

1972

Resolutions Passed at a Ard Fheiseanna in Relation to the Subject of Women's Rights

Sinn Fein

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Resolutions passed at an Ard Fheiseanna in relation to the subject of womens rights.

Ard Fheis 1972.

Recognising that both men and women are oppressed by the capitalist system, we believe that women are conditioned in a particular way to accept a secondary and submissive role in society and that this conditioning has led them to accept inequality in education, law, wages and opportunity. We believe that the special function of women in child-bearing has been exploited by the capitalist state as a means of oppressing women, in that they are forced to bear the full responsibility for rearing children without adequate and guaranteed support or protection for the vital work that they do. Conditioning (brainwashing) is continually used by the media and advertising since, as wife and housekeeper, women play a vital part in maintaining the capitalist society in her role as a consumer.

Recognising also that in a State in which the moral code of a particular Church is enforced by law, women are denied the right to control of their own bodies and ultimate destiny: We believe that if we are to produce generations of free and conscious citizens both parents must share full responsibility in all aspects of their children's life from birth: the community must implement their responsibility for the welfare of all children.

SINN FEIN DEMANDS:

1. Free family planning and advice for all women.
2. Equal pay, opportunity and an end to specific male or female jobs.
3. Fully paid maternity and paternity leave and a substantial maternity grant for all women.
4. Supervised nursery schools in all areas available to all.
5. That the same criteria be used to assess the eligibility for unemployment benefit of married women as in the case of men.
6. That the State pay an adequate grant to either men or women who are engaged full-time at home in the care of children.
7. Equality in law.
8. Equal educational facilities at all levels and an end to the type of children's books which begin the discrimination process by segregating children into aggressive and passive roles.
9. The immediate cessation of all advertising, books and periodicals which perpetuate discrimination against women.
10. That a mother without the financial and emotional support of a husband be granted a living wage to support herself and her children in decent comfort.
11. That since the lack of decent housing facilities affects to a greater extent, women and children, we demand decent housing for all.
12. That women wishing to return to work be provided with retraining facilities at all levels.
13. Trade Unionists, who have accepted the right of women to equal pay for nearly a century, should insist on the full implementation of women's rights as workers now, i.e. equal pay, and end to wage increase differentials, an end to the marriage bar, and end to the sex bar which still exists in some unions, the establishment of a minimum wage law to prevent the exploitation of women and juveniles whose underpaid labour depresses the wages of the working-class in general.

Recognising that the full achievement of women's liberation requires first and foremost the active participation of women themselves, we instruct the incoming Ard Comhairle to arrange for meetings of women members to implement the above demands

ARD FHEIS 1974.

Reaffirming that the emancipation of women is conditional on the emancipation of the working-class, any serious revolutionary movement must base the struggle for women's equality in a class context. However, it is necessary to understand the contradictions that emerge within revolutionary movements who embrace the question of women. These contradictions are usually manifested in Social Democratic and Feminist attitudes. Social Democrats seek to equalise the status of women on a class basis. Feminists on the other hand believe that women themselves are an exploited class, that men of themselves are the exploiters. These two concepts must be rejected by all Socialists. To quote Lenin, "the inseparable connection between the social and human position of the woman and private property in the means of production must be strongly brought out that will draw a clear and ineradicable line of distinction between our policy and feminsim - there can be no real mass movement without women, no special organisation in the party for women. A woman socialist is a member of the party just as a man socialist with equal rights and duties". Therefore the women members of the Movement in consultation with the leadership must aim at building a mass movement of working-class women as an ultimate goal. The basis for this development is organising for women's rights within the Trade Union Movement and representative people's bodies.

INDUSTRY.

Equal pay of itself will not give women equal treatment at work. The attainment of equality and the movement towards equal earnings (as distinct from equal basic rates) depends on other factors. We demand that members of the Movement involved in the Trade Union Movement should press for the following demands:

1. EQUAL PAY AND MINIMUM RATES

While equal pay legislation in itself is an important step forward, we must acknowledge that this legislation will of itself only benefit the minority of women. The majority of working women are classified in all female grades. Therefore, the Republican Movement must be in the forefront in demanding equal minimum rates, equalisation of fringe benefits i.e. bonus schemes, shift premiums, overtime rates, redundancies payments and pension rights.

2. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

The pattern of working life differs for the majority of women from that of men, because of two simple facts, women bear the children and have the major responsibility within a capitalist society for bringing them up. For economic reasons more and more women are having to seek employment while at the same time are expected to rear a family. In order that women be given equal opportunity for promotional outlets, we demand the following:

TRAINING FACILITIES

That State and private industries be called upon to provide equal opportunity for women to gain apprenticeships and establish training courses to achieve higher levels of skill and expertise and that employers be called upon to make facilities available for women to attend day-release courses

RETRAINING

That AnCo be called upon to provide realistic training facilities

to make the above a reality, we also demand:

- a) That State and private employers provide creche facilities for pre-school infants and play group facilities for holiday periods
- b) Maternity leave --All contracts of employment to include paid maternity leave for six-months with no loss of position or seniority.

UNIONISATION

To campaign within the Trade Union Movement for a recruitment programme to unionise the thousands of women workers currently unorganised e.g. Clothing and Clerical, Manufacturing, Cleaning, Catering, Laundries, Domestic Service

N.A.T.O. AND RESIDENTS

Agitation should be mounted through tenant and resident organisations to make the following demands.

1. The establishment by the State of proper family planning services.
2. The provision of professional State-run creches and play centres.
3. Proper recreational facilities to be provided in all areas e.g. playing fields, swimming pools, youth centres.
4. Free legal aid centres
5. The setting up of Parent/Teacher/Student groups to campaign for democratic secular management of education
6. That a realistic Childrens Allowance be paid for mothers to cover the high material cost of feeding, clother and educating children.

INTERNAL EDUCATION

In this area we consider that there is a vital need within the Movement for education on the question of women. We would therefore urge the Director of Education to provide a series of lectures outlining the historical and economic reasons for oppression and exploitation of women. These would come under the headings of "Women under Capitalism", Women under Socialism" and "The Democratic Question".

That the educational system be geared to train all children irrespective of sex for socially productive work

That women be held equal before the law and that all men and women of voting age be allowed to sit on juries.

That the Ard Fheis instruct the incoming Ard Comhairle to immediately investigate the means to implement the resolutions passed on the womens' question as laid down in the Ard Fheis 1972.

That this Ard Fheis instructs the incoming Ard Comhairle to reactivate and broaden the Womens Committee with specific instructions to work towards the implementation of resolutions on women passed at the last two Ard Fheiseanna.
