

# The Mayday Miscellany

Newsletter of the Green Party in Northern Ireland's Trade Union Network



## Further budget cuts will cripple schools, says teachers' union

Failure to form an Executive will have a devastating impact on schools in Northern Ireland, the NASUWT, the largest teachers union in Northern Ireland, has warned.

In a letter sent to schools yesterday the Department of Education stated that they had to "plan for a level of reductions to inform their spending plans in the initial months of the year". DE is following guidance from the Department of Finance which has advised that departments should plan on the basis of potential reduction scenarios of 2%, 4% and 6%.

Chris Keates, General Secretary of the NASUWT, said:

"This should serve as a wake-up call to Northern Ireland's politicians. School budgets in Northern Ireland have already been cut back to the bone. If these cuts are to proceed schools will find it impossible to maintain their current high quality of education.

"Schools in Northern Ireland are already stretched to the limit. Any new cuts will have profound consequences.

"Schools cannot afford to make any more teachers and support staff redundant."

Justin McCamphill, NASUWT National Official Northern Ireland, said:

"If devolution is not restored, these budget cuts will cripple public services across Northern Ireland.

"Education is already at breaking point. Children and young people are suffering from the legacies of political failure, mismanagement, no long-term budget planning and money being frittered away on pet projects.

"The NASUWT remains resolutely opposed to budget cuts in education and our members will be strengthened in their current action short of strike action by this news."

## Hard Brexit failure threatens thousands of jobs in Northern Ireland



Jimmy Kelly, Unite the Union

Unite Ireland Secretary, Jimmy Kelly, has condemned the failure of the Secretary of State for Exiting the EU to understand the significance of Brexit decisions for Northern Ireland's economy:

"The performance of the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis MP, before his Westminster select committee inspires no confidence in the ability of his government to negotiate Brexit on terms meeting the needs of Northern Ireland's economy or safeguarding the interests of workers.

"The Tories clearly fail to understand or appreciate the consequences of a Hard Brexit, including loss of access to tariff-free trade and exclusion from the EU Customs Union. Mr Davis appeared impervious to the specific impact of the re-establishment of a hard border on Northern Ireland's political stability. *Continued over....*



## Since you're asking The shirts on our backs

IndustriALL, the global union of mining, energy and manufacturing workers, is celebrating the release [in Bangladesh of some 35 workers who were arrested for their role in demonstrations calling for higher wages](#).

Around [1,500 workers were sacked in December](#), after calling for a hike in the sector's minimum wage, which, at 5,300 taka or £54 a month, [is regarded as falling far below living wage standards by campaigners](#). During the demonstrations, police fired rubber bullets into the crowds and made numerous arrests.

On 23 February, after a campaign that gained international attention, IndustriALL, the Bangladesh Ministry of Labour and the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association came to an agreement resulting in the release of the arrested workers.

However, celebrations should be tempered by the knowledge that the underlying cause of the clashes is yet to be resolved. Moreover, this is no "quarrel in a far away country" in Neville Chamberlain's phrase. The Bangladesh ready-made garment industry is a major source of the clothes sold by well-known UK High Street brands such as Zara, Gap and H&M.

These are 'our' companies, in so far as their profits and their business decisions are driven by our demand. And that demand is our strongest lever.

To buy a product is to express demand. Usually what goes into the making of the product is cropped out of the picture, and all that is left visible is the finished article and the price-tag. But bring the terms and conditions of the producers, the wages, the pollutants, the carbon emissions, and all the other elements in the long supply chain into the picture, and demand can be changed.

Take the [Rana Plaza](#) disaster of 2013, for instance, in which over 1,100 Bangladeshi garment workers died when their unsafe factory building collapsed on them.

Over two hundred European and US companies subsequently signed a legally binding Fire and Building Safety Accord. They did so not necessarily out of humanitarian largesse, but because of pressure from campaigners and customers. The businesses knew that the more the campaigners informed the customers – the more customers saw their logos in the rubble – the more customers' expression of demand would change.

Bangladeshi workers making our clothes have been sacked and arrested for exercising what should be a basic democratic right to demonstrate. And we have the power to stand alongside them, demanding those rights, and demanding fair wages and conditions. We can demand that 'our' companies resist the criminalisation of those without whom their supply chain would dry up, and without whom we would not have the very shirts on our backs.

*The Mayday Miscellany* is the newsletter of the Green Party in Northern Ireland's Trade Union Network. It offers a round-up of trade union related news and views, and strives to develop the relationship between greens and the workers' movement. Opinions expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the Green Party.

If you have trade union related news you'd like to share please contact *The Mayday Miscellany* at: [stephenjohnbaker@icloud.com](mailto:stephenjohnbaker@icloud.com)

## ICTU make case against Brexit

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has released a briefing paper stating its case against Brexit.

The ICTU argues that Brexit poses a threat to jobs, human rights and the peace process. But it says that its opposition to Brexit should not be seen as an endorsement of the EU's policy direction in recent years, and in particular the EU's, "adherence to self-defeating austerity and the ongoing erosion of Social Europe."

In the briefing paper the Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU say: "From our viewpoint, we are deeply concerned with the neoliberal direction the EU has taken under the Council of Ministers and the ECB in recent years. We do not think that austerity from Brussels is better than austerity from Westminster or Stormont.

However, we will not win by walking away. "We are still dedicated to building a Social Europe, and we will argue that we should stay and fight for an EU that respects its working people and protects their dignity..."

The full briefing paper is available here: [http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/brexit\\_briefing\\_paper.pdf](http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/brexit_briefing_paper.pdf)

### Hard Brexit failure

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"Thousands of manufacturing jobs and jobs throughout the Agri-Food supply-chain in particular would be threatened should the UK be forced to fall back on WTO trade rules. Such a hard Brexit would lead to punitive tariffs being imposed on cross-border trade. Getting Brexit wrong will have devastating consequences for an economy that is already struggling to deliver growth in the context of a productivity crisis.

"Our lack of confidence in the ability of the Tories to negotiate Brexit only reinforces the need for local parties to agree the speedy re-establishment of a functioning Executive capable of presenting a unified position on behalf of everyone in Northern Ireland."