

THE CORK WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE POLICY DOCUMENT

The Cork Women's Collective is a feminist group open to women.

This Policy Document was drawn up by the Cork Women's Collective and states our minimum demands as follows:

EMPLOYMENT:

1. Amendment of the Unfair Dismissals Act by extending protection to workers who work less than the current minimum of 21 hours per week.
2. The extension of redundancy benefit rights to workers employed in part-time work.
3. Positive measures of affirmative action to provide special training, management development, and work experience opportunity in semi-state and public service employment for women whose point of entry grade or lack of formal education affects promotion opportunities.
4. Facilities for women who leave work because of family responsibilities to continue their credits for health and pension purposes.
5. State funding for women's centres in all community areas and the provision of community-based self-help courses and adult education.
6. The extension of the Employment Equality Act to cover discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation (i.e., against lesbians or homosexuals).
7. The extension of the powers of the Employment Equality Agency to monitor the application of the Social Welfare code and provisions to ensure that there is no discrimination based on sex/marital status. The rights of an individual to state a claim in the Labour Court.
8. Provision of industrial courses with training allowances at hours to suit women with family responsibilities.
9. Provision of incentives for employers to train or send for training women in non-traditional areas of employment. Provision of incentives for employers who sponsor women for craft apprenticeships for women over 21 years (with special reference to semi-state bodies).
10. Funding for research sponsored by the Employment Equality Agency into areas of resistance to employing women.
11. Special scholarships for training in previously sex-stereotyped subjects (e.g., for women to train as woodwork and metalwork teachers and men as home economic teachers). A recruitment drive to attract women and men to train as teachers for these traditionally single sex subjects.

HEALTH & SOCIAL WELFARE:

1. A comprehensive and free health service should be available to all with the immediate extension of free dental and optical benefits.
2. Social welfare payments should be standardised at the highest rate regardless of the status (widowed, separated, deserted, unmarried) of the woman. The current arbitrary practice of long waiting times for receipt of payments be abolished.

3. Funding to continue the locally based combat poverty schemes to facilitate working class and rural women to obtain an effective say in their own lives.

SEXUALITY:

1. The repeal of all present legislation on contraception.
2. The provision of state funded and community based and controlled health centres for the provision of contraception, sterilisation and birth control advice for all and ante and post-natal care for all women.
3. State funding of feminist controlled research into safe and effective methods of birth control.
4. Provision of comprehensive educational facilities on birth control, sexuality and personal relationships in schools and community health centres.
5. The legalisation of all expression of sexuality between consenting adults.

ABORTION:

1. In recognising that the subject of abortion is an emotional one, we must nevertheless accept that it is a fact of Irish life. An estimated 30,000 Irish women have had British abortions since 1967. We believe it is time that our hypocritical and inhuman law be changed to decriminalise abortion.

FAMILY LAW:

1. The abolition of dependent domicile for married women.
2. The extension of the Family Home Protection Act to give women proprietary rights.
3. That no person be denied custody of his or her children on the grounds of sexual orientation (i.e., lesbianism or homosexuality).
4. The abolition of the status of illegitimacy and the extension of the adoption laws to cover all children.
5. Legislation to provide for the introduction of civil divorce with free legal aid for all civil law cases.

(n.b., points on the Family Law (Protection of Spouses and Children) Bill 1981, to be checked - Mary O'Donnell).

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

1. That the definition of rape be extended to include all violent sexual assault and rape within marriage.
2. That all rape cases be dealt with as a matter of priority in the courts taking into account the psychological trauma suffered by the victim.
3. That a woman's previous sexual history should never be part of the evidence in trial proceedings.
4. Adequate funding for rape crisis centres and centres for battered and homeless women.

EDUCATION:

1. Equality of access to education for all women with positive discrimination in favour of working class people.
2. Coeducation to be introduced at all levels and the immediate end to state funding of all single-sex schools.
3. Equality of access to all subjects and the removal of sexual stereotypes from educational materials, sport and career guidance.
4. The extension of the present curriculum to include women's studies courses within second and third level institutions and adult education.
5. Grants for conversion courses for women in scientific and technical subjects (with, if necessary, foundation courses to bring them to Leaving Cert level) to provide them with third level qualification.

CHILDCARE:

1. Immediate setting up of state funded child-care centres located in housing estates, shopping centres or attached to community centres and strict monitoring of standards in privately run child-care services.
2. Provision of child-care facilities at places of work and at AnCO training centres where they are not available.
3. Free access to day nurseries for everyone requiring them.
4. Increased state funding for training courses for child-care staff and the development and expansion of existing AnCO courses.
5. Payment of proper union rates to all trained child-care personnel, particularly for residential child-care workers.
6. Provision of community based social centres for parents and young children.
7. Provision for children in public places (e.g., playgrounds, high-chairs in restaurants, nappy-changing and feeding facilities).
8. Improved facilities for women and children at the Cork Labour Exchange.

RURAL WOMEN:

1. We support and encourage the full economic and legal recognition of the contribution made by working women on farms.