



Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People: A Personal History

by Kieran Rose

May 2024

**“Trade Union policy on
lesbian and gay rights is
an integral part of overall
trade union policy to fight
discrimination and protect
workers rights.”**

- ICTU 'Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace' 1987

Cover Photo: Cork May Day
Parade 1985
Kevin Doyle

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Laurie Steele of Cork Gay Collective
lobbying the Annual Conference of
ICTU in City Hall Cork 1981

GAYS AND THE TRADE UNIONS WORKSHOP MOTIONS

- i) The achievement of equal employment rights for lesbians and gay men should be a priority for the Gay Movement. (Carried)
- ii) The Conference calls on all trade unionists to support the rights of lesbians and gay workers. (Carried)
- iii) The Conference recognises the central role the Trade Union Movement plays in defending and advancing the rights of workers and calls on all lesbians and gay men to be active in their union. (Carried)
- iv) That this National Conference which represents the united strength of the Gay Movement in Ireland, noting the recent positive stand on gay rights of the Scottish TUC and the silence to date of the Irish Trade Union Movement, unreservedly condemns the elitist and anti-democratic action of the Council of IFUT in rejecting a motion on discrimination against gays in employment and calls on the Trade Union Congress to itself introduce a special emergency motion on this issue at its forthcoming Conference in Cork. (Carried)
- v) This Conference recommends that the Cork Gay Collective act as an information centre for all individuals working on the issue of gay rights at work. (Carried)

Summary

The trade union movement was hugely important in progress for LGBT people in Ireland from the early 1980s when we had few supporters but many powerful enemies. This history is largely unrecognised and unwritten, significant exceptions to this are Orla Egan and the Cork LGBT archive, and Dr. Patrick McDonagh's great research in his book 'Gay and Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1973-93' (2021).

Crucial moments were the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and LGPSU resolutions of 1982, the ICTU lesbian and gay rights seminar of 1985, the Employment Equality Agency under the leadership of Sylvia Meehan in 1986 supporting sexual orientation to be included in its legislation, the publication of the ICTU policy 'Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace: Guidelines for Negotiators' in 1987, and the Civil Service anti-discrimination policy of 1988. All contributing significantly to later progress such as; Labour Party Equal Status Bill 1990 including sexual orientation, the equality-based gay law reform in 1993, the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Unfair Dismissals Act 1993, and later Equality legislation. The trade union movement also played a crucial role in the achievement of Civil Partnership in 2010 and the successful Yes Equality Referendum of 2015, as well as progress on Transgender issues.

The First National Gay Conference was held in Connolly Hall Cork in 1981 and had a Trade Union Workshop which I chaired, it made a number of key recommendations including stating that employment rights should be a priority for the gay movement, recognising the central role of trade unions in defending and advancing the rights of workers and calling on lesbians and gay men to be active in their Unions, and calling on all trade unionists to support lesbian and gay workers. It condemned the Irish Federation of University Teachers (IFUT) for not sending a Motion on LGBT workers proposed by David Norris and passed by IFUT, to the ICTU Annual Conference as required by the Motion. It also set out that the Cork Gay Collective would be the information centre for work with trade unions. Later in the year ICTU held its Annual Conference in City Hall Cork and the Cork Gay Collective lobbied the delegates including informing them that they should have a Motion before them on LGBT issues passed by IFUT.

In 1982 the Cork Branch of LGPSU adopted a Motion proposed by myself and Tricia Tracey calling for gay law reform, and amendments to the Unfair Dismissals Act, the Employment Equality Act and legislation dealing with the employment of civil servants, the armed forces, and the Gardai to prevent discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. It was my first time speaking at a trade union meeting. Arthur Leahy and Laurie Steele and others who were renovating the Quay Coop building at the time came along in their work clothes to give me moral support which I much appreciated. Only one person spoke against our Motion and he came up to me after the meeting saying in a smarmy way 'no hard feelings', I replied 'no problem, we won'.

This Motion later became the programme of GLEN when it was established in 1988, and was largely achieved in the 1990s with an equality-based gay law reform, amendments to the Unfair Dismissals Act, and Equality legislation introduced.



Cork Gay Rights at Work banner on first Dublin Pride Parade 1983

The motion got high profile and positive media coverage (unusual at the time) especially in the Cork Examiner when it was adopted at the LGPSU Annual Conference in May 1982. It got 'overwhelming support', and was passed by the 'vast majority' after 'a contentious debate'. One delegate said that; 'if Cork have a problem with homosexuality then let them go away and solve them quietly without publicity'. Tom Bogue, President of the Union, spoke strongly in favour of the motion saying 'we have a repressed minority'. I worked with Tom in Cork County Council and he was a great supporter, especially when I publicly came out.

I was elected to the Cork Branch committee of the LGPSU and attended my first Annual Delegate Conference in Bundoran in 1984 where I organised a workshop on lesbian and gay workers. I went to a workshop on Miscarriages of Justice such as the Birmingham Six, a delegate who was also a Worker's Party activist, came up to me quite angry and said he was not have gone to my gay workshop if he knew I was going to go to the Birmingham Six workshop (for some at the time if you were a supporter of the Birmingham Six you were a 'crypto-Provo').

I distributed this at the 1984 LGPSU Annual Delegate Conference in Bundoran

LESBIAN AND GAY WORKERS REPRESENT 10% OF THE MEMBERSHIP OF THIS UNION. WHAT THESE 1,700 WORKERS NEED NOW IS PRACTICAL AND DETERMINED SUPPORT. WE ARE ASKING THE UNION TO WORK TOWARDS:

- * THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROGRAMME WHICH WOULD IDENTIFY THE AREAS WHERE THE INTERESTS OF LESBIAN AND GAY WORKERS ARE AT RISK AND WHICH WOULD RECOMMEND ACTION.
- * THE ADOPTION OF A SIMILAR ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROGRAMME BOTH BY THE I.C.T.U. AND THE EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY AGENCY
- * THE AMENDMENT OF THE UNFAIR DISMISSALS LEGISLATION SO THAT SEXUAL ORIENTATION WOULD BE AN INVALID REASON FOR DISMISSAL.
- * CHANGES TO EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS WHERE THEY COULD BE USED TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST US.
- * ADVANCING OUR INTERESTS ON THOSE AGENCIES, SUCH AS THE NATIONAL HEALTH COUNCIL, WHERE THE UNION HAS REPRESENTATIVES
- * THE APPOINTMENT OF A FULL/PART-TIME WORKER TO COORDINATE THIS ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROGRAMME.



Claiming an Identity

TWO YEARS AGO THIS UNION VOTED OVERWHELMINGLY TO SUPPORT LESBIAN AND GAY WORKERS. LATER THAT YEAR THE I.C.T.U. FOLLOWED THE LEAD WE HAD SET. MANY OF US WERE GREATLY ENCOURAGED BY THIS STAND.

.....BUT.....

SINCE 1982 THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE PRACTICAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE POLICIES AND THE SITUATION FOR THE VAST MAJORITY OF LESBIAN AND GAY MEN IN IRELAND REMAINS APPALLING. NOW IS THE TIME FOR THIS UNION TO RENEW ITS SUPPORT FOR LESBIAN AND GAY WORKERS.



'What is needed is a clear, comprehensive and categorised statement of support for equality of treatment for gay people as a major matter of public policy - by the Labour Movement, including the Labour Party and the Trade Unions'

Tony Benn, M.P.

GAYS AT WORK

KIERAN ROSE
CORK BRANCH

GAY RIGHTS—

A Trade Union Concern . . .

LGPSU Magazine
October 1984
by Kieran Rose

"What is it like to be gay?" my ten year old nephew asked me recently. I looked at him in surprise thinking that you should never underestimate children's critical awareness. Older people don't ask each other basic questions like that 'cause we feel the answers will be so uncomfortable.

Well, the simple answer is that, for me, being gay is great and it is awful. It's great because once I affirmed my sexuality I was able to open myself out to loving and caring relationships with gay men and so with other people. Once I said "I'm gay and proud of it" I began to take control of my own life and I'm glad I did. Since then I have been up and down, but more and more I am convinced that ordinary people have the need and the strength to radically change this society. So I am realistically optimistic about a lesbian/gay future in our country.

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

In the meantime, the awful part of being gay is the prejudice and discrimination which you continually experience. Discrimination is built into the structures of society; we experience it in school, at work, from the caring professions, the law, government services etc. For lesbians, it is worse because they are also discriminated against for being women.

with these kind of pressures it is understandable that most of us conceal our sexuality. There is also a defeatist belief that no progress is possible. So the discrimination goes unchallenged and can seem not to exist.

DISCRIMINATION AT WORK

Work dominates our lives and it is here that discrimination is most subtle and effective. There is discrimination against gay workers in many areas: politicians, bishops, professors, lawyers etc.

Passing a resolution is a good start but discrimination must be continually challenged, even in difficult circumstances. A space has to be made for us to be able to work openly within the trade unions for our rights. The Kinross affair in Northern Ireland is a good example. Here was a situation where the





DISCRIMINATION

LESBIANS AND GAY MEN ARE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN EVERY ASPECT OF THEIR LIVES. THE BARBARIC LAWS WHICH CRIMINALISE GAY MEN STILL REMAIN AND MOCK THIS SOCIETY'S PRETENCE AT VALUING CIVIL LIBERTIES. A MORE SUBTLE WAY OF CONTROLLING PEOPLE IS TO THREATEN THEIR JOBS AND IT IS AT WORK THAT LESBIANS AND GAY MEN ARE MOST VULNERABLE. MOST OF US CANNOT TAKE THE RISK OF LOSING OUR JOBS AND SO WE HAVE TO CONCEAL OUR SEXUALITY FROM BOTH CO-WORKERS AND EMPLOYERS.

ANTI-GAY PREJUDICE ALSO MEANS THAT WE CANNOT GET ACCESS SOCIAL FACILITIES SUCH AS PUBS/DISCOS. IT IS OFTEN DIFFICULT TO GET SPACE TO HOLD MEETINGS. THERE IS A WIDESPREAD COVERT POLICY OF SUPPRESSING INFORMATION WHICH WE NEED. BOOKS AND MAGAZINES ARE EITHER CENSORED BY THE STATE OR ELSE NOT STOCKED BY LIBRARIES AND RETAIL OUTLETS. THE MEDIA GENERALLY REFUSE TO ACCEPT ADVERTISEMENTS FOR OUR TELEPHONE SERVICES. PUBLICLY FUNDED AGENCIES SUCH AS YOUTH SERVICES IGNORE THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY. WITH ANTI-GAY PREJUDICE BEING REINFORCED BY CHURCH AND STATE IT IS NOT SURPRISING THAT WE LIVE WITH THE THREAT OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE.

GIVEN THESE OBSTACLES IT IS EASY TO SEE WHY THERE IS NOT A POWERFUL NETWORK OF LESBIAN AND GAY ACTIVISTS. BUT SOME PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE. THROUGH THE DIFFERENT STRUGGLES WE HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THERE IS NOW A GROWING AND MORE CONFIDENT LESBIAN/GAY MOVEMENT. A UNITED CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN SET UP ON THE BASIS OF FOUR DEMANDS:

- * THE REMOVAL OF ALL ANTI-GAY LAWS
- * EQUAL JOB OPPORTUNITIES
- * EQUAL CUSTODY RIGHTS FOR LESBIAN MOTHERS
- * A POSITIVE APPROACH TO LESBIAN/GAY SEXUALITY THROUGHOUT THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LESBIAN AND GAY WORKERS IS LINKED IN WITH ISSUES WHICH AFFECT ALL WORKERS. RECENTLY THERE HAVE BEEN MANY ATTEMPTS TO UNDERMINE THE RIGHTS OF INDIVIDUAL WORKERS AND OF THE ORGANISED LABOUR MOVEMENT. MORE AND MORE THE PRIVATE LIVES OF WORKERS AND THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES ARE SEEN AS GROUNDS FOR DISMISSAL OR LOSS OF PROMOTION. THERE APPEARS TO BE A CONCERTED PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN TO GET WOMEN OUT OF THEIR JOBS. SEXISM IN THE WORKPLACE AFFECTS ALL WOMEN AND GAY MEN.



DISCRIMINATION

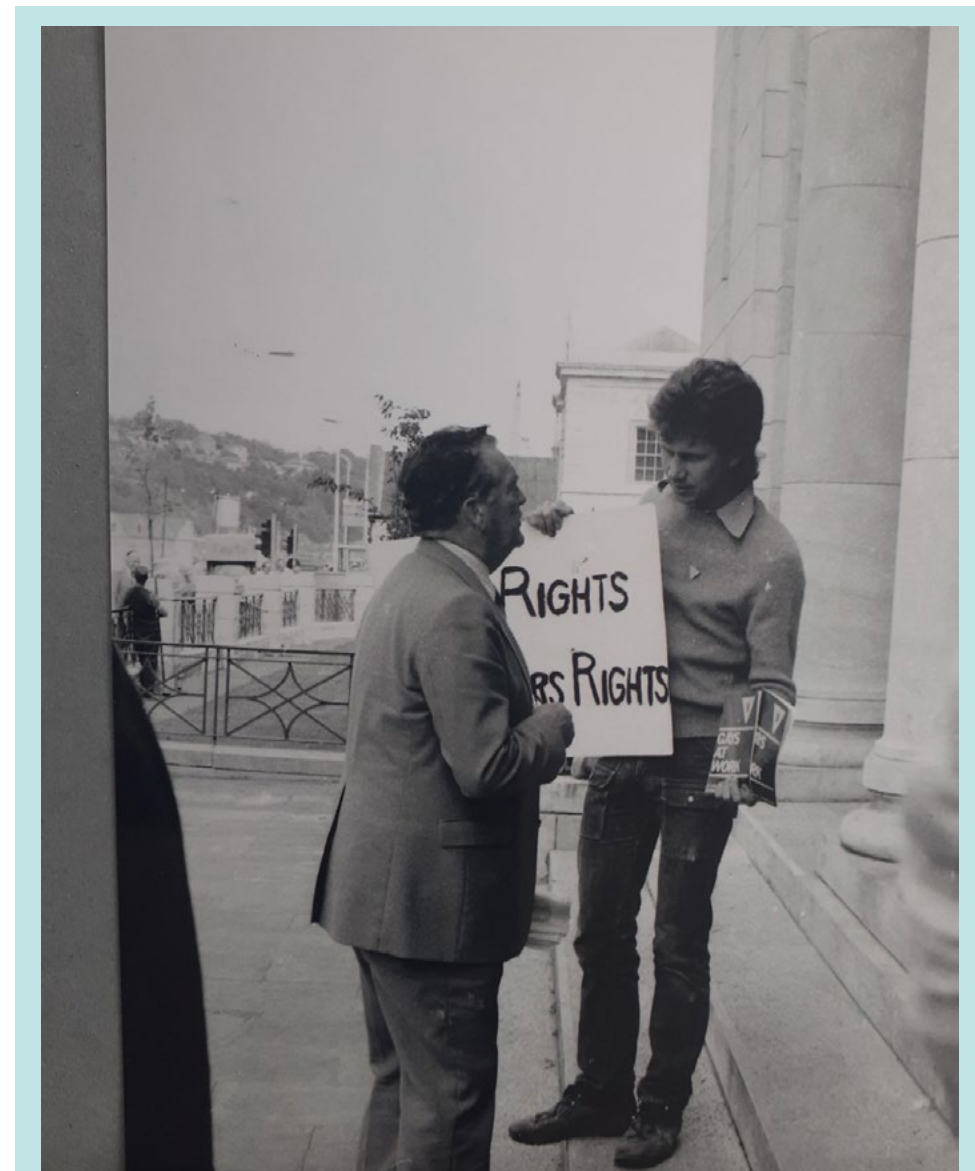


A photograph of the Cork Anti Amendment Action Group information stall on Daunt Square, Cork city in the early 1980s.
Kieran Rose Photography Collection

Government Ministers usually addressed Annual Conferences but with Phil Flynn recently appointed General Secretary, Government Ministers refused to attend because he was also Vice President of Sinn Féin, Michael D Higgins addressed the Conference instead. At a Conference sing-song was the first time I realised how emotional it was to be in a large group singing the Fields of Athenry.

I became a LGPSU delegate to the Cork Council of Trade Unions and witnessed a very robust even angry debate between the delegates on the proposed Abortion Amendment to the Constitution. Eventually the chair stood up to bring order to the meeting but the delegates kept on arguing and the chair said 'In my Union when the Chair stands up everyone shuts up, but not you'. The trade union movement was a leading force in the Anti Amendment Campaign. The Cork Gay Collective more or less disbanded to concentrate on the Cork campaign.

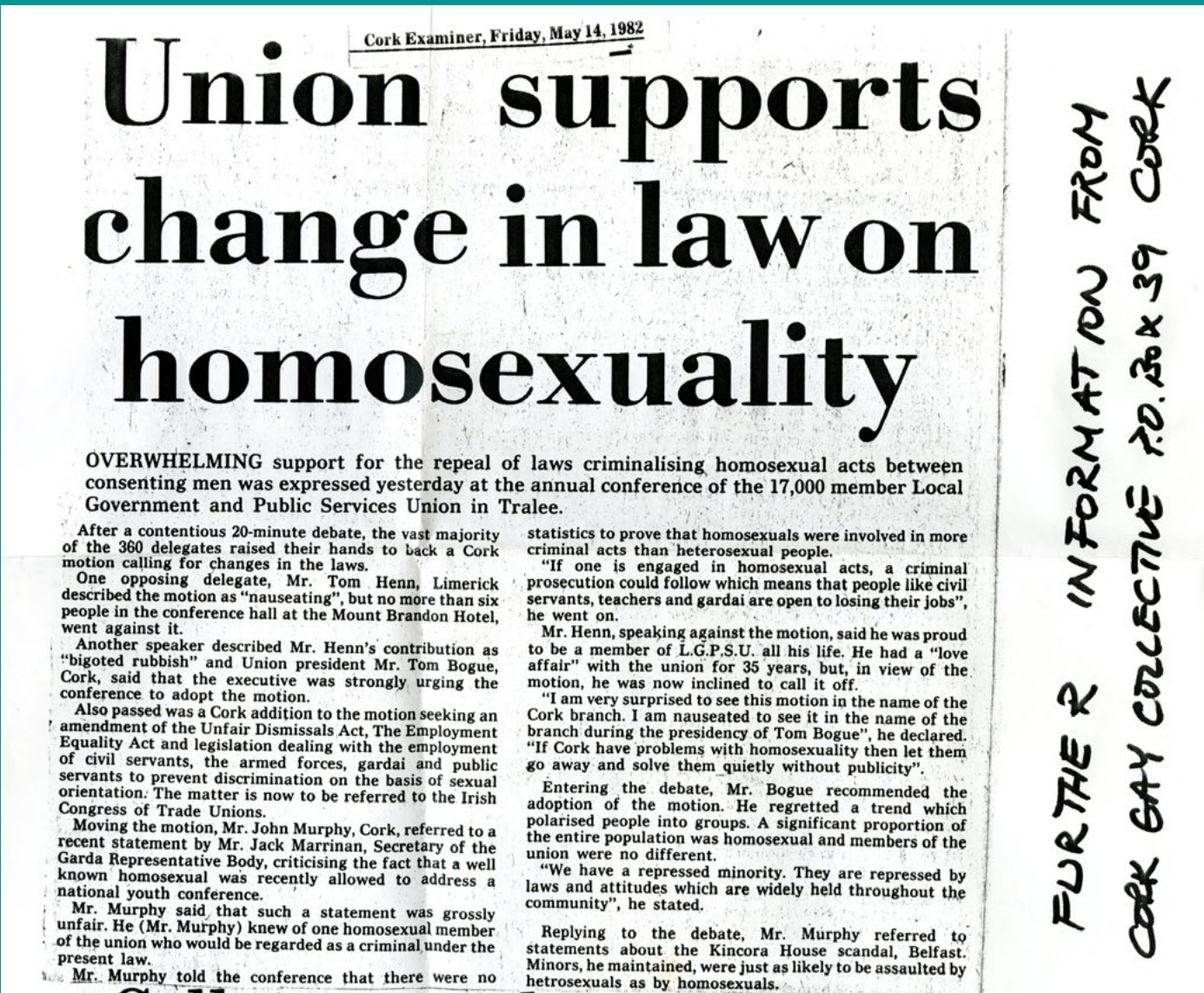
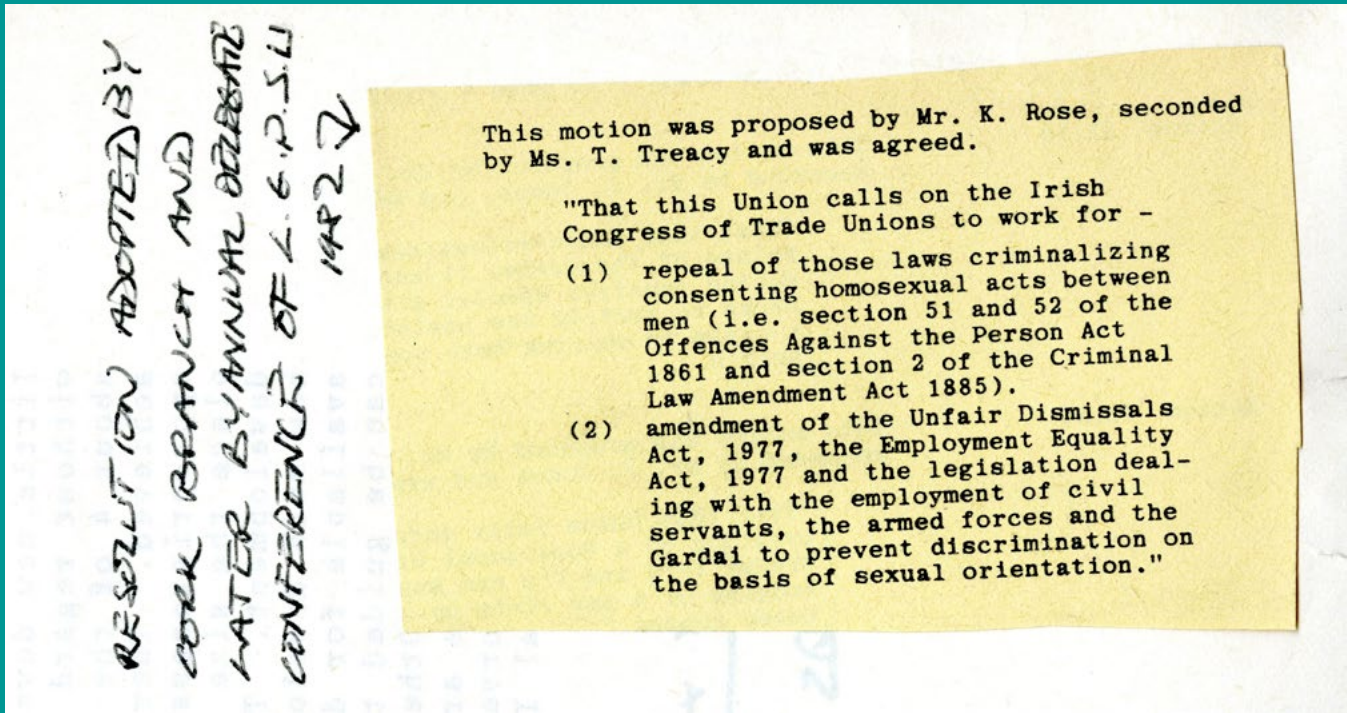
I wrote an article for the LGPSU magazine 'The Reporter' in October 1984. Also in 1984 I was sponsored by the Cork Branch and the Executive Council of the LGPSU to attend the NALGO (a public sector trade union similar to the LGPSU) Lesbian and Gay Conference in Manchester. We learned a lot from British lesbian and gay trade union groups as they were more developed than we were, and they had great publicity material. The London-based 'Gay Rights at Work' group came to the First National Gay Conference and we later used their pamphlet a lot (Laurie Steele is holding it in the photo outside City Hall). There was an active Miners Support Group in Cork and I was involved in that campaign.

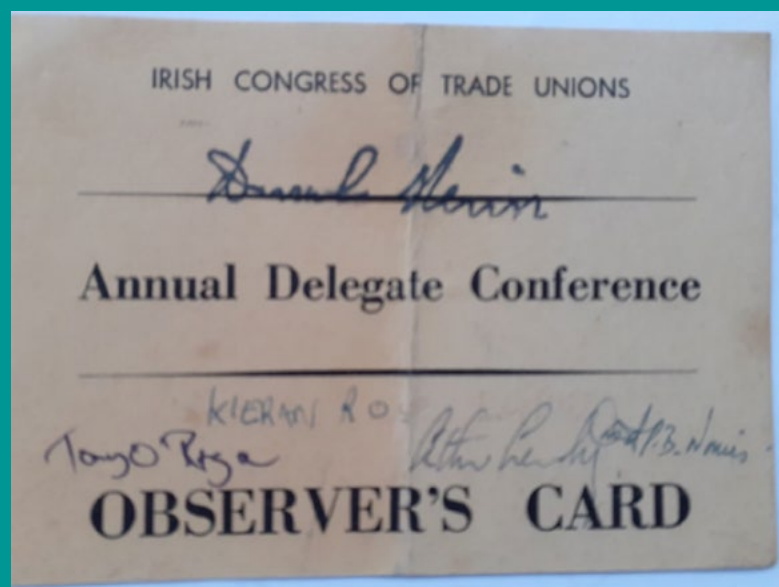


ICTU Conference Cork 1981
Laurie Steele Outside City Hall
Laurie was founder member
of the Cork Gay Collective
and the Quay Coop Cork
Kieran Rose Photography
Collection

In July 1982 ICTU passed a Motion sponsored by the LGPSU, in favour of lesbian and gay workers at it's Annual Conference in Belfast. Members of the Cork Gay Collective went to Belfast to lobby the delegates.

Cork Examiner report
May 14th 1982





Observers Card for Belfast ICTU Annual Conference 1982 signed by Arthur Leahy and Tony O'Regan and myself of Cork Gay Collective, and David Norris

Cathal Kerrigan, Cork Gay Collective and UCC Gay Soc canvassing Michael O'Riordan, then General Secretary of the Communist Party of Ireland [CPI] and a member of the International Brigade in the 1930s, on his way in to the ICTU annual conference in City Hall, Cork in 1981
Kieran Rose Photography Collection



ICTU Conference Cork 1981 Cathal Kerrigan Lobbying ICTU Delegates Outside City Hall 1
Kieran Rose Photography Collection



Cork Gay Collective members Cathal Kerrigan, Arthur Leahy and Laurie Steele in front of Cork City Hall, Anglesea Street during the May Day March in Cork, 1982
Kieran Rose Photography Collection

Donal Sheehan left and David O'Connor right holding Cork Gay Collective banner 1984 Pride.

In between is Eamonn McCann and Goretti Horgan with Socialist Worker placards.
Kieran Rose Photography Collection





Laurie Steele to right, on holidays Sleat Head early 1980s

Phil Flynn General Secretary of LGPSU was a great supporter of lesbian and gay workers and lobbied Government on our behalf, as well as working within ICTU. He spoke at a workshop organised by the Cork Lesbian and Gay Collectives at the ICTU 1984 Annual Conference in Waterford, giving us great practical advice on our campaign. Arising from that and a subsequent meeting with Phil I wrote to Phil on April 1985 enclosing a proposal for an ICTU workshop on discrimination against lesbian and gay workers. Phil Flynn wrote to ICTU General Secretary Donal Nevin in May 1985 calling for a seminar in order to make progress on the 1982 resolution which he wrote that the Union had 'sponsored'. Donal Nevin wrote back saying he 'saw no reason why our Trade Union Education and Training Committee should not arrange, say, a half-day workshop on the subject'. **The holding of this workshop opened the door to all subsequent progress.**

Kevin O'Driscoll, a senior official in the LGPSU, was also a great supporter and worked effectively on the ICTU Education and Training Committee, against some resistance, to ensure that a productive workshop was organised. In October 1985 Michael O'Halloran ICTU Education and Training Officer wrote to Kevin setting out the agenda for the workshop including that its purpose was to enable trade union representatives 'to discuss how unions might take a positive initiative to implementing the [1982] policy'. I spoke at the workshop which was held on November 1985. The workshop made a number of recommendations for further action including that a working group be set up to progress actions. Kevin also worked doggedly on the General Purposes Committee of ICTU against some resistance to achieve their agreement in September 1986 to a ground-breaking five point action programme by ICTU including that 'Guidelines for Negotiators' be prepared.

The Northern Ireland Committee of ICTU also held a workshop in June 1986. Northern Ireland trade unions played a major role in defending LGBT workers during the fall out of the Kincora controversy, at one stage the Health Board sought to fire all lesbian and gay workers.



The airport protest in 1984 against the visit of Vol Tsek Evans, a representative of the South African apartheid regime, who had come to speak at an event in Cork. The event was subsequently cancelled.

Kieran Rose Photography Collection



The 1980s was a time of very high unemployment and precarious employment and many lesbians and gay men could not become trade union members. Those who were trade union members had to be out in their workplaces to campaign in their trade unions and that was a big obstacle. The workers in the Quay Coop Cork, a Worker's Cooperative, were able to become members of the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union (IDATU now MANDATE) and were able to advocate within their trade union, particularly Donal Sheehan who wrote an article for the IDATU magazine 'The Distributive Worker'

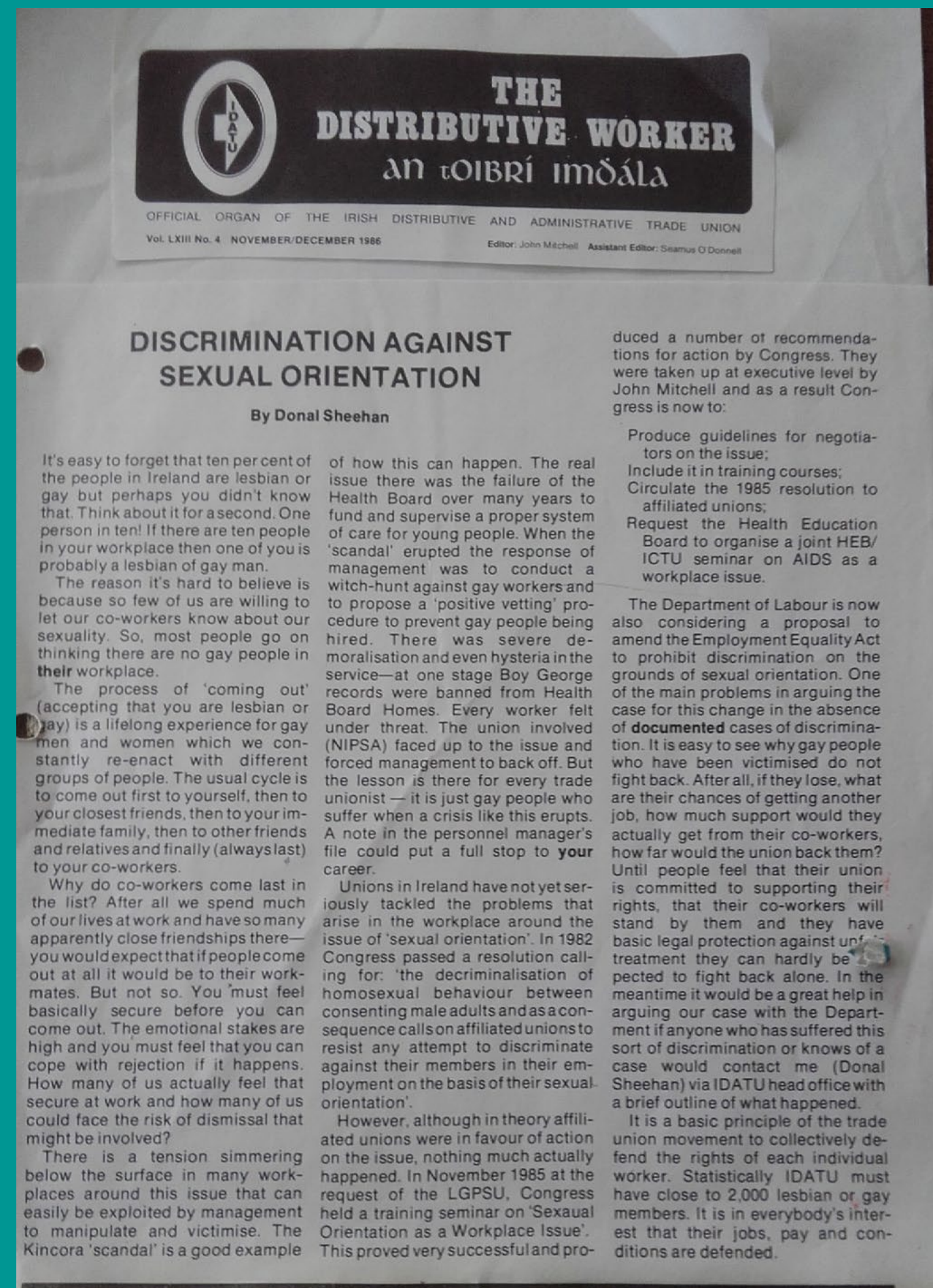


Donal Sheehan standing in Wellington Square, Cork city, in the early 1980s.

Donal was a founder member of the Cork Gay Collective, the Quay Coop and Gay Health Action
Kieran Rose Photography Collection



Pride banner on Quay Coop 1984
Kieran Rose Photography Collection



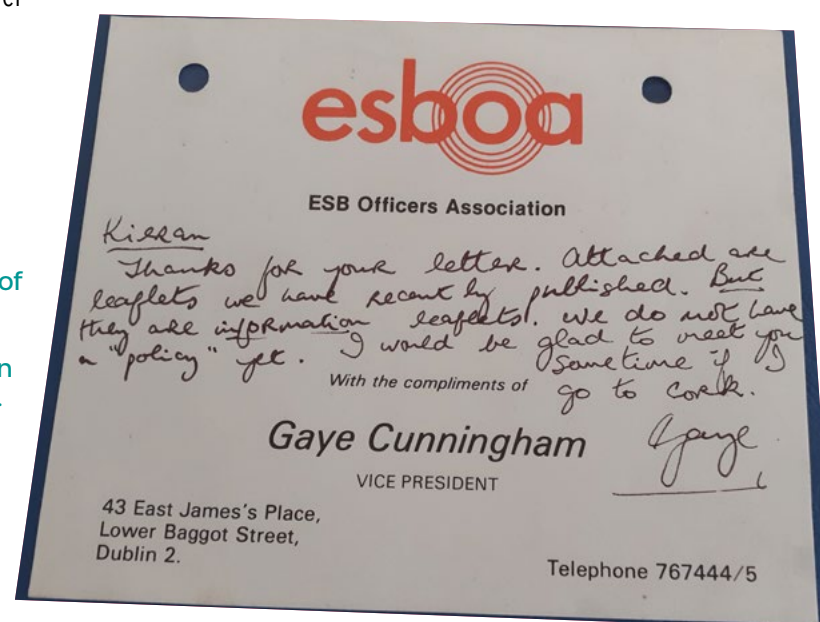


Donal Sheehan, Kieran Rose, Bill Foley
and Tonie Walsh

Photo by Thomas A O'Shea, Irish Queer
Archive

John Mitchell was General Secretary of IDATU, a great trade unionist, became a key ally for progress in ICTU including some sparky correspondence with Donal Nevin. It was said that John Mitchell was one of a few people who could rattle Ben Dunne the then combative Head of Dunnes Stores. John was a great advocate for the Dunnes Stores workers striking against Apartheid. IDATU had a great Georgian building on Parnell Square O'Lehane House and I met John there a number of times, he was very charming and funny, I remember him saying to me that in negotiations with employers he used a pencil to keep notes as it made it more difficult for the employer side to read what he was writing.

Note to me by Gaye Cunningham Vice President of the ESB Officers Association (ESBOA) who produced an information leaflet on lesbian and gay issues in mid 1980s.



Laurie Steele and myself on May Day Parade c1983 Cork with Collective banner
Kieran Rose Photography Collection



Irish Congress of Trade Unions

Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace Guidelines for Negotiators

The 1982 Annual Delegate Conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions adopted a resolution urging affiliated unions to resist any attempt to discriminate against their members in their employment on the basis of their sexual preference. The ICTU Women's Charter adopted in 1985, recognises and demands the right of everyone, irrespective of sex, marital status or sexual preference to pursue their economic independence and to full participation in the social, cultural and political life of the community in conditions of freedom, dignity and equality. Congress has sought amendments to employment and anti-discrimination legislation to make discrimination against lesbians and gay men unlawful. Congress also supports the decriminalisation of homosexual behaviour. Trade Union policy on lesbian and gay rights is an integral part of overall trade union policy to fight discrimination and protect workers' rights. Discrimination on grounds of sexuality leads to isolation, abuse and victimization of lesbians and gay men in the workplace. Unions must negotiate policies and procedures which counteract discrimination and prejudice in all its forms against lesbian and gay workers. The objective of such policies and procedures is to create a workplace environment where lesbian and gay workers can have equality of opportunity and be free of harassment or possible reprisals from other workers or management.

lesbians and gays in Ireland

Lesbians and gay men are women and men whose most important relationships, emotional and sexual, are with other women and other men. Almost all of the popular stereotypes are untrue. There are lesbians and gays in all social classes, in all age groups, and in all parts of the country. They are rarely immediately identifiable: if people do not, or cannot, talk about their lives, then few other people become aware that those lives are different.

It is a common mistake to believe that 'these people are few, and there are none where we work' and to think therefore that lesbian and gay rights are not real issues. Research many years ago showed that one person in ten is predominantly lesbian or gay and studies since throughout the world have confirmed that basic figure. This figure, when applied to Ireland, would amount to over 300,000 men and women — perhaps the largest minority in the country. In a workforce of a hundred, some ten people may be lesbian or gay: a committee or small group will probably have at least one lesbian or gay present. These figures still cause surprise, but it is very easy to hide or deny an identity even to oneself, and there are strong reasons for doing so.

One reason is the law which in the Republic of Ireland treats all sexual acts between men as criminal and only limited decriminalisation has taken place in Northern Ireland. Lesbians are not directly subject to these laws, but they are still affected by them and sexual acts between women are regarded with perhaps even greater prejudice. Lesbian mothers also have to contend with prejudice from the

judicial system in relation to custody of their children. The law creates a background of fear and restriction. Advertisements for lesbian and gay organisations or publications are refused and individuals know that the issue of criminality weakens their position with employers and others. Often in cases of harassment or physical violence (common against both lesbians and gays), the legal rights of the attacked person are compromised.

Discrimination also operates at other levels. Housing, publicly or privately-financed, is difficult to obtain for people of the same sex. Lesbians are affected by the general lack of women's rights, and frequently face the prospect of a lifetime of low pay, poor career prospects and insecure employment. Many lesbians and gays are denied the basic right to work as they are often refused jobs solely on grounds of their sexuality.

At work, lesbians and gays are often afraid of the opinions of their colleagues. They are afraid that if their sexuality becomes known they will lose any chance of promotion and above all, they are afraid of losing their jobs. The enforced secrecy about people's lives is damaging and the continuous necessity to pretend or lie can cause isolation, mental stress and alcoholic problems. Discrimination also occurs in relation to conditions of employment. Pensions and benefits are paid for but cannot be passed on to partners. Partners are given no recognition in relation to sickness or bereavement. Underlying this discrimination is the usually unquestioned consensus that lesbian/gay sexuality is unnatural and/or inferior to heterosexuality. This consensus ('heterosexism') is pervasive but is also open to challenge. Trade

Unions must take up that challenge on behalf of all their members.

discrimination in the workplace — what trade unions can do?

Discrimination here means treating workers less favourably because of their sexuality or because other people may have prejudices about that sexuality. Management can discriminate in hiring and firing, in training and promotion and in onerous supervision and discipline.

Lesbian and gay workers are often subjected to harassment from management and co-workers. Harassment can be broadly described as persistent, unwanted behaviour intended to humiliate a person. The harassment can be verbal such as unwanted personal questions and remarks, offensive jokes, innuendo and malicious gossip. A lesbian or gay worker may be isolated or 'frozen out' by co-workers. In extreme cases a person may be physically attacked. The Labour Court has stated 'that freedom from sexual harassment is a condition of work which an employee of either sex is entitled to expect'. Any denial of that freedom constitutes discrimination and there is a responsibility on employers to ensure that such harassment is stopped effectively.

Lesbian and gay workers are also indirectly discriminated against in relation to conditions of employment. This arises mainly in relation to pension schemes and arrangements relating to compassionate leave or family leave.

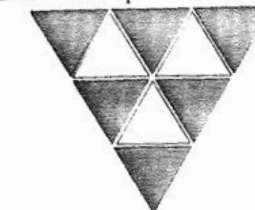
Anti-lesbian and gay prejudice often focuses on certain work areas,

In September 1986 Phil Flynn wrote to me stating that; 'Arising from the Seminar on Discrimination in employment due to sexual orientation held in November 1985, the General Purposes Committee of Congress has recommended the following programme of action to the next meeting of the Executive Committee'. This 5 point programme including most importantly that Guidelines be prepared, a seminar be organised, the 1982 motion to be re-circulated to all Unions, the ICTU training programme should include issues of sexual orientation, and that a joint ICTU/Health Education Bureau seminar on HIV/AIDS in the workplace be organised. This was a major breakthrough. A working group chaired by Patricia O'Donovan (ICTU) was set up in December 1986 to prepare the Guidelines and Christopher Robson (UPTCS) and myself (LGPSU) were on the working Group.

In May 1987 ICTU published 'Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace: Guidelines for Negotiators', a very strong and radical policy. This was the first time a powerful national organisation had come out with a detailed policy in favour of equality. The launch of the Guidelines was well covered in the national media which was very important in winning over public opinion and elected representatives and building the narrative of equality for lesbians and gay men being a workers rights issue.

GLEN Press release on Labour Party
Equal Status Bill 1990

GAY & LESBIAN EQUALITY NETWORK



GAY & LESBIAN RIGHTS
ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

GLEN,
HIRSCHFELD CENTRE,
10 FOWNES STREET,
DUBLIN 2, IRELAND.

TEL: (01) 710939 [10-5 p.m.]

P R E S S S T A T E M E N T

11th April 1990

G.L.E.N. WELCOMES LABOUR'S EQUAL STATUS BILL

The Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) welcomes the publication today of Labour's Equal Status Bill, which would outlaw discrimination against a number of groups, including gays and lesbians.

Kieran Rose, co-chairperson of the organisation, said:

"We are calling for all-party support for this enlightened measure, which would be an important step towards equality for all Irish citizens, regardless of their social grouping, gender, or sexual orientation. If this is enacted, Ireland could make a leap ahead to join those far-sighted countries which now protect their minorities from unjust treatment and discrimination.

"A society which is healthy enough to accept the many minorities which go to make it up is a safer and better place for all its members. The broad welcome given to the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act last year shows that protecting the human rights of all our citizens strikes a chord with most people's basic sense of fairness and justice."

GLEN is campaigning for equality for lesbians and gays in Ireland. It seeks implementation of the Strasbourg ruling on the laws criminalising gay men, a common age of consent for all, and the passing of anti-discrimination laws.

END

FOR MORE INFO CONTACT:

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Don Donnelly - (01) 535040 (home)

A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY ASSOCIATION (ILGA)

The 1987 Guidelines were the basic building block for future progress and were used extensively by GLEN in our campaign for an equality based gay law reform, for equality legislation, and job protection. They heavily influenced the Civil Service Circular (12/88) of June 1988 which states: 'discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or medical condition will not be tolerated in the civil service'.

Christopher Robson has a very interesting article, 'Anatomy of a Campaign' in the 1995 book 'Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland, Towards the 21st Century' (eds Eoin Collins and Ide O'Carroll). Christopher analyses GLENS campaign for equality, and the hugely important role of the trade unions. Regarding the 1987 Guidelines he writes how it was 'an unapologetic and radical charter of rights'. 'It also gave a mandate to the ICTU to intervene on our behalf in negotiations with government. They have done so ever since, to powerful effect'. One example is that in May 1991 Peter Cassells General Secretary of ICTU wrote to the Minister for Justice that; 'Congress would like to reiterate its concern at the inordinate delay in dealing with this matter [i.e. gay law reform] which affects the quality of life of thousands of Irish citizens'.

Christopher continues: 'The ICTU guidelines helped with the civil service policy: both were incorporated into 'Equality Now for Lesbians and Gay Men' (ICCL, 1990), which in turn was presented in its entirety to the Law Reform Commission. Right up to the end of the campaign all these documents, and many more, have worked as interconnecting elements in a comprehensive platform'. In the late 1980s Gay Health Action had a number of Social Employment Scheme (SES) workers funded by the Department of Labour. They wanted to increase the number of SES workers and the application went before a committee of civil servants, trade union and business representatives and chaired by Bertie Ahern Minister for Labour. At the meeting the civil servants opposed the application on the basis that homosexuality was criminalised, the same reason given by the Department of Health in refusing funding for Gay Health Action. Bertie Ahern paused the meeting to talk to his civil servants, apparently he said something like 'come on lads you can't be doing this'. The meeting reconvened and Gay Health Action proposal was agreed.

On behalf of the 'Lesbian and Gay Rights at Work' group I wrote to Sylvia Meehan Chair of the Employment Equality Agency (EEA) in July 1986. Sylvia replied saying she would be 'very interested' to meet and that it would be 'very helpful' if she could receive copies of the recommendations of the ICTU 1985 seminar. Subsequently in October 1986 the EEA recommended to Government that the Employment Equality Act 1977 be amended to include sexual orientation, this was a major breakthrough for a State agency to come out unequivocally in favour of equality, at a time when the Right were all-powerful. Sylvia Meehan was a fearless champion of the rights of lesbian and gay workers and sadly passed away in 2018. I wrote a tribute to Sylvia for her key role in LGBT progress in the October 2018 edition of GCN.



Tribute to Sylvia for her key role in LGBT progress in the October 2018 edition of GCN

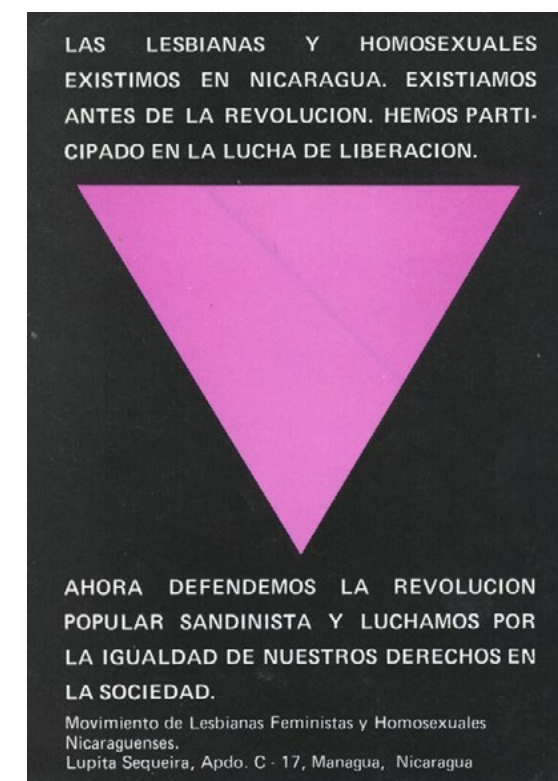


ILGA delegates including GLEN commemorating Jewish Minyan at request of Dennis Altman, delegate from Australia, in July 1989. Pictured inside the Mauthausen concentration camp.
Kieran Rose Photography Collection

I learnt a huge amount from my trade union activism, from the great activists I met, and the shop steward training courses I went on, it was empowering, and I was able to put this learning to good use in GLEN. I was fascinated by the history of trade unions in Ireland and internationally, and especially the struggles of women and minorities to be properly included by the trade union movement. I joined the Irish Labour History Society who produced a great annual journal, 'Saothar'. In the 1990s I tried to persuade the editor to publish an article on the history of LGBT people and trade unions, I was unsuccessful.

GLEN was set up in 1988 to campaign for an equality-based gay law reform and equality legislation and inclusion of sexual orientation in the Unfair Dismissals Act of 1977. We went to our first International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) International Conference in Vienna in 1989 bringing with us our trade union material. We held a workshop on trade unions and were surprised that few of the groups at the Conference were doing much work with trade unions in their own countries. The Conference delegates including ourselves went to Mauthausen Concentration Camp to pay tribute to all the victims of the Nazis including homosexuals. It was a very emotional experience especially the Jewish Minyan ceremony we carried out at the request of Dennis Altman, the renowned Australian activist and writer. It was at this conference that I first met leading Australian activist Rodney Coombe, we discussed how similar Tasmania and Ireland were in terms of LGBT issues, we have remained in touch ever since.

Solidarity including international solidarity is a key trade union principle. In 1988 I took part in the First Irish Coffee Brigade to Nicaragua organised by the Irish Nicaragua Support Group to support the Nicaraguan people against US imperialism. We picked coffee in Matalgalpa for four weeks. Later we met the Nicaraguan LGBT group in Managua and Lupita Sequiera did a speaking tour of Ireland in early 1990s. Nicaragua had a huge empowering impact on me, showing how ordinary people could achieve massive change despite almost overwhelming opposition, overthrowing a brutal dictatorship supported by the US, and trying successfully in many ways to build a more equal and just society despite the war waged by the Contras supported by the US.



Given to me by Lupita Sequiera, early 1990s

First Irish Coffee Brigade in Nicaragua meeting LGBT group in Managua. Features John Fannon (L) a colleague planner in DCC, 1988
Kieran Rose Photography Collection



Quay Coop Women's Place, Cork early 1990s featuring Lupita Sequiera
Kieran Rose Photography Collection

1988: First Irish Coffee Brigade in Nicaragua - Kieran with local children in Matalgalpa
Kieran Rose Photography Collection





Irish Coffee Brigade to Nicaragua in 1988 on March to US Embassy in Managua calling for peace and end to US-aided attacks on Nicaragua
Kieran Rose Photography Collection

The ICTU Guidelines fed into the ground-breaking Labour Party Equal Status Bill of 1990, the precursor of our current Equality legislation. The Labour Party published their Equal Status Bill in 1990 including sexual orientation etc, and it was narrowly defeated in the Dail in 1992 by 63 votes to 67. This Bill (which included employment equality issues) was a model for the subsequent equality legislation introduced by Minister for Equality and Law Reform Mervyn Taylor. The Bill is available on the Oireachtas website.

I had read a report in the newspapers about Niamh Breathnach Labour Party spokesperson on women's rights preparing an Equal Status Bill to expand the 1977 Employment Equality Act to include services. I contacted Niamh and asked her to include sexual orientation and other grounds in her Bill. We met in her house in Blackrock and I gave her the Ontario Human Rights Act which we got at the ILGA 1989 International Conference in Vienna and on which the Labour Party 1990 Equal Status Bill is based. Niamh was very supportive and she became a champion of equality for LGBT people. We hadn't known one another beforehand and she later told me that she had 'checked me out' before she met me.

Sponsoring the private members Equal Status Bill in 1992, Dick Spring Leader of the Labour Party said in the Dail: "This legislation sets out wider areas of discrimination than any legislation previously brought before the House. It sets out to prohibit discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, religion, age, handicap, race, colour, nationality or national or ethnic origin, including membership of the Traveller Community. It is only right that these provisions should be very wide. It is extremely important to ensure that this Bill is totally inclusive and that there are no exclusions. The second object of the Bill is to make discrimination unlawful not only in the workplace but also in education, in the provision of goods, facilities and services, including recreational, banking and other financial services, entertainment, accommodation, transport and the services of any trade or profession and in the disposal or management of premises."

GLEN was instrumental in setting up the Campaign for Equality in 1991 which was an alliance of all groups vulnerable to discrimination including women's groups, people with disabilities, Travellers, to campaign for broad-ranging equality legislation and for an equality-based gay law reform.

The campaign was launched in October 1991 in the European Communities offices with speakers including; Monica Barnes, Chair Joint Oireachtas Committee on Women's Rights; Patricia O'Donovan, Assistant Secretary General ICTU; Sylvia Meehan, Chief Executive, Employment Equality Agency; and representatives from GLEN, the Dublin Travellers Education and Development Group; Forum of People with Disabilities; Council for the Status of Women and others.

Launch of the Campaign for Equality



NEWSLETTER OF THE CAMPAIGN "LESBIAN & GAY RIGHTS AT WORK"

ISSUE NO. 1 JANUARY TO FEBRUARY 1988

BREAKING THROUGH

1987 was a year of significant progress for lesbian and gay workers. 1988 could be equally important if we take all the opportunities for action that are now open.

The adoption by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions of the radical policy document on Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace was an historic breakthrough. As it is implemented it will considerably improve the working lives of thousands of trade union members.

Of course there are many other thousands of workers unemployed or in non-unionised workplaces who it will not directly benefit. And of course organised workers are facing the severe threat posed by the right wing anti-worker consensus that is growing in this country.

But we cannot afford to be defeatist. We should organise to make progress in any area that we can. The issue of lesbian and gay rights in the workplace is one where we can make substantial gains.

WHO ARE WE?

Lesbian & Gay Rights at Work (LGWR) is an informal network of trade unionists. Our objective is to provide an information link for trade unionists and for the lesbian/gay community on workplace issues.

We intend to publish this newsletter every three months and to produce other information material as needs arise and finance allows.

If you would like to receive further copies of the newsletter or further information on any of these issues you can contact us c/o P.O. Box 1890, Sheriff St. Dublin 1 or tel (01) 783242 and leave a message.

Comments, suggestions, news for future Newsletters would also be welcome.

LGPSU SEMINAR

The Local Government and Public Service Union held a seminar in Dublin on the weekend of 6-8th of November to consider how the union should implement the ICTU Guidelines. It was a weekend of stimulating and original discussion resulting in a useful programme of work that the union could undertake. The seminar recommended that the union set up a working party to process that work.

Michael D. Higgins T.D., Patricia

O'Donovan (Legislation Officer of Congress) and Kevin O'Driscoll (National Officer of LGPSU) addressed the seminar. Among the many issues raised by the speakers were:

- the lack to date of a serious public debate on the lesbian and gay issue within the trade union movement by contrast with the large scale and ramorous debates that punctuated the progress of women's issues. This conspiracy of silence must be broken!
- The relative inexperience of Irish trade unions in tackling issues of discrimination and how much we can learn from the American experience of tackling racial discrimination for example.
- The link between many particular problems of anti-lesbian and gay discrimination (e.g. pension rights and special leave entitlements) and broader questions of the recognition of non-marital relationships which unions will increasingly have to tackle.

Michael D. Higgins made an important analysis of the scale and nature of anti-lesbian and gay prejudice in Ireland and how it might be tackled. Its conclusions brought home the vital importance of radical reform of the law and the creation of positive images of lesbian and gay people within the educational system.

A full report of the seminar is available from Lesbian and Gay Rights at Work.



CONGRESS GUIDELINES

The publication last May of the ICTU's 'Guidelines for Negotiations on Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace' was an historic event. Congress has had a policy of support for lesbian and gay workers since a motion was passed at annual conference in 1982, but little action had been taken. The Guidelines are an action programme for trade unions on this issue. They provide an analysis of how anti-lesbian and gay discrimination affects people at work - and often prevents them from getting a job in the first place. It sets out a procedure for handling complaints of discrimination and a model equality agreement prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexuality. It also suggests a wide range of initiatives that unions can take to progress the issue.

Of course the publication of a set of guidelines will not change the world but it does mean that anti-lesbian and gay discrimination is finally getting on to the real agenda of the trade union movement. Remember how important the Guidelines on Sexual Harassment were in transforming what was seen as an almost trivial complaint into an accepted concern of all trade unionists.

The Guidelines provide a basis on which a lesbian or gay worker can take up a complaint of discrimination or harassment confident that clear policies exist to support that complaint. It also poses a challenge to all trade unionists to raise the issue in their own workplace and their own union. In dealing with this, as with any form of discrimination, we cannot stand back and wait for those who suffer the discrimination to act. It must be taken up and dealt with by the trade union movement as a whole.

IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM

If you are being harassed at work:

- Don't panic.
- Don't resign.
- Keep a record of what is said, done, dates etc.
- Know your rights - get copies of free ICTU leaflets on lesbian/gay rights and sexual harassment and study them.
- Contact your shop steward, branch officer, or some union official you know will be sympathetic.
- If you are not in a union (why?) find out your legal rights (free leaflets from the Dept. of Labour).
- Contact us if necessary.

EQUALITY AGREEMENTS

Unions and employers negotiate agreements on a whole range of issues from pay and conditions of employment to grievance/disciplinary procedures etc. More recently unions are negotiating agreements to ensure that women are not discriminated against in the workplace. Following the launch of the Guidelines, many unions have begun to demand that lesbian/gay must be specifically included in these equality agreements.

The LGPSU have lodged a claim with the Local Government Staff Negotiations Board which would affect 70,000 workers in local authorities and health boards (contact Alice Moore, LGPSU at 01-7288991). The Northern Ireland Public Service Alliance have lodged a similar claim (contact Sid McDowell, NIPSA at 084-661831). The Irish Distributive and Administrative Union has an equality agreement with Principals, the Dublin Clothes Shop (contact Marie Hayde, IDAU, 01-746321). The Federated Workers Union of Ireland has also got lesbian/gay equality agreements with some employers (contact Bernard Browne, FWU).



Me pictured in Dublin in 1993 for an article in Impact Trade Union magazine about the GLEN campaign for decriminalisation of homosexuality in Ireland.
Kieran Rose Photography Collection



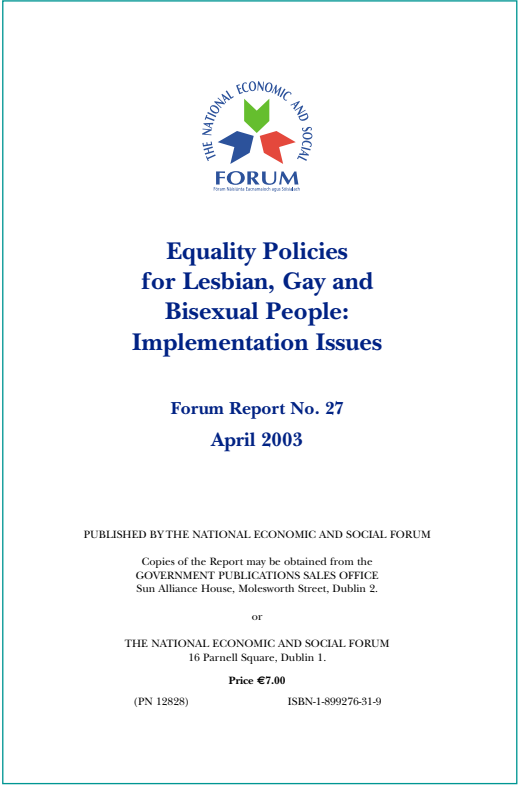
Postcard produced by GLEN to mark equality-based gay law reform

Equality at last

An informal group of trade union activists and supporters in mid 1980s coordinated by myself

The equality-based gay law reform and the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Unfair Dismissals Act were passed by the Oireachtas in 1993 to great acclaim. **The Employment Equality Bill 1996, and the Equal Status Bill 1997** were introduced by Mervyn Taylor, Minister for Equality and Law Reform and passed in 1997. They were central to the Rainbow Coalition's raft of anti-discrimination legislation and sought to eliminate discrimination on nine grounds including gender, race, religion, disability and membership of the Travelling community in employment and in the provision of services. They were referred to the Supreme Court by President Mary Robinson, where both were found to be unconstitutional because it was considered that making premises accessible to people with disabilities was unreasonably burdensome.

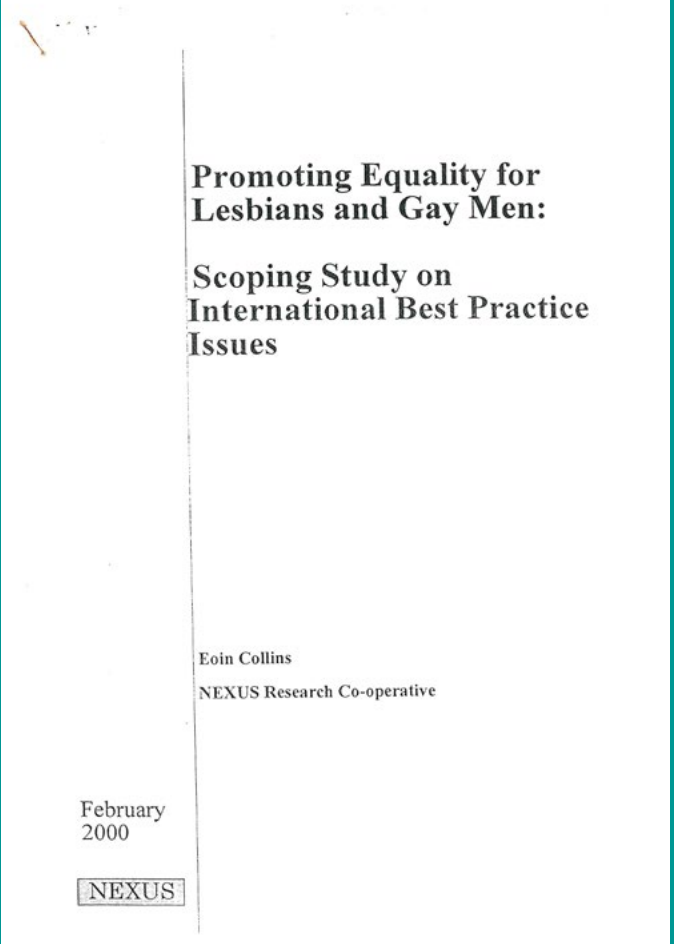
Amended equality legislation was subsequently enacted during the following Dáil term, the Employment Equality Act, 1998 and the Equal Status Act, 2000. The Equality Authority was set up under the Employment Equality Act 1998 and was established in October 1999. The Equality Authority replaced the Employment Equality Agency, and had a greatly expanded role and functions. In the public consultation on the first strategic plan GLEN recommended that a statutory Advisory Committee be set up including community representatives to consider how to achieve equality for LGBT people. The Advisory Committee was set up in 2000 including LGBT representation and ICTU and IBEC representatives from the Board of the Equality Authority. Various reports by GLEN/Gay HIV Strategies and Nexus Research on Poverty, HIV/AIDS, Education, Community Development and other topics were the only research available on Ireland and vital to the work of the Advisory Committee. The powerful report of the Advisory Committee 'Implementing Equality for Lesbians, Gays and Bisexuals' was published in 2002.



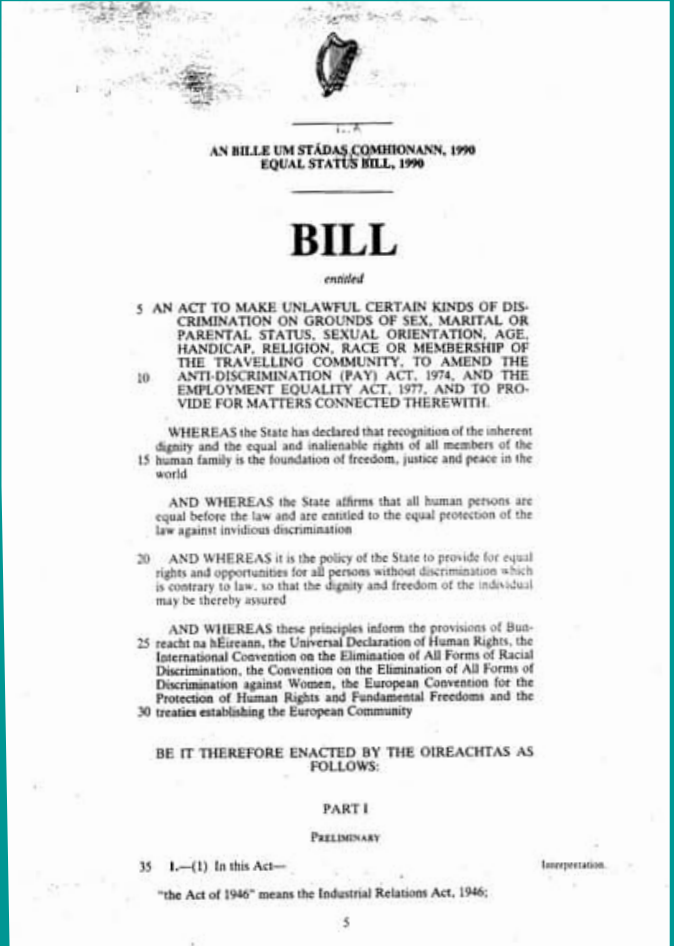
In the mid 1990s Minister Eithne Fitzgerald refused GLEN any representation on the newly established National Social and Economic Forum (NESF), a Social Partnership body, and got quite annoyed when we continued to make our case. However we did have influence through the trade union movement and the Community Workers Cooperative/Community Platform.

The 1995 IMPACT policy on lesbian and gay workers made recommendations on the Programme for Economic and Social Progress (PESP) and NESF. Dr Philip O'Connor (DCU) has written on the importance of Social Partnership for LGBT progress beginning with the Programme for National Recovery.

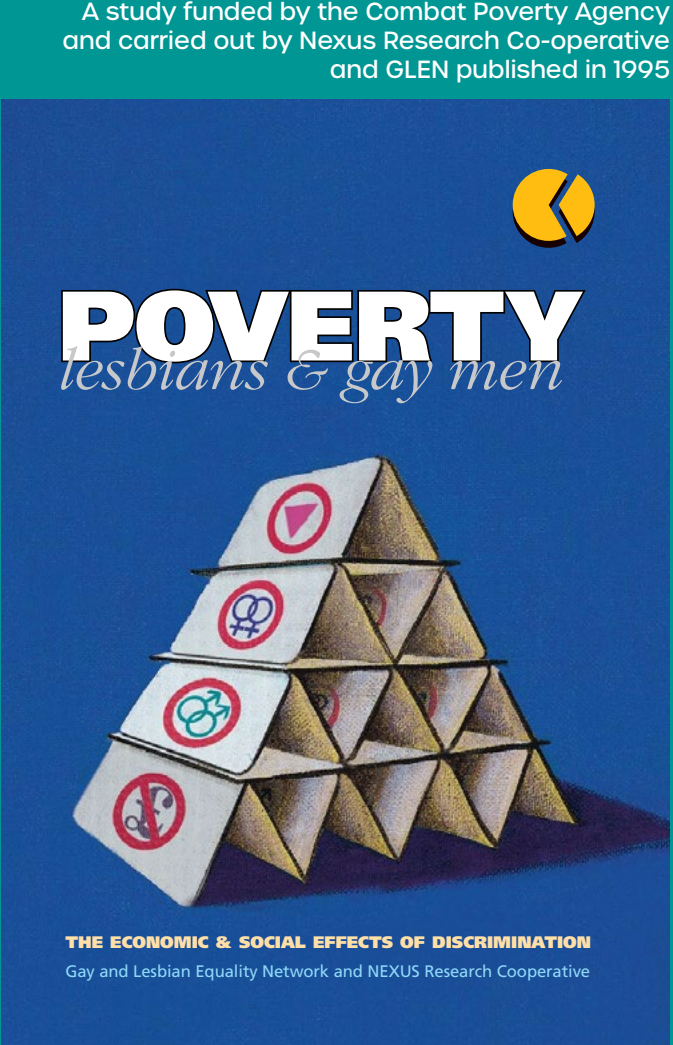
In 2002 NESF set up a Project Team including LGBT representatives and trade union and business representatives to consider the recommendations of the Equality Authority. It's report 'Equality Policies for Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People: Implementation Issues' was published in 2003. The Equality Authority and NESF Reports along with various GLEN reports on poverty, health and education provided the key basis for GLEN's first Strategic Plan when it got significant funding from Atlantic Philanthropies in 2005 and allowed us to hit the ground running making progress.



Commissioned by the Equality Authority for the LGBT Advisory Committee



Labour Party Equal Status Bill 1990



In 2007 I was appointed to the Board of the Equality Authority by the Minister for Justice and Equality Brian Lenihan, the first 'representative' of the LGBT activist sector to be appointed. The Equality Authority played a significant role in the achievement of Civil Partnership as a stepping-stone to Civil Marriage. In 2008 there were severe cuts to various State bodies including the Equality Authority ostensibly due to the economic crisis. Niall Crowley CEO of the Equality Authority and some Board members including the ICTU and IBEC representatives resigned as a result. I considered resigning and consulted with various people and in the end I decided to remain on the Board because the Authority still had a budget, staff and all its legal powers. I didn't see what my resignation would achieve, the Government would just appoint someone else.

At a Board Meeting of GLEN some members said they wanted me to resign from the Equality Authority and it was decided that we would have a Special Board meeting to discuss the matter and a vote would be held. I remember walking home thinking this is an odd dilemma for me, if I lose the vote do I resign from the Equality Authority or GLEN. It was a difficult Special Meeting, I had stood aside as Chair because I was the topic of the debate, the call for me to resign from the Equality Authority was defeated by one vote and a number of people resigned from the GLEN Board. One person who resigned rang me up later and said they supported me but resigned due to work pressure. Not long after, ICTU and IBEC decided to go back onto the Board of the Equality Authority and their representatives were appointed to the Board by the Minister for Justice and Equality.

In the later 2000s Eoin Collins and myself began to develop the economic case for diversity and equality in a globally competitive world in terms of nurturing, attracting and retaining key skilled workers, attracting investment, tourists and international students, and encouraging innovation. This was intended to amplify the social justice case for diversity and equality. GLEN and Dublin City Council did a project on 'Diversity, Equality and Economic Competitiveness' in 2011 funded by the Equality Authority and the EU. We held a conference on 'Globalisation, Diversity and Economic Renewal' in September. Eoin Collins wrote the final report of the project. This was at a time of economic crisis and hugely increased unemployment and a great need for economic recovery. GLEN worked with ICTU, IBEC, the Equality

Authority and IBM on a workplace diversity guide (2010, use front cover as image). This led into GLEN's very successful workplace diversity programme. In 2012 GLEN, ICTU and the Equality Authority produced 'Being Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender at Work, A Guide for LGBT People and Trade Unions'.

In October 2011 I was appointed to the Working Group on the Merger of the Equality Authority and the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) by Alan Shatter Minister for Justice and Equality. Coincidentally Tom Cooney was then adviser to Alan Shatter and was also on the Working Group. Tom as chairperson of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL) and myself and Christopher Robson worked together on the production of the ground-breaking 1990 ICCL report 'Equality Now for Lesbians and Gay Men'.

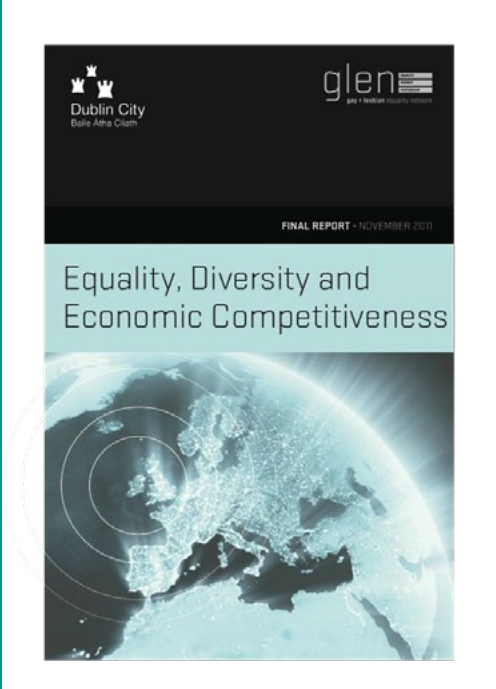
I persuaded the Working Group to recommend that the new body would be able to consider emerging human rights issues such as the human rights of same-sex couples to access Civil Marriage. Myself and Michael Farrell persuaded the Working Group to recommend the new Public Sector Duty, that public sector bodies should have regard to human rights and equality in the carrying out of their functions. Both recommendations were incorporated into the 2014 Act that established the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC). In 2014 I and others were appointed as the first Commissioners of the new body by President Michael D Higgins in Aras an Uachtaran.



Members of IHREC (Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission) after appointment by President Higgins in Áras An Uachtaráin, 2014

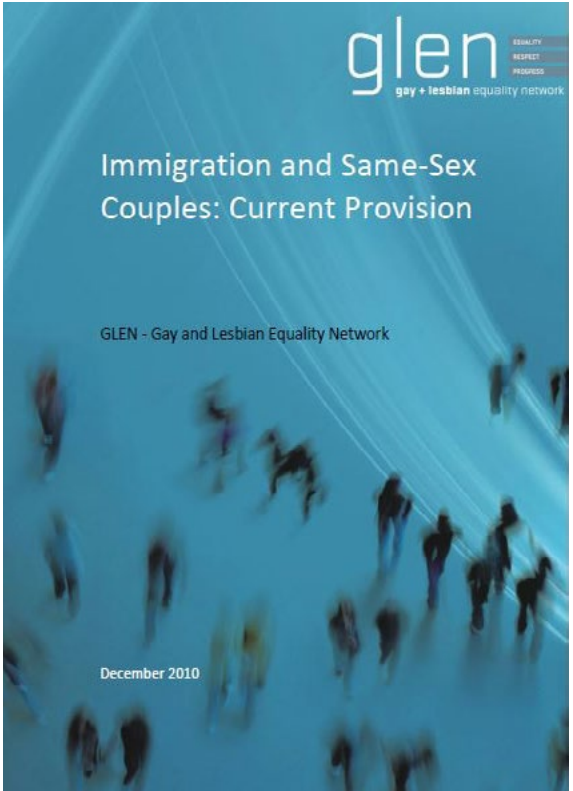


Lesbian Gay and Bisexual Workplace Guide 2010



GLEN and Dublin City Council 2010 Project on Equality, Diversity and Economic Competitiveness, funded by the Equality Authority and the EU

The rights of LGBT immigrants was a key concern for GLEN including employment rights and Eoin Collins in particular put a lot of work into these issues. The Civil Partnership Act 2010 radically improved the rights of LGBT immigrant couples and GLEN published a guide to these new rights in 2010, 'Immigration and Same-sex Couples: Current Provision'.



Immigration and Same-sex Couples: Current Provision, 2010

The Equality Authority had a long-standing policy of support for Civil Marriage for same-sex couples. IHRC did not support Civil Marriage despite Katherine Zappone being a Human Rights Commissioner and then taking a Constitutional case on her and her (late) partner Ann Louise Gilligan's right to marry. I thought it essential that the merged body support Civil Marriage and made the case at IHREC meetings, there was some opposition or delaying tactics. After much discussion I said, 'it's a very simple question, does IHREC believe that opening out Civil Marriage is a matter of human rights and equality?' In February 2015 IHREC published a detailed policy document that said unequivocally that opening out Civil Marriage to same-sex couples 'is a matter of equality and human rights', the wording I had proposed at IHREC meetings. There was some blow-back from the Right but Chief Commissioner Emily Logan handled it very well no doubt based on her previous experience as Children's Ombudsman dealing with the Right.

The trade union movement played a key role in the Yes Equality Referendum campaign. I was invited by IMPACT to speak at their Biennial Conference in Galway where I was presented with the IMPACT poster 'Love Equality'.



GLEN Immigration Guide launch
Photo by Karl Hayden

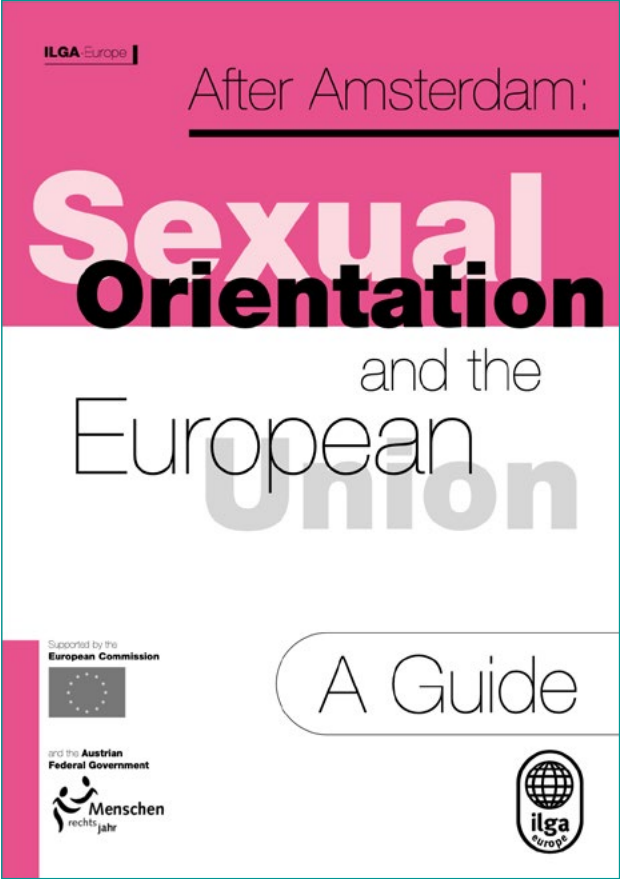


Me being presented with IMPACT Yes Equality poster by Paul O'Halloran chair of the Dublin City Council Branch at the IMPACT Conference in Galway 2015 which I was asked to speak at just before the Marriage Referendum
Kieran Rose Photography Collection

In 2016 I proposed that IHREC set up a Worker Employer Advisory Committee under Section 18 of the IHREC 2014 Act as I thought the lack of trade unionists and business representatives on the Commission was a significant obstacle in properly implementing it's remit especially in relation to employment equality. The ICTU and IBEC representatives on the Board of the Equality Authority played a major role. After some delay, the Advisory Committee was established with ICTU and IBEC representatives and I was very honoured to be Chairperson. I think this Advisory Committee and the Equal Marriage policy are my two most important achievements on IHREC.

Fergus Finlay was the full-time LGPSU official in Cork in the early 1980s and I went to him to get his support before I came out publicly on radio in 1980. I was on temporary contracts with Cork County Council at the time, and he was very supportive. Later GLEN had intensive contacts with Fergus on the need for an equality-based law reform and equality legislation when he was chief advisor to Dick Spring Leader of the Labour Party and Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1990s. Sometimes we met Fergus in the splendidly palatial Iveagh House, headquarters of Foreign Affairs, making the case that the law reform had to be on the basis of equality.

The Irish Government as part of its Presidency of the Commission got sexual orientation back into the Amsterdam Treaty with Dick Spring as Minister for Foreign Affairs in 1997. GLEN particularly Christopher Robson lobbied Noel Dorr and others to have sexual orientation included. Article 13 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and other and this gives the EU a competency in these matters. This was a breakthrough, and Ireland was largely responsible. Previously sexual orientation was dropped from the draft Treaty under the Dutch Presidency.



Front cover of ILGA document on Amsterdam Treaty

I was hugely impressed by Fergus's analysis of Referendum campaigns in his 1998 book 'Snakes and Ladders' where he wrote:

'It's easier to make people afraid than it is to make them hope. It's easier to appeal to that fear rather than to encourage generosity and Ireland possesses some of the most skilled and experienced practitioners of the politics of fear there are.'

In the lead up to the marriage equality referendum GLEN asked Fergus to address a number of meetings on effective campaigning strategies. Fergus later was on the Yes Equality Strategy Committee. I circulated an extract from 'Snakes and Ladders' on Referendum campaigns to the Yes Equality campaigners.

The Union of Professional and Technical Civil Servants (UPTCS) also played a major role, UPTCS later merged with the LGPSU to form IMPACT, now Forsa. 'An AIDS Policy for the Civil Service', Civil Service Circular 12/88 was negotiated by Christopher Robson and Tom Lacey of UPTCS and others. It states: 'discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or medical condition will not be tolerated in the civil service'. This was a huge breakthrough, and ironic as we were still criminalised by the State. As Christopher notes it was issued in July 1988, four months before the Strasbourg judgement. 'If the government considered such protection necessary for its own workers, then the argument for its extension to everyone else became unanswerable' according to Christopher Robson. The policy was subsequently extended to all the public sector. Christopher Robson was a key trade union activist for LGBT equality and sadly passed away in 2013, I wrote a tribute to Christopher for the IMPACT magazine.

Christopher Robson tribute for IMPACT magazine

Obituary

Christopher Robson

29th January 1941 – 23rd March 2013

CHRIS ROBSON was a long-standing activist for equality for gay and lesbian people, and for civil rights more generally. From the early 1980s he was pivotal in all the key campaigns that delivered such fundamental progress for us in this country. We would not have achieved this transformation so effectively without the huge commitment, as well as the wise, calm and principled guidance, of Chris.

Chris was a committed trade unionist, active in the Union of Professional and Technical Civil Servants (UPTCS), IMPACT, and the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). In UPTCS, he and Tom Leacy successfully negotiated the groundbreaking 1988 Civil Service agreement, which stated that discrimination on the basis of HIV status or sexual orientation "would not be tolerated." He was also on the ICTU working group that produced the pivotal 1988 publication *Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace*.

He had an acute understanding of the importance of making progress in employment areas, and was particularly proud of his role in getting sexual orientation explicitly included in the Unfair Dismissals Act (1993) and the Employment Equality Act (1998).

Christopher and Bill Foley, partners of more than thirty five years, recently celebrated their civil partnership. Over the years Bill (a member of IMPACT's Dublin Hospitals branch) and Chris were comrades in arms in many pivotal campaigns including the establishment of the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Men's Collective, the organisation of the pivotal 1983 Fairview march, and the founding of Gay Health Action.

Chris was a founder member of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) in 1988 and continued on as a board member. He was a skilful strategist and a persuasive speaker. He wrote beautifully with great insight. Equally important, he ensured that his own great generosity of spirit was the



bedrock of GLEN's approach to campaigning.

Chris was brave, principled and passionate; to be an open gay activist in the 1980s was not easy. We had few friends and supporters – and many powerful enemies – in those days. But Chris put himself on the line and took risks with his career because he believed that discrimination and oppression were inhuman and that each person had a responsibility to take action where they could.

The range of Chris's commitments was huge and included being a long-standing board member of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, the Ana Liffey drug treatment project and EURO-CASO, the European response to the HIV/AIDS crisis. He was a founder member of the Campaign for Equality.

His legal legacy is powerful; gay law reform in 1993, equality legislation, civil partnership, and now moves towards gay marriage. It is so sad that Chris was not able to witness the overwhelming vote for civil marriage at the recent Constitutional Convention. He would have been thrilled.

Chris was a huge force who

enhanced all our lives, all our communities and Irish society.

A secular memorial service held on Saturday 30th March was a wonderful and moving celebration of the breadth of Chris's life, the profound impacts he had on people's lives, his great talents, passions and foibles. President Michael D Higgins was represented at the service by his aide-de-camp, Commandant James Galvin.

Our great condolences go to his partner Bill Foley and to their families and wide circle of friends and colleagues.

Kieran Rose
IMPACT member and chair of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network.

The inclusion of 'sexual orientation in the Circular was used in the Seanad debates (30th November 1988) to support the inclusion of sexual orientation in the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Bill; such inclusion was being opposed by the then Minister for Justice Gerry Collins. In the Dail on the 15th November 1989 the Minister for Justice Ray Burke (suddenly) accepted the sexual orientation amendment to general acclaim from all speakers.

In the later 1980s in Ireland there was a huge sense of defeat and demoralisation for the Left and progressive forces with defeats in the Abortion and Divorce referendums. In the mid 1980s there was a big downturn in lesbian and gay activism and the few remaining activists rightly focused their energy on Gay Health Action founded in 1985. I decided to concentrate my efforts on trade union progress as there was so much potential there including in relation to the HIV/AIDS crisis, and no one else was concentrating on trade union work.

I became coordinator of 'Lesbian and Gay Rights at Work' an informal group of lesbians and gay men and allies set up in May 1986 to campaign on issues of equality in the workplace, and in particular to follow-up on the recommendations of the ICTU 1985 seminar on lesbian and gay rights in the workplace. In a sense this informal group was carrying out the policies and objectives agreed at the trade union workshop and adopted at the First National Gay Conference held in Connolly Hall Cork in 1981. The ICTU Women's Charter of 1985 was a radical policy document and included sexual orientation, we began to campaign for a LGBT Charter from ICTU. In the end ICTU decided on a 'Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace, Guidelines for Negotiators' policy document which some in the Network wanted to reject in favour of a Charter. However, I didn't see the point in objecting to what had been achieved with great effort by the LGPSU, IDATU and others in ICTU. In the end the Guidelines for Negotiators were radical and uncompromising, a Charter by another name.

When I moved to Dublin in mid-1980s to work in Dublin County Council I was elected to the Branch Committee and became a delegate to the Dublin Council of Trade Unions. In 1989 I proposed to the Branch Committee that it put a Motion to the Trades Council calling for an equality-based gay law reform and equality legislation.



Donal Sheehan, Ann Fitzpatrick and Deirdre Walsh leaving a house in Cork for Dublin Pride in the early 1980s

This was a debate (12th December 1990) on the need for gay law reform following the ECHR ruling of 1988 striking down the anti-gay laws. The Minister for Justice Ray Burke spoke quite positively. Senator John A. Murphy said: 'I find it hard to evade the conclusions of the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network in their letter to Senators which I received this morning when they say that: "Not only must the criminalisation of homosexuality be removed but there must be anti-discrimination laws as well"'

Senator Pat Upton referred to the Labour Party Equal Status Bill and also to the ICTU 'Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace' policy. Senator O'Toole referred to the long-standing policy of the trade union movement in favour of gay law reform. HIV/AIDS was an issue that came up in a lot of these debates.

The inclusion of sexual orientation as a protected ground in the Unfair Dismissals Act was part of the LGPSU motion adopted in 1982. GLEN campaigned very strongly to have sexual orientation included in the Unfair Dismissals Act including producing a Resource Document.

The Unfair Dismissals (Amendment) Bill including sexual orientation was introduced into the Senate on 10th March 1993 by the Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise and Employment Mary O'Rourke, who GLEN had met some time previously. Interestingly the gay law reform Bill was not introduced into the Oireachtas until 15th June 1993.

The Minister also said that the Bill was the 'first step' towards enactment of legislation by Maire Geoghegan Quinn (gay law reform) and Mervyn Taylor's equality legislation. The Minister referred to the inclusion of 'sexual orientation' in the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act.

The amendment was widely welcomed by all political parties. One Senator said that the sexual orientation amendment 'attracted media attention by virtue of its sexual connotation'. Senator Joe O'Toole General Secretary of the INTO said that they had been calling for this legislation for a long time, his members were worried about dismissals.

I thought it was essential that the 30th anniversary of the passing of the equality resolutions in 1982 be marked by Foras (the successor to IMPACT) and ICTU. Foras held an equality conference at which I spoke, and Foras produced a short video 'Organising for Equality'. The Financial Services Union and ICTU held a three part webinar on LGBT issues organised by Karl Hayden. The first session was an interview with myself and Dr Patrick McDonagh by Karl on the evolution of trade union support.

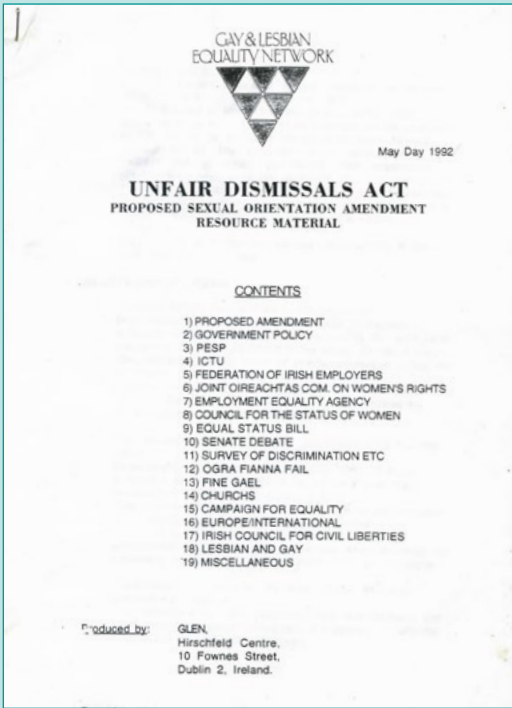
Donal Sheehan, Christopher Robson and Eoin Collins have passed away, they made a huge contribution to progress for LGBT people in Ireland, and we miss them greatly.



Seamus Dooley, myself and Clare Moore (Northern Ireland Committee ICTU) hosting the ICTU (Irish Congress of Trade Unions) Pride panel discussion in Books Upstairs, Dublin in 2019. David Joyce



Eoin Collins at GLEN meeting when Unfair Dismissals Act Resource Document launched, 1992 Christopher Robson Collection National Library of Ireland



BEING LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER AT WORK

A GUIDE FOR LGBT PEOPLE AND TRADE UNIONS

STRONGER TOGETHER
CONGRESS
Irish Congress of Trade Unions

glen

EQUALITY
IN THE WORKPLACE

'Being LGBT at Work' by ICTU GLEN and Equality Authority

Resources

www.kieranrose.ie
www.eoin-collins.ie
www.corklgbtarchive.com
www.ihrec.ie
www.ictu.ie

'Resource Document on Unfair Dismissals Act', GLEN, 1992

ICTU and Financial Services Union video interviews by Karl Hayden for the 40th anniversary of the 1982 LGPSU and ICTU Motions including with me and Patrick McDonagh, Jeffrey Dudgeon on the Kincora controversy, Orla Egan on the Donna Mc Anallen case, etc, www.ictu.ie

'Campaigning for Lesbian and Gay Rights 1981 - 1993', Bob Cant interview with Kieran Rose www.notchesblog.com January 2021

Patrick McDonagh video interview with Kieran Rose for 'Outing the Past' Dublin 2021

'Diverse Communities, The Evolution of Lesbian and Gay Politics in Ireland', Kieran Rose, 1994

'Pride at Work, Pride in a Union', Collection of trade union and LGBT documents and photos by David Joyce for ICTU Pride event 2019.

IMPACT, Policy on the Rights of Lesbian and Gay Workers, 1995

'Gay and Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland 1973-93', Patrick McDonagh, 2021

'A Very Political Project : Charles Haughey, Social Partnership and the pursuit of an "Irish economic miracle"', Dr. Philip O'Connor. PhD thesis for DCU.

'Sexual Identities, National Identities, the politics of gay law reform in the Republic of Ireland', Dr Richard Dunphy, Contemporary Society, 1997

'Cherishing All Her Children Equally, the law and politics of Irish lesbian and gay citizenship', Leo Flynn, SAGE publishing, 1997, and other articles

'Out for Ourselves, The Lives of Irish Lesbians and Gay Men', Dublin Lesbian and Gay Men's Collective (1986), article on trade unions by Kieran Rose, see www.corklgbtarchive.com

'IDATU Union: Lesbian and Gay Workers in the 1980s', Resource Document, Kieran Rose, 2023

'Employment Equality Agency, Sylvia Meehan and the Evolution of Equality Legislation', Resource Document, Kieran Rose, 2023

'LGPSU and Lesbian and Gay Workers Rights', Resource Document, Kieran Rose, 2023.

'GLEN Phase Two, 1994-2004', Resource Document, Kieran Rose, 2023

'Promoting Equality for Lesbians and Gay Men, Scoping Study on International Best Practice Issues', Eoin Collins for the Equality Authority, February 2000

'Reviewing Progress on Equality for Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual People', Eoin Collins, Equality News, Spring 2006

'Diversity Powering Success', Kieran Rose, Equality Authority News, Spring 2008

'Diversity Powering Dublin's Success' presentation by Kieran Rose to a 2007 conference 'Dublin: A Creative City Region', hosted by the Dublin Regional Authority and the Dublin Employment Pact

'Dublin could be a creative city if we get rid of limiting mindsets', Kieran Rose, Irish Times 17th June 2008

'The Economic Case for Diversity, International Competitiveness and the New Economy - The Role of Equality and Diversity ', Eoin Collins, GLEN, 2010

Kieran Rose trade union records (Box 2) in National Library of Ireland

Christopher Robson photography collection and documents in NLI

National Archives records on the Unfair Dismissals Act, Equality legislation, and the 1988 Civil Service Circular on HIV/AIDS, etc

Kieran Rose Photography Collection digitised by QueerCultureIreland, some of my photos are available on www.corklgbtarchive.com

Kieran Rose, article on lesbians and gay men in 'Nicaragua, An Unfinished Canvas', Nicaraguan Book Collective, 1988

Kieran Rose, 'The Tenderness of the Peoples', article on the international dimensions of LGBT issues, in 'Lesbian and Gay Visions of Ireland' edited by Eoin Collins and Ide O'Carroll, 1995.

'The Power of the Powerless' and other articles by Vaclav Havel in his collection 'Living in Truth' (1987) influenced me greatly

'Told to be Quiet, a Planner Launches Bid for the Seanad', Dublin Inquirer 23rd March 2016

Digital Repository Ireland www.dri.ie

'No Red-Baiting No Race-Baiting No Queen-Baiting, The Story of the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union' illustrated video talk (2016) by Alan Berube on this very progressive 1930s trade union in the USA, www.outhistory.org and see also www.labornotes.org

Appendices

TEXT OF SPEECH ON GAY RIGHTS MOTION (NO. 35) TO CORK BRANCH L.G.P.S.U. 30.3.'82
KIERAN ROSE AND TRICIA TREACEY

This motion calls for civil and human rights for a minority that represents about 5% to 10% of the population; that is the lesbians and gay men of Ireland.

Under the present laws gay men can be sent to jail for up to life terms for consenting sexual relationships. The European Court has declared that these two laws contravene the European Convention on Human Rights. These laws degrade our democratic society because a society where a minority no matter how small can be jailed for no other reason than prejudice - cannot call itself free. This motion calls for the repeal of these two laws.

Besides the threat of imprisonment - gay people experience the same range of discrimination, stigmatisation and prejudice as other minorities. Living as a gay person in Ireland is in many ways like being black in Alabama. This discrimination is expressed in terms of the educational system, the so-called caring professions, media stereotyping, access to housing etc. A more recent development is that gay men have been subjected to what seems like an organised and widespread campaign of Garda harassment.

But employment is the most critical area where discrimination and prejudice effect gay people. In many cases gay people do not get jobs, are fired or lose promotion solely because they are gay. The right to work and to a fair deal at work are basic workers rights which everyone is entitled to whether black or white, male or female, gay or heterosexual.

The Employment Equality Act and the Unfair Dismissals Act specify certain types of discrimination as unlawful - this motion calls for these and other Acts to be amended so that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation will be unlawful.

It would be wrong to consider gay rights in isolation from the rights of other minorities. 25% of our population are denied the right to a basic standard of living and are classified as living in poverty. There are about 1/4 of a million people on this island who are denied the right to work. Women, by no means a numerical minority, are kept in a subservient role by our male dominated society. I could go on listing those groups which are excluded from full participation in our community - travellers, the disabled, unmarried mothers, those who we decide to incarcerate in mental institutions etc. All these groups share one thing in common - they do not have the wealth, the power or the privileged status to ensure that their legitimate intrests are protected.

On the other hand there are elites which can hold the community to ransom. 5% of the pop

Reference No: E107/12/87; Date: 22/06/88

Circular 12/1988:- Civil Service Policy on AIDS

A Dhuine Uasail

I am directed by the Minister for Finance to say that he has accepted agreed recommendations by the General Council under the scheme of conciliation and arbitration for the civil service, and by the Conciliation Council under the conciliation and arbitration scheme for the higher grades, regarding the adoption of a Civil Service policy on AIDS in the workplace.

2. The agreed policy statement is printed overleaf. An information booklet containing general information on AIDS will be circulated to all staff.

3. The normal sick leave regulations as set out in Circular 25/78 will apply to staff suffering from AIDS who will be treated no differently than staff suffering from any other serious illness. Staff are further reminded that medical certificates and all matters concerning an officer's sick leave records must be treated in the strictest confidence. Personnel Officers should ensure that there are adequate local arrangements to ensure that medical records remain strictly confidential.

4. Any enquiries from Departments regarding the Civil Service AIDS policy should be addressed to the Department of Finance, 36-42 Kildare Street, Dublin 2 (Telephone 779601 Ext 314). Medical queries can be raised with the Chief Medical Officer for the Civil Service, Dr J Geoghegan, or directly with the Public Health Division of the Department of Health, Hawkins House, Dublin 2. Individual officers can raise queries through the Civil Service Welfare Service, or their local doctor or Health Board. A list of specialist counselling services is included in the information booklet which all staff will be receiving.

Mise le meas,

Seamus O Cíosáin
Runaí Cúnta

Civil Service Policy on Aids in the Workplace

1. Officers who are HIV positive or who suffer from AIDS will be retained in their job for as long as they can perform their duties to an acceptable standard.

2. The normal sick leave regulations as set out in Circular 25/78 will apply to staff who suffer from AIDS.

3. All details of an officer's health record should continue to be treated in the strictest confidence.

4. Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or medical condition (e.g. haemophilia) will not be tolerated in the civil service.

5. General

"NO RED-BAITING! NO RACE-BAITING! NO QUEEN-BAITING!"

The Marine Cooks & Stewards Union
From the Depression to the Cold War



The Marine Cooks & Stewards Union organized the waiters, cooks, laundrymen and other service workers on the luxury liners and freighters sailing the Pacific from the 1930s to the 1950s. It was one of the most left-wing and multi-racial labour unions in the US. And it had lots of bold, tough queens. Their union was attacked for being "red, Black, and queer." How did these men build their solidarity and defend themselves with dignity?

A new slide show by Alan Bérubé, author of "Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two."

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 3, 1995, 8:00 PM,
EDUCATION CENTRE, 155 COLLEGE ST, 6th FLOOR
AUDITORIUM
(donations appreciated)

Sponsored by: The Ontario Federation of Labour; Canadian Union of Public Employees, Pink Triangle Committee; Canadian Employment and Immigration Union (Ontario), Gay Lesbian Support Group; Toronto Centre for Lesbian/Gay Studies; Equity Studies Centre, Equal Opportunity Office, Toronto Board of Education; U of T Women's Centre

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM THE MCS VOICE 1945

Disadvantaged groups look to the trade union movement as their natural ally, particularly in their efforts to achieve equal rights before the law, and equal treatment in terms of employment opportunities and protection against unfair dismissal. A number of trade unions including the Local Government and Public Services Union have now adopted positive gay rights policies.

In July 1982 the Annual Conference of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions passed the following resolution:

"Conference supports the decriminalisation of homosexual behaviour between consenting male adults in private and as a consequence of such support urges affiliated unions to resist any attempt to discriminate against their members in their employment on the basis of sexual orientation".

What You Can Do

ICTU's policy decision places an onus on unions to inform their members on the problems facing gay people in Irish society; this leaflet attempts to do that.

If you have not considered this issue before and find it disturbing, please examine your reaction and ask yourself why you feel this way. You may simply have absorbed some of the myths concerning gay people that we have all been exposed to without having had the opportunity to question them.

- Please be aware of the problems society creates for gay people.
- Be supportive of gay friends, relatives and work colleagues.
- Avoid offensive jokes, language and behaviour.
- Support legal reforms to secure equal treatment under the law.
- Help other people to become more aware.

Conclusion

Gay people ask that gay rights be viewed as human rights, that they be entitled to the same things as other members of the community. Social justice asks us at least to listen.



FURTHER INFORMATION

National Gay Federation, 10 Fownes Street Upper, Dublin 2. Tel: (01) 710939 NGF is the national organisation working for the rights and welfare of gay people in Ireland.

LIL (lesbian women's group), same address as NGF.

Tel-A-Friend Tel: (01) 710608

TAF is a confidential telephone information and befriending service staffed by gay people. Hours: Sunday-Friday 8-10 p.m.

Saturday 3.30-6 p.m.

On Thursdays the service is reserved for women callers under the title Lesbian Line.

Dublin Gay Collective, c/o D.R.C., 6 Crow St. Dublin 1.

Cork Gay Collective, c/o Quay CO-OP, Sullivan's Quay, Cork City.

Galway Gay Collective, P.O. Box 45, Galway City.

Gay Trade Union Group, Quay CO-OP, Cork City.



esboa
INFORMATION LEAFLET



GAY RIGHTS



The Social Justice (Ireland) Committee
ESB Officers Association

1984

Gay Rights

Introduction

Homosexual men and women constitute a large minority which is both socially and legally discriminated against. Equal rights for this minority is an issue now more openly discussed than ever before. Little factual information on homosexuality is generally available, however, and society's image of gay people is often a false one.

What is Gay?

Just as other minority groups have as a positive statement chosen their own word to describe themselves, in preference to generally pejorative terms applied by others, so homosexual people use the word gay to describe themselves. Homosexual women sometimes prefer to be called lesbians.

Who is Gay?

A man or woman may be defined as being gay if he or she is exclusively or predominantly attracted emotionally and physically to members of the same rather than the opposite gender. The reasons why some people develop a homosexual rather than a heterosexual orientation are not fully understood; it would seem that in common with heterosexuality it is the result of a complex interaction of influences that may include genetic/biological and psychosexual/environmental factors. This is as much as can safely be said. At any rate gay people do not choose their homosexuality but rather discover it.

How Many People Are Gay?

Research in other countries (notably the USA and Holland) indicates that somewhere between 5-10% of the adult population may be classified as gay under the above definition. Behavioural scientists believe that findings to date can be safely applied cross-culturally, i.e. it seems probable that similar research if carried out in Ireland would produce comparable results. This means that in a population of just under 4 millions the number of Irish gay men and women is probably at least 200,000 and may be even

much higher. Even the lower figure represents a number considerably in excess of e.g. the combined membership of all the minority churches.

Social Invisibility of Gay People

Gay people are ordinary people. They are to be found in all walks of life, in all kinds of jobs; they contribute to society just like everybody else. It seems probable that every extended family, every club, group, organisation, business or industrial enterprise will have its gay members — as will every trade union. Chances are that each reader of this leaflet will know somebody who is gay even if this isn't realised.

Unlike most other minority groups gay people are indistinguishable from the population at large. This social invisibility allows the effeminate male/masculine female stereotypes and the 'queer' joke to pass too often unchallenged.

Pressures on Gay People

A social stigma attaches to homosexuality in Ireland and there are legal and other sanctions against it. This forces many gay people to conceal their homosexuality, to lead double lives. Society's mistaken assumption that gay people are readily identifiable allows those who from social pressures wish to 'pass' as members of the heterosexual majority to do so with ease. They live in isolation, however, constantly in fear that their 'guilty secret' will be revealed, their lives ruined, their jobs and career prospects jeopardised, that they will be estranged from their families and friends.

Prejudice

Besides fearing the unknown, society tends to isolate and exclude the outsider, the misfit. When minority groups are thus distanced from the community, misinformation regarding them inevitably follows. Consequently, many cruel myths and prejudices surround the gay minority.

- Gay people are the butt of offensive jokes; they are denied self-respect and dignity.

- Because homosexuality is deemed socially unacceptable, gay people are exposed to robbery, blackmail and violence (sometimes resulting in death).
- At work, openness about being gay may bring hostility and discrimination from employers and fellow workers.

A major obstacle to understanding is the myth that gay people are attracted to children. Available evidence indicates that gay men and women share the same human needs as heterosexual people and seek fulfilling relationships with other mature people. What research has been done points to the conclusion that seducers of children are more often heterosexual than homosexual.

Discrimination

Discrimination against gay people is practised widely and in many different ways. There are, however, some major problem areas:

- Laws dating from the 19th century categorise all sexual relations between men as criminal offences. The penalties range from 2 years to life imprisonment. (Sexual behaviour between women is not a criminal offence).
- Gay people experience discrimination in job opportunities and promotion prospects. Many cases of unfair dismissal are not contested by the victims for fear of publicity. (There are no such cases known within the ESB, however).
- Lesbian women suffer discrimination in child custody cases; gay men are often denied access or visitation rights to their children.

Trade Union Involvement

Difficulties experienced by gay people in their lives are invariably linked to the denial of equal treatment and opportunity. The trade union movement supports the principle of equal rights for all citizens in the belief that inequality is the underlying cause of social injustice.

**NIPSA LGBT GROUP LAUNCH
BELFAST CITY HALL THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2012
JEFFREY DUDGEON
30TH ANNIVERSARY OF DECRIMINALISATION**

My thanks go to Geraldine Alexander for organising this important launch event and inviting me to address you and to Brian Campfield, NIPSA General Secretary, for his welcome. This is my third speech in recent weeks on the 30th anniversary of decriminalisation, and the emancipation, in Northern Ireland, of our community. One was made at a NIGRA celebratory dinner, another was a sermon at a special Evensong service at St George's, and this one is to mark the launch of my old trade union NIPSA's inaugural LGBT group. I hope you get a speech not the sermon.

The House of Commons vote for law reform, at midnight on 25 October 1982, was 168 to 21, with no Northern Ireland MP voting in favour. I was present. Some of those who cheered the result were taken to the Tower and kept there until the intervention of Robin Cook who had effected Scottish gay law reform in 1979.

It seems odd to me, and presumably odder to most of you who would be younger, that we can go from the threat of life imprisonment in 1982 to high-powered employment protection in 2012, in less than two generations. In my case I went from arrest in 1976 to an award from Her Majesty for services to the LGBT community in the New Year's honours list.

But it happened, and in Northern Ireland, with little or no help from civil society, outside of a number of female journalists including Sandra Chapman now of the News Letter, the late Mary Holland, Fionnuala O'Connor of the Irish News, also John Hewitt the poet and the Rev Sidney Callaghan of the Samaritans and Kevin Boyle my Strasbourg barrister.

And with no help from any political party. We did it ourselves

I think, but am not sure, that NIPSA conference passed a motion favouring law reform. I hope it did, but I recall very few out gays at the time, even amongst the Broad Left. However NIPSA did something more courageous around that time. And here I must pay tribute to an Assistant General Secretary of the union who died prematurely in 1989 – Laurence Pimley – for saying what he said, and doing what he did, in difficult times and territory.

What he did, in the wake of the Kincora Boys Home scandal of 1980-85, is especially apposite given the current crisis at the BBC following Newsnight's false accusation of paedophilia, levelled against Lord McAlpine. A witch hunt, one identified as a possibility by the Prime Minister, which could engulf innocent gay people, died in its tracks.

Because of the incessant news stories about homosexual rings – the word paedophilia had not then been coined – at Kincora, after the conviction in 1981 of three wardens, one a Unionist political figure influential amongst the young, the Eastern Health and Social Services Board agreed a policy, with one notable dissenter, the recently deceased James Ford Smith of the Ulster Museum, of barring homosexuals from all caring jobs.

The effect of this policy was going to be catastrophic to very many gay staff, not just in children's homes, as happened, but throughout the Board and beyond. It would have generated a purge had it not been resisted in public by NIPSA and Laurence Pimley who had responsibility for social services staff. He even addressed an intra-insular, gay conference in Belfast, organised by NIGRA, on the matter utilising his brisk, common sense approach.

In the end, the DHSS, presumably with some trepidation, obliged the Board to drop the policy saying it would lead to unfair dismissal claims. However the chill factor of the Eastern Board decision remained and, I would presume, many gay people missed out on jobs and promotion in the following years. This is a little known episode out of which NIPSA comes well, one worthy of more research.

Another result however was that staff in homes became so nervous and vigilant that they reported sexual activity between boys to the police, with frightening criminal consequences. In one case of two consenting boys, the charge was only withdrawn on the steps of the court. I recall this, having obtained the services of Norman Shannon, a radical solicitor, who is still willing to help in such legal cases. It should be remembered that Northern Ireland cleaned up its care homes long before the rest of the UK or the south. Young people were better protected here, and listened to. Trade unions are about many things, mostly economic, and sometimes societal but, to my mind, partly because I am more of a fiscal conservative than I was, their most important current function is to protect their members when they hit trouble. And I believe NIPSA does that well although this group has been a long time coming.

Much has been achieved in the fields of human rights and equality in the thirty years since decriminalisation. My Strasbourg case paved the way for a wide range of human rights successes. Once sexual orientation was on the European agenda, the EU legislated with a directive in 2000 prohibiting discrimination and harassment on such grounds in employment and training.

Now Northern Ireland has employment equality regulations from 2003, and goods and services regulations since 2006, even if important harassment provisions, in areas like education and housing, were struck out by the High Court in 2008, at the behest of the Christian Institute.

We are hearing later from the Equality Commission and it is important that LGB&T people who want to go to tribunal can seek its assistance. However trade unionists should be able to turn first to their union for assistance. They should recruit LGB&T members only if confident that they will be supported when their rights need protected.

I appreciate that very few LGB&T workers take tribunal cases. Figures in the last three years indicate 17, 19 and 22 LGB&T cases being heard respectively, that is 0.4% of total industrial tribunal claims, compared to 2.5% where race is the key factor. These figures may suggest things are reasonable out there, particularly in the public sector, or they mask a reservoir of unfair employment practices, discrimination and harassment as Matthew McDermott of Rainbow has identified in his recent report.

NIPSA and other unions must be there in the workplace to protect their LGB&T members when issues arise. More importantly, they must make sure that there are equality audits on all such grounds, particularly on sexual orientation, to ensure that measures are taken to prevent issues arising in the first place.

This launch of NIPSA's LGBT group will encourage members to be open about their sexual orientation and gender identity, at least within the union. But many other members may not wish to be 'out' even in the workplace, let alone in their communities and with their families. It is therefore vital for NIPSA to see that harassment and equal opportunities procedures in the workplace work in practice for LGB&T workers, whether 'out' or not.

I have to say at this point that I was not impressed by so many at the time of the 2010 Equality Act when the chance, particularly on disability discrimination, to enhance gay and other rights by including Northern Ireland, was spurned, and worse, ignored, even by the head of the Equality Commission.

This has happened so many times before, on all but one of the further gay law reforms since 1982, that I am well used to it, if still angered.

We had to mount campaigns for Northern Ireland to be included immediately on equalising the age of consent assisted by Kate Hoey, and on civil partnership - despite the force of the Strasbourg judgment saying we were not so different as to merit the maintenance of draconian anti-gay laws or be left out of reforms.

People put devolution in front of their members' best interests and their clients' rights. I know this will not be appreciated by some here, or ever acted upon, but it is true and should be said.

NIPSA can also work with other unions in NIC-ICTU to ensure that our equality laws are at least as good as GB's on LGB&T rights, for example on harassment.

I take this moment to praise and thank the late Lord Blease, Billy Blease of USDAW, the former NIC-ICTU full-time officer who was a lone Northern Ireland voice at Westminster in October 1982 speaking in favour of law reform.

Even the gay MPs from Ulster voted against it. While my own MP who also voted against, the Rev Martin Smyth of South Belfast, remarked, "I should put it on the record that if the hon. Member for Hammersmith (Clive Soley) has heard of names being used against Mr. Dudgeon, I can only say that Mr. Dudgeon is a constituent of mine and at no time have I heard any names so used, but that may be because we move in different circles."

That last point was true but I received breeze blocks and bricks more than name calling.

Finally, I urge NIPSA to affiliate to ILGA-Europe whose annual conference last month was in Dublin. Next year it is in Croatia. It is a fine organisation much assisted by your sisters and brothers in UNISON.

At Dublin, there was an important meeting addressed by Barry Fitzpatrick of Cara-Friend and Gavin Boyd of Rainbow on the out working of EU employment law, in both parts of Ireland, particularly relating to teachers. This is an aspect that will become more and more significant for trade unions and their LGBT groups in the near future. This is an excellent initiative by NIPSA, providing real, practical support and representation to its LGB&T members and I commend it heartily.

**FREE
SIMON
NIKOLI**

Gay South African
anti-apartheid activist



BENEFIT CONCERT
Thurs. 3 December
Billy Doyle's
Hill St. (secure car park)
8.00 — 11.00p.m.
featuring **Dear Frankie**
Ireland's first all-woman rock group
Organised by Lesbians and Gay men against apartheid

Flyer for Dublin fundraiser in 1987 for Simon Nkoli a gay Anti-Apartheid activist imprisoned by the South African government c1990

IRISH PRESS
30th October 1980

IRISH TIMES
30th October 1980

**Labour and
Gay Rights**

I WOULD like to inform your readers of a meeting which took place during the course of the Labour Party Annual Conference in Connolly Hall, Cork, last weekend, in which the Labour Party general secretary, Brendan Halligan, and myself met a delegation from the Cork Branch of the Irish Gay Rights Movement.

As a result of the meeting I promised to announce to the Labour Party Conference on Sunday that I had agreed to convey the movement's request to the incoming Policy Committee of our administrative Council that they should consider the position of homosexuals in the light of the recent High Court decision upholding the draconian legislation repressing male homosexuals.

They would like the Policy Committee to consider the present legal position and would hope that the Parliamentary Party would initiate and demand an all party review of this legislation, which is now unique in Western Europe, so that it can be reformed and therefore bring about an equality before the law.

I deeply regret the fact that due to the extreme pressure during the Sunday conference session I overlooked announcing this matter to our conference.

MICHAEL D. HIGGINS
party Chairman,
The Labour Party
Dublin 1.

GAY RIGHTS

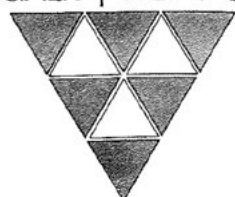
Sir, — I would like to inform your readers of a meeting which took place during the course of the Labour Party annual conference in Connolly Hall, Cork, last weekend, in which the Labour Party general secretary, Brendan Halligan, and myself met a delegation from the Cork branch of the Irish Gay Rights Movement. As a result of the meeting I promised to announce to the Labour Party conference on Sunday that I had agreed to convey the movement's request to the incoming policy committee of our administrative council that they should consider the position of homosexuals in the light of the recent High Court decision upholding the draconian legislation repressing male homosexuals. They would like the policy committee to consider the present legal position and would hope that the Parliamentary Party would initiate and demand an all-party review of this legislation which is now unique in Western Europe so that it can be reformed and therefore bring about an equality before the law.

I deeply regret the fact that due to the extreme pressure during the Sunday conference session I overlooked announcing this matter to our conference. — Yours, etc.,

MICHAEL D. HIGGINS,
Chairman,
The Labour Party,
16 Gardiner Place,
Dublin 1.

Michael D Higgins then Chair of the Labour Party letter to the Irish Times in 1980 about meeting a group of Cork gay activists at the Labour Party Annual Conference in Cork
Cork LGBT Archive

GAY & LESBIAN
EQUALITY NETWORK



GAY & LESBIAN RIGHTS
ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

GLEN,
HIRSCHFELD CENTRE,
10 FOWNES STREET,
DUBLIN 2, IRELAND.

TEL: (01) 710939 [10-5 p.m.]

Brian Fitzpatrick,
Principal,
Employment Equality Section,
Dept. of Equality and Law Reform,
65a Adelaide Road,
Dublin 2.

6th April, 1993

Dear Mr. Fitzpatrick,

Thank you for your letter of 24th of February inviting our views on employment equality issues. It would be difficult to overestimate our welcome for the proposal to include sexual orientation and other categories in amended employment equality legislation and indeed for the consultation process itself. Discrimination in the labour market is the most critical issue facing our community. We attach a research proposal commissioned by the Combat Poverty Agency which sets out these issues in greater detail.

We strongly welcome the proposed extension of the legislation to include a wide range of other disadvantaged categories not least because many lesbian and gay workers are also discriminated against on other grounds such as gender, parental status, disability, ethnic origins etc. Equally important is the encouragement of a 'culture of equality' which would regard any form of discrimination or harassment in the workplace as unacceptable and detrimental to the interests of employer and employee alike. We attach a policy document from one employer, Software 2000 Limerick, in this regard.

The Employment Equality Agency has had an important role in encouraging such a 'climate of equality' within the constraints of its statutory functions and available resources. With the expansion of its statutory role and greater resources, the Agency could have a far more decisive role in the creation of an environment where 'equal opportunity' would be regarded as the norm in terms of the workplace. The pro-active role of the Agency would (as with the unfair dismissals legislation) reduce the potential for conflict and recourse to legal/disputes procedures. The proposed broader based representation on the Board of the Agency would be vital in ensuring a realistic consensus on these matters.

As you know, the Board of the Employment Equality Agency as far back as 1986 recommended to the Minister such an inclusion and there is now a consensus amongst the social partners and others on the matter. We attach our resource document on unfair dismissals, a draft report to the E.C. and other material in this regard.

Discrimination in the labour market is a complex process and a very difficult issue to tackle and we welcome the various measures proposed

A MEMBER OF THE INTERNATIONAL LESBIAN AND GAY ASSOCIATION (ILGA)

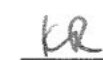
Codes of Practice, improving access to information and the extension of the legislation to include contract workers and members of the Defence Forces.

As our research proposal to the Combat Poverty Agency outlines, discrimination in the labour market often begins in the educational, youth services and job training systems and we would hope that these agencies, especially FAS, would develop more effective programmes to facilitate equality of opportunity.

It is our experience that harassment on the basis of sexual orientation is a key mode of discrimination in the workplace and the proposals made in relation to sexual harassment are most welcome. We suggest that codes of practice to combat harassment on any basis (i.e. age, membership of the Travelling community etc.) should be developed.

We would like to reiterate our strong welcome for the proposed changes to the legislation and for the consultation process itself. If you would like any further information or clarification please do not hesitate to contact myself (tel. 724755 work or 372995 home) or Chris Robson (tel. 789011 x3320 work or 963762 home).

Yours sincerely,


Kieran Rose

DUBLIN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS Comhairle na gCeárdchumann Bhaile Átha Cliath

President: Paddy Trehy
Vice President: Paddy Coughlan
Secretary: Sam Nolan



44, Lower Gardiner Street
Dublin 1.

6th December, 1989.

TO: EACH DELEGATE

A Chara,

The monthly delegate meeting of the above Council will take place on Tuesday, 14th December next, in the O'Lehane Hall, Cavendish Row at 8 p.m. sharp. The Agenda is as follows:-

AGENDA

- 1) Minutes
- 2) EC Summary
- 3) Correspondence
- 4) Disputes
- 5) Motions

Motion from the Executive Committee:-

"Council condemns the failure of the Government to provide a substantial increase in the rates support grant to Dublin Corporation and Dublin County Council. This will result in another year of sub-standard services to the City, in particular in the areas of maintenance to Corporation houses and flats.

We also call for Trade Union resistance to moves to extend the use of private contractors by Dublin Corporation and Dublin County Council."

Motion from the Local Government & Public Services Union

"The Council welcomes the Government decision to give protection to lesbians and gay men and travellers, under the Incitement to Hatred Bill. We call on the Trades Council to lobby the Government and others so that the Government's response to the October, 1988 decision of the European Court of Human Rights (declaring that the current anti-gay laws contravene the European Convention of Human Rights) will include:

- 1) Full legal equality for lesbians and gay men, including the same age of consent for heterosexuals and homosexuals.
- 2) Anti-discrimination legislation to give protection to lesbians, gay men and other groups vulnerable to prejudice.

We call on the Trades Council to circularise all other Trades Councils and the ICTU, requesting them to take similar action."

Please Note:

At our November delegate meeting we passed a resolution to support the demonstration to be held in the city on Saturday, 9th December.

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Trade Unions and Progress for LGBT People: A Personal History