SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP IN IRELAND: A VIEW FROM BELOW

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Introduction

Since 1987, social partnership type agreements between trade unions, employers and government have been the dominant feature of collective bargaining in Ireland. Such agreements also occurred in an earlier period from 1970 to 1980 but were less comprehensive in scope and proved more unstable than present agreements (O'Brien, 1981; Hardiman, 1992). While the form of corporatist arrangements vary considerably across European countries a number of characteristic features of the model can be identified. First, the centralised agreements negotiated between the social partners goes beyond purely industrial relations matters to include broader socio-economic goals. Secondly, the agreement is a negotiated exchange between the parties. Trade unions agree to co-operate with the government and employers to restrict union members to agreed pay norms. In return, unions and employers may gain a measure of influence over public policy in areas of critical concern to their constituents, such as employment, social welfare and taxation (Maier, 1984; Roche, 1994).

According to Teague (1995), there is a widely held perception among Irish trade union officials that the centralised agreements negotiated since 1987 represent a new departure. These agreements are perceived as indicating a move towards the Swedish model of corporatism. Undoubtedly Swedish corporatism has produced many beneficial social and economic outcomes. However, it also had a number of unintended consequences that were to prove problematic for labour and trade unions. Firstly, a substantial concentration of wealth towards employers, and, secondly, a rank and file revolt of union members

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challenging the outcomes of centralised agreements. Swedish union members were not opposed in principle to centralised bargaining but to its apparent inability to redress the unequal distribution of wealth and union weakness at plant level.

Admittedly, the comparison of the Irish case with the Swedish model may appear overstated. On a cumulative scale of corporatism, the centralised wage negotiations in Sweden could be characterised as a strong model of corporatism while similar arrangements in Ireland, up to 1984 at any rate, would register as a medium model (Lehmbruch, 1984: 66). Since 1987, the revival and development of centralised bargaining in Ireland apparently represents a shift towards a stronger model of corporatism. Yet all corporatist arrangements have the common objective of establishing a virtuous circle of wage restraint, investment and growth (Maier, 1994: 57). The weakest link in this chain is generally considered to be the workers whose wages are to be regulated. Whatever the systemic benefits of regulated wages, the primary point of instability and breakdown is at the micro level, that is, in the willingness of workers to sacrifice short-term wage gains in the pursuit of the general welfare (Lange, 1984: 98). Indeed, it was a rank and file revolt of Swedish workers discontented with union weakness at plant level and increasing inequality in the distribution of wealth that forced the labour movement to adopt a programme of industrial and economic democracy. Once accepted by the social democrats, the embodiment of industrial democracy in labour legislation was remarkably rapid. The laws laid down in the previous 60 years governing relations in the labour market were almost entirely replaced between 1972 and 1978.[1] While industrial democracy reforms may have been a solution for problems encountered at enterprise level, other difficulties confronted the labour movement on a macro level. How could centralised bargaining be maintained without exacerbating the unequal distribution of wealth and the concentration of economic power and how could employee influence be increased over the economic process (Meidner, 1978)? The proposed solution was that 20 per cent of pre-tax profits in certain firms would be transferred annually in the forms of shares to a central employee wage earner fund controlled and administered by the trade union movement. Wage restraint could now be pursued free of its maldistributive aspects, for the greater a firm's profit, the faster would wage earner shares accumulate in the fund. Thus, wage restraint by workers in the most profitable companies would not benefit private owners (Meidner, 1978). Yet these attempts to modify the existing corporatist arrangement in favour of increased equity and democracy ultimately

threatened its continuance (Aberg, 1984; D'Art, 1992: 152–166; Kjellberg, 1992; Schwerin, 1984; Visser, 1996).

Are the strains and problems experienced by the Swedish labour movement common to all developed forms of corporatism? Certainly the operation of incomes policies in Denmark produced similar problems for the Danish labour movement and called forth a solution that anticipated the Meidner plan (D'Art, 1992: 204–208). Furthermore, the potential destabilising effect of inequitable outcomes on incomes policy was a concern felt beyond Scandinavia. A resolution of the European parliament insisted that:

> . . . an incomes policy cannot be effective unless it is accompanied by a policy whereby large sections of the population are favoured in asset formation and whereby would be avoided an excessive concentration of assets in the hands of a few. (EC, 1979)

Consequently, it seems plausible to argue that the Irish labour movement will not be free of the difficulties encountered by its Scandinavian and European counterparts (see Wallace et al., 1998). These are the questions addressed in this paper. Indeed, it is a particularly apposite time to consider these problems after more than ten years of social partnership and on the threshold of negotiations for a new agreement. If the Irish case follows a similar pattern to the Scandinavian models, we can expect, firstly, to see greater returns to capital than labour and a resulting scepticism among rank and file concerning the outcomes of these agreements; and secondly, a weakening of the effectiveness of union organisation at plant level.

We outline the trends in economic performance during the period of wage agreements, including profits and wages. Using a survey of a general union, we look at members' perceptions of the benefits of the agreements, and their effect on the union at national and workplace level. In addition, the success of workplace initiatives in strengthening local union organisation and increasing members' involvement and autonomy in work is considered. The final section provides a summary and conclusion.

Survey Data

The data in this paper is based on a survey of members of a general union in Ireland carried out in 1998. Support for the project was provided by the general union. A total of 2,080 members were surveyed in 43 companies. Union members were randomly selected using the membership list for each company provided by the trade union. The

questionnaires were addressed to the selected members and distributed to the companies either directly by the authors or through relevant union officers. Each questionnaire included an envelope addressed to the authors for the completed questionnaire. A total of 605 completed questionnaires were returned. This represents 29 per cent of the sample surveyed. Such a return rate is acceptable for a postal survey. The majority of respondents, 64 per cent, worked in the private sector and the remainder, 36 per cent, in the public sector. In all, 78 per cent worked in the manufacturing sector and 22 per cent in services.

Trends in Economic Performance in the Irish Republic 1987 to 1996

The period since 1987, and particularly after 1994, has been one of continuous and rapid growth in the Irish economy. The economic crisis which acted as a catalyst for the emergence of centralised agreements has vanished. Real National Income increased by 54 per cent between 1987 and 1996 compared to an increase of 7 per cent between 1980 and 1987. In 1996 alone, national income grew by 8 per cent (Table 1).

TABLE 1: ECONOMIC INDICATORS 1987–1998 (ALL PRICES STANDARDISED USING THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX: BASE YEAR 1968)

Year	National Income	Average earnings*	Company profits	Number employed	Unemployment**
	% change	*% change*	*% change*	*% change*	*% change*
1987–98	+54.2% (1987–1996)	+17.5%	+77.7% (1987–1996)	+41.7%	–27%

* Refers to average industrial earnings before taxation deductions
** Seasonally adjusted standardised unemployment rates from the live register
Source: Central Statistics Office: Labour Force Survey and National Income and Expenditure Reports.

While unemployment increased from 7.3 per cent of the labour force in 1980 to 17.5 per cent in 1987, it subsequently decreased to 6.2 per cent by September 1999. This sharp fall in unemployment has been accompanied by a substantial rise in the number of people at work; the employed labour force increased from 1,090,000 in 1987 to 1,544,700 by November 1998, an increase of 41.7 per cent. A similar

trend is evident in the growth of real wages since 1987. Between 1980 and 1987, there was no real increase in the gross average industrial wage, whereas gross average earnings of industrial workers increased by 17.5 per cent between 1987 and 1998. Indeed, it is estimated that real average *disposable* income actually fell by between 8 and 10 per cent between 1980 and 1987, while real *disposable* income is estimated to have increased by about 27 per cent between 1987 and 1998, partly as a result of changes in taxation (see Leddin and Walsh, 1997: 8). However, company profits increased at a more rapid rate than average wages: 78 per cent from 1987 to 1996. A recent paper has examined the movement of profit and wage shares in the nine-year period between 1987 and 1996. There has been a dramatic shift in income share from labour to capital with the profit share rising from 25.1 per cent in 1987 to 34.8 per cent by 1996 and a corresponding decline in the wage share from 74.9 per cent to 65.2 per cent. In short, there has been a radical factor income shift away from labour and towards capital during this period (Lane, 1998).

In summary, like the Swedish experience, the centralised agreements negotiated since 1987 have been associated with, in the main, beneficial outcomes for the social partners in terms of real wages and profits and decreasing unemployment. In an increasingly buoyant economy, it would be surprising if all parties did not experience some gains. A more appropriate question in this regard is the extent to which the agreements have promoted equity and fairness in the distribution of wealth. The reverse seems to be the case as the chief beneficiaries have been the employers. As Allen observes, instead of a "trickle down effect there is a trickle up" (Allen, 1999: 41).

Union Members' Perceptions of Economic Outcomes

Members of a general union were surveyed to assess their opinion regarding the effect of national wage agreements in two areas: the distributive effects of the agreements on various social groupings in Irish society and the impact of the agreements on their specific pay and conditions. As Table 2 indicates, wage earners, the unemployed and low income groups were perceived to have benefited considerably less than employers, the self-employed and the government. Indeed, respondents felt that government and, particularly, employers have benefited greatly from the agreements. A majority of the respondents reported that wage earners, the unemployed and low income groups had received some benefits. Yet almost half the

respondents believed that the unemployed and low income groups had experienced no benefit from the agreements.

TABLE 2: PERCEPTIONS OF WHICH GROUPS BENEFITED FROM THE NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENTS

	No benefit	A little benefit	Benefited greatly	N
Wage earners	31%	67%	2%	100% (581)
Unemployed	48%	42%	10%	100% (555)
Low income groups	46%	49%	5%	100% (561)
Employers	6%	24%	70%	100% (557)
Self-employed	23%	36%	41%	100% (538)
Government	2%	11%	87%	100% (553)

Source: Union member survey

A majority of respondents (69 per cent) believe that national wage agreements have not been effective in giving workers a fairer share of the national cake (Table 3).

TABLE 3: NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENTS SINCE 1987 HAVE GIVEN A FAIRER SHARE TO WORKERS*

	%
Strongly disagree	25%
Disagree	44%
Agree	28%
Strongly agree	3%
N	100% (536)

* Respondents with no opinion are excluded
Source: Union member survey

Turning to the impact of national wage agreements on members' own pay and working conditions, Table 4 indicates that only a minority believed that national wage agreements had a detrimental effect on pay, pensions, job security and working hours. However, aside from changes in pay, a majority felt that either there had been no change or a deterioration in pensions (73 per cent), job security (88 per cent) and hours worked (85 per cent). A majority of respondents (68 per cent) believed there had been minor improvements in pay.

TABLE 4: THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENTS ON RESPONDENTS' PAY AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT

	Pay	Pensions	Job security	Hours reduction
Much worse	5%	3%	8%	2%
Slightly worse	5%	4%	7%	4%
No change	20%	66%	73%	79%
Minor improvement	68%	25%	10%	14%
Major improvement	2%	2%	2%	1%
N	*100% (596)*	*100% (559)*	*100% (582)*	*100% (588)*

Source: Union member survey

The above results indicate that a large proportion of union members believe that government and employers have benefited most from national wage agreements while the unemployed and low income groups have benefited least. Furthermore, the agreements are perceived to have been ineffective in redistributing a fairer share of national income to workers. More specifically, apart from a minor improvement in pay, the areas of pensions, job security and hours worked are perceived to have either remained unchanged or deteriorated.

Effectiveness of Unions

We address the question of union effectiveness at two levels: the influence of trade unions in Irish industrial relations and the wider economy and the effectiveness of members' own union at workplace level. Almost 50 per cent of members surveyed indicated that the capacity of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to promote social policies which reduce unemployment and reform taxation policy had not changed. Those who perceived a change were more likely to believe that the ICTU influence in the areas of unemployment and taxation had increased rather than decreased. However, a total of 37 per cent of respondents believed that the ability of unions to win recognition from employers had decreased while 16 per cent believed it had increased with 47 per cent perceiving no change in this area (Table 5).

TABLE 5: NATIONAL WAGE AGREEMENTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON TRADE UNION EFFECTIVENESS

Range	Decreased	No change	Increased	N
Ability of ICTU to promote social policies which reduce unemployment	19%	51%	30%	100% (587)
Effectiveness of ICTU in reforming government taxation policy	20%	48%	32%	100% (589)
Capacity of unions to gain recognition from employers	37%	47%	16%	100% (588)
Effectiveness of ATGWU in negotiations	57%	31%	12%	100% (595)
Ability of your union to get things done in your workplace	49%	37%	14%	100% (595)

Source: Union member survey

Regarding respondents' own union, 57 per cent believed that the effectiveness of their union had decreased in negotiations, while 12 per cent indicated it had increased. This probably reflects the inevitable loss of autonomy for individual unions when national wage agreements are negotiated. More significantly, 49 per cent of respondents believed that the ability of their union to get things done at the workplace had decreased compared to 14 per cent who felt that it had increased. Taken together, the effectiveness of the union and its capacity at the workplace, the results indicate that more union members perceive a decrease rather than an increase in the effectiveness of their union. Conversely, a greater proportion of respondents believed the influence of ICTU had increased rather than decreased in the areas of unemployment and taxation but the ability of trade unions generally to gain recognition from employers had decreased.

Almost 50 per cent of respondents indicated no change in the union's capacity to negotiate over changes in work practices, productivity deals and the introduction of new technology (Table 6). Yet more members believe that the union's capacity to negotiate in these areas had decreased compared to those who perceived increased union influence. More respondents perceived their union's ability to ensure that management honour negotiated agreements and prevent the dismissal of workers had increased rather than decreased.

TABLE 6: CHANGING INFLUENCE OF RESPONDENTS' UNION AT THEIR WORKPLACE*

Range	Decreased	No change	Increased	N
To negotiate changes in work practices	32%	48%	20%	100% (579)
To negotiate introduction of new technology	32%	48%	20%	100% (569)
To negotiate over productivity	31%	47%	22%	100% (570)
To ensure management keep to agreements negotiated	26%	44%	30%	100% (577)
To prevent the dismissal of workers	13%	60%	26%	100% (574)

* The question asked was: "In recent times has the ability of the union in your company to get things done *changed* in the following areas?"
Source: Union member survey

The evidence from the above tables suggests that respondents perceive an overall reduction in their union's influence at national level and a reduction in its effectiveness at firm level during the period of national wage agreements.

Workplace Initiatives and Partnership at Firm Level

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has encouraged the development of social partnership between unions, employees and management at firm level to complement agreement at national level. The present national wage agreement and Partnership 2000 deal more comprehensively with social partnership at firm level than previous agreements. Both the Irish Business Employers Confederation (IBEC) and ICTU have agreed to the development of appropriate initiatives at enterprise level. However, the agreement did not attempt to "impose any single structure or model of partnership" and recognised the need to "tailor the approach to fit different employment settings" (Partnership 2000, 1996). The agreement lists a number of topics appropriate for discussion, which range from employee co-operation with change, including new forms of work organisation, to forms of financial involvement. While there may be some differences regarding the detail of their application, there is a remarkable level of consensus among the peak organisations as to the nature of these initiatives. This consensus is mainly due to the ICTU's shift in emphasis

from representative participation (e.g. worker directors) to task-based schemes of employee involvement (see FIE/ICTU Joint Declaration on Employee Involvement, 1991). Accordingly, schemes of employee involvement such as teamworking, quality circles or profit-sharing schemes at the level of the individual firm all come under the rubric of appropriate initiatives.

In this section, we focus on the extent to which new workplace initiatives have been introduced in the companies surveyed and union members' perceptions of their effect in fostering partnership with management. It should be noted that what is being measured here is members' perceptions that particular initiatives have been introduced in recent years. It may well be the case that many members are unaware of the existence of new initiatives in their companies. However, our purpose here is not to document such initiatives, but to examine members' experiences.

An implicit premise of the trade union position is that such developments will have beneficial outcomes, both for individual union members in their daily jobs, encourage greater partnership between employees and management, strengthen local union organisation and give workers a fairer share of a company's economic success. Table 7 addresses these issues and evaluates members' perceptions of the outcomes of new workplace initiatives.

TABLE 7: NEW INITIATIVES AND ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES*

	Job related outcomes		**Institutional outcomes**		**Rewards**
	Influence in deciding how your job is done	*Amount of work you have to do*	*Feelings of a "them and us" divide*	*Influence your trade union has in your workplace*	*Fairer share of profits to workers in your firm*
Decreased	24%	3%	17%	38%	22%
No change	60%	32%	53%	47%	63%
Increased	16%	65%	30%	15%	15%
N	*100% (470)*	*100% (469)*	*100% (473)*	*100% (474)*	*100% (459)*

* The question asked was: "If you have experienced any new workplace initiatives have they achieved any of the following [*see items in table above*]?"

While 60 per cent of respondents believed that the influence they had over how to do their job remained unchanged, 24 per cent felt it had actually decreased, with 16 per cent indicating it had increased. However, 65 per cent of respondents believed that the amount of work to be done had increased, 32 per cent indicated no change and only 3

per cent stated that it had decreased. Clearly, employees felt that they were working harder but had not, in most cases, experienced any increased influence over their day-to-day task activities. In terms of partnership between management and employees, the development of new workplace initiatives does not appear to have fostered an increased sense of partnership. A total of 30 per cent of respondents indicated an increase in the sense of a "them and us" divide between management and employees, while 53 per cent indicated no change and 19 per cent reported that the divide had decreased. A substantial proportion of members (38 per cent) believed that the influence of their union in the workplace had decreased compared to 15 per cent who felt it had increased, while 47 per cent indicated no change in the union's influence. Lastly, a greater number of members surveyed (22 per cent) believed that the share of profits going to workers in their firm had decreased while 15 per cent indicated an increase and 63 per cent no change in the situation. The evidence here appears to show that new workplace initiatives have been largely perceived to have either no impact or a negative outcome for workers. In particular, local union influence is perceived to have decreased. Although it may be the case that this perceived decline in union influence is unrelated to the workplace initiatives, it raises questions about the efficacy of such initiatives for improving or developing local union organisation. On a general note, it is plausible to conclude that the development of a genuine sense of partnership at firm level has not occurred to any significant degree in the companies surveyed here. As Table 8 indicates, responses to the general question about the emergence of social partnership at firm level reveal that the majority of respondents either believe that co-operation has declined (37 per cent) or has remained unchanged (40 per cent). These perceptions find some support in recent studies, which suggest that the extent and depth of collaborative production in Ireland may be exaggerated (Roche and Geary, 1999; Gunnigle, 1997; D'Art and Turner, 1999).

TABLE 8: SOCIAL PARTNERSHIP AND CO-OPERATION BETWEEN MANAGEMENT AND WORKERS AT FIRM LEVEL*

Co-operation between management has declined to a great extent	14%
There is less co-operation in this workplace than before	23%
Nothing has changed here	40%
Co-operation has increased to some extent	22%
Co-operation has increased greatly	1%
Total	100% (587)

* "The ICTU have promoted the idea of social partnership and co-operation between management and workers at firm level. What is your experience of this in your firm?"

Summary and Conclusion

As we noted earlier, the perception among some Irish trade unionists that centralised agreements negotiated since 1987 represent a shift towards the Swedish model of corporatism may be somewhat fanciful or overstated. After all, by the end of the 1960s the Swedish model represented the most developed form of a labour capital compromise or bargained corporatism in Europe and a high point of social democratic achievement. Nevertheless, the Swedish experience illustrates some of the problematic aspects of bargained corporatism for all trade unions involved in such arrangements. Firstly, wage restraint for some rank and file members may appear contrary to the *raison d'être* of trade unions. Of course, the strength of this perception will likely vary with the nature of the particular labour movement and more importantly with the extent to which it can be concretely demonstrated that the outcome of wage restraint benefits, in roughly equal measure labour and capital. Evidence of an unequal distribution of benefits may well encourage disenchantment with an incomes policy. Indeed, in the Swedish case when it became apparent that capital had inordinately benefited from wage restraint, it was the necessity for remedial action that contributed to the long-run destabilisation of the model.

Similar difficulties appear to be occurring in the Irish case. As we have seen, since 1987 there has been a radical factor income shift from labour towards capital with the chief beneficiaries being employers. Yet, of possibly greater significance for the long-term stability of centralised agreements, this was also the perception of the rank and file union members. Wage earners, the unemployed and low income groups were perceived by union members surveyed to have

benefited considerably less than employers, the self-employed and the government. Indeed, a majority of union members believed that the national wage agreements have not been effective in giving workers a fairer share of the national cake. Aware of this defect, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions have advocated profit-sharing at the level of the individual firm as a way of securing a more equitable outcome to wage restraint. Unfortunately, such a stratagem may be potentially productive of new disparities in income and division among the general membership. The Irish employers' organisation is opposed to any legal obligation on their members to introduce such schemes. Consequently, the inevitably haphazard and piecemeal application of profit-sharing/employee shareholding will exclude many from its benefits in the private sector along with workers such as teachers and nurses in the public sector. This could become a source of discontent and add to the difficulties in operating an income policy.

A second difficulty with bargained corporatism or income policy is the tendency, evident in the Swedish case, for power or influence to shift from the shop floor and national union towards the union centre. With pay bargaining largely conducted at national level, the role of national unions and local shop steward organisation may appear redundant, encouraging a perception among rank and file members of declining influence. In the Irish case, there appears to be a perception, at least among the union members we surveyed, of a power shift towards the union centre. A majority of respondents believed that the influence of the ICTU at national level had increased in the areas of unemployment and taxation, but the ability of trade unions generally to gain recognition from employers had decreased. Regarding their own trade union, members perceived an overall reduction in the union's capacity nationally and, in particular, a reduction in its effectiveness at firm level. Congress has attempted to pre-empt such a development by encouraging the development of social partnership between unions, employees and management at firm level as a way to complement agreement at national level. This strategy of partnership and new workplace initiatives could potentially have negative as well as positive outcomes for employees. While such task-based participation may address the lack of involvement or alienation among shop floor workers, it could also result in work intensification. Among the union members we surveyed, the new workplace initiatives were largely perceived to have either no impact or in some cases involved a negative outcome for workers. The development of a genuine sense of partnership at firm level does not seem to have occurred to any significant extent in the companies surveyed.

Our survey has pointed up some of the unintended consequences of bargained corporatism as presently operating in Ireland. These are the increasingly skewed distribution of wealth and the concentration of decision-making power at the union centre with the potential for rank and file alienation. Yet these outcomes and the problems they pose for trade unions are not unique to the Scandinavian or Irish versions of bargained corporatism. Similar problems with incomes policies were experienced in Europe and Britain during the late 1970s. Crouch sketched out the requirements for a policy that would increase the acceptance and integration of trade unions in such arrangements (Crouch, 1978: 233). The more workers' representatives, he argued, are involved in controlling economic variables the more willing they will be to pursue wage restraint. This, he suggested, would include measures of co-determination, involvement in effective national planning instruments and participation in control of occupational pension funds and collective profit sharing funds such as the Meidner plan — schemes for which had already been advanced in the Netherlands, Sweden, Britain and West Germany (Crouch, 1978: 234).

Such a policy of co-determination at firm level and collective profit sharing at national level is a solution to the problems posed for the labour movement by corporatism. Furthermore, it is a solution that can be defended on the grounds that it promotes a greater measure of both equity and democracy. With the benefit of hindsight, the obvious weakness of such a policy is its transcendence of the existing capital–labour relationship, which inevitably calls into play powerful forces of resistance. There is no evidence that the Irish trade union movement has effectively addressed these questions. Indeed, over time the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has moved away from demands for co-determination and collective profit-sharing.[2] In the present and future partnership arrangements, it seems the Irish trade union movement is fated to occupy the status of a junior partner. Even this modest position may be less than secure. During the 1980s and 1990s, Irish unions have found it increasingly difficult to gain recognition (McGovern, 1989). Admittedly, between 1987 and 1998 there has been an increase in union membership, but this has not kept pace with the growth in employment. Union density as a percentage of the employed workforce has fallen from 56.2 per cent in 1987 to 42 per cent in 1998.[3] This represents the lowest figure for union density since 1950 (see Roche and Larragy, 1989: 22). That this decline is occurring in political and economic circumstances that would normally be expected to favour union growth raises questions about the long-term prospects of the Irish union movement and the continuance of bargained corpora-

tist arrangements. A prerequisite for the initiation and continuance of bargained corporatism is that unions possess and exercise power in the labour market, which in large measure will depend on the level of unionisation among the employed workforce. The Irish trade union movement may become one of those sleeping partners that can easily be dispensed with.

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Endnotes

[1] Board Representation of Employees, 1973; Act on Shop Stewards, 1974; Work Safety Law, 1974; Security of Employment Act, 1974; Act on Employee Participation and Decision Making, 1977.

[2] In 1984 the ICTU outlined its position on profit-sharing/employee shareholding. Reviewing schemes already established, Congress was critical of many aspects of their operation. In particular, its expectations of profit-sharing/employee shareholding were such as to render unsatisfactory any schemes based at the level of the individual firm. Congress proposed to realise its objectives through a Scandinavian-type workers' fund system or collective profit-sharing. The demand for a worker fund system or collective profit-sharing has since been dropped.

[3] Membership figures for 1987 are from Roche (1994); union membership figures for 1998 are based on the affiliated membership of ICTU; employment figures are based on the Labour Force Survey. The total affiliated union membership of ICTU for 1998 (December) is 521,036. According to Congress, their affiliated membership accounts for approximately 97–98 per cent of all union members. However, Congress's figures may be an overestimate, as they contain members who are retired or lapsed. Union density is calculated by dividing the number of union members by the number reported at work from the labour force survey.