

The 'Croke Park Extension' Deal is the Worst Set of Proposals Ever Voted on Collectively by the Irish Trade Union Movement

8 March 2013

The National Executive of the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has decided unanimously to recommend a 'no' vote to IFUT members in the ballot which will take place in the next few weeks.

IFUT is calling on all of its members to reject the proposed agreement for the following reasons:

We Can't Afford it and that's a fact

IFUT members have already suffered a reduction in their earnings of the order of 25%. We simply cannot afford a **further pay cut** of 5.5% to 8%.

IFUT has calculated that a combination of the proposed cuts and reductions over recent years will mean that every single pay increase achieved since the year 2000 will be more than wiped out for all academics below the level of Professor (who constitute a small minority in any College). In fact, a College Lecturer will earn 3.6% **less** than his/her equivalent back in April 2000 when adjustments are made for CPI increases since then.

Despite all of these facts there is still a gross misconception in the public mind that Academics are highly paid. How many people know for instance that the starting salary of a Lecturer is €34,386? And that's for a job which requires at least 8 years of post-Leaving Certificate education to qualify for!

Many IFUT Members are under a constant threat of Compulsory Redundancy

Almost uniquely in the Public Sector significant numbers of staff in the universities and colleges face the threat of **compulsory redundancy**. IFUT has been forced to fight all such threats on a case by case basis and the Department of Education refused point blank to insert any wording whatever into the new proposals which would give more job security to academics and researchers.

Student Numbers Up, Staff Numbers Down. The Savings we have already given are exceptional in the Public and Private Sectors

The cut backs proposed in the revised agreement will have a seriously **disproportionate** effect on higher education staff because of the massive amount of extra work they have had to take on arising from historically high enrolment numbers combined with severe reductions in staff numbers. Our staff:student ratio has disimproved alarmingly over the past few years.

In 2008 there were 4,795 academics and there were 89,650 students. By 2011 the number of staff had fallen to 4,426, yet the number of students we teach had soared to 106,448 (and it's still increasing). If we had an agreed student:staff ratio we would automatically have almost 900 extra colleagues to help us share the extra work we all have had to do for free.

You can't trust people who do not keep their word

The new proposals represent a **shameful breach of faith** by the Government. Ever since 2010, we have been giving huge concessions in return for a promise that there would be no pay cuts for four years. This commitment has been reneged upon in a manner which renders recent promises that the current proposals will last for three years meaningless.

The existing agreement does **not** permit the Government to threaten us as they have done. The existing 'Croke Park' Agreement says that it is binding for four years unless there is an "**unforeseen budgetary deterioration**". Things are bad but there has been no deterioration, as we are told constantly when it suits the Government to say so.

Why should one person pay while another on exactly the same salary or more escapes scott-free?

IFUT accepts that the country is in dire financial straits (although for reasons entirely beyond our control or fault) and that, regrettably, sacrifices are called for by those who can afford them. What we cannot and will not accept is that these concessions are to be sought exclusively from public servants. If a person on €34K or €80K is being asked to contribute more then, in fairness, all people on €34K or €80K should be involved. The way to effect that is through **a fair and progressive taxation system**. Everyone, Public Sector and Private, should be asked to contribute according to their means in a manner which does not victimise one section of society simply because they serve the public good.

The Proposal was put together by two Departments who have no idea of how Universities operate

In Clause 2.3 of the Agreement it says that the people who work 39 hours a week will not have extra hours to work. Yet in the same clause it says that “academic staff at third-level will work an additional 78 hours per annum”. How can that make sense unless the Department of Education thinks we work less than 39 hours? But at least one University (NUIM), sent up a formal report to them confirming that academics there, work 55 hours per week.

Also, in figures contained in her speech to the IFUT Annual Conference last April, Dr Marie Clarke of UCD provided proof that senior academics in Ireland work an average of 50 hours per week and junior academics an average of 47 hours per week. In both cases this was significantly higher than the European average (48 and 42). These are **facts**, not anecdotes and were established by a survey conducted across 12 European countries and involving more than 1,200 respondents in Ireland.

The Proposals hit lower paid Academics more than higher paid

The Proposals demand the elimination of exam fees despite the fact that only early-stage academics are paid these separately. More senior staff have their exam duties paid for as part of their basic salary. IFUT calculates that this measure could involve a loss of up to €2,250 per annum for academics who are already struggling on lower pay scales.

The Department was unable to answer IFUT's queries as to how they will manage if casual staff who are paid to mark exams are no longer available for this work because there will be no payment for it.

Conclusion

There has been much talk of late of "sweeteners" to entice unions to vote in favour of this dreadful deal – easily the worst deal ever voted on collectively by the Irish Trade Union Movement. Well, for IFUT members there have been no enticements and the deal is as bad today as it was in the early morning when it was finalised.

ENDS