1916 2016

Celebrating a Century of Women's Struggle and History

Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Women's Conference 2016

3-4 March | **Mullingar**

Countess Constance Georgine Markievicz **Suffragette and Socialist**
In December 1918, she was the first woman elected to the British House of Commons but did not take her seat.

Congress Women's
Conference 2016

'1916 - 2016 celebrating a Century of Women's Struggle and History'

3/4 March 2016
Bloomfield House Hotel,
Mullingar

Thursday 3 March

10.00 Registration and Tea/Coffee

Session 1 Opening Session

11.00 Welcome and Introduction –

Theresa Dwyer and Vivien Holding,
Joint Women's Committee Chairs.

Chair of Conference Arrangements Committee.

Councillor Peter Burke,
Mayor of Mullingar Municipal District

11.15 Opening Address

Brian Campfield
Congress President.

11.30 General Secretary's address:

Patricia King
ICTU General Secretary.

Session 2

12.00 Motions

EC Report
Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs

Report of Women's Committees
Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs

Voting on Motions and Agree Sections of Reports

13.00 Lunch and Fringe Events:

- Trade Union Friends of Palestine (Molesworth Suite)
- Alliance for Choice and Trade Union Campaign to repeal the 8th amendment (Lynnbury Suite).

Friday 4 March

Session 3

14.30 Motions

Guest Speaker:
Dr Margaret Ward,
Northern Suffrage and the First World War

EC Report
Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs

Report of Women's Committees
Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs

Voting on Motions and Agree Sections of Reports

15.45 Coffee Break

16.00 Session 3 resumes

Guest Speaker:
Dr Mary Muldowney
Role of Women in 1916

17.30 End of Day 1

19.30 Dinner followed by Disco

Session 4

09.30 Motions

EC Report
Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs

10.45 Coffee Break

Guest Speaker
Montserrat Mir Roca
ETUC Confederal Secretary

Appropriate Sections/Paragraphs

Voting on Motions and Agree Sections of Reports

13.00 Close of Conference

Introduction

Welcome to the 2015 Irish Congress of Trade Unions Women's Conference -

'1916 – 2016, celebrating a Century of Women's Struggle and History'

2016 is a historic year marking the centenary of the Easter Rising and also of the Battle of the Somme, events which changed the lives of women throughout the island of Ireland and which still resonate today.

In choosing the theme, the Congress Women's Committee recognised the shared and different histories, experiences and realities for women over the last hundred years.

We are here to celebrate many of the advancement's made for women workers over the past century and to consider how best we address the remaining challenges. In the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, we are working to ensure that economic development is based on decency, equality and solidarity and leads to real improvements in the lives of working families right across our island. The challenges facing such a mission are all too familiar and include:

- unequal access to jobs;
- the persistent problem of low pay and wage inequality;
- the increased incidence of precariousness and job insecurity;
- weakened bargaining power and voice at work;
- inadequate arrangements to reconcile work and family life
- the erosion of social supports and protection - including pensions
- the imposition of austerity and attacks on vital public services.

As we listen to guest speakers and debate motions on these and other issues over the coming days, let us be inspired by each other and the history of struggle we share with so many inspiring women over the past century. Let's rededicate ourselves to our joint mission of building workers' power and remind ourselves and others that Women must be central to this fight. Gender equality is needed to strengthen unions and to build workers 'power.

We hope that you enjoy the conference and take part fully in all the discussions so that you can return to your union and workplace revitalised in the struggle.

Patricia King
General Secretary

Bernadette Segol (General Secretary ETUC), Frances O'Grady (TUC General Secretary), Patricia King (Congress General Secretary) and Sharon Burrow (ITUC General Secretary) at Congress BDC 2015

MOTIONS TO THE CONGRESS WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2016

Motions to the Congress Women's Conference 2016

Women and the Workplace

1. Women and Austerity

Congress Women's Committee,
motion number 1

Whilst more women are in employment that at any time in the last hundred years, conference notes that their employment is characterised by low wages, casual and insecure jobs and a constant pressure on work life balance.

Conference condemns the increasing trend towards the casualisation of labour and the growth of temporary insecure work and zero hours contracts. Whilst the outworking of such contracts is not exclusively borne by female workers, Conference recognises the particular problems that precarious work contracts pose for women, especially when they are coupled with childbearing and caring responsibilities.

Many sectors such as health care, retail, catering, cleaning, hospitality and childcare sees many thousands of women increasingly employed on precarious contracts that offer little in the way of a living wage, guaranteed hours or job security. Such contracts are also becoming a feature of many professions such as teaching and nursing.

Hard won employment rights make a real difference to the work life balance that is necessary for workers, however an increasing amount of women workers are excluded from these gains, as the casualisation of labour means they do not benefit from the same access to these rights. In addition, their working hours and patterns are largely dictated by their employer and they have little flexibility or autonomy to plan their own time and finances.

Conference calls for an end to all casual contracts including, short-hours contracts, exploitative agency contracts, zero-hours contracts and bogus self-employment.

Conference calls on the Executive Council to campaign and lobby for decent work for women including:

- access to permanent secure employment and an end to zero hours and low hours contracts;
- equal pay and an end to the Swedish derogation contained within the Agency Workers Regulation;
- an equal floor of basic workplace rights including full maternity rights for all workers;
- access to affordable childcare;
- the enhancement and extension of collective bargaining to ensure enforcement of such rights;
- the opportunity for training and progression at work;
- a social security system which reflects the realities of casualised labour.

Easter 1916 sees the armed insurrection of Irish Republicans against British Rule in Ireland. The Battle of the Somme starts in July 1916 and lasts until November 1916. Almost 60,000 British soldiers were killed, wounded or taken prisoner on the first day of fighting. In total, an estimated million lives are lost.

2. Carers Statutory Paid Leave

CWU (UK)

Through our lives many workers are faced with circumstances which necessitate taking leave for either parental or other caring reasons.

Women shoulder a disproportionate responsibility for caring arrangements and so this usually falls to them. This situation is made worse by the fact that this is normally unpaid leave. Taking unpaid leave can impact on a woman's career and promotional opportunities and can also negatively impact on her pension arrangements.

This Conference calls on the Women's Committee to investigate best practice examples in relation to these types of leave and campaign to establish statutory paid benefit for leave in such circumstances.

3. Cost of Childcare

CPSU

There is widespread consensus that childcare costs in both jurisdictions are too high and that the State has a role to play in terms of assisting parents in this regard. At European level there is an increased commitment, particularly in Scandinavian countries, in support of family and work life policies in terms of:-

- Recognition of family
- Promoting gender equality and
- Increased labour participation

The OECD Economic Review Ireland 2015 shows that childcare costs in Ireland are 40% of the average wage and as such are the highest in the OECD. Their view is that much more needs to be done in Ireland to assist parents, particularly low income families enter or re-join the labour force. The rate of female participation in the labour market had dropped to about 40% for women with children which, according to the OECD, represented the lowest level of employment for women with children in the OECD countries. In July 2015 the European Commission revealed that Ireland is one of the two most expensive countries in the world for childcare.

Surveys conducted in Ireland tell us that many stay-at home mothers want to work in some capacity but feel trapped by childcare costs.

Therefore the Congress Women's Conference calls on Congress to campaign for an effective solution to the cost of childcare in Ireland.

4. Mental Health Awareness

ESU

ESU call upon this conference to ask Congress to recognise the importance of addressing the mental health issues of Women both at home and in the workplace. AWARE state that Women are four times more likely to suffer from depression and other mental health issues. While both men and women are equally affected with mental health problem there are significant health consequences of discrimination against women in nearly every

society. Poverty, unequal power relations between women and men, and unequal access to resources, are powerful barriers to women in achieving, and maintaining, optimal levels of health. Given the Irish Government's commitment to a National Women's Strategy, and its reaffirmation of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2005, it is now a good time to address this issue of the health of women in Ireland. Women are statistically more likely than men to be poor, to parent alone, to earn low wages, to be reliant on public transport, to be at risk of sexual violence and to be in poorly protected employment (Zero hours), all of which negatively impact on their health.

Finally women are also feeling under pressure as opportunities to work beyond core hours are limited and Social Welfare payments and supports have been cut or withdrawn.

Therefore Conference calls on Congress to support the development of a programme on mental health awareness to be adopted by affiliated trade unions and that these unions ensure that the work they do on mental health acknowledges the needs and issues of women in the workplace.

Amendment to Motion No 4 Mental Health Awareness

Include that the current cuts in social welfare for the young be abolished as it is having a damaging effect on the mental and physical health of young adults and call on Congress to put pressure on the Government to put a fairer system in place.

TEEU

5. Care Homes and Female Employees

GMB

This conference calls on the Women's Committee to press the N.I. Assembly to review the number of job losses, and the particular impact on women, that the closure of Four Seasons Homes has caused.

Conference notes that the service Industry has been one of the only growth areas in the Northern Ireland economy and that Northern Ireland cannot afford to lose more jobs.

We call on ICTU to put pressure on the private sector providers to review their decision to close care homes, and for the N.I. Assembly to take over the homes to provide security for their occupants and staff.

6. Equality in Employment

PSEU

Conference, noting that the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has said that the best way to assess how an organisation is performing in terms of equality in employment is to undertake an employment equality review, expresses its concern at the ongoing failure of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform to review the content of its Gender Equality Policy published in 2001 and its policy on Diversity in the Civil Services published in 2002.

End of World War One. During the course of the war, thousands of women left domestic life for the first time to work in munitions and other factories. In rural areas, women took to the bog lands in droves in search of sphagnum moss, which was in huge demand for the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot. 1918 Women are granted limited voting rights.

Conference believes that in view of legislative changes since the publication of these documents it can only be considered appropriate and necessary to review and update the policy "Diversity in the Civil Service" and to review the impact of the Gender Equality Policy.

Conference supports the view that any such review should involve an audit of where the Civil Services stands, particularly in relation to gender equality in terms of composition, recruitment, participation in promotion processes, training programmes etc.

Conference notes that the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform was asked to undertake a review of its policies as far back as 2010 and expresses serious concern at the ongoing failure of the Department to take any action whatsoever on the issue.

7. Flexible Working

NASUWT

Conference is concerned at the number of education employers who resist and actively discourage requests for flexible working.

Conference believes that too many of the refusals for working flexibly are unsubstantiated and based on prejudicial misconceptions about the implications of flexible working on educational progress and achievement.

Conference is deeply concerned that such refusals disproportionately affect women teachers who are increasingly being driven out of the profession or forced into relinquishing hard-won posts of responsibility to the detriment of their careers and financial security.

In seeking to alleviate the problems caused by such refusals Conference believes that flexible working should be an entitlement for all teachers.

Conference calls on ICTU to:

(i) Research and expose the extent to which women are being denied access to flexible working;

(ii) Work with affiliates to continue the campaign for a legal right to flexible working.

8. Bullying and Harassment in Work

Limerick Trades Council

Further to our conversations Bullying is a highly destructive set of behaviours, sometimes openly aggressive and sometimes covertly manipulative. Bullying has been observed and recorded in many workplaces. The person being bullied can feel very alone and insecure which can result in damage to their health as well as to their confidence and work. In recognising this, conference calls on the ICTU Executive to publicly highlight this issue with a view to ensuring that its affiliates and their membership,

along with employers and workers in general are fully aware of their rights and obligations in dealing with and preventing this kind of negative behaviour in the workplace.

9. Women and the Economy

NIPSA

Household incomes, poverty rates and the labour market have all worsened in Northern Ireland in the last five years. Paid work is not an equal experience for women and men. Women are concentrated in low-paid and part-time jobs – 79% of female employees work part-time, many on zero hour contracts with neither job security nor decent conditions of employment, unable to access tax credits most needed by the poorest families. Two thirds of those earning minimum wage or below are women and women on average earn 12.5% less than men. Cuts to working Tax Credits/Universal Credit systems have a higher impact on lone parents, mainly women, than on any other group.

Now that Welfare Reform has been introduced by the Westminster Government as part of the 'Fresh Start' Agreement, women will be further disadvantaged. Not only have women lost out on social security relating to pregnancy and children, but women have also lost more than men as a result of housing benefit reform, the change from RPI to CPI in the uprating of benefits and the benefits cap. Cuts in central and local government spending have seen a reduction in services for all, including many services that are relied upon by women such as domestic violence refuges, Sure Start Children's Centres and sexual and reproductive health services.

Conference calls on the government to:

- Carry out meaningful equality impact assessments before spending decisions are made;
- Monitor the impact of their decisions on women and revise policies when it is clear that there is a disproportionate impact that can't be justified;
- Introduce a dedicated women's employment strategy to address the dominance of women in low paid work and recognises social infrastructure and the value of women's skills and labour; and
- End public sector pay freezes and caps; introduce stronger legislation on equal pay audits, greater pay transparency and better quality part-time and flexible work opportunities.

10. Change to Sick Leave Entitlement

TUI

This conference demands that the ICTU negotiate with the relevant parties to secure changes to the current Public Service sick leave provisions, in order that any pregnancy related sick leave of a public service employee will not be counted against their sick leave entitlements.

1919

Nancy Astor is the first female MP to take her seat in the House of Commons.

11. A Pledge to End Zero Hours and Casualisation

UNISON

Conference acknowledges the historic and important year and the setting in which we meet. Our theme of **100 years of struggle** allows us to record the great advances that have been made by women across the island of Ireland in fighting for civil, political and human rights. It can truly be said that were our forebears alive today much of what they see would gladden their hearts, with women making up more than half of the membership of the organised labour movement.

Conference must also acknowledge however that they would still be deeply troubled by prevailing inequality and by the continuing small numbers of women in the senior leadership of the trade union movement. The need to build a proportionate leadership reflective of the membership remains a key challenge to the movement today. A second challenge is to ensure that equality and human rights is at the core of all our industrial relations bargaining structures and behaviour.

One of the most important issues on this front is our demand to end the use of zero hours and exploitative low hours and casual contracts across all sectors private and public and to replace them with contracts that fulfil human rights obligations on a decent standard of income. We already have the policy. It is now time to integrate that policy in all our bargaining strategies and political, industrial action and legal action. Elimination of this form of exploitation benefits all workers but especially women workers.

In support of turning policy into practice we call on the Executive Council to launch a solidarity pledge focused on making zero hours contracts history.

Our Women's Committee, North and South, commits to campaign for endorsement of this solidarity pledge across civic society and in particular the women's movement. We also call on political parties to sign the pledge.

This pledge will include a call that programmes for Government following elections North and South will take action on exploitative work contracts. In the Republic of Ireland, we call for the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Report by Limerick University on the prevalence of zero hour contracts and low hour contracts in the Irish economy. In Northern Ireland we call on the NI Executive to outlaw zero hours contracts and commit to a full review by the lead Ministers into how casual contracts are being used to exploit women in the workplace.

12. Childcare and the Flexible Economy

USDAW

Conference is deeply concerned at the impact that employer demands for ever-greater flexibility in industries such as retail are having on women's need to balance work and family life.

Many employers are increasingly showing a total disregard for the caring responsibilities most women have and seeking to impose shift changes that involve evening and weekend working.

Women who may have had a relatively stable shift pattern for several years are being faced with an impossible choice and have to cut their hours and therefore their pay as they cannot comply with the new shift pattern. This has a severe impact on their current and future earnings potential and puts women and their families at greater risk of poverty and ill health.

Women south and north of the border face the same issues in relation to finding affordable flexible childcare. The Government's failure to invest in high quality childcare places an often insurmountable barrier in the way of women's greater economic participation. Too many women in low-paid part-time work are hanging on to the labour market by a thread. Unions are the last line of defence for women workers with children and other caring commitments.

Childcare at weekends and in the evenings and early mornings is almost non-existent and women in rural areas face particular obstacles to finding childcare that will enable them to work. Low wages in the childcare sector and the exploitation of vulnerable migrant women many of whom work as au pairs is a pressing issue for unions and Government.

There is much work to do. We urgently need:

- A Government-led childcare strategy and as part of this much higher levels of investment in childcare.
- Affordable high quality childcare provision that meets the needs of women working in low-paid part-time vulnerable employment.
- A duty on employers to take caring commitments into account when planning changes to hours and working arrangements.
- Measures to better support childcare providers including non-profit organisations by developing a framework of qualifications for childcare and subsidies.
- Greater recognition and support for the vital role played by grandparents in caring for children.

A strategy to tackle the fact that part-time work is heavily concentrated in some of the lowest paying sectors of the economy so that women who need or want to work part time do not pay a heavy price in terms of low and unequal pay.

Women and Society

13. Austerity and the Impact on Women

PCS

This Conference is angered by the continued pursuit of Austerity programmes by the Irish, Northern Irish and UK governments. Cuts in welfare, cuts in public and private sector jobs, cuts in public services for women and the elderly combined with casualisation of the workforce, poverty pay, soaring child care costs and an ever increasing cost of living has had a detrimental and disproportionate impact on women across the islands.

Austerity has undermined the hard won rights and protections for woman at home and in the workplace. Austerity has increased the number of women living, working and dying in poverty and as a

Michael Collins addresses throng in Skibbereen, County Cork, Ireland, on St. Patrick's Day. Irish Free State is formed. Irish women were granted equal voting rights.

direct result increased the number of children and elderly in poverty.

Conference believes that none of these cuts are necessary. Each government has the power to legislate against tax evasion and avoidance and to collect the billions of pounds / euros in tax that goes unpaid by big corporations and the wealthiest in society. These uncollected billions would adequately fund public services and negate any cuts. However each government chooses to protect the rich and attack the poorest and most vulnerable in society instead.

To fight against Austerity and for equality and to defend women's rights Conference calls on Congress to:

Work with the ICTU Women's Committee and all affiliates to;

- Organise women's lobbies of the Irish and UK parliaments and NI Assembly to highlight the disproportionate impact of the cuts on women and campaign for equality and Tax Justice to end Austerity.
- To develop a women led political campaign based around agreed key industrial and socio-economic demands which are to put to all elected representatives in the form of a letter and e-action campaign, with party and individual politicians responses published to members
- Provide political education courses including training on the how government works at all levels for female trade union activists and open to female community/charity activists.

14. Child Poverty

ASTI

ICTU Women's Committee calls on Congress to adopt as a priority in social dialogue with the Government and employers, the goal of ending poverty among children and young people, who have been disproportionately hit by the recession and cutbacks in public services.

Specifically, ICTU should seek:

- A commitment to halving the number of children and young people living in poverty by 2020 with a view to eliminating such poverty by 2025.
- A commitment to investment in education to ensure services are in place in schools to assist children and young people, who are living in poverty, including the provision of school meals, book rental schemes and access to ICT.
- A commitment to ending food poverty among children and young people.
- To work with other agencies currently campaigning on ending child poverty and ensuring better lives for our children and young people.

15. Reproductive Health & Justice

UNITE

Conference recognises that the introduction of the contraceptive pill and access to abortion have transformed women's lives — increasing control

over when, and if, to have children and so boosting women's employment and education prospects, incomes and opportunities. Barriers to reproductive rights are barriers to full social, economic and political equality, which makes the right to access abortion a clear Trade Union issue.

Conference notes that access to sexual and reproductive health services is crucial to women's health and well- being. It is also an international requirement under CEDAW. Termination of pregnancy is lawful in Ireland, but under highly restricted circumstances; forcing 5,000 women per year to travel to Britain and beyond to access health care services.

Conference welcomes the ICTU's endorsement and full support of the Trade Union campaign to repeal the 8th amendment to the Constitution. Women comprise more than half of the trade union membership in Ireland and it is unacceptable that they live in a country where the law puts their health and lives at risk, criminalises them and forces them to travel abroad to avail of safe and legal abortion services. The Trade Union Campaign demands a referendum be held early in 2016.

Conference calls on the executive council to:

- Continue to support the Trade Union campaign to repeal the 8th amendment
- Lobby all political parties in the Republic to fully commit to holding a referendum to remove Article 40.3.3 from the constitution early in 2016
- Support Alliance for Choice's 'Trust Women' campaign which seeks to make abortion an election issue in the run up to the 2016 May elections to Stormont
- Lobby all political parties in Northern Ireland to give MLA's a free vote should abortion legislation come before Stormont that increases access to these vital services
- Encourage the mobilisation of trade union members on this issue in both jurisdictions

Women deserve better than this from our political leaders. We need abortion provision in this country that protects and respects women's lives, health and choices.

16. Gender Pension Gap

MANDATE

Conference calls on the incoming Executive Council to lobby Government to address the gender pension gap of 39% which leaves many women in Ireland living in Poverty.

17. Violence against Women and Girls

UTU

Conference is appalled at the level of violence against women and girls in all parts of our society, including at the workplace.

Conference notes the all island survey undertaken by the Women's Committee in 2014 on the impact of domestic violence on the workplace which had nearly 2,000 responses. Worryingly, a third of those responding noted that they had experienced domestic

Cissy Cahalan, 1876-1948, was a member of the Irish Drapers' Assistants Association, now Mandate. She worked in Arnotts, Dublin and in 1912 she formed a Women's Committee in the Dublin branch. Elected to the Irish Trade Union Congress Executive, 1922-23.

violence and that this had impacted on their work in relation to issues such as being forced to take time off work due to physical injury and restraint.

Respondents to the survey indicated that workplace policies in relation to domestic violence could have made a positive difference to their circumstances.

Conference calls on the ICTU Executive Council to:

- campaign to introduce legislation similar to the Violence against Women and Girls Act in Wales which places a positive duty on Ministers and public bodies to introduce, monitor and evaluate strategies to tackle Violence Against Women and Girls;
- work with affiliates and employers to develop workplace policies on domestic violence and introduce it as part of the bargaining agenda.

18. Equal Marriage

Belfast and District Trades Union Council

Conference welcomes the historic Yes vote for Conference welcomes the historic Yes vote for civil marriage equality in the referendum in May 2015 and applauds the ICTU Executive Council and the trade union campaign for the leadership demonstrated in mobilising for a yes vote.

However conference notes with dismay that Northern Ireland is now the only part of the UK and Ireland where gay and lesbian couples cannot marry the person they love.

Conference calls on the Executive Council to fully support the Civil Marriage Equality Campaign in Northern Ireland and to campaign for a change in the law to ensure that all citizens of this island have equal access to marriage.

Women and Trade Unions

19. Support for work of Women's Committee

Women's Committee motion number 2

Conference believes that the ICTU Women's Committees has always had a strong role to play in identifying issues that are a priority for working women across all sectors. Conference welcomes the ROI Women's Committee comprehensive programme of work document, as approved by the Executive Council, and urges all affiliates to support and promote the implementation of the programme. Conference believes that the Programme will make a positive contribution to Congress policy overall and, in particular, to policy work in three key areas:

- Women Organising for Decent Work which includes collective bargaining, pensions, family leaves, affordable childcare and flexible working;
- Women in Society which includes women and the working poor, violence against women and ending child poverty;

- Women in Trade Unions which includes an audit of women in Trade Unions including delegations to union conferences.

Conference notes that in delivering on the Programme of Work the Committee will coordinate with Congress led campaigns such as the Congress Charter for Fair Conditions at Work and the Living Wage campaign.

Amendment to Motion No 19 Women in Trade Unions

'This Conference welcomes the comprehensive Programme of Work document from the ROI Women's Committees. In terms of promoting Women in Trade Unions this Conference calls for the introduction of targets/gender quotas for senior posts in Trade Unions.'

CPSU

20. Gender balance in Workers College

SIPTU

Having regard for the development of the Workers College, SIPTU call upon the ICTU Executive to:

- Ensure that there is an adequate gender balance from those contributing to the teaching in the college.
- Have regard to the gender breakdown of the participants from the trade union movement.
- To ensure that the education and training curriculum for the Workers College includes specific targeted training aimed at women activists with a particular focus on leadership skills.

21. Training and Mentoring for Women Trade Unionists

IMPACT

This conference calls for the development of a training and mentoring program specifically for women activists. It is important that all steps should be taken to ensure that we empower women activists to enable them to be confident in pursuing a career through the trade union movement, thus ensuring we achieve an acceptable gender balance.

Conference Report

Women and Trade Unions

Women in Leadership in the Trade Union movement:

It is very important that we continue to have women role models in leadership positions throughout the movement and there have been positive developments in this regard in recent years.

In 2015 history was made when Patricia King became the first woman to be appointed as General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

In another first, Alison Millar became the first woman to be elected as General Secretary of NIPSA in December 2015.

Sheila Nunan is General Secretary of the INTO and Vice President of ICTU. The following women are members of the Executive Council:

- Ethel Buckley, *SIPTU*
- Marie Levis, *IMPACT*
- Patricia McKeown, *UNISON*
- Alison Millar, *NIPSA*
- Maria Morgan, *NIPSA*
- Aileen Morrissey, *MANDATE*
- Phil NiSheaghdha, *INMO*
- Sheila Nunan, *INTO*
- Deirdre O'Connor, *INTO*
- Anne Speed, *UNISON*

And these women are members of the Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU:

- Maria Morgan, *NIC ICTU Vice Chairperson (NIPSA)*
- Avril Hall-Callaghan, *former NIC ICTU Chairperson (UTU);*
- Anne Speed *(UNISON)*
- Patricia McKeown, *former President of Congress (UNISON).*
- Anne Speed *(UNISON)*
- Michala Lafferty *(USDAW)*
- Laura Graham *(BFAWU)*
- Taryn Trainor *(UNITE)*

The period also saw the election Esther Lynch as Confederal Secretary of the ETUC at their September 2015 Conference. Esther has responsibility for Collective bargaining and wage policy as well as Fundamental Social Rights and European Labour Law. We wish Esther well and look forward to cooperation in her role in Brussels.

Esther Lynch,
ETUC Confederal Secretary

1928

Representation of the People Act 1928 (amended). Age qualification abolished to put men and women on an equal footing. All women over the age of 21 could vote.

Congress Women's Committee Report 2014-2016

The Women's Committee is one of the longest standing formal committees of Congress and continues to provide an opportunity for women in the movement to meet and discuss issues of direct concern and relevance to women in employment and in society generally.

The constitution of the Committee sets out the functions to be:

> *the co-ordination of policy or action by affiliated organisations catering for women workers on matters relating to the interests of women; the investigation of problems arising from the employment of women in industry, services and the professions; the preparation of reports on aspects of women's employment, conditions of work, remuneration etc.*

The committee in the Republic was reconstituted in 2014 and the following were elected Officers of the Committee.

- Theresa Dwyer (CPSU), Chair;
- Margaret Coughlan (IMPACT), Vice Chair
- Melissa Brennan (PSEU), Secretary.

In Northern Ireland, the Officers are:

- Vivien Holding (CWU), Chairperson;
- Jacquie Reid (UTU) Vice Chairperson
- Eileen Gorman (IBOA) Secretary.

Major initiatives during the period included the organisation of a **National Women's Conference in 2014** and a **Seminar in 2015** as well as participation in the Women's Council of the Isles, an initiative that brings together the TUC, STUC,WTUC and ICTU Women's Committees on an annual basis.

The Women's Committee has an important to play in identifying issues that are a priority for working women across all sectors and in so doing makes a positive contribution to Congress policy.

Work programmes based on the motions that were passed at the 2014 Women's Conference, the 2014 NIC ICTU Biennial Conference and the 2015 ICTU Biennial conference were adopted by the committees in both jurisdictions.

Following a series of discussions, the Women's Committee in the Republic decided to prioritise a number of issues as set out in a Programme of Work. As well as being guided by Congress policy and priorities, the Committee also considered ETUC data and analysis.

The Programme of Work has been broken down into three key areas:

- Women Organising for Decent Work which includes collective bargaining, pensions, family leaves, affordable childcare and flexible working;
- Women in Society which includes women and the working poor, violence against women and ending child poverty;

Congress General Secretary Patricia King meeting with Women's Committee

- Women in Trade Unions which includes an audit of women in Trade Unions including delegations to union conferences.

In Northern Ireland, the Women's Committee adopted a Programme of Work which likewise reflected the priorities established at the NIC ICTU Biennial Conference as well as the other policy setting conferences of Congress.

The Programme of Work was broken down into:

- Women in Work;
- Women in Society; and
- Women in Unions.

In delivering on the Programme of Work, the Women's Committee will coordinate with Congress led campaigns such as the Congress Charter for Fair Conditions at Work, the Living Wage campaign and the Campaign against Austerity and changes to the Welfare system in Northern Ireland. The Committee would encourage all affiliates to engage with the issues raised in both of these Programmes.

Women's Conference 2014

The Wexford conference brought together about 200 delegates under the theme of **securing decent work** for women. Delegates debated motions on the effect of austerity and privatisation on women's lives and the economic and social fabric of our society.

Opening the conference, Congress President John Douglas noted

> *I am very conscious that women make up the majority of trade union membership on the island of Ireland and that this conference would represent nearly 400,000 working women on the island. This number of women organising for decent work is a very considerable resource for this movement to have – and one whose participation we need to improve if we are to fully realise our potential for change in Irish workplaces and wider society.*

Congress President John Douglas with Ann Henderson, STUC

Betty Sinclair was Secretary of the Belfast and District Trades Union Council, 1947-75.

Following a presentation on labour market trends Conference heard presentations from the following women trade union activists:

School Secretary Marion Jackson from IMPACT told the conference

> The erosion of decent working standards has led to a worsening of inequality and has left those experiencing it to be just about surviving on a week to week basis.

Shop Worker Jackie McNeil from USDAW commented

> To me, decent work means being treated with dignity and respect. Every woman deserves to earn a decent wage, have a fair work-life balance and get the opportunity to develop

Guest speakers included Ann Henderson of the Scottish TUC who spoke about the economic imperative for investing in quality childcare provision and Grainne Healey of the Marriage Equality campaign, who urged the trade union movement to continue to be strong advocates for LGBT equality and inclusion in the upcoming referendum in the Republic of Ireland. Motions on both of these issues were then debated and passed unanimously. All motions available here: http://www.ictu.ie/download/pdf/20140218124908.pdf

NICICTU Chairperson, Pamela Dooley, presented a report on "Women and Trade Unions" including the results of our 2013 Equality Audit. She recalled the positive developments that have been achieved in the trade union movement over the last twenty years whilst also calling for the leadership of the union movement to be more reflective of the union membership.

Full report of the conference is available on the website: http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2014/03/06/women-organising-for-decent-work/

NICICTU Chairperson Pamela Dooley

Seminar March 2015

The seminar in March 2015 in Belfast was themed "Women's Views Women's Voices" and saw 150 delegates from North, South, East and West meet during the week of International Women's Day. Themes explored at the seminar included women in public and political life, gender equality and gender based violence twenty years on from the Beijing Platform for Action.

Invited guests included Zuzanna Muskat-Gorska from the International Trade Union Confederation, Eileen Dinning from the STUC Women's Committee and Caroline McGuigan from Suicide or Survive.

In one of his last public appearances as Congress General Secretary, David Begg received a standing ovation from delegates. Commenting on the type of social investment required to challenge inequalities, he said

Social investment takes on a whole new meaning in this context. It means investing in people so that they can contribute fully to the economy and society. If they can participate then the tax base needed to support social investment is strengthened. In a nutshell social investment is about turning viscous circles of poverty and unemployment into virtuous circles of a strong economy, good public services, high taxes and full employment.

He observed that the feminisation of the labour market now requires different kinds of risks to be taken on board. Family formation is different. Caring needs are different. These have to be provided for if people – men and women – are to be able to participate in the labour market and achieve their full potential.

Referring to International Women's Day on March 8, Mr Begg said: "That is what I always wanted – for women to be equal in a way that gives every person the opportunity to be fulfilled, to have children and yet have the freedom to obtain your own dreams, whatever they might be."

The seminar was also attended by incoming General Secretary, Patricia King. As the first woman to take up that role it was very appropriate that she took up her duties on International Women's Day.

Joanne, an intern with the Lord Mayors office attended the womens seminar and spoke about participation in public life.

In response to The President of Ireland's Ethics Initiative, Congress established a project to explore the role of ethics in the workplace and many delegates took part in recording their views on film in response to the initiative. More here: http://www.ethicalworkplace.ie/

A charity fundraising appeal in memory of our former colleague, Karen Sims, (former NI Organiser for NASUWT, a member of Congress Women's Committee and also the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU) was held in aid of the NI Hospice. Karen passed away in the NI Hospice in September 2014 and is sadly missed by all NASUWT members, Women's Committee and the wider trade union movement. Colleagues also marked the passing of our former colleague, Ann Casey, who died after a long illness during the week of the seminar.

In a blog piece published on www.ictu.ie following the seminar, Eileen Dinning from the STUC said:

I don't know of a single cleaner, cook, admin assistant, shop or childcare worker who currently sits on a public board in Scotland. Why is that?

They have as much to offer as have the high flying professionals.

Women's lives matter. Our society would be a poorer place without their contribution. Not just in the workplace but in recognition of the unpaid caring work they do.

That their position in our society is considerably less than it should be is not acceptable in 2015. Must do better.

Sheila Conroy, a hotel worker and ITGWU member from 1942, was the first women to be elected to the Irish Transport & General Workers' Union National Executive Council, 1955-59 topping the poll in 1958.

ICTU Biennial Delegate Conference July 2015

Equality was a major theme at the Congress Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) held in Ennis, 7 - 9 July.

A motion on living standards and social protection proposed by the Executive Council was introduced by Ethel Buckley, Executive Council member and SIPTU, who noted the contribution of the trade union movement to the recent Marriage Equality Referendum, and urged delegates to continue and enhance the trade union movement's commitment.

The number of speakers to the motion was so high it resulted in the conference being behind schedule. Contributions ranged from calls for publication of the long awaited comprehensive employment strategy for people with disabilities, child care costs and need for public investment and family leaves, and the need for civil marriage equality in Northern Ireland.

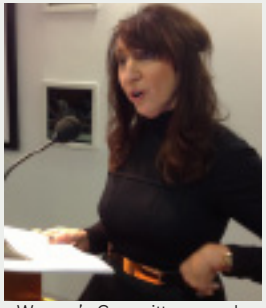
Theresa Dwyer addressed the biennial delegate conference on behalf of the Women's Committee.

Congress President, John Douglas, Chair of Women's Committee (ROI) Theresa Dwyer, Incoming General Secretary, Patricia King; Chair of Women's Committee, Vivienne Holding, Zuzanna Muskat-Gorska and Outgoing General Secretary, David Begg at Women's Seminar March 2015

Women's Council of the Isles

Members of the Committee participated in the Women's Council of the Isles meetings in London in 2014 and in Glasgow in 2015.

Presentations at the Council of the Isles included topics on UN resolution 1325, Violence against women and the childcare infrastructure in Ireland, North and South.



Women's Committee member and NIPSA Official Geraldine Alexander gives a presentation on the topic of Violence Against Women at the Council of the Isles in 2014.

Other areas of Committee activity in the Republic of Ireland included:

- Theresa Dwyer continues to represent Congress on the ETUC Women's Committee, Theresa also represents the ETUC Women's Committee on the ETUC Internal Market and Legislation Committee and is a substitute member of the ETUC Employment and Labour Market Committee;
- Theresa Dwyer, Chair of Women's Committee addressed the biennial delegate conference in Ennis July 2015 and the STUC Women's Conference in November 2015;
- Theresa Dwyer and Melissa Brennan met with members of the European Parliament's Women's Committee in the EP offices in Dublin, October 2015;
- Supporting the 16 Days of Action Campaign to end Violence against Women;
- The Committee wrote to the Executive Council in relation to the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th. At their meeting in September 2015, the Executive Council determined the position of Congress in relation the matter. Congress decided to support the Trade Union Campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment in line with the Congress position in 1983.
- With the TUC, STUC and WTUC, the launch of an online survey on people's experience of domestic violence and its impact in the workplace.
- Co-hosting with partners Ruhama in May 2014 an event entitled: The "Unchosen Roadshow: Human Trafficking Short Film Competition" which showcased 3 short films on human trafficking;
- Continued support for the Turn off the Red Light Campaign and in particular the publication of the General Scheme of the Sexual Offences Bill, its provisions to criminalise the purchase of sex and ongoing work to ensure that the Heads of the Bill are turned into legislation and swiftly enacted.
- Welcoming the July 2014 announcement on the ratification of the ILO Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers as "a major advance for domestic workers and their right to decent work."
- Jointly, with the National Women's Council, writing to all of our MEPs urging them to support the revision of the proposed Maternity Leave or Pregnant Workers Directive.
- Continuing to highlight the disproportionate impact of the recession on women
- The launch by Tánaiste Joan Burton of Congress Guidelines "Policies to assist workers with breast

Kay Fallon (Geraghty) of the Workers' Union of Ireland proposed the establishment of the first National Committee for trade union women at the 1959 founding conference of the Congress of Trade Unions.

cancer and other illnesses";
- Writing to Minister for Justice seeking exclusion of renowned promoter of sexual violence, Julian Blanc, to Ireland;
- Completion of annual ETUC 8th March survey on gender mainstreaming within trade unions.

More info at: http://www.ictu.ie/equality/gender.html

In Northern Ireland, Committee activity included:

Women and Austerity

The Women's Committee were active in campaigning against austerity and highlighting the disproportionate impact of austerity on women's lives.

The Women's Committee produced specific materials as part of the Northern Ireland Committee's campaign against the Stormont House Agreement and participated in the March 13 2015 strike action.

Members of the Women's Committee continue to take an active role in movements such as Reclaim the Agenda and the Empty Purse Campaign.

Violence Against women

Building on the work undertaken for the survey on the effect of domestic violence on the workplace, the Committee developed a position paper on this issue.

This paper has been used to lobby government departments including the Department of Justice. Members of the

Margaret McKee, UNISON, one of the founding members of the Belfast Area Domestic Violence Partnership

UNITE members with Women's Aid call for an end to Violence Against Women on 25 November 2015.

Women's Committee met with the Justice Minister and senior Officials to discuss the policy vacuum in relation to domestic violence in Northern Ireland.

Reproductive rights

The Committee invited Alliance for Choice to brief members on a campaign which was launched in early 2016. Alliance for Choice campaigns for progress on abortion legislation in Northern Ireland, which is currently one of the most restrictive in Europe. The #Trust Women campaign believes that women should be trusted to know what is best for themselves and their families and is campaigning for progressive legislation in relation to access to abortion.

In a response to the Department of Justice consultation on the Criminal Law on Abortion, Congress stated that that barriers to reproductive rights are barriers to full social, economic, political and workplace equality and that Northern Ireland has one of the most restrictive laws in relation to abortion in the EU.

NI Women's Committee heard from Alliance for Choice at their January 2016 meeting.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) has, since April 2013, been advising the Department of Justice that current criminal law on abortion in Northern Ireland is a violation of human rights. Congress has consistently made clear, whether legislative change is brought about by a legal challenge or otherwise, legislative change is essential to put an end to the daily attack on women's reproductive rights in NI.

Congress notes that concluding observations from the CEDAW committee in 2008 and in 2013 have also highlighted these issues.

The 2013 concluding observation said:

> That a public consultation regarding the possible abolition of criminal abortion laws, as called upon by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (A/63/38, paras. 288 and 289), has not been undertaken, and it is concerned that abortion continues to be illegal in Northern Ireland in all cases except where continuance of the pregnancy threatens the life of the mother, thus making it necessary for women to seek abortion in other parts of the State party…

And further that

> The State party should also ensure that legal abortion not only covers cases of threats to the life of the pregnant woman, but also other circumstances such as threats to her health and in cases of rape, incest and serious malformation of the foetus. The CEDAW Committee has invited the UK to report on developments with respect to this recommendation by July 2014.

1970

The Equal Pay Act is introduced in the UK and prohibits any less favourable treatment between men and women in terms of pay and conditions of employment. Almost all women were paid less than male colleagues doing the same job. In March 1970, the average hourly pay for women was five shillings, while for men it was over nine. In areas covered by a statutory minimum wage, the female rate was two-thirds that of men. Legislation on equal pay was introduced in 1974 and employment equality legislation followed in 1977, both as a result of European directives.

Congress supported the changes to criminal law to allow for abortion in cases of fatal foetal abnormality and sexual crime and has noted with grave concern that changes to the legislation continue to be blocked by the NI Assembly in moves which appear to be out of step with the views of the majority of citizens in Northern Ireland

Women and Leadership

The Women and Leadership course continues to run in Northern Ireland. To assess the success of the programme, the Women's Committee invited past students together in an informal networking session. This took place in January 2014 and the purpose was to reflect on the course and how women might be further supported within the trade union movement.

Members of the Women's Committee continue to represent Congress on various bodies and have input to a high level within Government on issues crucial to women.

Northern Ireland Women's European Platform (NIWEP)

The Committee has been represented by Women's Committee Chair Vivien Holding (CWU).

Domestic Violence Partnership (DVP)

Three members of the committee sit on various working groups of this body including Margaret McKee (Unison), Geraldine Alexander (NIPSA) and Taryn Trainer (Unite). ICTU Officer Clare Moore also sits on the Partnership steering group.

Equality and Human Rights

Sub-Group (EHRSG)

The EHRSG is a sub-committee of the NI Committee (NIC) which extends its membership to the chairs of the NIC's self-organised groups, equality officers of affiliated unions and trade unionists on the enforcement bodies. The EHRSG's function is to develop on behalf of the Northern Ireland Committee a strategy on equality and human rights, and to co-ordinate ICTU's lobbies, relations and negotiations with Governments, enforcement agencies and others on equality and human rights issues.

The Women's Committee is represented by the Chair, Vice Chair and by other members of the Women's Committee.

Congress Ad Hoc Welfare Reform Group

The committee is represented by the Chair and other members of the Women's Committee. The Women's Committee has played an active role in the ICTU campaign against the so-called welfare 'reform'. Linking with initiatives within the women's sector such as the Empty Purse Campaign, the Women's Committee has attended briefings, demonstrations and has also produced specific information on how changes to the welfare system will impact on women.

ICTU Global Solidarity Committee

The Committee is represented by Teresa Graham (NASUWT).

Women's Policy Group

The Women's Policy Group is coordinated by the Women's Resource and Development Agency and brings together a wide range of representatives including trade unions, women's organisations and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Various members of the Women's Committee attend meetings which are also attended by the ICTU Equality Officer.

The Ad Hoc Women's Budget Group

The Northern Ireland Women's Budget Group consists of individuals with economic, financial and public policy expertise. The purpose of the group is to influence and scrutinise budgets and budgetary processes to ensure that budgets and spending plans are sensitive to gender. Members of the Committee attend this group.

Human Rights Consortium

Congress is a member of the Human Rights Consortium which brings together nearly 200 NGO's, trade unions and other groups to campaign for the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, in particular for a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

The Human Rights Consortium meets on a monthly basis.

Equality Coalition

Congress is a member of the Equality Coalition which is a broad alliance of non-governmental organisations whose members cover all the categories listed in Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 ('s75'), as well as other equality strands. It was founded in 1996 by community and voluntary sector organisations and trade unions.

1976 the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order introduced which protected women from discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status.

The Congress Equality Officer and members of the Women's Committee attend monthly meetings of both the Equality Coalition and the Human Rights Consortium and play an active role in the work of the Coalition.

Europe an Trade Union Congress (ETUC) Women's Committee

The committees continue to be updated on the ETUC Women's Committee programme of work. The committee have a direct input to the work via the Equality Officer.

Women and the Workplace

Tackling low pay and precariousness

We know from Nevin Economic Research Institute research that low pay is more common among:

- female workers;
- younger workers;
- those in the retail, hotel, food and security sectors;
- single parents; and
- those on temporary contracts.

Overall,

- 25% of employees (almost 345,000) earn less than €11.50 per hour (living wage).
- 30% of employees (just over 400,000) earn less than €12.20 per hour.
- 75,000 employees work at the minimum wage and most are women (65%), most are aged in their 20s and 30s.
- In Northern Ireland, Food services, accommodation, retail, residential care and social services (particularly within the private sector) have the highest number of workers below the Living Wage with women accounting for two thirds of employment in these sectors.
- Over a fifth of women are defined as low paid, earning less than two thirds of the median wage. Almost one third of women earn below the Living Wage (currently set at £7.85 per hour).

In 2015, Congress launched a charter campaign calling for fair conditions at work. Decent working conditions and a fair income – at work and in retirement - are essential components of any civilised society, along with the provision of high quality public services that meet all the citizen's needs. The Congress Charter sets out the key elements required to make Ireland, North and South, the best place in which to work, live and raise a family.

Decency for Dunne's Workers March, June 2015

The Charter focuses on 5 areas:

- A living Wage
- Fair Hours of Work
- Right to Representation and Collective Bargaining
- Respect, Equality and Ethics at Work
- Fair Public Procurement

The concept of Decent Work emerged during the late 1990s, as the process of globalisation created a new dynamic between job creation and sustainable economic progress. In 1999, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) declared the achievement of Decent Work for all as a primary policy goal. It defined this as work carried out in conditions of "freedom, equity, security and human dignity."

> *"Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men."* (ILO)

As part of Budget 2016 the Government announced an increase to the statutory Minimum Wage from €8.65 to €9.15 per hour from January 1st. The increase followed the recommendations of the Low Pay Commission. Patricia King and Gerry Light represent Congress on this Commission and presented a Minority Report to the substantive report of the Low Pay Commission disagreeing with the recommendation to increase the hourly rate of the National Minimum Wage by just 50c. They did this on the basis that it falls far short of that required to allow a worker to meet the cost of providing for their most basic needs and making the case that a larger step towards the 'Living Wage' should have been taken. They also made it clear that since the implementation of the first National Minimum Wage in 2000, this floor rate was struck based on a Single Adult working 39 hours per week and that any attempt to reconstruct this model and advocate a revised rate based on part-time hours is wholly unacceptable. They went on to recommend a €1.35 increase per hour, which would see a 7% gain for people working on the minimum wage. It is Congress intention to work towards the achievement of the living wage during the life of the Low Pay Commission. The rise in the Minimum Wage together with adjustments to the PRSI system and changes to the Universal Social Charge, meant that Budget 2016 included some positive measures that see lower paid earners make measurable gains. However, these are but a first step towards establishing the Living Wage and decent work across the economy.

Congress also welcomed the signing into law of two new Employment Regulation Orders (EROs) which marked a significant advance in the trade union campaign against low pay and precarious employment. The restoration of the Joint Labour Committee (JLCs) system and the signing of the orders meant an immediate and very welcome pay rise for some 50,000 workers in the security and contract cleaning, but also marked a reversal of the downward trends of recent years.

The marriage bar in the public service was removed in July 1973, on foot of the report of the first Commission on the Status of Women. In 1977, the Employment Equality Act prohibited discrimination on the grounds of gender or marital status in almost all areas of employment.

While 'zero hour contracts' have been effectively outlawed in this jurisdiction since 1997 - legislation was introduced following campaigns mounted by trade unions and effectively set a 15 hour weekly minimum threshold for workers - the growth of low hour and precarious work has been a feature of every developed economy in recent years. There was never any reason to believe Ireland was an exception: quite the contrary, with the economic crisis providing fertile ground for the spread of such abusive practices.

In **Northern Ireland**, zero and low hour contracts are widely used by employers. Responding to a consultation by the Department for Employment and Learning, Congress said that

> Zero hours contracting is the most extreme form of a process of casualisation of terms and conditions of employment. Although the rise of zero hours contracts (ZHC) is driven largely by employer strategies and to a lesser extent by changing patterns of workforce participation, it is also the result of deliberate policy choices which have undermined the standard employment contract and allowed precarious work to spread. Employment law is part of the story, but also important is social security and tax law, and the legal framework of public procurement.
>
> Trade unions have consistently argued that the prevalence of these practices meant the state had to formulate stronger legislation to protect workers – the majority of them female and low paid – and stop their corrosive impact on wider employments standards.

On foot of recent industrial disputes, Minister Gerald Nash commissioned a study, carried out by the University of Limerick (UL) expert group, to discover just how deep and widespread these problems were. The Dunne's Stores dispute graphically illustrated a key element of this new employment culture: the use of low hour rosters on an industrial scale, as a means of cutting employer costs and a none-too-subtle 'control' mechanism for staff. In the aftermath of the April 2015 24 hour stoppage, some Dunne's workers suffered significantly for the brave stand they took. The new UL study confirmed our worst fears, as it outlines how 'If and When' contracts are prevalent across key areas of the economy, from: accommodation/ food and retail and key areas of the health and education sectors. Women form the majority of workers in these sectors and we deplore the claims by employers that such arrangements suit students, older workers and women with caring responsibilities. They undermine existing employment protections and threaten peoples' security of income.

The Department of Jobs Enterprise and Innovation has since invited submissions in relation to the Low Pay Commission's new round of work and in particular the underlying reasons for the preponderance of women on the minimum wage. We will work closely with the Women's Committee in preparation of the Congress submission.

It was in this context that Congress launched the Charter for Fair Conditions at Work, which aims build a national conversation about the importance of decent work across this island. Although the UL study does paint a somewhat grim picture, it also presents us with a critical opportunity to address it.

In that respect, the report's key - and very positive- recommendations need to be acted on with urgency. This particularly applies to proposals for an 'hours floor', along with a deterrent in the case of employer abuse of the 72 hour notice period and a wider review of the entire 'If and When' culture. Congress will be pursuing these changes in the coming period.

Leaves agenda developments

Following the 2013 transposition of the Parental Leave Directive, Congress has continued its work on seeking to bring Irish Workers family leave up to EU standards. Along with the National Women's Council and Start Strong, we developed a common platform on progressive changes to our Leaves system to seek to influence the signalled Family Leaves Bill. We met with officials of the Department of Justice and Equality and with Minister Kathleen Lynch and Minister Aodhan O Riordan to make our case for improvements. Subsequently in September 2014, we organised a Family Leaves seminar attended by Minister for Justice, Frances Fitzgerald, and Minister of State, Aodhan O Riordan: http://www.ictu.ie/equality/worklifebalance1.html The event got widespread print and broadcast media coverage, including Irish Times Op Ed by keynote speaker, Peter Moss and interview for Congress on Last Word, Today FM. The introduction of paternity leave was signalled in Budget 2016 and in January 2016 the Government introduced the necessary legislative amendments to family leave legislation to allow for the introduction of 2 weeks paternity leave, as from September 2016. The 2 weeks' leave will be accompanied by a social welfare benefit on the same lines as maternity leave and the Department of Justice and Equality are also progressing the necessary amendments to Social Welfare legislation in cooperation with the Department of Social Protection. This will have a positive on gender equality. The proposed paternity leave can be taken any time within a 26 week period of the birth of a child, allowing fathers to spend increased time with their children and families around the child's birth. Evidence from countries such as Norway shows that paternity leave – aside from its social benefits and positive impact on fatherhood – promotes equality for women and supports higher levels of female participation in the labour force.

Minister Frances Fitzgerald addresses the joint Congress, National Women's Council and Start Strong seminar on Family Leaves, September 2014

Our proposals for paid parental leave have also been included as possible options in the overall childcare debate.

July 19th, 1984. Mary Manning refused to check out a customer's South African fruit. She had been directed not to handle goods from South Africa by her union, Idatu. Manning, then 21, was suspended. She went on strike outside the Henry Street shop, with 10 of her colleagues.

The Report of the Interdepartmental Working Group on Future Investment in Early Years and School Age Care and Education Services recommended progress in relation to family leaves, by proposing to introduce a paid parental leave scheme for parents of children aged under one. If implemented, this proposal has the potential to greatly enhance parental choice to remain as the primary care-giver of their child in the first year of life – something all the evidence shows is of great benefit to the child.

In relation to the ongoing EU discussions regarding the proposed Maternity Leave or Pregnant Workers Directive, Congress wrote to MEPs urging them to support its revision in 2014 and also called on the Government to save the proposal to revise the Directive, which has been on the table since 2010 and was threatened to be withdrawn by the European Commission, as "red tape". The threat to remove the Maternity Leave Directive from the legislative process was serious as it contradicts Europe's rhetoric on its commitment to gender equality and effective work-life balance for women and men in Europe. It also had the potential to create a serious precedent of the "better regulation" agenda (REFIT), which is sacrificing social standards in the name of administrative burdens. Despite all our efforts, sadly (but expectedly) the European Commission announced in July that proposed maternity leave directive was being withdrawn. Then ETUC General Secretary Bernadette Ségol said "EU Governments have let down women and their families by their frankly embarrassing failure over seven years to improve maternity leave." We will continue in partnership with the ETUC to pressing for an ambitious and coherent package for gender equality at European level. It should include legal initiatives on paternity as well as maternity leave and other measures for the reconciliation of work and family life. Increasing women's participation in the labour market can be only achieved by investing in gender equality and not by driving down women's rights. Congress made a submission to the European Commission on a new gender equality package and has lobbied our own Government to ensure that the Strategy for equality between women and men is an official Communication and not the EC planned downgrade to a "Staff Working Document".

In **Northern Ireland**, the Work and Families Act came into operation during this period. The new legislation makes provision for Shared Parental Leave and the extension of the right to request flexible working to all employees.

In a submission to the consultation, Congress welcomed any initiatives which encourage shared parenting and rights to flexible working. However we also argued that the proposals are procedurally extremely complex and furthermore do not apply to all workers as of day one. Shared parental leave and pay will increase choice for some parents and can result in a fairer sharing of parenting responsibilities. This could enhance gender equality, better relationships and improved child well-being. We support the leave being taken on a more flexible basis and by allowing parents to take leave at the same time. However, there are a number of weaknesses in the shared parental leave and pay scheme. It will not lead to a substantial change in the number of fathers/partners taking time off work to care for children because it lacks sufficient incentives.

International evidence shows that fathers are most likely to take leave that is clearly available solely to them on the basis that if they do not use it they lose it.

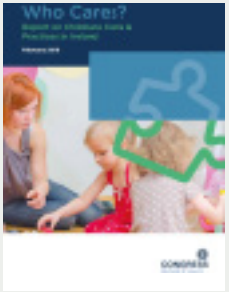
Shared entitlements are mostly used by mothers. The absence of reserved leave for fathers means they are less likely to apply. ICTU believes a reserved period of leave for fathers/partners, perhaps as an extension of the current paternity leave entitlement and in a way that does not reduce the entitlements of the mother would enhance the credibility of the scheme.

Childcare

Congress and the Women's Committee continue to call for more public investment towards universal quality accessible childcare. Because of our market model, parents across this island face some of the highest childcare costs anywhere in Europe. It is because of this that we decided to examine how working families in the Republic of Ireland reconcile paid employment and childcare. Congress carried out a survey of 3,703 members in seven affiliated unions in September 2015 to gauge the cost of care for parents across a range of income bands, assess the type of childcare available to members in different parts of the country and analyse the main factors influencing childcare choices.

The overall findings of the study clearly point to the high burden on working parents faced with some of the most expensive childcare costs in the EU. More specifically, it found that:

- Family members, especially grandparents, continue to represent one of the most common forms of childcare, with close to a third (29%) of respondents saying they rely on relatives to mind their children.
- Private crèches are less popular with households on lower incomes, which largely rely on cheaper and more flexible forms of childcare.
- Among those using private crèches, the largest proportion of households (18%) pay monthly fees of between €1,000 and €1,499.
- Only a very small number (1%) of parents avail of workplace crèches, the vast majority of which (91%) are public sector employees.



The report goes on to compare the price of childcare in Ireland to other EU countries, where fees are typically much lower. The contrast highlights the impact of low public investment in the Irish childcare sector, which remains chronically underfunded. A number of recommendations are then presented for ensuring working families have access to more affordable childcare. Among the measures proposed to ease the financial burden of childcare is a need for more public investment, linked with the quality of the service, so that we move towards the OECD average spend of 0.8% of GDP; paid parental leave of six months, as well as a review of capitation payments to childcare providers.

Congress further recognises that the pay and conditions of childcare professional are pivotal to

1985

A 1985 Act allowed contraceptives to be sold in the Republic of Ireland to anyone over 18 but only in chemists. The IFPA and Virgin Megastore were prosecuted for selling condoms in 1991. Later that year, the sale of contraceptives was liberalised.

the implementation of a high-quality model of care. To this end, the report proposes that the entry-level rate for childcare professionals be no less than the living wage of €11.50 per hour. It also recommends subsiding schemes to allow staff achieve qualifications beyond the current minimum requirements.

In **Northern Ireland**, parents and care providers also face crippling childcare costs. A recent report by Employers for Childcare in Northern Ireland indicates for a family with two children in full-time childcare the costs can be as much as £16,432 per year; whilst the average full-time childcare place now costs £158 per week, a £2 increase on last year's figure. Despite this, Congress is dismayed that there is still no strategic Childcare plan for Northern Ireland.

In a response to a consultation on developing a Childcare strategy for Northern Ireland, Congress argued that if a childcare strategy is to succeed, the NI Executive must consider legislative measures such as those introduced in GB.

England, Scotland and Wales have been proactively addressing childcare since the late 1990s.

Each of the childcare strategies produced by these departments have been reviewed and renewed over the years to ensure that the problems associated with childcare are being addressed. The duties of Local Authorities in England and Wales to ensure that there is sufficient childcare in place are reinforced by a statutory duty laid down by the Childcare Act 2006.

The Childcare Act also ensures that parents have access to information on their childcare options. As such, a network of Family Information Services which span across each local authority provides parents with advice and information on childcare.

As such, we called on the NI Executive to introduce legislation which lays out a statutory requirement to ensure that there is sufficient childcare in place and that parents are provided with appropriate advice and information on childcare.

Pay Gaps and achieving Equal Pay between Men and Women

According to recent reports by the European Commission, the pay gap between women and men in the European Union continues to remain. Congress has expressed its disappointment at the lack of ambition from the Government and European Commission, and their unwillingness to undertake concrete measures to fight the gender pay gap. We included the issue in our pre-election manifesto in advance of General Election 2016.

The findings are alarming with the gender pay gap existing at various levels in all 28 Member States. For example, on average, women also work 59 days unpaid per year. Ireland's gender pay gap stands at 14.4%, below the EU average of 16.4%, but up from 13.9% since 2013. The complex reasons that give rise to the gender pay gap are well documented. Temporary, insecure, part-time employment together with poor levels of maternity pay, the low status and

value given to women's job roles and the tendency for women to be clustered at the bottom of grading structures in low paying sectors of the economy, are all major factors.

The light touch, voluntary approach favoured by governments and employers is not working. Now is the time to move beyond pay gap rhetoric towards effective, practical solutions. Equal opportunities laws and efforts to reduce the gender pay gap have clearly failed and Congress continues to demand urgent action to address pay equity and to increase transparency in wages. We have sought to *acknowledge the crucial role of trade unions, to keep the topic on the political agenda, to raise awareness and to challenge discrimination.*

The period also saw the finalisation of the ETUC resource: "Bargaining for Equality: How collective bargaining contributes to eliminating pay discrimination between women and men performing the same job or job of equal value". The report documents trade union tools and instruments to reduce the gender pay gap, with a specific emphasis on the role of collective agreements to reduce pay inequalities between women and men. It shows how trade unions have approached the issue of gender pay inequalities in collective bargaining and gives examples of successful agreements at sectoral and company levels, as well as the challenges faced by trade unions in the context of the increasingly difficult bargaining climate arising from the economic crisis.

In the Republic of Ireland, the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Bill 2015 removes a significant obstacle to advancing the pay and conditions of all workers by addressing most of the deficits exposed by the 2007 Supreme Court ruling and bringing union rights in Ireland into line with international norms. This is an important milestone in the struggle for workers' and human rights in Ireland and can help to play a key role in the creation of a more equal and fairer society – including tacking of the gender pay gap. The right to join a union and bargain collectively for fair pay and fair conditions of employment is critical to a fair workplace and, as our economy enters recovery, is the only way to ensure workers enjoy bargaining power on a par with the employer.

In **Northern Ireland**, the Nevin Economic Research Institute produced a briefing on the gender pay gap (see www.nerinstitute.net).

Their findings indicate that whilst Northern Ireland performs better than the UK as a whole on measures of the gender pay gap, women still earn on average 12.5% less than men and in the private sector, this drops to 17% less than their male equivalents.

Part of the reason that the gender pay gap is better than the UK average is that a higher proportion of women work in the public sector where women working full-time earn on average 16% more than equivalent men. Without such substantial female employment in the public sector it is possible the gender pay gap in Northern Ireland would be significantly worse.

1990 – Mary Robinson elected as the first woman President of Ireland.

Equality Infrastructure

The period saw the continuing evolution of the rights and equality infrastructure in the Republic of Ireland. The Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) finally came into being in November 2014, when the Equality Authority was formally merged with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission with the passing of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act.

Despite efforts on our behalf, and to our great regret, there are no trade union (or employer) reps among the new Commissioners appointed. Congress is now in the process of developing a working relationship with the IHREC and has had a series of meetings with staff and Commissioners with a view to agreeing a modus operandi between the organisations. The new Chief Commissioner, Emily Logan, spoke at our Mental Health and the Workplace Seminar, and we presented at the Equality mainstreaming conference of the IHREC and also the Beijing plus 20 conference in February 2015. The General Secretary met with the Chief Commissioner in late 2015 to discuss the Congress submission to IHREC on the development of their 1st strategic plan. The plan was published in January 2016 and significantly contains a commitment to "having a strong collaboration with workers and employer groups to drive equality and human rights". Congress looks forward to working with IHREC in this regard.

On the Equality Tribunal side, we have been working to ensure that the principle enshrined in the EU anti-discrimination Directives to guarantee easy access to redress is maintained in the new Workplace Relations Commission, finally put on a statutory basis through the Workplace Relations Act in 2015. The Act merges existing employment rights fora (including the Equality Tribunal) into a single body, the Workplace Relations Commission. We have been working to ensure that sufficient consideration has been given to the unique nature of equality cases, the particular role of Equality Officers and the Equality Tribunal, and the need for our infrastructure to address the high levels of under-reporting of discrimination in Ireland.

European Union and Gender Equality

Equality between men and women is also a fundamental right and a common principle of the European Union.

The European Union's achievements in fostering equality between women and men have helped to change the lives of many European citizens for the better.

Although inequalities still exist, the EU has made significant progress over the last decades. This is mainly thanks to:

- equal treatment legislation;
- gender mainstreaming (integration of the gender perspective into all other policies);
- specific measures for the advancement of women.

Some encouraging trends include the increased number of women in the labour market and their progress in securing better education and training.

However, gender gaps remain and in the labour market, women are still over-represented in lower paid sectors and under-represented in decision-making positions.

Congress participated in a European Commission Forum on the Future of Gender Equality in Brussels, 20/21st April 2015. As part of the ETUC delegation, we made a strong case for the need for a new EU level strategic framework specifically focussing on equality between women and men. Aspects to be improved include precise outputs, targets, monitoring mechanism, timelines, funding and member states responsibility. We also made the case for a real gender mainstreaming approach to all EU policy areas and more ambitious policies on the gender pay gap, reconciling work and family life, and addressing new forms of vulnerability, including precarious work.

The Strategic engagement for gender equality 2016-2019 was published in December 2015, and is a follow-up and prolongation of the Commission Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015.

Ethel Buckley and Anne Speed (Executive Council members) with Mary Van Gelder of SIPTU at Women's Conference 2014

Inez McCormack was, from 1999-2001, the first Woman President of the ICTU since its formation in 1959. She was the first women full-time official of the National Union of Public Employees, 1976-90; became the first woman Regional Secretary of UNISON in 1993; was the first woman elected to the Northern Ireland Committee of Congress1980; and its first woman Chair, 1984-85.

It sets the framework for the Commission's future work towards improving gender equality.

The Strategic engagement focuses on the following five priority areas:

1. Increasing female labour market participation and equal economic independence;
2. Reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women;
3. Promoting equality between women and men in decision-making;
4. Combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims;
5. Promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world.

The Strategic engagement sets out objectives in each of these priority areas and identifies more than 30 concrete actions. It reaffirms commitment to gender mainstreaming: A gender equality perspective will be integrated into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes. The Strategic engagement also supports the implementation of the gender equality dimension in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

There is also a first stage consultation with the social partners on a "New Start" for work life balance. Congress has been cooperating with the ETUC in feeding in a trade union perspective to this process and made the point that work-life balance has a positive impact on the well-being of workers. It can also contribute to achieving major EU policy goals: stimulating employment (especially among women and older workers) and growth; promoting children and youth development; and eventually achieving gender equality.

It is high time that the EU took action to promote upward convergence among Member States on work-life balance. There is both a need to modernize existing EU legislation (such as the maternity leave directive), to address shortcomings or lack of legislation in certain areas (such as Paternity and Carers' Leave) as well to strengthen member states' coordination in order to ensure a level playing field regarding the costs and benefits of reconciliation policies. Investment in public services as well as coherent policies to promote gender equality and family-friendly environments should be promoted. This includes improving the provision of availability, quality, affordability and accessibility of care (for children, dependants and the elderly). The achievement of Barcelona targets by Member States should be monitored through the EU semester process. Targets on elderly care and care for dependants should be also introduced by the EU Council.

Reconciliation policies must not be considered as benefits for women or parents only but rather as a deeper change in employment policies and functioning of businesses, from which all employees, regardless of their gender or family status, as well as employers can benefit.

Other Equality Initiatives

Among our wide range of other equality related activities during the period were:

- Continued development of equality training

opportunities for unions including liaising with coordinator of Workers College Equality training group regarding coordination of trade union equality training.

- Training events both run by Congress and participation by Congress staff on trade union equality training events, including: SIPTU college groups, the newly elected Equality Committee in IMPACT; CWU; IBOA; MANDATE, POA and others.
- Organised with Esther Lynch a briefing on Section 37 of the Employment Equality Act with input from Brian Merriman of the Equality Authority. Following this, wrote and submitted the Congress submission on the proposed amendment of same.
- Continued engagement with political institutions regarding the rights of LGBT people at work, finally culminating in the amendment of Section 37.1 of Employment Equality Act This will make it illegal for religious run schools to discriminate against LGBT teachers on the grounds of their sexuality. The section permitted institutions with a religious ethos to give preferential treatment on the grounds of religion to an employee or prospective employee where it is reasonable to do so in order to maintain the ethos of the school and to take action where it is reasonably necessary to prevent staff from undermining the religious ethos of the institution. It had a chilling effect on LGBT workers in religious run institutions. The amendment has been welcomed by all of the Teachers Unions who have welcomed it as "positive step towards inclusivity in schools".
- Submitted views to Committee on Justice, Defence and Equality on Integration, Multi-Culturalism and combatting Racism
- Participated in the launch of Trade Union Polish Network with SIPTU and Minister of State, Aodhan O Riordan: http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2014/09/26/launch-of-polish-network
- Participation in the ETUC Migration working group meetings in Brussels. This included a roundtable discussion with Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom on EU related matters. Discussions also included planning for the first ETUC Conference on trade union services for migrant workers to be held in Brussels in December. SIPTU and the NICICTU Migrant Support Service participated actively in the "A4I European network of assistance for integration of migrant workers and their families" project, including training events in Turin, Florence and Dublin. We also actively participated in final event in June 2015: http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2015/03/13/unionmigrantnet-registration-portal-opens/
- Successfully applied to Equality Authority Innovation Fund to replicate the BelongTo "Stand Up" campaign in workplaces; Video attracted much publicity including among trade unions internationally and in local and national media. More here: http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2014/05/16/stand-up-against-homophobia-and-transphobia-at-wor/ Joint presentation with BelongTo on joint work for "Stand Up at Work" video (an Equality Authority ESF funded project) for Equality Mainstreaming Conference in Dublin Castle in October 2014;

2005 Northern Ireland becomes the first part of the UK to hold Civil Partnerships.

- Executive Council support for trade unions to support the nomination of the INTO LGBT Teachers group for a Gay and Lesbian Award (GALA) – the first trade union group to be nominated for such an award. They were successful also!
- Spoke at a number of LGBT related events organised by trade unions including the PSEU, INMO and the INTO - http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2014/12/04/trade-unions-supporting-lgbt-equality/
- Meetings with Violence against women groups to plan trade union participation in events with emphasis on role of men in tackling violence against women. Secured Executive Council support for such actions, including: Trade union leaders' attendance at White Ribbon Event http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2014/12/04/16-days-campaign/ Collaboration with Safe Ireland in relation to violence against women campaign culminated in the October launch of Man Up - http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2014/10/23/congress-partners-with-safe-ireland-on-man-up-camp/, in which the General Secretary participated. Facilitated participation of the then Women's Committee Chairperson (Maire Mulcahy) in the Oireachtas Justice Committee hearings in Feb 2014 on violence against women.
- David Joyce continues to represent the ETUC as an alternate member to the Experts Forum of the European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE)
- Spoke on decent work deficits for Women in Ireland at National Women's Council event: "Still we work", at EP building in July 2014
- Mental Health and the Workplace Seminar held in October 2014 with participation from: HSA, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission, See Change and EU OSHA and chaired by broadcaster, Dil Wickremasinghe. Full report here: http://www.ictu.ie/equality/2014/10/23/mental-health-and-the-workplace-seminar/ Event attracted media coverage of the issue including an interview with Dil in her Newstalk Global Village slot. As a follow up, Congress facilitated the holding of a suicide awareness event for trade unions in January 2015: http://www.ictu.ie/press/diary/2015/01/27/suicide-alertness-workshop-now-full/

Equality and Employment Law Seminar Series

Congress is pleased that the popular Equality and Employment Law seminar series continues to be offered with support from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Labour Relations Agency. The seminars run approximately 15 times a year and topics have included:

An Introduction to Equality Law, Disability Discrimination and Age Discrimination in the workplace, promoting equality between women and men and the new legislation on shared parental leave.

Congress in partnership with the Commissioner for Public Appointments held a seminar on diversity and under representation in public appointments.

Other equality related courses include an accredited ten day equality legislation programme.

Responses to Consultations

During this period, Staff responded to a number of consultations including:

- The Work and Families Bill
- Consultation on a Childcare Strategy for Northern Ireland
- Criminal law on Abortion: Fatal Foetal Abnormality and Sexual Crime
- Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy
- Assembly and Executive Review Committee Stakeholder 'Call for Evidence' Paper on Review Women in Politics and the Northern Ireland Assembly
- Human trafficking and Exploitation Bill
- Consultation on the Limited Circumstances for a Lawful Termination of Pregnancy in Northern Ireland.

Gender Equality Strategy and the Gender Equality Panel

Responsibility for the Equality strategies in Northern Ireland including gender, sexual orientation, disability and racial equality rests with the Office of the First and Deputy First Ministers (OFM DFM).

The gender equality strategy runs until the end of 2015. The Gender Equality Panel (GAP) was established by OFM DFM to oversee the progress of the Gender Equality Strategy and comprises representatives from trade unions, women's groups, men's groups and equality and human rights groups.

ICTU is represented on the GAP Equality Officer Clare Moore and Women's Committee member Taryn Trainor. Congress continues to lobby for a robust Gender Equality Strategy underpinned by relevant human rights legislation. Congress is represented on the Sexual Orientation Project Group by Clare Moore. The group is charged with advising OFM DFM on the development of a Sexual Orientation Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Women and Society

North and South, Congress has been to the fore in calling for a "Better Fairer Way" to deal with the economic crisis and the imposition of austerity measures.

In response to the Stormont House Deal which emerged following weeks of detailed negotiations by Northern Ireland political parties, Congress held country wide town hall meetings highlighting the increasing detrimental impact of the austerity agenda and cuts to public services culminating in a day of strike action on 13 March 2015.

Following the publication of the Fresh Start Agreement by the NI Executive, the NIC ICTU said that:

> Given the critical role of the NI trade union movement in promoting and securing a peace process, Congress views it as essential that

2015 Patricia King is appointed as the first woman General Secretary of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

our devolved institutions remain intact. The challenge for those institutions is to share and develop with us a peaceful and stable democratic society with equality and human rights at its core.

The Northern Ireland Committee continues to campaign against the policies of austerity and welfare reform introduced by the Westminster Government.

Violence against Women

Congress participated in a survey on the effect of domestic violence on the workplace along with the TUC, STUC and WTUC. Nearly two thousand people in both jurisdictions responded to the survey.

Results from the survey were shocking and highlighted the impact that violence has on the victims and on the workplace.

- A third of respondents had experienced domestic violence themselves.
- Nearly twenty per cent knew someone in employment who had experienced domestic violence.
- Nearly all respondents (99.4 per cent) said they thought that domestic violence can have an impact on the work lives of employees.

Respondents were asked to name the ways in which domestic violence had prevented an employee from getting to work.

In answering this question, it emerged that:

- 70.2% of respondents experienced threats
- 66.5% said that they had experienced physical injury or restraint
- 28.7% said that refusal to show up to care for children prevented them attending work
- 21.6% said that their partner hid/stole car keys or money
- 16.5% said that their partner hid or stole personal documents.
- While nearly 90% said that they were harassed at work through phone calls or email messages

To launch the results of the survey, Congress held a seminar in November 2014 in Belfast and invited key-note speaker Dr Nata Duvvury from National University Galway. Dr Duvvury shared her expertise in relation to research on the issue of gender-based violence, particularly intimate partner violence. In particular, Dr Duvvury explained the significant economic cost of violence against women and girls.

Turn off the Red Light campaign

Congress continued to participate in the Turn off the Red Light campaign including the General Secretary speaking at a fundraising lunch in 2015. The work of the campaign lead to the publication of the Sexual Offences Bill in 2015. The Bill contains many crucial advances in legislating for effective remedies to sexual offence crimes, including the criminalisation of the purchase of sex, child grooming, prostitution and sex trafficking and issues regarding consent.

Unfortunately, due to the dissolution of the Dail for election 2016, the Bill was not passed. The huge political support for the Sex Crimes Bill shown in both the Seanad and Dáil has laid a solid foundation for Ireland to join the list of countries targeting demand for sex trafficking and prostitution. It is clear however that the debate on how to end prostitution and sex trafficking has changed for ever with politicians accepting the overwhelming evidence that sex buyer laws work. We will as one of the 73-organisations which make up the Turn off the Red Light Campaign, work in cooperation with any newly elected Government and Minister for Justice to ensure the momentum of recent months is not lost.

Campaign for Civil Marriage Equality

Congress and Trade Unionists for Civil Marriage Equality (convened by Seamus Dooley, Ethel Buckley and David Joyce) played a proactive role in the May 2015 referendum on civil marriage equality. Following a launch in Liberty hall attended by over 200 people, we coordinated trade union activities during the campaign and provided campaign briefings for affiliates. The Congress Executive Council took a very visible position at key points during the campaign and unions can be proud of the efforts we all made to make Ireland the first country to introduce civil marriage equality by popular vote.

The happy couple celebrating the majority vote in favour of same sex marriage at the NI Assembly in 2015

2015 Ireland becomes the first country in the world to legislate for same sex marriage through a popular vote.

Executive Council of Irish Congress of Trade Unions calling for a Yes Vote in the final week of campaigning for the historic referendum on civil marriage equality in the Republic of Ireland

Following on from the Yes vote in the referendum, Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK and Ireland which does not have full civil marriage equality. Building on the momentum from the positive vote, Congress joined with Amnesty International and the Rainbow project and called for a march and rally in Belfast in June 2015.

An estimated 20,000 people participated in an event which saw church leaders, trade unionists, writers, young people and families call for civil marriage equality to be introduced without delay.

Despite widespread popular support, moves in favour of introducing legislation in Northern Ireland continue to be blocked in the NI Assembly by political parties using the petition of concern mechanism. However a milestone was reached in November 2015 when the majority of MLAs backed a motion to introduce same sex marriage, again blocked by the petition of concern.

A campaign consortium has been established and Congress is one of the founding members.

Repeal the 8th Amendment Campaign

The Congress Executive Council took the decision to support the Trade Union Campaign to Repeal the 8th Amendment to the Irish Constitution – an amendment that we opposed back in 1983. Women make up more than half of trade union membership in Ireland and it is unacceptable that they still live in a country with one of the world's most restrictive abortion laws. Despite repeated calls by human rights organisations to reform those laws – which in effect criminalise Irish women - governments here have relied on women travelling to England and elsewhere in order to avail of safe and legal abortion services. The 8th amendment to the Constitution protects the foetus' right to life on an equal basis with a woman's life and has had a negative impact on the type of health care that women receive here. It is about time that it is repealed and that our elected representatives be given the responsibility of replacing our laws in a compassionate and humane manner. It is time that in the tragic circumstance where women whose unborn baby has been diagnosed with a fatal foetal abnormality with no chance of surviving to term have a real choice between seeing out their pregnancy and seeking a termination in their own country. Forcing them to travel abroad is inhumane and uncompassionate and Congress urges any new Government to deliver a referendum on this issue.

- For regular equality updates and more about our Equality work, please see: http://www.ictu.ie/equality/

Committee members

Committee Members

Women's Committee 2014-2016

Moira Leydon	*ASTI*
Mary Ohle	*ASTI*
Rhonda Donaghey	*Bray & District CTU*
Aileen Atcheson	*Clonmel CTU*
Theresa Dwyer	*CPSU*
Helen Linehan	*CPSU*
Carol Sheffer	*CWU*
Betty Tyrrell Collard	*Dublin CTU*
Anne Carroll	*ESU*
Ann Lynch	*ESU*
Carmel Heneghan	*Galway CTU*
Angela Ryan	*GSU*
Margaret Browne	*IBOA*
Marian Geoghegan	*IBOA*
Joan Donegan	*IFUT*
Clare Muffly	*IMO*
Margaret Coughlan	*IMPACT*
Patricia Fanning	*IMPACT*
Helen Butler	*INMO*
Margaret Frahill	*INMO*
Eileen Lawrence	*INMO*
Moira Wynne	*INMO*
Carmel Browne	*INTO*
Mary Lally	*INTO*
Carol Delaney Harris	*MANDATE*
Joan Gaffney	*MANDATE*
Therese Caherty	*NUJ*
Melissa Brennan	*PSEU*
Rhona McEleney	*PSEU*
Ethel Buckley	*SIPTU*
Suzanna Griffin	*SIPTU*
Ann Russell	*SIPTU*
Breda Swift	*TEEU*
Annette Dolan	*TUI*
Laura Dowd	*UCATT*
Margaret Moody Maguire	*UNITE*
Catherine Lawler	*VOA*

Committee Members

Northern Ireland Women's Committee 2014-2016

Alanagh Rea	*NIPSA*
Ann Speed	*UNISON*
Anne Dines	*SIPTU (until 2015)*
Annmarie Conway	*INTO*
Brenda Callaghan	*B&DTC*
Gaye Partridge	*UNITE*
Gayle Matthews	*PCS*
Caroline McCarthy	*INTO*
Geraldine Alexander	*NIPSA*
Jacquie Reid	*UTU*
Danielle McCusker	*USDAW*
Karen Burch	*PCS*
Denise Collins	*CWU*
Eileen Gorman	*IBOA*
Felicity McCall	*NUJ*
Margaret Gregg	*GMB*
Margaret McKee	*UNISON*
Gail Keown	*GMB*
Jackie McNeill	*USDAW*
Julie Orr	*President UTU*
Naomi Connor	*B&DTC*
Taryn Trainor	*UNITE*
Teresa Graham	*NASUWT*
Ngaire McCann	*NASUWT*
Vivien Holding	*CWU*
Tina Muldoon	*SIPTU*

annex a:

Report on Motions Passed at Congress Women's Conference 2014

Motion Title	Summary	Action
Equality proofing & Pay & Conditions	• Equality proof all proposed measures under consideration • Prioritise the elimination of the gap in earnings between newer and more established public servants	Pay increases in Lansdowne Road agreement were weighted in favour of low paid workers, the majority of whom are women; Account was taken of the differential pay scales between newer and more established public servants and some progress made.
Employment for Rural Women	• Seeks the provision of decent work for women in those disadvantaged areas	Charter applies to all women workers and we have taken the campaign right around the country to local authorities
Parental Leave	• Seek to have the Civil Service Work-sharing scheme available to parents without restriction until the child reaches 5 years of age.	The focus of Civil Service Unions in relation to the work sharing scheme was related to changes consequent on the Haddington Road Agreement (HRA) and the maintenance of the scheme in its current form, so far as was possible, consistent with the terms of the HRA. The issue raised in the motion will be followed up when circumstances permit
	• Seek to have all collective agreements equality proofed in advance of their implementation.	The General Secretary is writing to affiliate unions about equality proofing collective agreements

Universal Childcare	• Call on the executive council to campaign vigorously for affordable, quality childcare for all. • Campaign to ensure workers within the childcare sector are properly paid and have access to career development opportunities.	Congress in Northern Ireland liaised with key stakeholders in preparing a response to the Northern Ireland childcare strategy. The Women's Committee also participated in the development of a joint response through the Women's Policy Group. Through the Women's Policy Group, continue to press for an affordable childcare strategy for Northern Ireland. Congress survey and report 2016 in ROI
Equality and Decent Work Campaign	• Instruct the ICTU to place the equality agenda and the restoration of those conditions at the top of the campaign "for decent work and a living wage"	Equality and fair treatment at work is a major component of the Charter campaign, North and South
Equality for Classroom Assistants	• Stop unfair and discriminatory practice against classroom assistants in Pay and pensions.	This motion was referred to the ICTU Education Trade Union Group for joint work and collaboration and to ensure that these issues are on the bargaining table in terms of meeting with senior Officials and Ministers.
Public Service Pensions	• Support for ICTU and individual public service union in campaigning and lobbing against the Public Service Pensions Bill.	Congress has facilitated the joint union campaign in relation to the changes to pension provision under the Public Service Pension Bill.

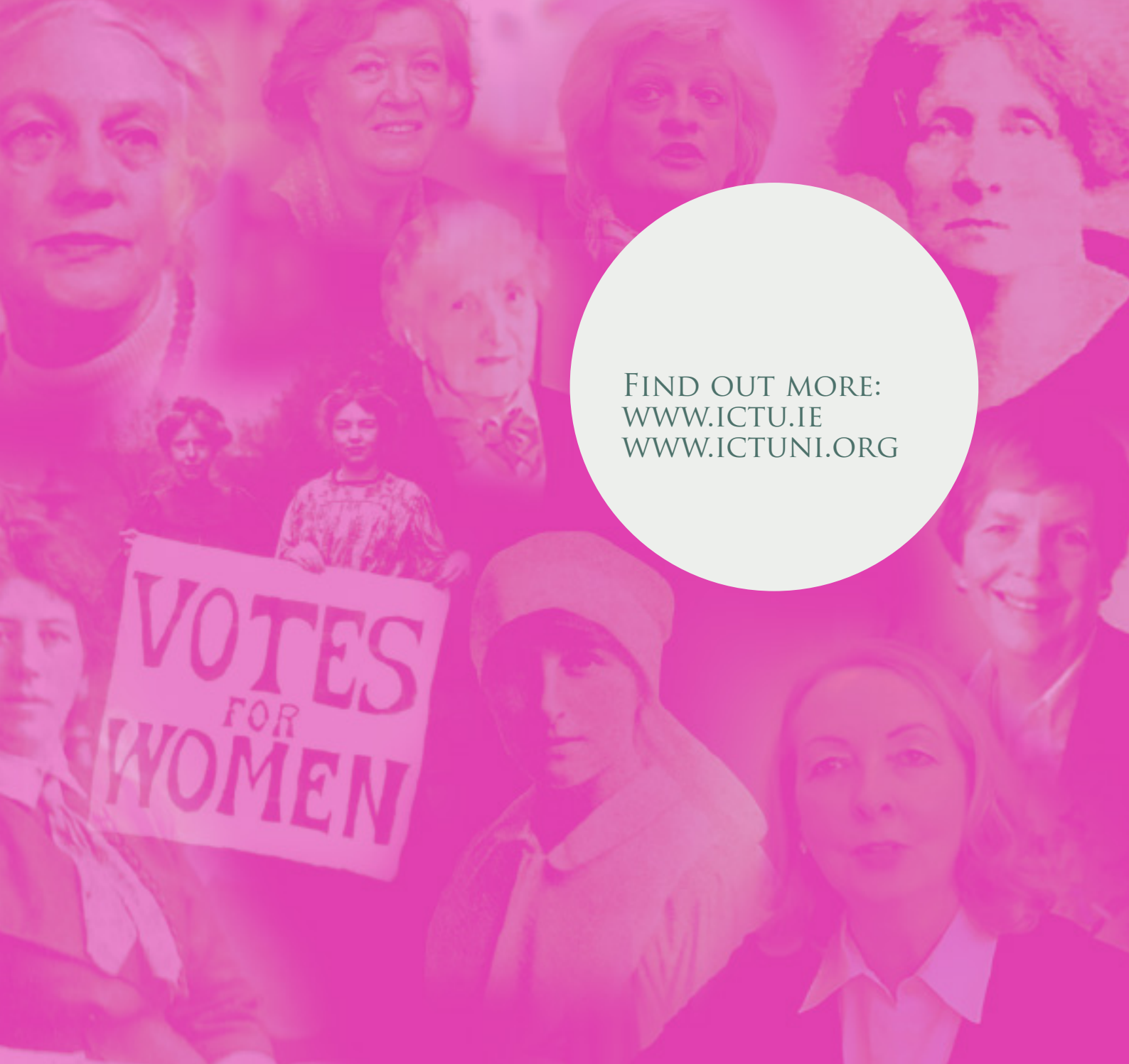
Maternity and Adoptive benefits	• Calls on Congress to campaign for realistic levels of maternity and adoptive benefits as part of wider campaign for decent work	Included in Congress prebudget submissions and our work on family leaves
Flexible Working	• ICTU to Co-ordinate a campaign involving all affiliates to ensure a strengthening of the terms of flexible working form right to request to right to access.	Congress provided a response to the Work and Families Bill consultation which included new measures for sharing parental leave and requesting flexible working. Congress provided further comments when the bill came to the scrutiny stage at the NI Assembly. Congress has organised a number of information sessions on the implications of the new legislation and how it can be interpreted. These have been run in conjunction with the Labour Relations Agency and the Department for Employment and Learning.
Marriage Equality	• Calls on Congress to campaign vigorously to ensure that lesbian and gay couples have equal access to marriage	Trade unionists for civil marriage equality formed and coordinated trade union campaign for the successful 2015 referendum campaign Congress is a founding member of the Campaign for Civil Marriage Equality in Northern Ireland and co-organised a rally and march in June 2015 which saw 20,000 people attend.

Violence against women	• Call on Congress to call for the introduction of Domestic Homicide Reviews in NI in line with the GB model. • Call for revision to the Domestic Violence definition to remove age limits. • Call for the introduction in NI of the Disclosure Scheme introduced in England and Wales	Congress has called for these measures in our submission to the DHSSPSNI and the DOJ on the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse strategy consultation. Congress has been lobbying the respective Departments and the NI Executive in relation to this, both at Official and Ministerial level. Congress participates in the Belfast Area Domestic Violence Partnership and feeds into the Regional Steering Group which advised the Ministerial Group. Congress has produced a position paper on the issue of Domestic Violence in the Workplace and hopes to learn from the legislative developments which have taken place in Wales.
Independence of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission	• Seek to ensure the IHREC is genuinely independent body • That it reports directly to the Oireachtas • That it is properly financed and staffed to carry out its role effectively.	• All these points included in Congress submissions; • Submitted views to the IHREC and met the Chief Commissioner in advance of its publication January 2015

Respect for Gender Identity	• Call on Minister for Social Protection to progress legislation that takes account of the Human Rights of trans persons and their families • ICTU to support TENI campaign for inclusive, marriage-friendly gender recognition for Ireland	Supported TENI in its work, successfully culminating in the Gender Recognition Act
Mental Health	• Calls to continue to support, advise and represent members with mental health difficulties • To engage in initiatives to raise awareness of the impact of mental health difficulties on women in the workplace	Mental Health in the workplace seminar held in 2014 Women's Committee to consider further action on this motion
Fair Shop Campaign	• Encourage all Trade Unions and conference delegates to support fair shop	Congress actively supported this campaign throughout period
Impact of Austerity and Gender Responsive Budgeting	• Calls on the respective governments to accept gender responsive budgeting as a requirement of the statutory equality duty.	Through membership on the Women's Policy Group, the Women's Committee has been involved in the development of the Women's Manifesto which will be used to lobby NI Parties in the run up to Assembly elections in 2016. The issue of women and austerity and gender sensitive budgeting is a priority in the manifesto. Congress has been campaigning against the austerity agenda and has repeatedly highlighted the negative impact of austerity on women.

Decent work for Domestic Workers	• Calls on the ICTU to continue to campaign for the ratification of ILO Convention No 189 concerning decent work for domestic workers • Campaign for the right of all care workers to have quality jobs	ILO Convention 189 now ratified Care workers feature in Charter campaign
Women, Peace and Security	• Calls on the women's committee to work with ICTU structures and all affiliates in campaign and lobbing for the UK government for the full implementation of UNSCR 1325 in NI	The Full implementation of UN Security Resolution 1325 is a priority for the Women's Committee and for Congress. Congress consistently calls for this to be implemented in our submissions to consultations The full implementation is also a key demand of the Women's Manifesto.
Women the Working Poor	• Calls the ICTU to lobby both governments to legislate for a living wage and which would rise on an annual basis in line with RPI • To continue the campaign to end zero hours contracts and replace them with a frame work of decent contractual agreements based on decent pay and pensions which rise annually with inflation.	The campaign to achieve a Living Wage is a priority for the NIC ICTU. Congress developed a Decent Work campaign, producing a charter which asks politicians, employers, local authorities to sign up to Decent Work. A link to the charter can be found http://www.ictuni.org/congresscharter

Tackling the Gender Pay Gap	• Campaign to raise awareness of the pay gap and the impact on women • Support the work affiliates are doing to address the gender pay gap and promote good practice. • Hold Government and other public bodies accountable • Campaign to challenge the marginalisation of equality issues in the current crisis	The Nevin Economic Research Institute produced a briefing report on the Gender Pay Gap in Northern Ireland. The report can be found http://www.nerinstitute.net/download/pdf/gender_pay_gap_ni_inbrief_may_2014.pdf In conjunction with the Women's Policy Group, ICTU is calling for the introduction of legislation which would require mandatory pay and bonus reporting broken down by gender which includes the sharing of information with employees and trade unions. This is a key ask in the Women's Manifesto.
Leadership Training	• Call ICTU to initiate a leadership training programme, targeting in particular those members of unions, which have an underrepresentation of women at national executive level.	Congress in NI continues to run the Women and Leadership programme for women activists. More recently, trade union activists have found it difficult to get time off work to attend training; Congress is therefore looking at ways of offering this course more flexibly.



Find out more:
www.ictu.ie
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www.three-creative.com

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