

Vulture funds and mass evictions a crucial issue for new Government

News emerged this morning (Monday 14 March) that some 60 families in a single housing estate have been served eviction notices; it is expected a further 140 will be issued shortly. This has happened through transfer of loans by business to so-called “vulture funds”.

The Cruise Park area of Tyrellstown was previously let by Twinlite. The property company are heavily indebted, and as a result, made a deal with Goldman Sachs, who have ordered the tenants out of their homes.

Court data shows that AIB has also initiated over 250 High Court actions with borrowers so far in 2016: an average of five a day.

There have been calls from Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and the Social Democrats to make this a top-of-the-bill issue during new Dáil talks.

Sean Melly, a candidate for the Seanad, has called the practices of these vulture funds a disgrace, and branded it a “national issue”. He has called into question the lack of transparency that exists around the practice.

With the homelessness crisis only getting worse in the city, and throughout the country, all eyes will be on the new Government to introduce swift, comprehensive measure that have the real human cost at the heart of them.

Citizenship applications up as Brexit referendum looms

According to the Department of Foreign Affairs, there has been a sharp rise in the number of British citizens applying for Irish passports, on the basis of their ancestry.

Between 2014 and 2015, applications for first Irish passports by adults born in England, Scotland or Wales with Irish-born grandparents rose by one-third; applications by those with one or more Irish parent went up by 11%. Irish citizenship laws give automatic citizenship to anyone whose mother or father is Irish, and are given to people with Irish grandparents as long as their births have been recorded in the foreign births register.

There is speculation that this sharp rise may be ahead of the Brexit referendum in June. However, a spokesperson for the Government said that no reason for application was recorded and therefore the rise could not be attributed to any one event.

Britain’s exit from the EU would mean that travel between the two islands would not enjoy the freedoms it has for centuries.

The people of Britain are due to go to the polls on 23 June 2016 to decide on whether or not they should continue as an EU member state.

Au pair positions need clarification, regulation

Last week, the Workplace Relations Commission ruled that au pairs were, legally, employees, and thus are entitled to payment of the minimum wage of €9.15 per hour.

Currently, the average currently wage for a live-in au pair is €120 a week, based on a 30-hour week with room and board. This would now cost nearly €900, when deductions are made for room and board.

The Migrant Rights Centre Ireland (MRCI) has called this a “landmark decision”. However, an article in the Sunday Business Post this morning, 14 March, contained interviews with both current au pairs and those who have used au pairs for years.

Those working in the sector, and their “employers” have put emphasis on the position being one of learning and emersion in the culture, not necessarily of full-time employment. One au pair, Marleen Kuip, said that “introducing minimum wage for au pairs would miss the point. As an au pair you should be part of the family”. The president of the Au Pair Agencies Council of Ireland, Claire Marty, has said that the real issue here is definition and regulation. “The system is open to abuse”. Ireland has still yet to sign the European Agreement on Au Pair Placements, which has been open for signatures since 1969.

The definition, said the MRCI, is “crystal clear. Au pairs are considered workers”.

This means they are entitled to a written agreement of employment, minimum wage, a work-week of no more than 48 hours, daily rests and days off, 20 days of paid annual leave for every year worked. The employer is also responsible for the health and safety of the worker while they are at work.

Social media leader announces 200 new jobs

Social media monolith Facebook has announced that they will establish another 200 jobs in Dublin before the end of 2016.

This is, in part, due to the opening of its new partner centre, a place where businesses can come and see for themselves the new and current apps and services.

Facebook currently employs 1,300 people in the city centre, despite setting up with only 30 in 2008. It is one of the most-visited sites online.

Their planned €200m data centre in Co Meath is also due to begin construction later this year.

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

Our first, [Protected Disclosures](#), will take place on Monday 11 April, from 9.30am to 12.30pm. Full agenda to follow.

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

The 32nd Dáil will reconvene at 10:30am on Tuesday, 22 March 2016.

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.

Following the dissolution of the Dáil, Dáil committees and Joint committees are also dissolved.