

# THE IRISH JOURNALIST



Newsletter of the National Union of Journalists in Ireland

December 2017

## SNAP! LIFETIME IN PHOTOGRAPHY IN FOCUS



Freelance photographer Barbara Lindberg turns the tables on Dublin photographers Liam O'Connor (front), Matt Kavanagh and Ray Cullen after they received Life Membership certificates in the Gresham Hotel on the eve of the NUJ Biennial Delegate Conference. Photo: Maxwell Photography.

## Time to end pay gap

The need to tackle the gender pay gap was the dominant theme of a seminar held in the Gresham Hotel, Dublin last month as part of the union's Biennial Delegate Conference.

The all-female panel was united in support of demands for ending discrimination in the workplace.

General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet detailed the union's campaign to tackle pay discrimination

and gender based harassment while newly appointed SIPTU Deputy General Secretary Ethel Buckley emphasised the vital role of unions in stamping out inequality.

The gender pay gap is narrower in countries where trade unions are strongest, she said, pointing out that Ireland ranks 11th of all the countries in the European Union when it comes to equal pay.

*(continued on page 2)*

## Ireland is 11th in EU equal pay rankings

(from page 1)

Michelle Stanistreet talked about the gender pay gap in the BBC and other inequality issues such as “the dearth of black faces on our screens” and the need to secure fair and decent contracts for members.

She said it was a brilliant opportunity to get more trade union activists involved in these issues.

The legal and equality officer for the NUJ, Natasha Morris, advised on how people could go about making a claim for equal pay. In the UK, it must be made within six months of becoming

aware of the pay gap and if successful, back pay of up to six years can be awarded.

Esther Lynch, Confederal Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), outlined ongoing battles involving legislation to introduce four months parental leave — she said employers were “going ballistic” over that proposal. She suggested it was maybe time to insist that men took mandatory parental leave.

Bláthnaid Ní Chofaigh, RTÉ broadcaster, who chaired the event, said there was a great appetite among her colleagues to narrow the gender pay gap in RTE.

## Union to undertake audit of low pay in regionals

A call has been made to address the issue of low pay being forced on journalists, especially those starting out in the regional sector.

Carol Byrne, a journalist in the Clare Champion and the delegate for the Irish South West Branch, proposed that the union organise a wage audit in the provinces.

Carol told the conference that pay deals successfully negotiated in chapels around the country had eroded since the recession.

“Overtime was bought out, pay cuts were taken and people lost their jobs. Throughout those difficult times managements have hidden behind excuses like inability to pay, and throw away remarks such as ‘you’re lucky to have a job’ and ‘no one is making money’,” she said.

“During that period we have been upskilling to become masters of the digital media sphere, we have continued to meet deadlines with increased

responsibilities with less staff for no additional pay and we have encountered more stress in the workplace.

“There’s no doubt many of us are downtrodden and bewildered. But there has to be an end to it, and we have to look to being properly compensated for the work we do and the additional work loads we have taken on.

“We all would like more money and fair compensation and we in Irish South West feel it is important for chapels to know the industry standards so when the time is right for them to address pay, they can lodge a realistic pay claim.

“With that in mind, we believe a pay survey should be conducted to better inform the union and chapels on where they stand in the pay divide. Such an exercise would also help address any potential gender pay gaps that exist. As the economy begins to pick up, now is the time to lodge pay

claims, to say enough is enough.

“I’m the MOC at The Clare Champion and we have had enough, we are not interested in the ‘you’re lucky to have a job’ argument anymore, because who wants to be in an under resourced newsroom, working unsociable hours under time pressures when you are poorly paid.

“We eagerly await the company accounts every year to see if there are any green shoots and this year at the sight of a healthy balance sheet we drafted and lodged a pay claim.

“Organiser Ian McGuinness has been with us on this from the get-go and has helped us push this to conciliation, but due to a lack of engagement by the company we are taking it to the WRC. We are in a stalemate situation currently, but watch this space.”

The motion urging the undertaking of a wage audit was passed unopposed.





A lifetime of membership: Front row, left to right: Brian Trench, Cathal Mac Coille, Ann Cahill, Mary Leland, Patsy McArdle, Standing: Liam O'Connor, Ray Cullen, Matt Kavanagh, Ken Kelly, Michael Hillard, Donal Buckley, Jimmy Rhattigan.

# Sparing the blushes!

Stories abound  
of careers in  
journalism as Life  
Members are feted

Ann Cahill didn't have to cover court or council meetings when she first started working as a journalist on a regional newspaper because her editor was worried she might be exposed to bad language and other unsavoury matters!

It was just one of the stories recounted in the Gresham Hotel where 16 members were honoured with Life Membership certificates, Ms Cahill among them.

She is a retired European Correspondent for the Irish



Proud sons Cillian, left, and Fachtna Kelly congratulate Ann Cahill on her life membership.

Examiner, for whom she continues to write a column.

Indeed, it was a night for stories, for remembering events

and incidents covered by those members.

*(continued on page 4)*



*(continued from page 3)*

One of them. Brian Trench, gave the keynote address on behalf of the recipients.

Brian is a writer and lecturer in communications and media in Dublin City University, who was a member of the first Irish Council of the NUJ and an active member of the union.

He rightly noted that the careers of his co-recipients, whether in national or provincial newspapers, whether reporters or photographers, were the makings of a rich social history

of not only the union in Ireland but of Irish life.

He said he was interested to hear from anyone in relation to his own work in archiving Irish NUJ activities and he guessed there was plenty of material available just from listening to the citations which had outlined the achievements of those honoured with Life Membership.

Brian was a full time journalist for 20 years until he joined DCU, where he set up a Masters in Science Communication.

Cathal Mac Coille said he was honoured with the recognition from the NUJ. He said, to his shame, that he had never filled any activist role at chapel, branch or executive level but he was instrumental in the abolition of Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act, along with other RTE colleagues.

NUJ President, Tim Dawson, presented the Life Membership certificates and said he was always humbled meeting members who had put in the years, both in the union and their careers.



## LIFE MEMBERS CELEBRATE

**LEFT:** Cathal Mac Coille with NUJ President Tim Dawson, NUJ General Secretary Michelle Stanistreet, Gerry Carson, Cathaoirleach, Irish Executive, and Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary.

**BELOW:** Ken Kelly with Séamus Dooley, Siobhan Holliman, Ann Healy, Bernie Ní Fhlatharta, Judy Murphy, Stephen Corrigan and Michelle Stanistreet.



# ‘Fat cat’ ownership is impacting on pay and conditions

The concentration of media ownership does have an impact on pay and conditions as well as the quality of content, Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary told the Biennial Delegate Conference.

Two motions on media ownership were tabled and Carol Byrne from the Irish South West Branch told Conference: “We have a problem in this country with media ownership and we need to deal with it.

“We have fat cats buying up newspapers and media organisations like they were buying up property on a monopoly board.

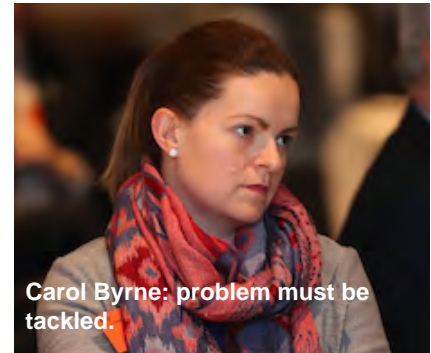
“As well as the implications for the public consuming news controlled by a

concentrated few, the more media outlets they own the more damage they can do to pay and conditions.

“If pay and conditions across these titles become standardised, what hope is there for the union to work on improving those pay and conditions? Individual chapels and house agreements are under threat from groups like Iconic who refuse to recognise the union and who will not engage.”

She also said it was becoming increasingly difficult to recruit and sustain membership when journalists were working for companies like Iconic who do not recognise the union.

“Membership will continue to fall if people fail to see a



Carol Byrne: problem must be tackled.

point in being part of the union, if one of the largest players in the market does not recognise it.

“And worryingly other players in the market are seeing they’re getting away with it.

“We note the work already done on this issue. In tabling this motion Irish South West would like to ensure this issue is kept firmly on the agenda and that the union continues to lobby our Government into addressing this before it is too late.”

Irish Secretary, Séamus Dooley, agreed that this issue needed to be widely debated in the public eye as it affected the quality and content of news that was available to readers.



Emma O’Kelly, Chair, Dublin Broadcasting branch, and Dublin (Newspapers) branch officers Martin Fitzpatrick, Jim Aughney and Des Coughlan. DM pictures: Maxwell Photography.



## FACES AT THE CONFERENCE



From left: Natasha Morris, Legal and Equality Officer, Ethel Buckley, Deputy General Secretary SIPTU, Esther Lynch, Confederate Secretary of ETUC, Michelle Stanistreet, General Secretary NUJ; Norma Prenderville, Irish South West; Bláthnaid Ní Chofaigh, RTÉ; Bernie Ní Fhlatharta, West of Ireland and outgoing IEC; Carolyn Farrar, North West; and Carol Byrne, Irish South West.



Derry and North West delegation: Carolyn Farrar, Joe Boland, Bernie Mullen, Anton McCabe, NEC, and Phil Mac Giolla Bháin.



LEFT: Mary Curtin, outgoing IEC member.

RIGHT: IEC members Kieran Fagan, Treasurer, and Ann Healy, Freelance sector.





NEC member Barry McCall with Bernie Ní Fhlatharta, West of Ireland.



Former NEC member John Ley, Belfast and District, pictured with Dublin P&PR delegates Neil Ward, Ronan Brady and Simon Devilly.



Gerry Carson and Bernie Mullen, who will job-share the post of Cathaoirleach on incoming IEC.

## Biennial Delegate Conference shorts

### GAA Press Passes

Concerns have been raised about the continued difficulties being experienced by freelancers securing national accreditation from the GAA to cover matches in Croke Park.

Two motions, penned by the Irish Eastern and Derry and North West branches have called on the NUJ to engage with GAA to do away with the unfair disadvantage in the allocation of press passes.

Irish Secretary, Séamus Dooley said the union had met with the GAA previously and suggested Newsbrand and Local Ireland, who represent regional titles also talk to the sporting organisation.

He also suggested other unions be asked to get their members to stop moonlighting by covering matches.

### Marriage equality

The NUJ is supporting the equal marriage campaign in Northern Ireland after a motion proposed by the Belfast and District Branch was carried.

Séamus Dooley, Irish Secretary, explained that the NUJ had not publicly campaigned in the marriage equality referendum in the Republic as the union had a policy of not taking part in election or referendum campaigns and, unlike other unions does not have a political fund.

However, as there was no referendum involved in this instance, the NUJ under the umbrella of Irish Congress would be supporting it.

### Candle vigil

A monthly candle vigil is held at Derry and North West Branch meetings in support of the blogger, Raif Badawi, who is imprisoned in Saudi Arabia and who received 50 lashes of a flogging when he mildly criticised the regime.

A motion proposed by the Branch, condemning the increasing repression and imprisonment of journalists throughout the world was passed at BDC.



# Redundancies at Donegal Democrat

Three staff members, all NUJ members, have been made redundant at the Donegal Democrat.

The owners, Iconic Newspapers, refused to engage with the union on the issue and proceeded to target three staff members for redundancies.

Journalists at the newspaper had already been struggling with a heavy workload.

NUJ Irish Organiser, Ian McGuinness, said: "The Donegal Democrat is a vital part of the county's democracy. It is pivotal in informing local people about what is going on in politics and current affairs.

"Cutting staff in the Donegal Democrat will increase the workload and stress on the journalists that remain, and will hurt the quality of journalism in Donegal as it is bound to negatively impact on the newspaper's reporting ability."

NUJ Irish Secretary, Séamus Dooley, added: "This is a perfect example of why

government needs to convene a Commission on the Future of the Media in Ireland.

"While we have always advocated the establishment of a Commission because of problems with diversity and media ownership in Ireland, we also need to address the drastic

cuts that have been, and are still being made, to local media.

"Cuts directly impact on the media's ability to cover council meetings, court hearings, and current affairs in the locality, as well as the local impact of decisions made in the Oireachtas."

## Zero hours comments spark concern

The National Union of Journalists has strongly criticised comments by Jon Williams, managing director of news and current affairs, RTÉ, regarding zero hour contracts.

Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley said the comments have caused concern among staff on a variety of contracts within RTE.

In a recent interview with the Sunday Business Post Williams compared zero hour contracts to the long standing industry practise of freelancing. He is quoted as saying that working arrangements are essentially the same as when he started his journalistic career in 1988.

Séamus Dooley said: "As managing director, news and current affairs Mr Williams is a member of the executive board. At a time when the NUJ has been exposing bogus self-employment in

RTÉ I am gravely concerned that someone in his position would appear to seek to minimise the impact of zero hour contracts.

"His comments have already been 'clarified' but may be reflective of an attitude at senior management level.

"In looking back to his own early days in journalism he is ignoring or unaware of significant advances in employment law since 1988, including the Working Time Act 1997, the Terms and Conditions of Employment Act 1994 – 2014, the Protection of Employees (Fixed-Term Work) Act 2003 and the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act 2001.

Freelancing and casual working arrangements are part of the employment mix in most media organisations. It is not helpful to confuse freelancing working and zero-hour contracts.



# Unions welcome Nash Bill on bogus contracts



Labour leader Brendan Howlin with the joint SIPTU/NUJ delegation led by Ethel Buckley, Deputy General Secretary, SIPTU; Séamus Dooley, NUJ Irish Secretary; Kieran Fagan, NUJ Irish Executive Council treasurer; Seamus Doyle, Chair, Musicians Union of Ireland, and Pdraig Murray, Chair, Irish Equity Group, SIPTU.

THE National Union of Journalists has welcomed publication of a Labour Party Bill to tackle bogus self-employment contracts.

The Bill has also been welcomed by ICTU and SIPTU.

Irish Secretary Séamus Dooley and Kieran Fagan, Irish Executive Council treasurer, attended the recent launch of the Bill by Senator Ged Nash. Later Kieran and Séamus attended a joint SIPTU/NUJ meeting with Labour Party leader Brendan Howlin.

The Protection of Employment (Measures to Counter False Self Employment) Bill 2017 proposed by Senator Nash would put all workers on an equal footing in situations where they are carrying out the

same duties, but are not legally designated as ‘employees’.

Séamus Dooley said: “We hope there will be cross-party support for this Bill. The media is one sector where there is strong evidence that workers are being forced to accept self-employed contracts even though they are clearly being employed to do the same work, in the same way as colleagues.

“In 2007 a Code of Practice was introduced with criteria designed to determine whether a worker is an employee or a genuinely self-employed subcontractor but this has not adequately addressed the situation. The situation in RTÉ is of particular concern but there appears to be a contagion within the media industry.

“Workers are in a catch 22 situation where they are forced

to declare themselves as self-employed and then denied the right to trade union representation or access to the WRC when they wish to challenge their enforced status – because they are not employees.

“There are no objective criteria used in forcing workers to be self-employed and there is no voluntary element to the ‘choice’ of self-employed status, since the alternative is no contract at all.

“This Bill suggests a route towards fairness and includes access to the WRC where employment status is in dispute.”

At the meeting with Mr Howlin, he endorsed the union call for action on bogus self-employed and noted the extensive work already undertaken by the ICTU.

## Kevin Dawson: an appreciation

It seems strange to describe a funeral service as inspiring.

At the end of a long life lived well grief can sometimes be overcome by the realisation that a friend or colleague has fulfilled their dreams and ambitions but there's no such consolation when someone as vibrant, as talented and with so much to offer as Kevin Dawson is taken from us.

Yet those gathered at the Victorian Chapel at Mount Jerome crematorium recently left inspired by Kevin's tenacity, courage and good humour following a service which was as diverse, as enriching and as spirited as the man himself.

There were tears of laughter and sadness as family and friends remembered the multifaceted career of Kevin Dawson, (57) whose fortitude in dealing with Motor Neurone Disease won him widespread acclaim.

Kevin refused to allow MND to define him or to inhibit his last few years – he merely looked on it as requiring a change in the planned schedule and with the wonderful support of family and friends commenced a remarkable odyssey which would have challenged even those with far great physical stamina.

Kevin was Head of Editorial Standards at RTÉ having previously served as a TV producer and commissioning editor. His career spanned print and broadcasting. Kevin began as a freelance journalist for In Dublin, Magill, Sunday Press, The Irish Times and Irish Independent and then as a senior reporter and news editor with The Sunday Tribune. He loved the Tribune and enjoyed the opportunity to take part in a work-study visit to The Washington Post.

He worked as a reporter and presenter in TV Current Affairs from 1992 to 1994 and then until 1998 as a TV producer and Executive Producer. After a brief period as Assistant Editor at The Sunday Business Post, he was appointed



The late Kevin Dawson: high standards.

Commissioning Editor Factual TV in 1999, a job suited to his talents, skills and imagination.

While he commissioned a number of award-winning documentaries on history, arts and politics Kevin's legacy was the talent he nurtured in so many young journalists and producers.

In 2010 he was appointed Head of Corporate Communications in RTÉ at a challenging period for the organisation. He was a visible and forthright spokesperson for the organisation.

As Head of Ethical Standards Kevin brought an intellectual rigour combined with a passion for truth and accuracy. His career was cut short but Kevin's high standards remain as an example to programme makers.

He was a man of wit, charm and intelligence whose greater interest in life was his family Brianóg, Colm and Anna to whom as to his relatives and friends sympathy is extended.

—SD

### IN BRIEF

#### Fran takes the helm

Well known journalist Fran McNulty has been appointed Chair of the RTÉ sub branch.

Fran succeeds Prime Time reporter Robert Shortt. Robert was the first chair of the sub committee of Dublin broadcasting branch and also served as vice chair of the RTÉ Trade Union Group.

#### Late Bidy White Lennon

Actor and food writer Bidy White Lennon, who has died, was a former member of Dublin Freelance branch.

Bidy White became a household name in her role as Maggie in The Riordans and later became a food writer and critic.



# Judge lifts reporting restrictions

by Anton McCabe

A Northern judge has overturned reporting restrictions which a fellow-judge imposed on a criminal prosecution.

Judge Bernie Kelly told Omagh Magistrates Court the restrictions were illegal.

“Democracy dies in darkness,” she said. “We are

required to have trials in public.”

Judge Browne had imposed the restrictions in Dungannon Magistrates Court in the case of Dylan Quaile.

Quaile is charged with a series of burglary, drugs and motoring offences, and is on remand in prison. A defence solicitor had claimed Quaile has “self-reported armed gangs are touring the area of his

home, actively seeking him out.”

The connecting police officer said that he was aware of “a threat of some nature” but could not comment further.

The press had previously reported a number of Quaile’s convictions.

After considering a written objection from freelance Tanya Fowles, Judge Kelly removed the restrictions.

# Pay increase boost for Cork online journalists

Online journalists at the Irish Examiner and BreakingNews.ie have won a pay increase and the right to be collectively represented in the same bargaining unit as their colleagues.

The NUJ online chapel, representing approximately a dozen journalists, had been fighting for these concessions for over a year. They were supported in their efforts by the Irish Examiner and Evening Echo chapel reps, who made the pay claim for the online journalists a priority issue.

After a series of talks, a Workplace Relations Commission Conciliation hearing, and a Labour Court recommendation; the union and management reconvened talks and agreed terms.

The members, most of whom were being paid €23,400, were seeking parity with the lowest rung of staff in the Echo, where the pay grade stands at €28,000. The agreement reached was that the NUJ’s online members would be paid €25,000 from July 1, 2017; €26,000 from January 1, 2018; €27,000 from July 1, 2018; and €28,000 from January 1, 2019. The agreement, which was reached recently, involves back payments from July.

The company also agreed to include the online journalists in the main bargaining unit for collective negotiations. Up until then, management collectively negotiated with NUJ members in the



Irish Examiner

Breaking  
News.ie

Irish Examiner and Evening Echo paper editions in one bargaining unit, while collectively negotiating with the NUJ online staff in a separate bargaining unit. Going forward the NUJ will now be collectively negotiating for all staff in one unit.

In return for these concessions, members agreed that they have a seven day liability over 24 hours and that unsocial roster hours were covered by the pay agreement. It was also agreed that any historical entitlements elsewhere in the company could be red circled for the purpose of future collective negotiating.

The online members voted to accept the proposal.

NUJ Irish Organiser, Ian McGuinness, paid tribute to the reps who worked on this matter: “Noel Baker, Sean O’Riordain, Stephen Barry and Greg Murphy were pivotal in keeping up the momentum and getting this over the line. Other reps also helped along the way and everybody’s contribution is greatly appreciated. It is proof that where unions are organised, with strong reps, they can deliver for their members.”