

**NOT FOR PUBLICATION
BEFORE 10.30am ON
WEDNESDAY 4th MAY 2022**



11th BIENNIAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE

4th – 5th MAY 2022

THE SHERATON HOTEL, ATHLONE

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

BY

MR. WILLIAM MOONEY

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, VICE-PRESIDENT, OFFICERS, DELEGATES, OBSERVERS AND FRIENDS, IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO WELCOME YOU ALL TO THE SHERATON HOTEL, ATHLONE FOR THIS, THE ELEVENTH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE OF THE COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS' UNION.

OUR BIENNIAL CONFERENCE IS TAKING PLACE DURING EXTRAORDINARILY DIFFICULT TIMES. AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF UNCERTAINTY WITH BREXIT, WE HAVE IN THE PAST TWO YEARS, HAD TO ENDURE THE TRAUMA OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. THIS PERIOD HAS BROUGHT SO MUCH GRIEF AND SADNESS TO MANY PEOPLE, NOT LEAST, THROUGH JOB LOSS, ILLNESS, HOSPITALISATION, LASTING SIDE EFFECTS OR SLOW RECOVERY, AND UNFORTUNATELY, THE SAD LOSS OF DEARLY BELOVED RELATIVES AND FRIENDS. ON BEHALF OF THE CWU, I OFFER MY SINCERE SYMPATHIES TO ALL WHO HAVE SUFFERED THE LOSS OF A RELATIVE OR FRIEND.

TODAY WE ARE WITNESSING A HORRIBLE WAR, WAGED ON THE INNOCENT PEOPLE OF UKRAINE, FOLLOWING THE ILLEGAL RUSSIAN INVASION OF THAT SOVEREIGN COUNTRY. THIS COWARDLY ACT OF AN AUTOCRATIC BULLY IS AN ABUSE OF HIS POWER AS PRESIDENT, TO IMPOSE DEATH AND DESTRUCTION ON THE CITIZENS OF UKRAINE. AND FOR WHAT PURPOSE?

THE IRISH PEOPLE HAVE ACTED IN SOLIDARITY AND GENEROSITY TO ASSIST IN ALLEVIATING THE HUMANITARIAN DISASTER. THE CWU HAS A PROVEN TRACK RECORD OF PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN AID AND IS CONTINUING ITS GOOD WORK WITH OUR SISTER UNION, CWU UK, WITH THE GENEROUS SUPPORT OF AN POST AND EIR. WE HAVE ALSO DONATED FIFTY THOUSAND EUROS TO THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS.

WHICH BRINGS ME ON TO WHERE WE, AS WORKERS, TRADE UNIONISTS AND CITIZENS, ARE GOING IN THE FUTURE. AS I MENTIONED EARLIER, WE ARE LIVING IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES. HOWEVER, THE COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS' UNION AND ITS MEMBERS HAVE WORKED TIRELESSLY IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST, MAINTAINING ESSENTIAL SERVICES, KEEPING COMMUNITIES CONNECTED. WE EMERGE WITH PRIDE, REINVIGORATED TO FACE NEW CHALLENGES IN A RENEWED SPIRIT OF SOLIDARITY AND PURPOSE.

MOVING TO THE COMMUNICATIONS SECTOR AND COMPANIES WHERE WE REPRESENT WORKERS, WE HAVE DEALT WITH HUGE CHANGE, SUCCESSFULLY PROTECTING AND IMPROVING MEMBERS' PAY AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN COMPANIES WHERE WE HAVE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS. TOGETHER IT IS EASIER.

THE ACCELERATED CHANGING MAIL PRODUCT PROFILE AND REDUCED CASH TRANSACTIONS AT POST OFFICES, TOGETHER WITH THE

FINANCIAL IMPACT OF COVID, HAVE PLACED A HUGE BURDEN ON THE FINANCES OF AN POST. SUSTAINABILITY OF THE COMPANY WILL BE DIFFICULT WITHOUT THE SUPPORT AND COMMITMENT OF THE SHAREHOLDERS, WITH GOVERNMENT OBLIGED TO PROTECT AND MAINTAIN VALUED AND NECESSARY PUBLIC SERVICES.

LIKEWISE, IN THE ECOMMS COMPANIES, OUR MEMBERS' WORLD OF WORK CONTINUES TO CHANGE AT A RAPID PACE. THE NEW CHANGE AGREEMENT WE HAVE SEEN, PARTICULARLY IN THE CALL CENTRE INDUSTRY, HAS IMPROVED OUR MEMBERS' EARNINGS, WHILE THE NETWORKS OUR MEMBERS WORK ON CONTINUE TO SHIFT FROM COPPER TO FIBRE, WHICH CREATES CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE WORKERS WE REPRESENT ACROSS THE INDUSTRY.

IN THE SECTORAL CONFERENCES WE WILL EXAMINE IN GREATER DETAIL THE ISSUES OF CONCERN TO MEMBERS ACROSS THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY, MANY OF WHOM ARE REELING FROM THE EFFECTS OF INFLATION, TRANSLATED INTO AN ESCALATING COST OF LIVING.

WHILE THE CWU HAS SECURED SIGNIFICANT PAY INCREASES FOR MEMBERS ACROSS THE SECTOR, UNLESS GOVERNMENT ENGAGES POSITIVELY WITH ICTU TO OFFSET THE WORST EFFECTS OF INFLATION, HIGHER PAY INCREASES WILL BE REQUIRED.

WE, AS A UNION, HAVE ALSO DEMONSTRATED OUR ABILITY TO SUCCESSFULLY DEAL WITH TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND THEIR IMPACT ON OUR MEMBERS. IN THIS SHIFTING LANDSCAPE, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE CONTINUE TO ORGANISE AND RECRUIT. WE SEE COMRADES IN COMPANIES SUCH AS FACEBOOK, AMAZON, GOOGLE AND OTHERS, NOW BEGINNING TO WAKE UP TO THE VALUE OF UNIONS, WHERE THE CHALLENGES ARE NOT AS DAUNTING WHEN FACED COLLECTIVELY.

IT ALWAYS AMAZES ME WHEN I HEAR PEOPLE SAY "*WHAT COULD A UNION EVER DO FOR ME?*"; WELL, THE ANSWER IS IN THE REACTION OF THESE BILLIONAIRE-OWNED MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES TO THE ATTEMPTS BY THEIR EMPLOYEES TO ORGANISE AND JOIN UNIONS. THEY SPEND MILLIONS TO FIGHT UNIONS GAINING A FOOTHOLD IN THEIR COMPANIES, BECAUSE IT IS RECOGNISED THAT UNIONS IMPROVE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERS AND REDUCE INEQUALITY IN SOCIETY.

THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT, OF WHICH OUR UNION WILL PLAY ITS PART, MUST WORK TO ENSURE THAT THE USE OF SO-CALLED "GIG ECONOMY" EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES ARE NOT TOLERATED TO UNDERMINE GOOD EMPLOYERS OR WORKERS' PAY AND CONDITIONS. WE MUST HOLD GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE FOR ENSURING ROGUE EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES ARE PROHIBITED BY LEGISLATION.

WHILE I MAY AGREE THAT BREXIT, THE COVID PANDEMIC, THE UKRAINE WAR AND INFLATION, ARE ADDED BURDENS FOR THIS GOVERNMENT TO MANAGE, THE FACT IS THAT MANY OF THE ISSUES IN IRISH SOCIETY TODAY PRE-DATE ALL OF THE ABOVE AND RESULT DIRECTLY FROM GOVERNMENT POLICY. PROBLEMS OF HOUSING, RENT, LONG WAITING LISTS IN OUR HEALTH SERVICE, LACK OF SUPPORTS FOR THOSE WITH DISABILITIES, A MENTAL HEALTH SYSTEM THAT IS NOT FIT FOR PURPOSE TO NAME A FEW; THIS GOVERNMENT HAS CONTINUOUSLY UNDER-INVESTED IN NECESSARY PUBLIC SERVICES THAT WORKERS AND FAMILIES DEPEND ON, AND INSTEAD OUTSOURCES THESE SERVICES, ESSENTIALLY SUBSIDISING THE PROFITS OF PRIVATE LANDLORDS AND COMPANIES.

A CHANGE IN DIRECTION BY GOVERNMENT IS REQUIRED WHICH SHOULD BE APPROACHED IN THE VERY SAME MANNER AS THAT TO THE PANDEMIC. WHAT WAS ALWAYS HERALDED AS NOT POSSIBLE, PROVED VERY POSSIBLE WHEN THE POLITICAL WILL WAS THERE. ICTU HAS LED THE WAY BY BEING THE VOICE OF WORKERS AND SOCIETY GENERALLY, SETTING OUT THE PATHWAY IN ITS POLICY DOCUMENT *NO GOING BACK*. IN THE ABSENCE OF A RADICAL POLICY SHIFT TOWARDS OUR AGENDA, WE SHOULD ADVOCATE SUPPORT FOR PARTIES AND CANDIDATES THAT ARE COMMITTED TO OUR DEMANDS AT THE NEXT ELECTION.

THE COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS' UNION IS EXPERIENCING ITS OWN CHANGES AND I WELCOME THE APPOINTMENT BY THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF SEÁN McDONAGH AS GENERAL SECRETARY. SEÁN HAS OVER TWENTY YEARS' EXPERIENCE OF SENIOR POSITIONS IN THE CWU, HAVING PREVIOUSLY BEEN PRESIDENT, NATIONAL OFFICER, AND DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY.

I WELCOME TOO THE APPOINTMENT OF IAN McARDLE AS DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY, WHO ALSO HAS A WEALTH OF EXPERIENCE IN ORGANISING, FINANCIAL SERVICES AND MORE RECENTLY THE ECOMMS SECTOR. I KNOW THAT YOU WILL JOIN ME IN OFFERING IAN AND SEÁN OUR VERY BEST WISHES AND WHOLE-HEARTED SUPPORT.

OUR LEADERSHIP HAS WASTED NO TIME IN REVIEWING ALL AREAS OF OUR ORGANISATION, DEVELOPING A STRATEGY TO *SHAPE THE FUTURE UNION*, WHICH WE WILL DISCUSS IN DETAIL SHORTLY. KEY TO THIS STRATEGY IS PLACING ORGANISING CENTRE-STAGE, WITH A DETERMINED FOCUS LED BY THE GENERAL SECRETARY.

OF COURSE, CENTRAL TO OUR DECISION-MAKING IS MEMBERS' PARTICIPATION IN THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS OF OUR BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS AND THIS BIENNIAL CONFERENCE.

WE IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT MUST ENSURE THAT THERE IS DEMOCRACY IN THE WORKPLACE AND IN GREATER SOCIETY, AND IN OUR COLLABORATION WITH OUR TRADE UNION AFFILIATES NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

AS A WORKER-DIRECTOR IN AN POST, I EXPERIENCE FIRST-HAND THE ABILITY OF WORKER REPRESENTATIVES TO HAVE A SAY AND INFLUENCE THE DIRECTION OF THE COMPANY. IT IS A RIGHT WHICH WORKERS SHOULD HAVE AT EVERY LEVEL AND IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DEDICATE ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO SECURE THIS RIGHT TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING FOR EVERY WORKER.

WHY SHOULD SOME WEALTHY OLIGARCH OR SHAREHOLDER ONLY HAVE THIS RIGHT?! SURELY A WORKER WHO GIVES EIGHT HOURS A DAY, FIVE DAYS A WEEK, FOR UP TO FORTY YEARS OF THEIR LIFE SHOULD HAVE THEIR VOICE HEARD AT EVERY LEVEL, INCLUDING THE HIGHEST DECISION-MAKING COMMITTEE IN A COMPANY – THE BOARD.

I HAVE TAKEN IMMENSE PRIDE IN BEING ELECTED PRESIDENT OF OUR GREAT UNION – THE COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS’ UNION – PARTICULARLY OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS WHERE YOU, THE MEMBERS, HAVE GONE ABOUT YOUR DAILY WORK DUTIES SELFLESSLY, HEROICALLY AND SOMETIMES IN DANGEROUS SITUATIONS. I SALUTE YOU AND THANK YOU.

FINALLY, I THANK YOU FOR ATTENDING THE 2022 CWU CONFERENCE. I WANT TO THANK IVOR REYNOLDS, VICE-PRESIDENT, FOR HIS STAUNCH SUPPORT, MY FELLOW NEC MEMBERS, THE GENERAL SECRETARY, THE OFFICERS, AND THE STAFF IN HEAD OFFICE FOR THEIR ASSISTANCE, SUPPORT, COURTESY AND FRIENDSHIP OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS.

IT HAS TRULY BEEN AN HONOUR FOR ME TO BE PRESIDENT OF THIS GREAT UNION. IT HAS BEEN DIFFICULT AND CHALLENGING AT TIMES, BUT I GAVE MY BEST TO FULFIL THE HIGH OFFICE OF PRESIDENT OF THE COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS' UNION, IN REPRESENTING OUR MEMBERS.

TO END, I SINCERELY THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND I HOPE YOU WILL CONSIDER THAT I HAVE ACTED IN A DIGNIFIED MANNER BEFITTING THE OFFICE.

THANK YOU.