



**A Dick Turpin impersonator during a protest against pay cuts at the offices of the Department of Enterprise, Jobs and Innovation on Kildare Street, Dublin, yesterday.** GARETH CHANEY COLLINS

# Struggling cleaners urge State not to give them the brush off

**Aideen Sheehan**

MEETING the household bills on a weekly income of €330 is already a struggle and Martin Brennan said his family would be flattened if any more cuts were brought in.

As a cleaner at Our Lady's Hospital in Crumlin, Dublin, the threatened cuts to premium and overtime payments being proposed by Enterprise Minister Richard Bruton would have a huge impact.

With two children aged three and five, his wife Yvonne working just three days a week, a

mortgage, creche and utilities costs, it is already a struggle to meet bills.

After three years in the job his hourly pay is €9.50, rising to €10.50 for night work, and time-and-a-half for Sunday work.

Martin was one of around 150 contract cleaners who protested outside the Department of Enterprise yesterday against proposals to overhaul the Joint Labour Committee system which sets pay and conditions in low-paid sectors such as cleaning, retail and catering.

"I would be better off on the dole. I feel sick when I see no white-collar criminals have

been put in prison for what they've done, and the rest of us have to pay with our wages going down and down," said Mr Brennan, from Drimnagh.

Barbara Molas from Poland said the abolition of Sunday premium payments would cost her €100 a week.

## Cheaper

After three-and-a-half years working as a contract cleaner in Beaumont Hospital she earns €420 for a 42-hour week.

The government argument that workers on existing contracts would not be affected by changes that would apply to new entrants didn't stand up,

because cheaper staff would be the ones picked for premium and overtime shifts, she said.

After nine years as a cleaner at Beaumont Hospital, Lucia Fay is on €9.88 an hour, coming out with just €296 for two weeks' work cleaning wards, clinics, surgeries and offices at the hospital.

More than 23,000 cleaners will be affected if proposed changes go ahead said Paul Gavan, an organiser with trade union SIPTU.

Premium shifts will undoubtedly go to cheaper new workers, and those on the old rates could be displaced.