

# ADC: Green light for emergency motion



*"We are not pawns to be shoved about on the government's chess-board," said Moira Craig, INMO Executive Council member*

NURSES and midwives unanimously agreed to take strike action with other unions if the government tries to impose further pay cuts on them at the annual delegate conference of the INMO in Letterkenny last month.

The emergency motion noted the "continuing threat from government to cut the pay of nurses, midwives and other public servants, for a third time, and to worsen other long-standing terms and conditions, of employment"

**I t a c k n o w l e d g e d :**

- The overwhelming rejection by INMO members of the unfair, flawed and inequitable and discriminatory proposals to extend the Croke Park agreement
- The effectiveness of the multi-union campaigns, involving the alliance for a 'no vote' group and the 24/7 Frontline Alliance
- The strong rejection of proposals, by all public service unions, both in terms of the numbers of unions, who

rejected the proposals and the strong majority of individual public servants who voted against them.

Moira Craig, INMO Executive Council member, from the North Dublin branch, proposed the motion. She said: "We are not pawns to be shoved about on the government's chess-board. We are working in the most abysmal of circumstances. We are short-staffed everyday under pressure, under resourced and under valued, and now they want us to accept less pay. Delegates, we have said 'no' and no means no."

She continued: "We embrace change. We are willing to change, we have changed and we want to change, so bring on the LRC and we are ready. But make no mistakes, we have reached the Rubicon. We have taken the cuts, we have taken the taxes, and we have taken the cutbacks.

"We are at the brink and if we are pushed past the brink we must be ready, and I know we are ready. For once the Rubicon is crossed, there is no going back.

Ms Craig concluded: "Colleagues, I don't want a war, and I certainly don't need a war, but I am ready, you are ready, we are ready."

On passing the motion, the Organisation was mandated to continue to explore alternatives to the rejected Croke Park II proposals with the Labour Relations Commission.

In addition, if the government seeks to impose pay cuts, or reductions in other terms and conditions of members' employment (through legislation or other means), the INMO has been mandated to commence a nationwide workplace ballot of all members. This ballot will seek a mandate for industrial action, up to and including, the withdrawal of labour as part of a public sector-wide campaign of action.

The INMO will also actively participate in other forms of protest action, which may be agreed with other public service unions as required, in pursuance of the maintenance of the existing income and terms and conditions of employment of members.

## Motion puts overwhelming work stress in the spotlight

THE enduring stress being placed on nurses and midwives in trying to maintain a safe standard of care was highlighted at the recent ADC in Letterkenny.

The Ballina/Belmullet branch of the INMO noted the increased number of people requiring a public health service and the increased acuity of patients.

It put forward a motion, calling on the Health Service Executive and other employers to urgently implement specific policies, including

robust health and safety measures, so that nurses and midwives are protected from suffering mounting workplace stress.

Frances Cullen, from the Ballina Branch, said: "The INMO counselling helpline has been receiving an increased number of calls on a daily basis and we are all acutely aware of some nurses in this present economic climate that simply cannot afford assistance in a private capacity."

She called on the INMO to address stress and burnout

by introducing a "more accessible" counselling service that is ongoing in nature.

Anne Burke, chair of the Galway Branch and Executive Council member, said: "The increasing caseload endured by our nurses and midwives on a daily basis coupled with the depleted and diminished workforce has contributed in its totality to a stress-immersed workforce.

"This stress is being compounded by the failure of managements right across the country to implement

existing support structures."

She added: "In some quarters, management drive the staff deeper into stress because they fail to understand or acknowledge the constraints that nurses or midwives are working under."

Ms Burke continued: "On a daily basis I meet nurses and midwives whose personal lives have been fractured and torn apart due to unmanaged work-related stress. This cannot and must not continue."

The motion was passed by the delegates unanimously.

# Home help must be assessed on needs basis



Delegates in Letterkenny pictured listening attentively to the speakers

A MOTION condemning 'the manner in which primary care/home support decisions are made, with the focus purely on financial measures', was put forward at the recent ADC. According to the motion, these decisions do not take into account the individual client's needs.

The motion – put forward by the Waterford Branch – resolved that the Health Minister 'be called upon to honour his commitment to primary and continuing community care'.

Grainne Walsh, from the branch, was scathing of government's inaction. She said: "Time and time again the rhetoric from government is that primary care is 'where it's all happening'. The *Programme for Government* identifies primary care as the main channel for health service delivery, ending what they describe as an over reliance on acute healthcare services.

"As well as reforming the current model of healthcare delivery, colleagues, don't forget that the money will

follow the patient.

"In my area last year, following a budget overrun, management decided to take that money from the most vulnerable, older members of our society when they decided to cut home help hours irrespective of assessed need," she said.

She added that the anger of those affected was subsequently directed at PHNs.

Ms Walsh spoke of one of her own clients, who was in her 100th year and lived successfully at home who only received seven hours of home help a week and was still cut to just over five hours.

"When public health nurses try to advocate on behalf of this vulnerable group, we are told to adjust our attitude and assist management in bringing in these savings as there is just no money.

"Colleagues, these cuts on home services are a direct assault on the most vulnerable people in our society. As a public health nurse struggling to deliver a quality service in an environment where all deci-

sions are made, not on a needs basis but on a fiscal basis, I urge you to support this motion."

Essene Cassidy, a public health nurse in the Waterford Branch said that PHN client needs assessment was a valid and accurate tool. "We don't need to be directed to reassess and change our mind on assessed need. As public health nurses, our focus is and will always remain on health promotion and illness prevention. We will never be instructed to be involved in cost extraction and reduction.

Patricia Barrett-O'Boyle, Castlebar Branch, said that decisions were being taken to reduce home help hours and PHNs were not being informed. She also said that clients were being told by phone rather than letter which meant there was no paper trail to the decision makers.

Jo Tully of the Dublin South West Branch said that these cuts represented "farfical thinking" in the health service and led to patients blocking beds in acute services as they could

not be discharged.

"Just last week in my hospital, a teaching hospital in Dublin, we had 120 patients who were fit to be discharged yet could not be discharged. The consequence of that is that we have multiple ICU patients in our recovery area in theatre and we have acute emergency patients on the surgical day ward. It is complete meltdown," she said.

Mary Keenan, a PHN from the Kildare Branch, gave examples of the kind of patients that were being affected by cuts to home support, such as a woman in her 80s living with a disabled daughter in her 50s who had all care removed and an elderly man who had diabetes and was blind who was reduced to half an hour a week. She spoke about patients being interrogated to the point of tears on their finances and family situations.

"I'm a public health nurse and I'd be in tears. I've been in tears for 10 years over home help and home care assistance," she said.

The motion was carried.