

EQUALITY BULLETIN



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CIVIL PUBLIC & SERVICES UNION

On May 22, vote **YES** for Marriage Equality



THE Marriage Equality Referendum is taking place on Friday, May 22, 2015. On this day you will be asked to vote on the insertion of a new sentence in the Irish Constitution which

will state: "Marriage may be contracted in accordance with law by two persons without distinction as to their sex."

CPSU are asking all our members to go out and vote YES in this referendum so that we can make Ireland a more inclusive and tolerant society. Civil Marriage is the only option that affords equal rights for same-sex couples.

The 'Trade Unions for Marriage Equality', group which includes CPSU, make up almost 800,000 people in the workplace across Ireland and the trade union movement are committed to full equality for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people in terms of marriage equality.

The Civil Partnership legislation that came into force in 2011 provides a number of very important benefits for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) workers as does the Children and Family Relationships Act 2015. However, there are still some key differences such as a Civil Partnership is not recognised in the Irish Constitution in the same way as a Civil Marriage is.

Irish society places a high level of importance on the institution of marriage in that it provides a secure foundation for people in a

loving committed relationship. It is valued by their families and friends and in their communities. Same sex marriage must be part of any society that considers itself fair and must treat all its citizens equally.

The results of a European Social Survey conducted in 2010 showed that in Ireland when asked if they agreed that "gay men and

lesbians should be free to live their own lives as they wish", 82% agreed. In 2014, RedC conducted an opinion poll on same-sex marriage and 76% were in favour. These figures are only meaningful if people go out and vote..

Each and every member is encouraged to go out and vote YES on Referendum Day Friday, May 22.

...our Annual Delegate Conference already has...

TURN TO REPORTS PAGES 2 & 3



Picture: Mayo Nolan



*Whatever She [God] says,
I will take that, but I'm not
going to take any more
strangling with beads*

– Trustee Dennis Walshe

A Republic of equals is our goal on May 22

“IT’S time we created a Republic of equals,” the 2015 CPSU annual conference was told.

Seamus Dooley from the Congress Executive Council made the comments in an emotionally-charged address to delegates gathered in Killarney on May 8.

Mr Dooley, who heads up Trades Unions for Marriage Equality which is campaigning for a Yes vote in the May 22 referendum, was speaking as an invited guest following the presentation to conference of the Equality Report by CPSU Equality & Diversity Officer Theresa Dwyer.

He said: **“It’s time we created a Republic of equals, that we eliminate the constitutional barrier which prevents gay and lesbian couples from enjoying the status of civil marriage.”**

The No side had, he claimed, sought to confuse a **“very simple debate”** with talk about surrogacy and adoption.

“They have talked about everything except the seven words being inserted in this document, and there’s a reason for that – because their argument is bankrupt.

“When you have no answers to the [issue of] equality, you seek to confuse and abate.”

Mr Dooley called on delegates to ignore the opinion polls, warning that **“complacency”** was **“the great enemy”**.

“I believe that there is a groundswell of opinion [in favour of marriage equality] – but I also know that there is a genuine and

sincere fear on the part of particularly, according to the surveys, older men and of course what we call ‘soft Yes’ supporters.

“And there is a concern because as you know there is a natural concern about children, about family and about family values. This is because we Irish cherish family, we cherish children and children matter.

“For us in the trade union movement, all children matter and all families matter and there is no room for a law which says that there is a two-tier system of equality and that some families matter more than others.”

Mr Dooley said that the trade union movement had the capacity **“to bring this one over the line”** because **“we recognise that family matters and that we are the family values movement”**, adding, **“This is a point we must stress again and again.”**

Praising the CPSU for the part it has played in supporting the launch of Trade Unions for Marriage Equality, he pointed out that in every town with a trade union congress visited by the Civil Marriage Equality bus, there had been trade unions members out in numbers to welcome its arrival.

Concluding, he said: **“I was to assure those who have doubts that no rights will be lost in the making of a more equal republic. The rights of heterosexual couples will not be interfered with in any way if we vote for civil marriage equality.”**



Dennis Walshe: ‘Marriage is a civil thing’

Picture: Moya Nolan

CPSU ADC ENDORSES CALL TO VOTE YES ON MAY 22

MORE THAN 300 delegates gathered at the CPSU annual conference in Killarney have given a resounding YES to marriage equality.

Motions 84 and 85, urging members to vote Yes in the May 22 referendum and pledging support to the *Trade Unionists for Equal Marriage* campaign, were passed unanimously at conference.

Deirdre Quinlan, moving Motion 84, told delegates: **“While many gay and lesbian couples have entered into civil partnership, it does not give them full constitutional equality – that is something only civil marriage can give. On May 22 citizens of Ireland have the opportunity to create history by voting in favour of marriage equality.**

“By voting Yes in the referendum it will allow gay and lesbian couples in this country the right to marry one another. They will no longer be the poor relation that is civil partnership as the only option for gay and lesbian couples who want to make solemn promises to one another.

“We have nothing to fear by the introduction of marriage equality – in fact, we should celebrate its introduction. We should celebrate the union of love and marriage – we should celebrate equality.

“I urge all CPSU members, their families, and friends to vote Yes and embrace marriage equality for all regardless of gender.

Anna Doherty, Department of Transport, Shannon, also urged delegates to vote Yes. She said: **“There is the No campaign [slogan] which says**



Picture: Kelly Kline (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



I think it will be a great day when we vote Yes and I urge everyone to support the motion before conference

– DGS Derek Mullen

'Mothers and Fathers Matter'. I am a mother, I am a grandmother and I matter. I'm voting Yes in this campaign."

She added: "There are people who say that they have civil unions now and that should be enough. I wouldn't have a civil union. I've been married for 36 years and I like it. I don't want to be 'civil unionised'!"

"There are 154 differences between civil union and marriage. It is in our remit to give this gift to our fellow colleagues and neighbours. I would urge you to vote Yes."

Dennis Walshe, moving Motion 85 on behalf of the Executive, told the conference: "I understand that people have reservations, have notions that have been instilled there for a very long time regarding what is known as the institution of marriage. Marriage once was never carried out in the

Church. It is only since the 13th century that it became a Church affair. Before that, marriage was always considered to be a contract between two people.

"Marriage is a civil thing. It is essentially a contract and everybody should have the right to transact a contract."

He added: "Whatever She [God] says, I will take that – but I'm not going to take any more strangling with beads. I have rights, everybody has rights. We all have the same equal rights. An injustice to one is an injustice to everybody. Please support the Yes vote in the referendum."

David Howley, Courts Service, told delegates: "If the referendum is passed, I will be able to marry my partner of nearly 12 years. I think it is very insulting actually when I have come across negativity



Derek Mullen: Voting for his mum and brother

Picture: Moya Nolan

on the streets. But these days, I'm finding it very positive going out canvassing with my cousin – who is straight (and he's fairly religious).

"It seems to be a generational thing – everybody over 70 believes what the Church tells them. It is actually quite hurtful that when people say [they are going to vote] No. They don't realise that when two people love each other, that they should be able to marry."

Deirdre Fenning, Limerick General, told delegates: "I'm voting Yes for all the under-18s that don't yet have the vote. We can't let complacency set in. We were given a democratic right to vote – use it!"

Another speaker, referring to an earlier contribution to the debate, told delegates: "I want to point out that my mother is 74 – and she is voting Yes!"

Michael Dwyer, An Post, told delegates: "I grew up in the 1970s and sadly homosexuals were [then] seen as deviants. A younger generation has [now] been educated to a different opinion about homosexuality.

"These people have loving relationships and bring love to their relationships. I'm sad that some should deny the love these people have by voting No. This room doesn't need educated. You need to go out and teach your friends, your family members. We need to tell people out here to vote Yes.

"Vote Yes", and he added jokingly, "Vote often!"

Executive member Joan Farrell spoke about a young man she knew who has been unable to come out to his parents.

She said: "If we vote Yes we will show all the other boys and all the other girls about what we feel and that it's no longer a shut door. To be able to say to your mum and dad, your brother and sister, 'I'm gay, I'm lesbian, I'm different'. But it doesn't matter if you're different, we all love you. And if you love somebody and you want to care for them, please vote Yes."

Deputy General Secretary Derek Mullen told delegates he was very struck by the debate. He said: "I am voting Yes for my brother who took such a long time to tell me he was gay because of the society we live in.

"I'm voting Yes for my mother – a woman of an older generation who in her own head had a long journey to make to accept the news that my brother asked me to impart to her. I think it will be a great day when we vote Yes and I urge everyone to support the motion before conference."

Vote

YES

on Friday, May 22nd

**for a
fairer
Ireland**

www.yesequality.ie

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