



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Justice

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further
Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill: Irish
Congress of Trade Unions

30 January 2014

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Justice

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Mr Paul Givan (Chairperson)
Mr Raymond McCartney (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson
Mr Stewart Dickson
Mr Tom Elliott
Mr William Humphrey
Mr Alban Maginness
Mr Patsy McGlone
Mr Jim Wells

Witnesses:

Mr Peter Bunting	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Ms Pamela Dooley	Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Ms Clare Moore	Irish Congress of Trade Unions

The Chairperson: Let me formally welcome Peter Bunting, assistant general secretary; Clare Moore, equality officer; and Pamela Dooley, chair of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU). You are very welcome to the meeting. As with the previous session, this will be recorded by Hansard and the transcript published in due course. I will hand over to you to make an initial opening statement, and then, I am sure, members will have questions.

Ms Pamela Dooley (Irish Congress of Trade Unions): Chair and Committee members, Clare will read a short statement. Following that, I will tell two short stories of my experience in Northern Ireland. The three of us will then be happy to answer questions.

Ms Clare Moore (Irish Congress of Trade Unions): Thanks very much, Pamela, and thanks to the Chair and members. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions represents 775,000 workers, 51% of whom are women. In Northern Ireland, our membership extends to 220,000 workers across public and private sector workplaces.

Human trafficking is a form of slavery involving the exploitation of women, men and children for the purposes of prostitution, sexual exploitation, forced labour or services or domestic servitude. Congress welcomes the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill and its purpose to tackle more effectively human trafficking and exploitation in Northern Ireland. We believe that the Bill does so in a number of ways, including strengthening protection for people in a vulnerable position and, in clause 6, criminalising the purchase of sex in Northern Ireland.

We understand that the Bill is intended to protect victims from all forms of trafficking and forced labour. We welcome the fact that it offers a broad interpretation of victims, including victims of trafficking and slavery offences, and explicitly clarifies the definition of trafficking for labour exploitation to include forced begging and criminality. We acknowledge that not all trafficked persons are trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, although we understand that most trafficking in Northern Ireland is for that purpose.

The International Labour Organisation estimates that one out of every five forced labourers in the world is a trafficked person and further estimates that the minimum number of people in forced labour as a result of trafficking at any one time is 2.45 million, with about one in every three trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation. More than 80% of all trafficked people are women and girls. Where trafficking takes place for sexual exploitation, that figure increases to 90%.

The issues that the Bill addresses have been firmly on the agenda of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions since the passing of a motion at our ICTU women's conference in 2010. In summary, the motion recognised that the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is a modern form of slavery and that an industry that severely harms women is a tangible form of human rights abuse. It further recognised that victims of trafficking have not made a free choice. Importantly, the motion committed congress to be part of developing effective and appropriate responses, recognising that the sex industry would not exist if there were no demand from men who buy sex. The motion urged learning from countries that have established good practice for dealing with sex trafficking, including criminalising the purchase of sex and decriminalising the selling of sex.

Since unanimously passing the motion, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has become an active member of the Turn Off the Red Light campaign, and we invited the campaign to address our biennial conference in 2011. The leadership of ICTU has spoken publicly in support of the Turn Off the Red Light campaign on many occasions. On one such occasion, general secretary, David Begg, stated:

"Having legislation in place that says we, as a society, do not believe it is acceptable for someone to buy another's body for sexual gratification, exploiting the poverty, past history of abuse or limited life choices of the person being bought, would send a very clear message that we are a society committed to equality."

That was the context for congress consideration of our response to the Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill. The response, which we submitted to the Justice Committee, was endorsed by both the ICTU women's committee and the Northern Ireland committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. In putting on record our support for the Bill, we are pleased to join many other civil society organisations, including the Women's Resource and Development Agency, the Women's Aid Federation Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Women's European Platform.

Recently, members of the women's rights committee of the European Commission agreed that the best way to combat the trafficking of women and girls for sexual exploitation is the so-called Nordic model, which criminalises sex buyers but not the women and girls who engage in prostitution. We agree with its views that prostitution is a violation of women's human rights and is a form of violence against women. We have also noted developments across Europe, including from members of the European Parliament who, joined by more than 200 civil society organisations, including the European Women's Lobby, have issued a call to Brussels in a campaign called Together for a Europe Free from Prostitution. They state their belief that European policies on trafficking will not achieve results as long as the impunity of procurers and sex buyers is not addressed.

We note the recent publication of 'Human Trafficking and Slavery: Strengthening Northern Ireland's Response' consultation by the Department of Justice. Although we have not yet had an opportunity to consider the proposals fully, we believe that it is a positive step forward that the Justice Minister and Lord Morrow have given indications that they are working together to find areas of common agreement. We hope that that will present an opportunity for Northern Ireland to have extremely robust legislation on human trafficking and slavery.

We understand that one of the most contested parts of the Bill has been clause 6, which calls for the criminalisation of the purchaser of sex. We have also heard the contention that the two issues of trafficking and prostitution cannot be conflated or dealt with adequately in one Bill. However, congress believes that demand for prostitution feeds trafficking, that the two issues are inextricably linked and that, to tackle trafficking, the demand for bought sex must also be tackled. Many of the women involved in the sex industry had no real choice. Poverty and life circumstances combined with

deception and exploitation are evident in many of their stories. We believe that for, most of those involved, prostitution is rooted in poverty, marginalisation and desperation and linked histories of abuse and violence. The trade union movement has fought for many years for decent work for all and, in that regard, we agree with Nelson Mandela, who said that decent work is about the right not only to survive but to prosper. The International Labour Organisation recently produced research that indicates that if you allow the sex industry to grow, you also allow trafficking for sexual exploitation to grow. Therefore, we support clause 6, which specifically legislates for the criminalisation of the purchaser of sex as a measure to discourage demand.

Congress believes that measures to support people who want to find a way out of prostitution are vital, and we strongly urge that clear mechanisms of support such as education, training and counselling be laid down and that appropriate resources be allocated. Victims of all forms of exploitation must be able to seek help without fear of criminalisation, marginalisation or deportation. We support measures such as those introduced in Italy that identify trafficked people and other forced labourers as victims of crime rather than illegal immigrants. Measures that permit trafficked people to regularise their status, whether temporarily or permanently, in the country in which they have been exploited will encourage them to come forward to testify against traffickers because it removes the danger of immediate deportation.

We are concerned to hear the remarks of the Council of Europe's group of experts on action on trafficking regarding information that victims of trafficking have been arrested, prosecuted and convicted on immigration or other offences. We support the call for authorities to step up their efforts to adopt a victim-centred approach and ensure that potential victims of trafficking are not punished for immigration-related offences. We hope that the Bill and the recent Department of Justice consultation will offer the opportunity for Northern Ireland to adopt such an approach.

Congress is a broad organisation that represents more than three quarters of a million people on this island. The decisions that shape our policy are debated vigorously and democratically at committee stage and through delegate conferences. We welcome the wide debate that the Bill has initiated and commend the Committee for its vigorous approach in interrogating the issues. The Bill covers issues that congress has considered and debated, internally and externally, for four years. We are clear that, in speaking in support of the Bill, we represent the majority view of our 775,000 members.

Ms Dooley: Thanks Clare. I am going to tell you a short story. On a Friday afternoon, I got a phone call in my office. It was from one of our members who lived in the flats across from the Royal Victoria Hospital. She said, "I have a woman with me who is calling for help. She can't speak our language other than to say the word 'help'." I went straight to the apartments to find a middle-aged woman standing with two of our members in the middle of the courtyard. She was from India.

When we got the story from her it was that she had been here for between three and five years. She was working for, would you believe, a consultant paediatrician who lived in one of the apartments and had five children. This woman had not been allowed out of the house. She had not been given any wages. She had spent three to five years — she did not know how long she had been there — looking after the children, cleaning the house and was locked into the place where she lived. She was known by the family as an untouchable because she was from a different, and what they considered a lower, sect than they were. She had no papers and was in the country illegally. She had nowhere to go, knew nobody and was living under those circumstances. That is what I call being trafficked. It was not about sex or prostitution; it was about using another human being as a slave.

The police were brought in and were very good and reasonable with us. Ultimately, the chief executive of the Belfast Trust stepped in and we got somewhere for the woman to live and be fed. She had no money; she had nothing, and we fought to get her the wages that she was owed. That is what I call trafficking. What could such a woman do?

I have a second short story. I do work in the women's prison and have come across women who have been trafficked as prostitutes. One woman was probably about 19. In the cell with her was her 10-month-old child. She had had the child to her pimp. She did not know that she was in Northern Ireland — she had never heard of Northern Ireland. She did not know that she was coming here to sell sex. That woman was to be deported, put on a plane to another country and then the whole cycle would start over again.

I would like to think that we in Northern Ireland would treat people a little differently from how others treat them. I would like to think that we are human beings who would at least look after and ensure that people such as that 19-year-old, who have never had a chance for anything, would be given a

chance and not just be stuck on a plane to be consigned to a life that, for the next 20 years, would be a repeat of the same. I think more of our people than to believe that they would do that.

The Chairperson: Thank you very much. We will move on to questions.

Mr Humphrey: Thank you very much for your presentation. I nearly thought that there was going to be something earth-shattering, Clare, and that you were going to agree with Nelson McCausland.
[Laughter.]

A Member: That would never happen.

Mr Humphrey: I agree absolutely that prostitution is a modern form of slavery. As representatives of the trade union movement, do you believe prostitution to be a valid form of work?

Mr Peter Bunting (Irish Congress of Trade Unions): The clear answer to that, which I think you got from the previous witness as well, is that it is really about exploitation. It is very simple. We could not conceive it to be a valid description of work.

Ms Moore: Some of the European statistics say that 60% to 80% of so-called workers in prostitution experience regular physical and/or sexual abuse. As Peter said, we could not say that that is a valid form of work.

Mr Humphrey: In your submission you state that you:

"endorse the call made by the Women's Aid Federation NI for support systems to be put in place to enable women and children to get routes out of sexual exploitation".

How crucial do you think the introduction of such services is in Northern Ireland?

Ms Moore: The introduction of such services is vital. We work closely with Women's Aid and value the work that it does, but its resources are extremely limited, so congress supports the call for adequate resources to help women, girls and other people who are exploited to receive those support mechanisms.

Ms Dooley: If you are talking about money, you could use the money from confiscated goods to set up a victims' trust fund to support some of those people.

Mr Humphrey: It has been suggested in some quarters that it would be better if clause 6 of the Human Trafficking Bill, which criminalises the purchase of sex, solely considered prostitution rather than considering human trafficking and prostitution together. What do you think of that argument? How do you separate them?

Mr Bunting: On the issue of the purveyor of sex being criminalised, there was a very good example of how that would put some people off. In Limerick last year, five or six farmers from the area were convicted of purchasing sex in a brothel. I have no doubt that it will be a long time before any of those who were convicted — and who were named and shamed, to a certain extent, across the media in the Republic of Ireland — will seek further services in a brothel. We believe that such actions will help women who are being exploited.

Having heard some of the questions, I assume that some people think that it will drive crime underground. Crime and prostitution are already underground in many circumstances anyway. I believe that, one way or another, even if you legalise it, it will become part of gang control anyway. That is what we believe will happen in one way or another, and it would just contribute to the further demonisation and exploitation of women. We are all for criminalising the purchaser of sex. One of my colleagues would probably be better placed to deal with human trafficking than I am.

Ms Moore: As we said in our statement, we believe that human trafficking and prostitution are linked and that, if there is a demand for the sex industry, we will have mostly women and girls trafficked to meet it. That is our contention.

Mr Humphrey: OK. Finally, some organisations and political parties in Northern Ireland have argued that the article 64A created by the Policing and Crime Act 2009 — which makes it an offence to pay for sexual services from someone who has been coerced — is enough to tackle the problem. Your submission suggests that you do not believe that that goes far enough. Why is that?

Ms Dooley: It is not working; they are still on the streets.

Mr Bunting: They are still on the streets, and people are openly purchasing sex. Two or three years ago around the Markets and Adelaide Street brothels were openly operating, and the police seemed inhibited from doing anything.

You have to have confidence in the PSNI carrying out the law. It is not just about looking after women: there are pimps' gangs involved, and we need to stamp those out. It is illegal activity. We believe in the justice system, in law and order, in a peaceful and just society; we want to end the exploitation of any worker, and that means that the law needs to be strengthened. If so, perhaps you might ask the police whether they need the law strengthened. You do not read about people being prosecuted for those acts on a daily basis in the media. As the previous witness said, if the law was there, it could deter people from engaging in this activity.

Mr Humphrey: I entirely agree with the point that you made earlier about the argument that it would be driven underground being a really weak one, because the assertion that you make is that it currently is underground.

Mr A Maginness: Thank you for your contribution, which was extremely clear and representative of a wide section of workers in this country, as was democratically expressed at congress. We are grateful for your coming along and the authority with which you speak on behalf of workers.

Mr Humphrey asked all the best questions, but in relation to the aftermath of human trafficking, whether it be women, or sometimes children and men, for sexual exploitation, but also those who, as Pamela described, are in forced labour: what do we do with the victims? We can have all the laws that we want, but, at the end of the day, we have women and men who have been brought to this country under false pretences, who have been enslaved and then they are discovered: what do we do? If we send them back to the countries from which they came, we are sending them back perhaps to danger, and we are certainly not doing them a service. What do we do?

Ms Dooley: Somebody somewhere gave Rachel a chance to get out of prostitution and to do what she has done. There has to have been a chance somewhere. Most, although I am not saying all, the women in those circumstances, given the chance, could change their lives. It is about how you give them that chance. What do you do to give them a chance?

Mr A Maginness: If a person has been brought into the country illegally, they are, de jure, illegal immigrants and could be deported at any time. Should we not have some tolerance?

Mr Bunting: I thought that we dealt with that in our submission. We think that there should be an attempt to integrate those people into Northern Ireland society, because deporting them is to send them back to the poverty and exploitation that they came from. There should be addiction counselling if necessary, training, education and then integration into Northern Ireland society.

Ms Moore: As Pamela and Peter said, we should look at them as victims of crime rather than as illegal immigrants.

Mr McCartney: Thank you very much for your evidence and its clarity. Laws are in place North and South to deal with the problem, but we have not dealt with it. You have to satisfy yourself that any piece of legislation that you bring in is adequate. Peter talked about the situation in Limerick. There is no law that outlaws the purchasing of sex, yet the law that was used in that instance was adequate. Why is it not employed more? That is my first port of call; will the law have the intended effect?

People talk about the deterrent and say that laws sometime force behaviour. However, that is not an adequate reason to enact a law. People might say that it is a good idea to have a law that prohibits things in order to deter someone from doing them, but that might not be enough. Do you have anything to say about that?

Mr Bunting: It is difficult to know where you are coming from, Raymond. Equally, you could ask whether you should legislate and, if not, whether you are legislating for the exploitation of women and kids in the main. I am certain that we would not be up for that.

There are different gradations in where you come from. However, we maintain that you need strong legislation enforced by the relevant authorities. That is crucial. You could not listen to the previous witness, walk out of the room and say, "Hunky-dory, we won't do anything about it." If that testimony was not heart-wrenching and emotive to all of us who heard it, we are in the wrong place. It is up to you people to enact legislation that is robust enough to defeat the gangsterism, the human trafficking, the exploitation and the pimps who dominate that sector of our society. That is what is needed.

We are very strong on this. One of the reasons is that I am a man. I am looking at the gender balance of the Committee, and it is not great. I do not know whose fault that is, however —

The Chairperson: All the Committee staff keep us right. Do not worry.

Mr Bunting: Lucky enough. They have a gender balance problem as well, by the way, but we will not deal with that.

In all seriousness, the Criminal Assets Bureau (CAB) has come up with a solution — it is CAB in the Republic and the Assets Recovery Agency (ARA) here. That is a way of funding some of the training, the housing and the schemes. If there is a will, there is a way.

I know that it is probably the oldest profession in the world — we hear that in the biblical sense — but we need to bring in stringent legislation to stop this exploitation, greed and all the rest. I do not want to get too moralistic, because I will be very close to my friends in the DUP to my left; not politically left, but the left-hand side of the table. It is a very serious matter, and I again refer to the testimony of the previous witness. No person having heard that could walk out of here and say that they are not going to introduce stringent legislation. We have to do something to stop it. It is rooted in criminality, personal aggrandisement and gain to the detriment of women and children.

Ms Dooley: There is good legislation in the UN, the Council of Europe and the EU. I ask you to get your legal people to look at those laws and take what is good in them and put it into our law in Northern Ireland.

Mr McCartney: Peter said that we should listen to Rachel's testimony. It is there; I have met her and have read the book. However, you want what you do to have the intended effect. The easy thing for us all to do is to have a law and then sit back and cover ourselves in glory without thinking about the consequences. That is what we have to satisfy ourselves of. At times, the debate can be presented as those who are for the law saying that those who oppose it have an ulterior motive and never the twain shall meet.

Mr Wells: That is right.

Mr McCartney: Jim says, "That is right". That sums it up. Academics report that 110 people have been arrested in Sweden, three quarters of whom were never charged, because —

Mr Wells: Seven hundred. You have been there, Raymond. We were told that it was 700 when we were in Sweden.

Mr McCartney: That is precisely the point that I am making: there can be two versions of this. Some people say that the conviction rate is not very high and that, where it is high, it is done in a summary way. In other words, it does not go to open court; it is done behind closed doors, so no one beyond the arrestee and the investigators know it has happened. That is what you are weighing up. The last thing that we want to do, from our point of view, is bring in legislation and, five years down the road, we are back together saying, "That wasn't good enough. We missed this and we overlooked that. At the time, we covered ourselves in a sense of glory, but we didn't tackle the issue properly".

Ms Moore: We referred to that in our statement; we commend the Committee for the vigorousness with which you have interrogated these issues. You are absolutely right that it needs to be looked at extremely carefully. Congress has looked at it extremely carefully as well. One of the reasons why we have come here today is to state very publicly our support for clause 6. I am not an expert by any

means, but we have looked at some of the Swedish research. I know that there are different figures. We have also looked at some of the research coming out of Holland. Having deregulated the sex industry, they are having huge problems coming out of that. It is important that we look at the evidence from Sweden, but also that we look at the evidence from the Netherlands.

Mr McCartney: Do you think that the Bill's provision for support services is adequate?

Ms Moore: I guess that we never really think that support services are adequate. We endorse very comprehensive support services and resources being allocated.

Mr McCartney: I was interested, Pamela, in your story about the consultant paediatrician. Was that person charged under criminal law?

Ms Dooley: She took herself off across the water very quickly.

Mr Bunting: It is another angle in dealing with human trafficking. It was certainly very big in Dublin; during the Celtic tiger, all the Dublin 4-ites would adjourn to their coffee and leave their nanny outside the door with a pram. There was huge exploitation going on. At one stage, they were talking about bringing in legislation that would have empowered the inspectorate to go into these houses where domestic servants were being used and abused and exploited as a reference point as well. The contract between the master and the servant was blatantly abused, and those people were imprisoned, in many stages, and not paid properly. It was well in excess of the normal weekly working. There is something in that that you may wish to chat about as well.

Mr McCartney: That is one of the issues. Read the Oireachtas report: they have that sort of view of whether these two issues should be put together. You see it here, and clause 6 possibly highlights that to a degree, but it nearly looks as though we are concentrating on one aspect of human trafficking. In other words, if we cracked this particular end of it, human trafficking disappears. There is no legislation or clause 6 saying, "What do you do with someone who trafficks people for forced labour?". There does not seem to be the same —

Mr Bunting: We have examples of those around the border counties with the gangmaster legislation, but we do not have anybody in Northern Ireland who is empowered to be the inspectorate of that. We have somebody associated with Scotland who is our chief inspector. We have anecdotal evidence of massive exploitation and human trafficking into the mushroom sector around a lot of the border counties. There are here today, and they are down in the Republic tomorrow. They are in the Republic tomorrow, and they are back in Northern Ireland the next day. We need to deal with that in human trafficking as well.

Mr Elliott: Thanks very much for your presentation. I note your comments, Peter, about your belief that the Committee does not have a great balance. Anyway, that is how it is.

Mr McCartney: Rosaleen is absent today.

Mr Elliott: You focused quite a lot on support services and integration. Can you put a wee bit more detail on it? By and large, we all support greater support services, but to manage that — can you put some detail on that? It is particularly, Pamela, your issue about the integration of the people, mainly the sex workers. Obviously I take Peter's point about there being human trafficking and exploitation in other industries as well. We cannot ignore that. Clearly, that is important if you want to reintegrate, or integrate, them into society. Will you put some detail on that?

Ms Dooley: That is quite a difficult one, because organisations like NICEM and STEP are dependent on funding from different Departments, the lottery et cetera. Funnily enough, I was in NICEM this morning having a discussion on its immigration project, for which the money has just run out. The discussion was about them sitting with 700 cases.

Mr Elliott: Having 700 cases of —

Ms Dooley: Immigration. It all runs into the same thing. There is no money: it is gone. Anybody who comes in with a new case will have to be told no, and NICEM is going to have to try to farm out what it has to other organisations.

Where is that cost going to end up? It will go straight back to DSD or OFMDFM, because when NICEM is not picking it up it has to go somewhere. Therefore, we are a little bit short-sighted, because we are talking about people who do not speak the language, have difficult problems, are homeless and cannot fill in forms. Those people end up on the street, and the problem ends up back with you in a different guise. So, somewhere along the line, we need some sort of joined-up thinking that looks at the issues as a whole, as opposed to a little bit of money here for that that runs out, and a little bit of money somewhere else. This is what we are talking about today — about the victims — so we are talking about a little bit of money for the victims. Somewhere along the line, it needs to be properly funded.

Mr Elliott: Should central government take a lead on this and be more proactive? Is that what you are saying?

Ms Dooley: Yes.

Mr Bunting: We are certainly saying that there are immigrant populations across Northern Ireland. Some of them come to media interest, and others do not. The interesting thing would be some form of a working group between DEL, for training et cetera, and Health for social work, addiction counselling and issues like that. A joint group there could be charged with funding and looking after those people who have unfortunately fallen into this exploitative sector of society.

Mr Elliott: Would you like to give all of them the option of being integrated into this society?

Ms Dooley: That is a big question.

Mr Bunting: I do not know who "all of them" are. Sometimes when you say "all of them", Tom, we can get lost in the fact that there may be thousands. Do you know what I mean? The other idea is that it becomes a trail: come to Northern Ireland and get integrated. So, you need to be quite tight in one sense about that would happen. I am not really sure, and I have not thought out the solution to that particular question, to be perfectly honest with you.

Mr Elliott: That is why I ask you for some detail, to be fair.

Mr Bunting: I do not have those minutiae. We are only doing the broad thrust here within the parameters of the time we are allowed. Maybe the academics who will be addressing you later will have more detail, if their research was Northern Ireland-based, about the numbers involved. If there are less than 100 per year, we should certainly be able to finance their integration into society.

Mr Elliott: I am sure that it is not, if Pamela is saying there are 700 cases of immigration.

Mr Bunting: That is the number of people who are looking for citizenship.

Ms Dooley: That is a slightly different issue. Helping the victims of human trafficking is a different issue to helping people who are experiencing immigration issues.

Mr Elliott: I assume that you will not have an answer for my next question. Are there any costings for it?

Mr Bunting: Certainly not, Tom.

Mr Elliott: Just finally, I notice from your written submission that you are a member of the Red Light campaign. So, I assume that there is nothing in the Bill that are at odds with the Red Light campaign on.

Ms Moore: There is nothing that we are at odds with the Turn Off the Red Light campaign.

Mr Elliott: The Turn Off the Red Light campaign, sorry, yes.

Ms Moore: No. We have looked at the evidence that the Turn Off the Red Light campaign presented to the Committee, and we support the aims of that campaign, which very much focus on clause 6, obviously.

Mr Elliott: Finally, there is an issue around what is basically a broad-based amnesty in clause 8. Have you any views on that?

Ms Moore: This is where there is no prosecution for victims of human trafficking. We have not fully concluded on that. We understand that the Law Centre has some reservations, but congress has not considered that completely. I think that I will reserve judgement on that clause.

The Chairperson: Finally, and briefly, please, Mr Wells.

Mr Wells: Peter, you and I have known each other since, at least, the Boer war. You never say "Never" in politics, but I never thought I would say this: for the first time in my life, I have actually agreed with every word that the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has said.

Mr Bunting: That is progress, Jim, on your part.

Mr Wells: What is even more progress, Peter, is that you quoted from the Bible. That is a first.

Mr Bunting: We had a conversation about this before, comrade.

Mr Wells: We did, about 50 years ago. Can I just clarify something? The International Union of Sex Workers, which gave us evidence two weeks ago, is a member of the GMB, and the GMB is a member of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Does that mean, de facto, that the International Union of Sex Workers — a group with prostitutes and pimps in it — is actually a member of your organisation?

Mr Bunting: That is correct, although, I am not so sure that they have members on the island of Ireland, by the way. My difficulty is that they are certainly based in London. I remember that I spoke at a May Day rally in London many moons ago, and they were there with a banner etc. I am not so sure that they are a vibrant, working organisation in Northern Ireland. As I understand it, the GMB primarily represents workers in Northern Ireland, so I think that it would probably have a number of members from the boilermakers and vat makers in Guinness in Dublin. Even allowing for that, if it has members from this branch of its union, this is the trade union movement. It is a bit like the coalition Government, Jim. We sit and we challenge; we discuss our policies. Sometimes people lose out on the policies, and sometimes they win. The policy is agreed in a democratic nature, and that becomes the policy of congress, and that is the policy for all trade unions.

Mr Wells: It strikes me as somewhat odd that an organisation that quite openly deals in the type of trade that you and I would find so obnoxious is actually allowed —

Ms Dooley: OK, can I answer that? As a trade unionist, as chair of the Northern Ireland committee and as a woman, may I say that, if I came across a group of prostitutes on the streets of Belfast who needed organised, looked after and supported, I would be the first one to do it. I would not ask the moral question, "Oh my goodness, should they be doing this or should they not?". If they needed support and help, that is what I would give them as a trade unionist.

Mr Bunting: If they are being exploited, you represent them. I know that there is a bit of hair-splitting on this, but Pamela is right. We represent workers in all sorts of industries — some you might disagree with and some I might disagree with — but we represent them. We represent senior civil servants. Some people might have a problem with that, and some people may not. I do not, but all workers are workers. The interesting thing about it is, if we can improve their lot and if we can represent them here in this Building by putting forward ideas that come from them, we are doing the right thing.

The other point is this: I was quite interested and enthused by looking at the banner in London. When I asked the question, it was a range of people. There were people from lap dancing clubs who may not do what other people do. There are different aspects of it. Anyway, the GMB —

Mr Wells: You are trying to avoid an awkward question that is coming.

Mr Bunting: No, listen: the policy of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, as been decided through a democratic vote, is what is written in front of you.

Mr Wells: What other union has its employers in the union as well as its workers? At this meeting two weeks ago, we were told that pimps are members of the International Union of Sex Workers. How unusual is that?

Mr Bunting: It is terribly unusual, and, again, I did not hear that. I would have difficulties if gangsters were running and were part of the trade union movement — full stop.

Mr Wells: I have checked the record.

Mr Bunting: I will check the record. I want to make it clear that there are rules and regulations in all trade unions and the line is that conduct that is inimical to the interests of the members allows —

Mr Wells: Laura Lee confirmed that Douglas Fox, who was one of the leading pimps in the north-east of England, was a member of the International Union of Sex Workers.

Mr Bunting: He was not in the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

Ms Moore: I am aware of that evidence. I read it this morning, and I noted that. GMB has membership on all Congress subcommittees, including the ICTU women's committee, which has vigorously debated this issue. So, the opportunity for it to raise those issues and to represent that particular section of its membership is there if it wishes.

Mr Bunting: I have my doubts about pimps, to be fair.

The Chairperson: I have a final question, and you sort of touched on it earlier. Some people will categorise people's positions as being on the left or as being a social conservative who is motivated by religion. Lord Morrow has always characterised this as social justice and has never mentioned religion as the motivation behind this. From the perspective of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, what is the motivation behind supporting clause 6?

Mr Bunting: It is to stop the exploitation of women. It is a social justice issue. It is a rights-based issue as well. People should have the right to determine their own future. Nobody who is compos mentis decides that they want to be exploited.

The Chairperson: I thank you all very much for coming to the Committee and giving us your time.