

IFUT fights redundancy threat to university staff

16 September 2008

The Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) has called on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions not to finalise any new pay deal until threats of redundancy against university staff are resolved.

The call follows a decision by IFUT members in NUI Maynooth to ballot for industrial action, following the decision of the college to issue a compulsory redundancy notice to a permanent staff member. The college move is a clear breach of all prevailing norms and understandings that preclude compulsory redundancies in the Public Sector, IFUT General Secretary, Mike Jennings, says.

Calling on the college to reverse its compulsory redundancy threat, Mike Jennings said, "it is ironic that this threat is being instigated at the same time that IBEC are citing permanency in employment in the public service as a reason for restrictions to pay increases in the current round of Partnership talks."

The staff member concerned has been employed by NUIM for five years and has had her permanent status ratified by a Rights Commissioner Decision under the 2003 Fixed-Term Workers Act, by way of formal decision, not a recommendation. NUIM Management has indicated their intention to appeal this Decision to the Labour Court, scheduled for Hearing on 16 October 2008.

It is believed Maynooth is the first university to attempt to issue compulsory redundancy in this way. "If the college is allowed to proceed, job security generally will be immediately compromised and it will not be possible to confine this decision to particular grades or areas of the university. In the current economic climate this is especially worrying and significant," Mike Jennings says.

IFUT had offered a compromise solution and proposed that the member's employment be maintained without prejudice to either party's position until the Appeal is decided. College Management has instead insisted that the staff member be "off the campus" from 1 October 2008.

Mike Jennings says: "The long-established guarantee of protection against compulsory redundancy in the public service is under serious threat; this has massive implications for academic staff in every college."

IFUT has referred the matter to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions who in turn have received confirmation from the Department of Finance that there is no change to the policy of no compulsory redundancies in the public service and none is contemplated.

IFUT is awaiting a response to a formal complaint to the National Implementation Body (NIB), the highest dispute resolution body in the State.

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