

## DJ Section 111 Equality and Human Rights

Refer to pages 45 – 53

Delegates, Guests,

I want to make a few points in introducing this section of the report

As Margaret Coghlan and Claire Mahon will be speaking this afternoon on the work of the Women's Committee and the Disability Committees North and South, I will just refer to those sections and let them use their time to say a little more.

Let me just note in passing that while we still face significant challenges in terms of vindicating our rights and combatting discrimination, there are areas in which we have made progress some of which again will be debated in more detail when discussing motions this afternoon.

We finally saw the publication of the Comprehensive Employment Strategy for People With Disabilities in the ROI and we are on the implementation group to ensure its aims and objectives are achieved and we finally ensure decent work opportunities for people with disabilities;

We now also have a new National Strategy for Women and Girls in the ROI which contains a number of measures that have the capacity "to ensure real improvements for women workers, if they are fully-implemented and delivered upon."

That includes a commitment to introduce gender pay gap reporting and, due to the work of Congress and trade union campaigns, North and South, we have now seen the introduction of a Gender Pay Gap Information Bill 2017, which if made into law, would require organisations with more than 50 employees to publish regular wage surveys aimed at measuring their internal Gender Pay Gaps. And, here in N.Irl trade unions were successful in pressing for gender pay gap reporting to be included in the recent employment act.

The period has seen the introduction of Paternity Leave last September ( a long standing demand of Congress for which we campaigned with the National Women's Council and Start Strong) and there is now a legislative proposal from the European Commission as part of the Pillar of Social Rights that aims at ensuring better balance between family and professional commitments for women and men, including paid parental, paternity and carer's leave and flexible working arrangements; Congress will seek to have this implemented fully.

We are about to hear from Martin Collins of Pavee Point on the historic decision by the Dail to recognise the ethnicity of the Traveller Community and the need for implementation of the new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy.

The introduction of the single affordable childcare scheme is a significant development and the fact that there is now no denial that a quality childcare service must include a professional workforce with professional terms and conditions is testament to the work of Congress and affiliate trade unions. Congress notes the delay in the publication of an executive childcare strategy and will be working with other civil society organisations to launch a major campaign in the autumn.

Delegates, having been excluded from the newly established IHREC, we have now managed to get a statutorily established worker employer advisory committee to the IHREC and will work to progress a number of workplace equality and human rights issues, not least the right to representation.

Delegates, Congress and trade unions North and South will continue to pursue these and other progressive social policy and equality issues including also:

Reproductive rights and healthcare;

Marriage Equality and again congrats to NIC and Clare in particular, for the fantastic March for Marriage last Saturday. And indeed to Seamus Dooley and Ethel Buckley and all those who travelled up in solidarity from Dublin on the Love Train...

Delegates, our pursuit of equality is not only the right thing to do but is also the smart thing to do if we are to address many of the challenges for this movement identified in debates at this conference.