

# THE IRISH TIMES

## Tesco contract terms criticised as Scargill joins picket

Former trade union leader Arthur Scargill appears at two Dublin stores amid strikes

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The terms of employee contracts at Tesco have come under criticism from former British trade union leader Arthur Scargill, who joined workers on the picket line on Saturday. Mr Scargill appeared at two of the 23 stores Irish stores where striking workers are in dispute over changes to contracts.

The supermarket giant, he claimed, are applying terms and conditions from the “17th century” to employees’ contracts.

The company rejected his claims as untrue, misleading and unfair and said it abided by all industrial relations processes at all times. Mandate argues that contracts proposed for such staff would see some workers experiencing reductions of up to 15 per cent in their incomes, along with requirements for increased “flexibility” in their work conditions. Tesco said changes to the contracts were needed as the original terms and conditions for these workers were agreed more than 21 years ago, before late-night and online shopping and Sunday openings. It said the planned moves would affect fewer than 280 employees out of a total Irish workforce of 14,500 and that negotiations on compensation for the affected workers had been under way for 12 months.

A Labour Court recommendation on changes to terms and conditions for staff who were hired prior to 1996 has been supported by Tesco.

In Ireland as a guest of Unite trade union to speak about why he believed Ireland should leave the European Union in the wake of the UK’s vote to exit, Mr Scargill visited Tesco stores in Stoneybatter and Artane in Dublin to show his support for striking workers, members of the union Mandate.

The former national president of the National Union of Mine Workers, who was cheered by workers and greeted by a number of shoppers as he talked to striking employees, said he wanted to show support for picketing workers and act on Tesco’s motto that “every little helps”.

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