

Solidarity – Shaping our future

I'D LIKE to begin by wishing you, your family and friends a very happy and healthy, New Year. And what a new year it has been already!

In January, we were challenged with the attempt by the Department of Health and the HSE to recruit new graduate nurses and midwives at 80% of the agreed salary. In response, over 500 new graduates, agency workers, and other INMO members, gathered in Croke Park to demonstrate their collective opposition to this low-paid, flawed initiative.

This rally reinforced the call for a boycott of the programme, which would spur the HSE to come to the negotiating table to agree a proper graduate programme that respects the quality of new graduates, the excellence of the agency nurses/midwives, and the expectation of members who are waiting on panels to be appointed to permanent posts.

The boycott worked and the HSE announced it was extending the deadline for applications to 'increase' opportunity. It also invited 2010 and 2011 graduates to apply. This was obvious proof that the programme is not educational but simply an overt attack on the pay of nurses/midwives and an attempt to introduce a new lower paid grade of staff nurse/midwife.

The solidarity of the 2010, 2011 and 2012 graduates has been absolutely brilliant. These young professionals have shown

that they understand what is at stake and they have showcased their respect for themselves and their clinical excellence. They realise that other nurses/midwives, who provide essential frontline services, must also be respected and cannot be 'sacked' as part of this insulting initiative. The boycott continues and we will, through collective action underpinned by solidarity, ensure this programme is stopped and that the proper rates of pay are paid to every nurse and midwife.

The INMO is participating in talks on a possible extension to the Croke Park Agreement. These talks are between the government and all public sector unions affiliated to ICTU including the INMO. At the outset of these talks the management side mapped out an agenda that not only seeks to reduce the pay of nurses, midwives and all public servants, but to also minimise the ability of public service trade unions to look after their members on a day-to-day basis. It is quite clear that the government is seeking to extend the working week, freeze increments, reduce premium pay, alter rosters, reduce flexitime working and increase their right to redeploy staff.

In response to the management agenda, the public sector unions, including the INMO, are insisting that rates of pay (including premium pay and allowances) cannot be further reduced. We will seek, through discussion, to reach the tar-



geted saving of an additional €1 billion over the next three years. However there is no guarantee of agreement.

At the time of going to press these talks were continuing. Therefore, it is not possible to say for certain what the ultimate outcome will be. The negotiations will be explained at branch/section AGMs. If proposals emerge, they will be the subject of a nationwide ballot. Regardless of what happens in the talks or what agreement emerges, the protection of existing pay rates and other conditions of employment will only be maintained through the absolute solidarity of every INMO member and every trade union in the public service.

Solidarity is the order of the day. Solidarity must determine our actions as it will provide us with the greatest protection and ultimately shape our future.

Liam Doran
General Secretary, INMO



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