Unite for Action Construction Conference says that sector growth must be reflected in worker’s pay

22% pay cuts suffered by mechanical workers since 2011

In 2011 substantial reductions in pay in the mechanical contracting industry were incurred on the basis that the then MEBSCA agreement and the Construction Registered Employment Agreement would be merged to form a Mechanical Contracting Industry Registered Employment Agreement (MREA). It was envisaged that this agreement would then be registered with the Labour Court and enshrined in Irish law thereafter; similar to the situation within the electrical contracting industry at the time. Events unfolded that hindered the ability to get the agreement registered; changes to the law, High Court & Supreme Court decisions, the general downturn in the industry and so on. Now the law has been changed with the enactment of the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015, it is time for the MEBSCA agreement to be registered and pay increase to be given. As advised in our last Newsletter, Unite activists have produced and sent the employers a Mechanical Contracting Industry Agreement. It contains a comprehensive list of terms and conditions that feature in other and past industry agreements. The draft agreement can be found at: http://unitetheunionireland.org/

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NEXT?

GET A COPY OF THE AGREEMENT AND START DISCUSSING IT ON YOUR SITES, IF YOU THINK IT’S FAIR, REFLECTIVE OF WHAT YOU SHOULD BE GETTING AND WORTH FIGHTING FOR; GET INVOLVED IN THE CAMPAIGN.

IF THE EMPLOYERS REFUSE TO ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATION TO HAVE A NEW IMPROVED MEBSCA AGREEMENT REGISTERED, THEN ACTION WILL HAVE TO TAKE PLACE THROUGH PROTESTS, WORK STOPPAGES AND INDUSTRIAL ACTION, IF NECESSARY.
What about contractors that don’t or won’t pay the rates?

A key feature of making any industry wide agreement work, lies in the approach taken by all the parties to the issues of compliance. We have prioritised compliance in the new document. Our press release earlier this month advised the following:

“A universal agreement governing the sector would benefit both workers and employers, ensuring that no employer is at a competitive disadvantage given the uniquely mobile nature of work in the construction industry.”

While a new agreement and mechanical wage rates written into Irish legislation would provide workers with several gains and a platform for further improvements; it would also create a legally binding floor of rights that would cut across the ability of some employers to pay below the rate and undermine the industry. The aim would be to have all mechanical workers organised and willing to fight for rates of pay and terms and conditions on sites in conjunction with using third parties when incidents of non-compliance are discovered on sites.