



**47<sup>th</sup> Annual Constance Markievicz Memorial Lecture**

**Press for Labour Rights**

**Keeping it real in a world  
of artificial intelligence**

**Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

**Address by Séamus Dooley, Assistant General Secretary, National Union of Journalists  
to the Irish Association of Industrial Relations at Liberty Hall, Dublin  
Friday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

1. It is an honour to have been invited to deliver the 47<sup>th</sup> Constance Markievicz Memorial lecture. This is an auspicious week for those interested in labour history and in industrial relations in Ireland.
2. I am grateful to the Irish Association for Industrial Relations for the invitation to deliver the 2023 lecture, which forms part of the Irish Labour History Society 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary conference, "Visions of Labour and Class in Ireland and Europe", through the good grace of the Association.
3. The publication of *Labour History in Irish History* by *Umiskin Press* and the Irish Labour History Society is a major achievement: the anniversary essays by a stellar list of contributors are a significant contribution to the study of labour history, all the more remarkable because of the vast range of subjects covered, eloquently illustrating the depth of labour history mined over five decades of scholarship fuelled by passion and commitment.
4. It is a particular privilege to deliver the lecture in Liberty Hall, *Halla na Saoirse*, a spot intrinsically linked with Constance Markievicz and the formative events of 1913. The foundation stones of this place echo of the struggles of a brave generation of men, women and children who bravely fought against the might of Dublin's wealthy barons, chief among them William Martin Murphy, owner of the *Irish Independent*.
5. The late Benedict Kiely, the wonderful Tyrone storyteller, novelist, and broadcaster was fond of recalling the instructions issued when he was appointed lead writer of the *Irish Independent*.
6. His subjects were to be "the co-operative movement and Godless Russia." In writing editorials, he was free to write what he liked, more or less; bearing in mind that the co-operative movement was a good thing and Godless Russia was bad. The one thing he must not do, under any circumstances, was to reach a conclusion.
7. The ILHS and the Association for Industrial Relations have imposed no such restrictions. It is perhaps fitting that I should reflect on the role of trade unionism today from the perspective of one who carries the burden of negotiating with the inheritors of William Martin Murphy and who represents those who have been said to write the first draft of history.
8. More accurately, I think it could be said that journalists write the first drafts of history, since there is frequently more than one version of contemporary events, and it is left to historians to unravel and untangle the truth.

9. My union has a proud history. The National Union of Journalists, UK and Ireland is the union of George Bernard Shaw,<sup>[1]</sup> George Orwell, Tony Benn, Brendan Behan, Sam McAughtry, Maeve Binchy, Mary Maher, and of generations of famous and forgotten reporters, photographers, production editors, press officers, columnists who have worked in print, in broadcasting and on contemporary digital platforms in an industry where change is the only constant.
10. Across the quay, there strides the ghosts of many an NUJ member: The Irish Press on Burgh Quay was a bastion of the union, the White Horse, affectionately known as the Mucky Duck, was a traditional watering hole for city centre journalists. It's now Starbucks.
11. The Irish Press building houses the Immigration Delivery Service of the Department of Justice.<sup>[2]</sup>
12. It was mainly in the Mucky Duck that Behan paid his weekly union subs to a chapel official whose sole duty was to ensure that the often-erratic columnist kept his payments up to date under the strict closed shop rules scrupulously applied at the Press. For safety, the man chosen for the job was a Tee Totaller, the late Joe Jennings.
13. It was in Burgh Quay that the aspiring poet Pearse Hutchinson worked as a sub editor, his proud family roots in the struggle for Irish Independence being a useful calling card in the De Valera controlled empire.<sup>[3]</sup> Hutchinson may be a neglected figure in Irish literature but his family archive at Maynooth University provides invaluable insights into Irish history. His father, Henry, was a Scottish printer interned in Frongoch in 1919. Incidentally Pearse went on to work as a translator at the ILO before returning to work as a poet and long-standing columnist with the RTÉ Guide.
14. The Hutchinson archive contains correspondence between Markievicz and Cathleen, the poet's mother, which provide personal insights into the countess's personality and her politics. Her fierce loyalty to Dev is only outweighed by her disdain from what she perceived as the hypocrisy of some Sinn Féin members, including Father Michael O'Flanagan,<sup>1</sup> whom she held in particular contempt.
15. She wrote: *'When the 16 leaders were hardly cold in the quicklime graves, and I was in a convicts dress shut up helpless in Mountjoy, a newspaper was smuggled into me in which I read a letter from him approving of partition...He makes me ill'*.<sup>2</sup> Incidentally Pearse later went on to work as a Translator for the ILO in Geneva.

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Journalists, 100 Years of the NUJ Tim Gopsill and Greg Neale Profile Books, 2007, ISBN: 9781861978080

<sup>[2]</sup> Joe Jennings in conversation with Seamus Dooley

<sup>[3]</sup> <https://mulibrarytreasures.wordpress.com/2019/07/03/caitlin-constance-letters-from-the-pearse-hutchinson-archive>

<sup>1</sup> Fr Michael O'Flanagan, 1876-1942, Priest, Republican activist, Chaplain, First Dáil.

16. Of course, Constance was never a member of the NUJ, her career pre-dating the union's formal establishment in Ireland, but among her many roles, one that is not remembered is that of Gardening Correspondent of *The Republic* magazine, founded by Bulmer Hobson and Denis McCullough in 1906. She was invited to write the gardening notes by Maud Gonne and even in that role succeeded in making acerbic political points.
17. She once wrote: *"It is very unpleasant work killings slugs and snails but let us not be daunted. A good Nationalist should look on slugs in the garden much in the same way as she looks on the English in Ireland, and only regret that she cannot crush the Nation's enemies with the same ease that she can with the garden, with just one tread of her fairy foot."*<sup>3</sup>
18. Liberty Hall remains a symbol of the Irish trade union movement and it was for many years the home of the NUJ, where I began my career as a union official.
19. We gather at a time of both promise and challenge for the trade union movement in Ireland. The High-Level Group on Collective Bargaining report published last October set out a framework for collective bargaining which may deliver real change for Irish workers.
20. The Group's recommendations will form the basis for the transposition of the directive to comply with EU law.
21. The recommendation that legislation should be enacted requiring an employer to engage with a trade union that seeks good faith engagement where they represent at least 10% of workers in a grade group or category within the employment, is especially welcome by the NUJ.
22. We must be vigilant in ensuring that collective bargaining is clearly understood to mean good faith engagement by and with trade unions. Attempts to insert yellow staff associations or shadowy management based alternatives to registered, democratic trade unions will not be tolerated and must be met with a Markievicz like response: trample them under foot.
23. The joint efforts of the NUJ and SIPTU, supported by the ICTU, over 20 years led to a reform of competition law which was absurdly misused to deprive low paid freelance workers from collective representation.
24. At a time when financial institutions were allowed free rein, the Competition Authority set its face against unions representing precarious workers in the media and the arts, deeming that the fixing of a minimum rate for a photograph or radio voiceover represented a form of price fixing which threatened the very foundations of the Irish economy.
25. As a loyal follower of Larkin, Markievicz would have been acutely aware that in Dublin his priority was organising self employed workers along the docks.

---

<sup>3</sup> Maud Gonne by Samuel Levenson (Cassell, 1976)

26. The ruling in the 1996 case taken by the NUJ on behalf of David Wilson to the Council of Europe was a landmark case in establishing a legislative framework for union rights. It is no surprise that we are again facing down Tory attempts to diminish workers' rights.
27. The Irish trade union movement views the Directive as providing a generational opportunity to deal with the right to freedom of association.
28. In the negotiations on the transposition, the trade union movement needs to prioritise a Right to Organise framework of supports and protections for workers which would encompass three fundamental elements:
- 1 It would make it safer for workers to unionise; this will require a radical overhaul of the Unfair Dismissals Act so that it is no longer cheap and easy for the bosses to fire union activists.
  - 2 It would provide statutory protections and facilities for union representatives to effectively carry out their role in the workplace.
  - 3 It would provide access for full-time union organisers to workers and workplaces, both physically and digitally so that we can unionise.
29. What is needed is a reimagining of the rights of workers to organise as part of the fabric of a democratic republic based on fundamental principles of social justice.
30. The right to be recognised and to be consulted on workplace change is of fundamental importance. It is unconscionable that companies would be allowed introduce technological changes such as Generative AI without collective agreements.
31. New EU Directives on adequate minimum wages and new domestic legislation will only be effective if we are ready for the challenge. All unions are experiencing difficulties in mobilising lay activists, and I would be the first to admit that many of our union structures, although imbedded in noble traditions, are no longer fit for purpose.
32. In this week it is worth recalling the development of my own union on this island. The first full-time NUJ office in Ireland was established following the appointment of Jim Eadie as Irish Organiser. The story of Jim Eadie is the story of the NUJ in Ireland writ small but it's worth recalling the earliest attempts to establish an NUJ presence in Ireland.
33. In his colourful history "Gentlemen, the Press" F J Mansfield detailed the 1926 visit when "enthusiasm was aroused" by a visit to Dublin of the National Organiser C J Bundock.<sup>4</sup>
34. The union was formed in 1907 and there had been previous attempts to recruit in Ireland.
35. As Mansfield put it "Although some impression was made in Ireland in the very early days of the Union by certain of our missionaries, who returned the compliment paid by some Celtic

---

<sup>4</sup> Gentlemen - the Press! Chronicles of a Crusade, FJ Mansfield, The Official History of the NUJ (W.H Allen, 1943)

saints to this island few centuries before, the Union gained no firm position there for a good many years.”<sup>5</sup>

36. Bundock’s 1926 efforts led to the first Dublin branch, with membership reaching eighty within a few months but the foundation of the Irish Press in 1931 greatly accelerated the development of the union in the newspaper sector. Within a year the NUJ had affiliated to the ITUC and the Dublin Trades and Labour Council and later, the Dublin Printing Trades Group.
37. In 1927, the NUJ General Secretary and President attended a Dublin Branch meeting where it was confirmed that, through unofficial channels, the Dublin newspaper proprietors were willing to talk to the NUJ but they would only do so in joint talks with the rival Institute of Journalists, a move which would have been contrary to policy as determined by the union’s ADM.
38. One of the greatest threats to the NUJ’s existence came from the Trade Union Act (1941) which the NEC deemed to be “an obnoxious piece of anti-trade union legislation designed to bring trade union activity under stricter government control” and consideration was given to withdrawing from Eire, leaving journalists at the mercy of the Institute of Journalists.
39. At the 1942 ADM, Dublin delegate R.M. Fox, incidentally a labour historian and the biographer of Markievicz, accused the NEC of seeking to abandon members in Ireland and proposed a motion calling on the union to register as a Negotiating Body under the 1941 Irish Trade Union Act, contrary to union policy in relation to State control of unions.
40. Conference accepted an amendment from the Treasurer supporting the status quo with a compromise of sorts – Dublin could remain as present but ‘in the event of circumstances requiring it, the NEC was authorised to deposit £1,000 for a trial period’ with provision for a review at the next ADM.
41. The NUJ stand taken by the Irish membership was vindicated when Dublin Branch, as part of the then Dublin Printing Trades Group (DPTG), secured two pay rises in 1943 and secured full-scale agreements on terms and conditions. That success laid the foundations for new branches.
42. Sean Lemass was especially sceptical of the power and influence of British based unions in Ireland as indeed were many Irish trade unions. For journalists, the priority was the maintenance of an independent trade union specifically for journalists, unaffiliated to a political party and with a professional code of conduct.
43. From the early days of the union to the appointment of Jim Eadie as a full time official in 1966 a group of committed activists served as NEC members and effectively part-time officials while holding down a job in journalism, notably the distinguished Irish Times

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

political reporter and activist Michael McInerney. McInerney was also a noted labour historian and the biographer of another former NUJ member Peadar O'Donnell.<sup>6</sup>

44. Jim Eadie has been described as an accidental official and in this week of celebration it is worth recalling his contribution to labour history. He was a towering figure in Irish journalism, a mould breaker who made a unique contribution to journalism, trade unionism and to Irish society.<sup>7</sup>
45. Much of the influence of the NUJ's impact on employment, education, training, and media policy in Ireland can be credited to Eadie, who had become actively involved in the NUJ at Independent House where the chapel (office branch) was undergoing a revival, not long after his arrival from the Roscommon Herald, Boyle.
46. Eadie was one of the young Turks who pushed for a more militant approach from the NUJ in the early 1960s and was elected as Deputy FoC (shop steward) to future broadcasting legend Frank Hall, whom he succeeded as FoC when Hall secured a job in RTÉ.
47. In 1965 Pat Nolan of The Irish Times was offered the job of Irish Organiser. Nolan tentatively accepted the offer but placed a condition on the appointment. Nolan will be familiar to many members of this audience from his role as Industrial Relations Correspondent of The Irish Times.
48. On being offered the job Nolan proposed that Irish members pay a levy to cover his salary as a means of ensuring that he – and those he served, would not be ' beholden ' to Acorn House. The NEC would not accept Nolan's pre-condition, the post was advertised in 1966 and Eadie emerged as the successful candidate.
49. He took pride in the fact that the NUJ was the first union in the Republic to lodge a maternity pay claim to a group of employers. Afterwards he was told by Mrs Lily Nerney of the Roscommon Herald that the Regional Newspapers Association of Ireland had conceded a claim for twelve weeks on full pay in the belief that it would not be a substantial burden 'because we won't be employing many women anyway'.
50. When Jim died on December 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022, I recounted that story only to be rebuked by a Nerney family member who protested that his mother was a feminist who would never have said such a thing. Even in death he was upsetting his former management!
51. Always interested in education, Eadie was directly involved in moves to establish the first journalism course in Ireland at the College of Commerce, Rathmines. He was present in the Royal Marine Hotel, Dublin on 12<sup>th</sup> September 1966 when Education Minister Donogh O'Malley, announced the introduction of free education at an NUJ conference and Eadie had been tipped off about a major announcement.
52. Travel to London often exposed Eadie to the cultural differences between the two islands. During his induction, he was invited for a drink by General Secretary Jim Bradley. It was four

---

<sup>6</sup> Peadar O'Donnell, *Irish Social Rebel*, Michael McInerney, O'Brien Press, 1974

<sup>7</sup> *Left Lives*, Volume 2 (2019) Umiskin Press

o'clock in the afternoon and they could not find any pubs open. On their way back to the NUJ office, then in Soho's notorious Great Windmill Street, Bradley pointed to a billboard poster portraying scantily clad performers at Raymond's Revue Bar and said: 'You wouldn't get that back in Ireland'. Eadie responded pithily: 'No, but you could get an f'ing drink'. Actually, he did not say F'ing!

53. Today the NUJ is one of the few cross border unions. Headquartered in London the number two official is currently based in Dublin with Irish members currently holding the joint vice presidency of the union. The NUJ is not a British union but an international union with a global vision, reflected in our role within the International Federation of Journalists and the European Federation of Journalists.
54. The cross-jurisdictional nature of the NUJ proved significant during the Troubles. Former President Barry McCall has spoken of Jim Eadie's importance in maintaining strict neutrality while never compromised his principles. The mere act of crossing the Border in a southern registered vehicle was to take a risk, McCall recalled following Jim's death on December 6<sup>th</sup> last.
55. As Irish Secretary I and my predecessor, Eoin Ronayne, were ever mindful of the importance of cross-community acceptance.
56. When my union colleague Martin O'Hagan was shot dead on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2001 he became the first working journalist to be killed in Northern Ireland. It remains a stain on the history of Northern Ireland that no one has been convicted for his murder. As we approach his anniversary, I again call for an independent, international investigation into his killing.
57. Marty was a committed socialist who would never have sought special treatment for victims based on their status.
58. But the murder of a journalist and the compelling evidence pointing to collusion adds significance to the failure of the authorities to properly investigate his killing. In this week I think too of my former colleague Veronica Guerin, also murdered because she exposed the devastation caused by those who traded in drugs and misery. No one here needed a slick TV series to remind us of the odious nature of John Gilligan.
59. The killing of NUJ member Lyra McKee on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2019 was no less outrageous because Lyra was not targeted in the way in which Marty was singled out. The shots fired were intended to kill and maim and in Lyra McKee, Northern Ireland – and our movement – lost a powerful voice which should not have been silenced.<sup>8</sup>
60. Lyra belonged to a tradition of strong women who used journalism to advance progressive ideas The sisterhood of the NUJ was the foundation stone for the Irish Women's Liberation Movement.

---

<sup>8</sup> Left, Lives, Volume 4, Lyra McKee, a tribute by Kathryn Johnston (2021 Umiskin Press)



61. Member of Honour, the late Mary Maher, was a trail blazer, an admirer of Constance Markievicz, who would no doubt remind us of the dangers of celebratory complacency in a city where soup kitchens have returned, where poverty stalks the back lanes and where workers rights are still not a reality for many so-called atypical workers.
62. The upcoming referendum on Article 41.2 brings to mind the strong opposition to the clause by Louie Bennett, General Secretary of the Women Workers Union, who wrote to De Valera outlining why she and her members were opposed to its inclusion.
63. Many of these women had played key roles in the struggle for Irish independence, but they were clear: 41.2 went against “the principle of equal rights and opportunities enunciated in the Proclamation of 1916.”
64. Notwithstanding her fidelity to Dev, I suspect Markievicz, a founder member of the union, would have supported Bennet in her opposition to the clause which identified women’s place in society as being in the home.
65. It seems to me that SIPTU’s position that a new clause should recognise the vital role of care in the home and the wider community is consistent with the vision of Markievicz and Bennett.
66. The NUJ has played a pivotal role in the International Federation of Journalists, often using its position to challenge authoritarian governments, defending journalists in Palestine, supporting our brothers and sisters in Afghanistan, and providing practical support for journalists in Ukraine.
67. At the World Congress of the IFJ in Oman in 2022 our delegation risked imprisonment by wearing and distributing rainbow badges in support of LGBTQI rights in a country where the very act of wearing a gay emblem is a criminal offence. My address to the IFJ Gender Council, carefully monitored by an Oman government official, was an open and potentially dangerous challenge to the law against homosexuality consistent with the history of our movement’s struggle for equality.
68. Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act 1960 presented a particular challenge to the NUJ and there are many myths about the role of the union in relation to the implementation of ministerial directives which prohibited interviews with proscribed organisations, including Sinn Féin.
69. At national level the NUJ strongly and consistently opposed Section 31, supported without ambiguity by the NEC. Jim Eadie passionately opposed Section 31 as did lead national figures such as Eddie Barrett and Patrick Kinsella.
70. In September 1972, as the first anniversary of the directive approached, NUJ members in RTÉ in Belfast staged a token two-hour work stoppage in protest, led by Kevin Myers.

71. It must be acknowledged that Dublin Broadcasting Branch, drawn largely from RTÉ, was at times more ambivalent than the wider union about Section 31.
72. In his biography branch chair Charlie Bird described as 'ludicrous' the 1986 ADM resolution which committed the union to supporting any member disciplined for refusing to work within the limits of Section 31.<sup>9</sup>
73. Eadie was steadfast in defending NUJ policy while seeking to keep RTÉ members on side, drawing on lay activists to steady the ship and many RTÉ journalists supported his stance.
74. Unchartered waters were entered in March 1988 when Jenny McGeever, faced disciplinary action over broadcasting the voice of Martin McGuinness as part of a Morning Ireland report on the obsequies of three IRA members shot dead in Gibraltar.
75. A ballot for industrial action was taken in RTÉ but interrupted by McGeever's decision to seek independent legal advice and a judicial review. Bird expressed his disagreement publicly: Eadie replied, 'Members in RTE are governed by union authority. Do Charlie Bird and his members want to defy us?'
76. The NUJ asserted its authority and in December that year the NEC decided to take a test case to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. Eadie confirmed the initiative at a Dublin press conference. Bird, resigned from his position but remained a loyal union member. The Broadcasting Branch subsequently endorsed the NEC's position.
77. The NUJ was to the fore in advocating for a Freedom of Information Act, through the Let in the Light Campaign, and played a key role in achieving the Freedom of information Act introduced by Eithne FitzGerald in 1997.
78. It was the NUJ who led the campaign against the disembowelment of the Act by Charlie McCreevey and Tom Parlon 2003 and successfully secured repeal of the most noxious amendments. Mary Maher and I maintained a midnight vigil in Seanad Éireann as senators pulled the Act apart while McCreevey and Parlon partied in Cheltenham.
79. The establishment of the Future of Media Commission arose from a long campaign by the NUJ, although the political cowardice displayed by successive governments has meant that much needed reform of public service broadcasting – and the licence fee collection system, has not been achieved.
80. The current crisis in RTÉ arises from both a failure of corporate governance and politics. This may not be the forum for an extensive discourse on barter payments, flip flops, extravagant junkets, and a culture of entitlement but it is important to stress that a properly financed, ethical public service broadcaster is fundamental to democracy.

---

9

This is Charlie Bird, Charlie Bird, and Kevin Rafter,  
Publisher: Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 2000

81. RTÉ has not been a model of good governance and in my professional life as a trade union negotiator I have encountered arrogance, incompetence, and deceit: from bogus self-employment and secret deals to dodgy contracts and appalling mismanagement. I have also encountered decent, upright public servants across the organisation, on both sides of the table.
82. Independent, verifiable journalism is of vital importance in an era of so-called fake news – I prefer the term false information, disinformation and media manipulation. In that context the protection of ethical, responsible public service broadcasting is vital nationally and globally.
83. Today we are at the mercy of the Tech giants who harvest data without benefit to creators or publishers. In 2020 the NUJ proposed a windfall tax of 6 per cent on tech giants in Ireland, using the UK Digital Services Tax model which could fund a News Recovery Plan.
84. The evolution of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) poses an existential threat to the future of journalism and to society.
85. The rapidly advancing technologies which seek to displace human thoughts and actions with machines may initially have been perceived as having a sort of sci fi novelty quality but as the seismic changes enabled by Artificial Intelligence become apparent the global trade union movement is waking up to the reality that this latest wave of new technology poses an existential threat beyond our wildest imaginings.
86. Trade unions have constantly navigated the turbulent waters of disruptive, transformative technologies. AI is of a new order and has implications beyond the workplace, leaving imprints on our daily lives as consumers, as citizens, as parents in every sphere of activity.
87. I know that those who challenge emerging technologies are frequently dismissed as Luddites, our questioning often compared to a blacksmith bemoaning the arrival of the motor car. It is the function of trade unions to recognise dangers and we should not be afraid to challenge change even if that risks criticism.
88. The ILO study, *Generative AI and jobs: a global analysis of potential effects on job quality and quality* published last month<sup>10</sup> suggested that AI is more likely to augment than destroy jobs by automating some tasks but finds, unsurprisingly, that AI will have a major impact on the quality of work. The report suggests that most jobs and industries are only partly exposed to automation and are more likely to be complemented rather than substituted by the latest waves of Generative AI. I would not be so complacent.
89. Of particular concern is the finding that the potential effects of Generative AI are likely to be different significantly for men and women, with more than twice the share of female employment potentially affected by automation. This is due to the over-representation of women in clerical work, especially in high and middle-income countries.

---

<sup>10</sup> International Labour Organisation, Geneva, August 2023

90. Clerical jobs have traditionally been an important source of employment as countries develop economically. One result of Generative AI could be that certain clerical jobs may never emerge in lower-income countries. This prediction has profound implications and there must be a global commitment to the provision of training to ensure that women workers, in particular, are not further marginalised by digital exclusion.
91. Unions must be cognisant of the opportunities AI presents for workers when used ethically but the chorus of caution from journalists, creators, and artists alike must not be ignored.
92. The reinforcement of bias through the use of AI in recruitment and selection procedures is a reality which cannot be dismissed and has a particular relevance to this audience. The potential for bias and prejudice in shortlisting, the absence of human involvement in shortlisting and selecting candidates should be a major concern.
93. The NUJ and ICTU are rightly calling for the protection of workers' rights to remain at the centre of advancements and the ETUC has been to the fore in demanding that human beings must be in control of workplace machines.
94. As Esther Lynch, ETUC general secretary told delegates at the recent Irish Congress of Trade Unions delegate conference, many workers are already being "monitored to within an inch of their lives" but now face a requirement for even greater engagement with technology in the workplace.
95. Global change requires a global response. The ILO must be to the fore in ensuring that workers voices are heard, and that digital transformation does not re-enforce exclusion, not just in industrial sectors but on a geo-political basis. As the report noted, there is a danger that only a few, well-prepared countries and marker participants will benefit from new technologies.
96. I believe there would be real value in an ILO Convention on Digital Transformation, although I recognise that the speed at which AI is already transforming the world of work exceeds the speed at which global institutions tend to respond.
97. The decisions to incorporate AI are taken by humans. It is imperative that it is humans who guide and prescribe how the transition process develops and that it is human values which inform policy decision. Governments, European and international agencies must not cede control to corporations.
98. There can be no ambiguity about what is generated by AI and what is produced by humans – this must become the legal norm.
99. Just as additives are featured on food labels setting out all ingredients it is important that AI generated copy is clearly marked. Historians and scholars will be hard pressed to determine the veracity of contemporary records and will have even more reason to challenge the notion of journalism – on whatever platform, as the first draft of history.

100. Shocking reports of actors' voices and likenesses used without consent, content scraped from the internet to inform models, or authors' books used to train generative AI systems without agreement are all recent examples of breaches giving cause for concern. Equally sinister perhaps, is the use of 'in perpetuity' contracts to manoeuvre ethical principles that should lie at the heart of AI use.
101. News organisations have a civic role in reporting local government parliament, courts, and public affairs if they are to fulfil their mandate in a meaningful way. The diminution of editorial resources and the move away from covering fixtures have implications at many levels.
102. In her book "*Stacking the Coffins*" Dr Ida Milne<sup>11</sup> drew on newspaper archives to piece together a grim picture of the Spanish flu in Ireland.
103. Dr Milne has pointed to the use made by Undergraduate and MA students at Carlow College of the Irish News Archive regional and national newspapers to draw on many aspects of history: court cases, coverage of local and national elections, and coverage of local and national news stories.
104. The 1918-19 flu narrative she developed came almost exclusively from regional and national newspapers, where journalists documented so many aspects of that pandemic in great detail.
105. Students of labour and social history in the future will be all the poorer for the absence of comprehensive reports, especially in the regional press. It will be argued of course that there are alternative forms of data but ironically in a world of multiple sources and platform there is a marked lack of diversity.
106. Algorithms, the use of intelligence to guide readers towards ideas which re-enforce beliefs, preferences and prejudices pose a threat to intellectual discourse.
107. Speaking at the World Congress of the International Federation of Journalists in Dublin in 2013 President Michael D Higgins warned of the dangers inherent in the editorial power being amassed by search engines.
108. He told delegates: "We can see the editorial power being granted to search engines – it is not a huge leap to suggest that in the future, these adaptive and hugely useful technologies will come to exercise an increasingly powerful role in how people will access media. Similarly, it is easy to see how this globalisation of content might allow popular commercial material to become the exclusive preserve of large multinational content providers – vertically integrated media companies that might come to control the commercial middle ground and with it access to the platforms people use to view content."
109. President, I know that your Association will continue to promote and provoke debate, not least through the Markievicz lecture.

---

<sup>11</sup> *Stacking the Coffins, Influenza, War and Revolution in Ireland 1918-19*, Dr Ida Milne (Manchester University Press, 2018).

110. Predicting the future is a dangerous and foolish activity but I am confident as we gear up to the Golden Jubilee of the series in three years' time, that the lecture will not be given by a robot!