016.

Dáil Éireann

Thursday 14 April 2016

2.30 p.m.
Nomination of Taoiseach (resumed)

Statements on Housing (to conclude at 8.30 p.m. tonight if not previously concluded)

8.30 p.m.
Dáil Adjourns

Committee Meetings

Wednesday 13 April 2016

Sub-Committee on Dáil Reform
Room 2 (off the Main Hall), Leinster House 9.30 a.m.
AGENDA: Private Meeting