

26 April 2024

PCS overseas

Cathy Darcan, GEC member, represents PCS at the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

International Women's Day 2024 and ICTU Women's Conference

As PCS's representative on Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) Women's Committee heading into International Women's Day (IWD,) I was proud to represent PCS at ICTU's women's conference. Looking at the events of the last few weeks, I've considered what this means for me and the progress we've made since IWD was first suggested in 1910.

The conference is an important marker in the trade union calendar. It represents a fantastic opportunity to stand in solidarity with our sister unions over issues in the workplace, the trade union movement and wider society, including sexual harassment, discrimination, and violence. Although saddened these issues are still on the agenda, I was inspired to see so many women attending the conference, tirelessly working to improve things for themselves, colleagues, and future generations.

The conference looks to bring women to the heart of policy making, bringing their experience to the fore. It reinforces that women make a real difference standing up to injustice and giving a voice to many who cannot speak for themselves. With more women in the workplace and trade unions than ever before, women should expect more. They deserve a trade union movement that recognises their experience, value, and contribution. I was proud to show PCS's commitment to supporting women who have and continue to achieve so much, not just for themselves but for everyone.

The conference's wider theme was something we can all appreciate, 'valuing care in all its forms'. Being a carer is something that impacts us all at some point in our life, from childcare to caring for a loved one, partner or parent. As a carer who has to work full-time, this is close to my heart. Caring is a role often undervalued or not recognised.

Carers are predominantly women. Carers are often forced out of the workplace, resigning women to becoming society's hidden voice, something trade unions have long campaigned against. We cannot stand by as women are forced back into the home. I was inspired to see the trade union movement embrace this issue as a priority.

The conference and IWD isn't only an opportunity to remember the struggles women have faced and recognising how far we've come, but an opportunity to identify current issues and overcoming these for future generations. It's important that we continue to fight for equal pay, work, and opportunity.

The old adage remains true, together we're stronger and together we'll make a change.