



Grad boycott hits headlines

The INMO's successful boycott of the nurse and midwife graduate recruitment campaign dominated the news in recent weeks

THE government's new nurse and midwife graduate recruitment campaign dominated the headlines in early 2013. The second big issue in the media was the Croke Park extension talks.

Post-grad campaign

The Sunday Times (January 20) ran a headline on page 2 – *Low-salary nursing jobs boycotted*.

"The Health Service Executive (HSE) got only 30 applications for the 1,000 graduate nursing posts it advertised last month by the time the official deadline expired last week, according to health-sector sources. The posts, advertised at 80% of a nurse's starting salary, were intended to reduce the reliance on expensive agency nursing staff but drew fierce opposition from the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO)."

INMO general secretary Liam Doran said "the campaign against the low paid nursing jobs 'took off' on social media – particularly Facebook – and was entirely driven by young nursing graduates determined not to work for €21,700 a year."

He continued "these young nurses have options. There has been aggressive recruitment from the UK where nurses are paid €25,500 plus an allowance of between €4,000 and €7,000 for working in London. Irish nurses from as far away as Australia were posting on the Facebook page that they were not going to come home for €21,700 when nurses in New South Wales are paid up to €43,000."

Mr Doran added that "he too had heard reports that there were between 25 and 30 applicants for the graduate nursing posts but understood eight of those applications were not submitted by nurses themselves but by one individual on their behalf..."

"The HSE has extended the application deadline by another two weeks and

invited nursing graduates from 2010 and 2011 to join the class of 2012 in applying for the posts.

"Doran said the move was an admission of failure and exposed as false a claim that the scheme was designed to give graduates learning opportunities and experience on the job."

The **Irish Sunday Mirror** (January 20) also covered the story under the headline – *Our nurse graduates are treated as cheap labour*. "Defiant young nurses, many of whom have worked night and day to put themselves through college over the past four years, are refusing to sign up for the programme."

Liam Doran said: "If you look at the overall public sector cost there is no saving. If an agency nurse is sacked to make way for young nurses they are going to end up drawing the dole so, overall there will be no saving."

Mr Doran continued: "This is an attack on gender by the male-dominated management in the public sector and in the government. It is a full frontal attack on nurses, midwives, young people and women."

Meanwhile in an interview in the **Sunday Business Post** (January 20) the Minister for Health, Dr James Reilly, said: "The alternative for these graduates is to move abroad or prop up the counters of fast food outlets."

He also said that "far from keeping this to nurses, I want to see this extended to physiotherapists, occupational therapists and others."

New graduate Aisling Maher, who is the student representative on the Executive Council of the INMO, spoke to the **Daily Mail** (January 18) under a headline – *We stood strong... And it has paid off*.

She said: "I think my colleagues should give themselves a pat on the back... The

HSE gave us a one-week window to apply for the jobs. I think that was to scare us or panic us into applying for the jobs... I don't think a further extension of the deadline will change anything. I encourage all of my colleagues to stay strong and fight this."

I would like to sincerely thank all the new graduates who have responded to requests for interviews on this issue so far – too numerous to mention here by name.

Croke Park extension talks

Unions bristle at talks 'hit list' – was a headline in the **Sunday Business Post** (January 20).

"The Croke Park talks have kicked off and the 'hit list' from government is known. The areas that will be targeted for savings include: working hours, overtime and premium payments, flexitime and redeployment, pay cuts 'at certain levels', increments, allowances and redundancies... health staff – who account for 40 per cent of the public pay bill – will be asked to make the largest contribution of the €1 billion savings sought: €420 million."

Liam Doran said "the Organisation had drawn up ten questions and clarifications that it wanted from management on foot of the financial information provided last Thursday."

"Management have confirmed that 2,400 jobs will be lost in the health sector this year, which includes 1,500 through an early retirement redundancy package. This is so that an extra €150 million can be saved in the health sector in 2013. But there is no way the sector can continue to meet waiting times for treatments, and targets, or retain current bed capacity and diagnostics if that is the case."

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