

## **Gerry Murphy for Summer School 2019**

Welcome to our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual ICTU Global Solidarity Summer School – our third in Wexford and it is a pleasure to be here in the Whites again.

Since we gathered in Derry last year, much has happened and I want to spend a short while talking about our international work as a movement and the importance of maintaining and strengthening that outward focus..

Let me start with some of the issues for discussion at this year's summer school:

### **ILO;**

David Joyce and Congress Vice President, Kevin Callinan represented Congress at the 108<sup>th</sup> [International Labour Conference](#) in Geneva in June – the Centenary conference of that organisation. The centenary was marked by the workers group successfully negotiating a new Convention and Recommendation on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work and a Declaration on the Future of Work – items you will hear about in the next session with David and Siobhan. I know also that many of you will be interested in the Irish Government's conference to mark the centenary on 17<sup>th</sup> September in Dublin Castle with speakers including President Higgins, ILO Director General Guy Ryder and our own General Secretary, Patricia King. The ILO originated from trade union demands that the post WW1 peace agreement integrate

workers perspectives. The workers group has been the decisive driving force of the ILO ever since, influencing the labour and social policies of Governments and Employers across the world. Some of the events at the ILO over the last century may indeed be instructive for the many challenges we face today.

## **ITUC**

I want to welcome Allison Tate from the ITUC. It's an important organisation for us – coordinating trade union work internationally and it's crucial that national affiliates are plugged into their campaigns. We look forward to hearing from Allison on ITUC plans for the coming period and how the trade union family on this island can continue to play our role internationally.

## **Agenda 2030;**

Coalition 2030 delegates (including our own Yvonne O'Callaghan and Niall McGuirk) were at the UN in New York last month attending and engaging in meetings and events around the High Level Political Forum, which had a particular focus on Goal 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth. We look forward to hearing a report from them tomorrow and to discussing again how to apply the Sustainable Development Goals framework to our trade union work. Start by wearing the badges you received at registration – they are great conversation starters (as you would have heard Mary Robinson remark at the recent BDC).

## **Asylum seekers / Organising against Discrimination and Exclusion**

This year marks 20 years of the introduction of the direct provision system in the Republic of Ireland - an inhumane system that has resulted in the exclusion of refugees and asylum seekers from our society. It is a system that must end if we are to truly give a safe haven for those escaping conflict, torture and persecution. On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October MASI, the movement of asylum seekers in Ireland are organising a major conference in Liberty Hall in Dublin. This conference will bring together people in the asylum system from all over the country who will speak about the past and present of the Direct Provision and asylum process in seeking a more humane response to those requesting asylum and refuge. As allies, we in the trade union movement must continue to support those within the system and I urge all our affiliates to support this conference.

In NI, NIC-ICTU are represented on the steering committee of Belfast City of Sanctuary, whose work welcoming refugees and asylum seekers has been supported by many affiliates. Many GS activists promoted solidarity events with migrants after the EU membership referendum, alongside such initiatives as '1 Day Without Us', and the Housing4All campaign, which is co-ordinated with a really excellent campaign group initiated by a Past President of Congress Inez McCormick, called Participation and Practice of Rights, or PPR. We will have a speaker from this

campaign, Makhosi Sigabade , a refugee from Zimbabwe who has completed the painful and frustrating process of attaining status.

Perhaps Makhosi can have some tips for EU citizens whose freedom of movement is under threat from whatever happens at Halloween, as the UK crumbles out of the Free Movement of the European mainstream into who-knows-what. What is particularly grim is that these threats to free movement, this bricklayer for Fortress UK, is herself the child of refugees, Ugandan Asians evicted from their tea plantation by Idi Amin who expropriated it for his cronies.

Those Ugandan Asians, the future tenants of an empire of corner shops, were themselves the recipients of horrendous racial violence in the aftermath of Enoch Powell's hateful racist rhetoric.

Those Ugandan Asians, which produced a generation of female students who came from underfunded comprehensives to academically outclass the products of Eton and Fettes, whose narrative out to be a model of integrated immigration, now have as a role model for exclusion Priti Patel the Minister for the Interior - sounds a bit less cosy than Home Secretary.

At the ICTU BDC in July, we discussed and passed two motions and heard an insightful and passionate contribution from journalist Matt Frei, on the rise of the right and our duty as trade unionists to stop that happening.

Well, it is happening, and not only on the streets, but in the cabinet room of Number 10 Downing Street, and we need to mobilise to stop that too. And the first step to oppose the institutionalisation of a far-right agenda is to stop its vehicle for power and persecution – that means stopping a No-Deal Brexit, and then working with whoever it takes to reverse the process entirely.

Freedom of movement for ordinary people to study, to work, to retire is an amazing right. It is exceedingly rare in human history, and it must be cherished and then defended. If a Labour movement can let that one slip by surrounded by conspiracy theories about EU armies and social policies abroad that are better than that laboured under at home, then we are letting ourselves down.

And don't think progress cannot be reversed. That is why we support the peace process in Colombia and the right of the Venezuelan people to determine their own democratic future, and demand the release from a sordid Brazilian prison of Lula de Silva. Our duty is to oppose the little Bolsonaros, be they in China, London or Mar-a-Lago.

### **Palestine;**

The Irish trade union movement remains a strong advocate for the rights of the Palestinian people. The work being done through the global solidarity committee on Senator Frances Black's occupied territories bill is crucial to making some progress in protecting Palestinian rights. Although the process

to date has shown that it has a strong majority support in both Houses of the Oireachtas, with every single opposition party now united behind it, we must stay vigilant in our campaigning as the bill emerges from the Oireachtas Foreign Affairs Committee in September for the final stages in the legislative process. Also, I look forward to hearing more during these days on the planned children's conference by Trade Union Friends of Palestine, which is to take place in Dublin late November. The importance of addressing the cruelty being inflicted on Palestinian children by the Israeli state is necessary and I hope through the trade union activists who will take part in the TUIFP delegation to Palestine in October we can bring awareness of the state of Palestinian children in education, health and child care.

## **Colombia**

Justice for Colombia board members, Congress Vice President, Kevin Callinan and TUC International Officer, Mariela Kohon, recently attended a hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Defence to discuss the Colombian Peace Process. As we know, Irish Trade Unionists and Irish politicians from all sides, particularly in the north, played an important role in assisting the Colombian process. Justice for Colombia was centrally involved in the coordination of this effort. Kevin and Mariela outlined how since the Peace Agreement was ratified there has been an upsurge in the level of attacks, threats, intimidation and murder of civil society activists and

human rights defenders. They added that it is a source of serious worry that elements of the Colombian Peace Agreement have been ignored, changed or progressed too slowly and requested Committee members to act as legislators and parliamentarians and seek to make a difference.

### **Climate Action**

Finally, I want acknowledge the contribution of many of you in firmly placing the issue of climate action on the trade union agenda and for promoting the concept of a Just Transition in moves towards a carbon free future. Recent reports paint a stark picture on the urgency of action needed. It is in all our interests that the necessary changes are made to avoid a catastrophic future. But we make no apology for protecting the interests of our members directly impacted by such changes and for demanding that workers and their representatives are subjects and not objects of that change.

I know that this event will prove to be a success. I wish to thank all the Congress staff (North and South) who have been involved in organising the event and commend them and the activists in all unions, for the important work that you perform throughout the year, work which makes a real difference and which gives a real meaning to “global solidarity”.