

The levy's too heavy The cost is unjust

Fight for Ireland's public service before the government destroys that too.

IT'S NOT A LEVY. IT'S A BOUNTY

The government's vicious and cynical decision to target ordinary working families with a crippling levy - or more accurately, a salary slash - is glaringly unfair, unworkable, damaging, divisive and stupid.

Before entering talks with government, people who work to provide public services had made a solemn commitment to bear their share of Ireland's common pain - to join with our hard-pressed family members, co-workers and colleagues in the private sector and play a leading and fair part.

But in a shocking, unilateral and divisive move, the government has tried to turn private against public and lay the burden for economic recovery on the backs of public service workers on low and middle incomes. This is not a pension levy. It's a bounty on the heads of public servants and their families - workers who have been stereotyped and demonised because the government needs an easy target.

THE PUBLIC SERVICE IS YOUR FAMILY, FRIENDS, CUSTOMERS

People who work to provide public services are not anonymous, faceless bureaucrats. They are caring people with families, worries, feelings, pride, responsibility. They're at the heart of Ireland. The vast majority of those who will be decimated by this levy are ordinary people who earn ordinary salaries between €20,000 and €50,000. Because of this, the levy is not just disastrous for public sector workers - it is disastrous for Ireland.

A GOVERNMENT OF THE DEVELOPERS, BY THE HIGH ROLLERS, FOR THE BANKERS

Now many commentators are saying this is a ham-fisted and damaging move driven by panic or cynicism. Meanwhile, this money stolen from family budgets will be handed over to the bankers and the developers who caused this debacle.

The truth is the levy will decimate family incomes. It will weaken their ability to pay for absolute necessities like their mortgages, loan repayments, childcare, health costs, education fees, and household bills. It will shut down people's ability to contribute to the national need for economic recovery.

WAVES OF ANGER AND HURT

Thousands of public service workers are coming forward with hard evidence - their own family budgets - demonstrating how this discriminatory tax will bring them to the economic edge and beyond.

It has already broken the patience of people who work to provide public services. Among IMPACT members, and workers from other unions, a hurricane of anger is swelling up against it. And like a storm levee that is in the wrong place, is badly planned and has no foundation - this levy will break under the pressure.

8 REASONS TO CHANGE THE LEVY

1 THE LEVY IS LOADED.

Ordinary workers in both the private and public sectors are being forced to bear the brunt of the economic crisis. Meanwhile high rollers and those who caused the problems are being rewarded.

2 THE LEVY IS A LOSER.

It will not create jobs.

3 THE LEVY IS LOCAL.

It will Hoover money out of local economies across the country.

4 THE LEVY IS LEAKING.

It will flush away more jobs and drive more consumers to spend north of the border.

5 THE LEVY IS LARCENY.

It is totally unjust and ham-fisted. Why hit low and middle income workers hardest?

6 THE LEVY IS LUDICROUS.

It is unfair and stupid because it only targets ordinary workers and does so regardless of their income or circumstances.

7 THE LEVY IS A LIE.

Who ever heard of a pension levy that is not related to pension entitlements? It is payable on all earnings (salary, overtime, taxable allowances etc.) and not just on pensionable salary. Some people who pay this will never get a pension benefit. What's more, public servants already make a compulsory contribution to their pension - most at 6.5% of salary.

8 THE LEVY IS LUNACY.

It will create a range of ridiculous anomalies between different categories. Lower paid workers receiving tax relief at 20% will end up paying a higher net pension-related payment than some higher paid people paying tax at 41%.

A gathering storm of anger

Public servants will take pain. But they can't and won't take abuse. As IMPACT members dig in to fight for their livelihoods and families, TDs of all political parties are bracing themselves for an unprecedented wave of anger, hurt and frustration. IMPACT is co-ordinating a mass lobby of local constituency clinics. Some 60,000 members of IMPACT are mobilising, along with members of other unions, against the constant abuse of their vital role by commentators, public representatives, government TDs and ministers.

Any objective analysis proves that the vast majority of public services are good quality and highly valued by the people and communities that use them, whether it be schools, hospitals, care services, parks and heritage, transport, public safety and security, or the hidden necessities like sewerage, health inspections and clean water.

READY TO ACT IN THE NATIONAL INTEREST

People who work to deliver public services take 'serving the public' very seriously and have been working harder to deliver more and better services. International surveys confirm that Irish public sector workers are doing a good job, and provide excellent value for money. But over and over, they have been pilloried, blamed and dehumanised by politicians and commentators.

Despite this, already hard-pressed IMPACT members, and members of other public sector unions stand ready to act in the national interest. The framework agreed by ICTU, Government and employers before the talks promised so much - fairness, protection for the least well off, a bigger contribution from the wealthy, regulation of the banks and executive salaries, job creation measures, protection for mortgage holders in difficulty, and action on the public finances. IMPACT members are ready to play their part and know that means taking some pain. All we got was a vicious attack on ordinary working families. Now it's time to fight for 'middle Ireland'.

How the levy hurts modest family budgets

The following are actual extracts from hundreds of letters from IMPACT members to their local TDs. Real names are not used.

LIZ I am a Special Needs Assistant. My bi-weekly net pay is €1091. I am a single mother. My child's father is now unemployed from the construction industry. I pay rent of €200 a week so that brings my pay down to €691. I pay €75 a week for childcare. The car loan which I need to get my daughter to school brings my net wage down to €341. My weekly grocery bill, petrol, phone, leaves me with €111. Electricity comes to about €40 a fortnight. That leaves €61 to last two weeks.

DAVID My deep concern is the unfair method. I have no problem making a proportionate contribution to economic recovery, but I certainly take issue with a 'levy' of 6.4% on my annual income when higher paid workers contribute a lesser percentage. This is grossly unfair.

MARY My husband and son have both lost their jobs in recent months so now I am the main wage earner in our house. As a result of these measures my net income will be reduced by approximately €1650 per annum. As someone who earns considerably less than the average wage this is a substantial amount of money. I feel that a disproportionate burden has fallen on those who can least afford to pay it.

JOHN When I read the papers, watch the news and hear about all the wasted money within government departments, private jets, limousines and the banking sector my blood boils with anger and frustration. I am just a very small cog in the wheel and count for nothing, but this time I will not sit back and let this happen. How dare they think that we can be walked all over. There is no goodwill left as we are all sick of the whole situation, and not prepared to accept any more. The whole service is at breaking point, and so are the employees.

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TRADE UNION

Join our campaign to defend ordinary workers and change the levy today