

The Socialist Party says...

NURSES DEMANDS COMPLETELY JUSTIFIED

Nurses have the power to force the government to concede



Socialist Party TD Joe Higgins and Cllr. Clare Daly fully support the nurses' demands for a decent wage increase and for a 35-hour working week. Nurses have been waiting 27 years for the government and the Health Authorities to respond to their demands and the industrial action is completely justified.

A lot is at stake. The government wants to lower wages and conditions in the public and private sectors. To concede significant concessions to the nurses could encourage other workers who have seen their wage decrease as inflation more than cancels out the Towards 2016 deal. The HSE is an agent of government policy in this dispute.

The government and HSE want to lean on the media, try to undermine nurses' public support and force them to suspend their action. The recent negotiations proved that they are currently not willing to offer serious concessions. However, regardless of the attempts of the media the overwhelming majority of the public support the nurses' action.

The nurses have the power to put the government and the HSE under huge pressure to concede. Firstly, the INO and the PNA should link the Government and HSE responsibility for the crisis in the health service to their unwillingness to invest in the frontline staff. Up until now the unions have let the government and HSE off the hook on this. If this link were made the nurses would get even greater public support, who would also see that the nurses are fighting on their behalf.

Secondly, the action should be escalated. Nurses have the right to withdraw their labour and if that causes significant disruption to aspects of the health service that is the responsibility of the government and the HSE. By taking these two steps the nurses could break the resolve of the government and force them to make concessions.

A significant escalation in action is now needed. While maintaining emergency care, nurses should not fear that the public would turn against them if the action was seriously escalated. By linking the issues to the crisis in the health service, the public are likely to endorse more action that brings the dispute to a head and therefore a resolution, rather than a long drawn out campaign of limited action. The Socialist Party believes that action should be escalated until there is a clear commitment to grant the nurses' demands.

Fight for the rights of student nurses

Student nurses support the struggle of their colleagues. Student nurses are also angry and demand that they get payment for their 30 week unpaid placement as well as allowances for food, travel and car parking. They carry out important duties during placement and the fact that they are not paid represents gross exploitation and is causing real hardship for many. The INO and the PNA should demand that entitlements and payment for student nurses be immediately forthcoming.

SOCIALIST PARTY SAYS:

- Invest to resolve the health crisis and invest in the frontline staff – the nurses
- Pay the 10.6% as well as an above inflation increase, back dated for all nurses and midwives
- A 35-hour week for all health workers without any loss in pay rates
- Escalate the action until the demands are conceded
- Reject "social partnership" and the government's privatisation of health and other public services