

Protecting your income is pivotal

AS I write, discussions continue between public sector unions and the government on a possible extension to the Croke Park Agreement. The INMO, and the rest of the 24/7 Frontline Services Alliance, have been seeking to protect the income of our collective membership from further cuts.

The 24/7 national rally, held in the Basketball Arena in Tallaght on February 18, saw over 4,000 frontline public servants come together and to say that they simply have no more to give. The Alliance is demanding that any agreement emerging from the current discussions must treat all public servants equally. It would be unacceptable for one frontline public servant to be hit harder than another colleague on a similar income, just because they have a liability to work unsocial hours.

Throughout the discussions, the government has been intent on unfairly targeting frontline workers on the spurious basis that their minimum compensation for working unsocial hours, is not core pay and can be reduced. This idea will always be fundamentally opposed by the INMO and all other organisations in the Frontline Alliance.

The INMO Executive Council will continue the talks process to protect the income of members and to ensure that any agreement made is equitable. This is constantly being monitored by the Executive Council. These are the most challenging and potentially damaging

negotiations ever undertaken by public sector unions. The government's blindness to the reality of life of frontline staff, and all other public servants on low and middle incomes, is breathtaking.

The fact is that nurses, midwives and all other public servants are on very ordinary incomes. They have already suffered in excess of a 25% reduction in their income since 2009. To suggest that the government can expect them to have their income further reduced is demoralising and quite bizarre.

The government continues to state that if no agreement can be reached, it will legislate, in a targeted way, to reduce public sector pay. This is obviously an overt threat, which would suggest that the government will seek disproportionate cuts, through the reduction in premium pay, from frontline staff. This would inevitably lead to workplace difficulties.

At the time of going to press these negotiations were almost certainly entering their final phase with the outcome simply not known. Regardless of what emerges or what is proposed, the INMO's position will continue to be – as directed by branch AGMs – that our members will not accept a further reduction in their current income.

This will be the subject of great media attention as you receive this journal, but I would remind you that whatever emerges will be the subject of a nationwide infor-



mation campaign, on the implications of any proposals that emerge and a national ballot of all member over the next few weeks.

If the process breaks down, the INMO, along with all other public service unions, will play an active part in any campaign designed to protect the pay and conditions, of our members, who have already taken more than enough.

Finally, I want to thank all of our graduate members (2010, 2011 and 2012) for their absolute support in our call for a boycott of the flawed, low-paid graduate scheme for nurses and midwives. The very small number of applications received by the HSE confirms the solidarity of our members, and their full understanding that 100% effort in a job deserves 100% pay. We continue to work towards a resolution to this issue but, in the interim, our call for a boycott remains fully in place.

Liam Doran
General Secretary, INMO



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