

## Equal Pay & the Gender Pay Gap – #PressforProgress

It was not until the 1970s that women in banking began to make inroads into being paid the same as men. There were different pay scales for bank officials and 'lady' officials; pay was lower, pensions were lower, terms and conditions were different. There were structural barriers to women's progression in banking - a blatant example was the operation of a marriage bar for women; a more subtle example was the clustering of women into jobs which were routine, poorly paid and sometimes temporary.

In 1920, Denroche the first Organising Secretary of the Irish Bank Officials' Association told the arbitration court that there was no sentiment within the IBOA against the continued employment of women in the banks, but that the Association, 'which is mainly composed of men, think that the ladies won't be satisfied if we don't say: "Equal Pay for equal service". On the other hand, if we say that, the Directors may dismiss them.'

An ongoing sore for women members from the early days of the Irish Bank Officials' Association was the position of temporary 'lady clerks'. The arbitration agreement of 1920 made huge improvements in the pay scales and conditions of men and women and was generally regarded as a clear victory for the arguments of the IBOA. However, there was an abject failure to secure adequate pay and protection for temporary 'lady clerks'. One such clerk, signing herself 'a Demented Clerkette', wrote to the Irish Banking Magazine immediately after the arbitration agreement to express her disappointment that, despite joining the union, they had been passed over:

"Is it not unjust that our needs should have been passed over?... When managers, accountants and other 'seasoned' members of staff were hedging and in doubt as to whether they should have anything to do with the Association, we boldly came forward to swell the ranks.....As a result of our endeavours, what do we receive? A crushing blow – while the 'lie-lows' and cowards step in to carry off the booty and live on the fatted calf of life for the remainder of their banking career... Oh, for a rational salary, a decent bonus and a good old spend."

The IBOA moved immediately to clarify that its position was to secure permanent status for temporary clerks. It said that it understood the disappointment of 'lady clerks', but that they were working towards finding a solution. Late in 1920 the Provincial Bank placed its temporary clerks on the same footing as its permanent ones, the other banks were much later in doing so. It took even the 'seasoned' and permanent women employees until 1966 to get a new promotional scale. The new promotional scale – Scale 3 – was introduced for women while the old Scale 2 – the 'Unpromoted Ladies Scale' – was phased out in the early 1970s.

Despite agreement for the removal of the marriage bar in banking in 1973, it was not until 1976 that the principle of equal pay between men and women doing the same work was established as a

principle in Irish banking. Cynics of both the bank and the union positions might say that it was fortuitous that this realisation came just after the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1974 and the introduction of the Employment Equality Act in 1977. However, it would be unfair to conclude that the union was not pursuing equality of pay for women working in banks. The 1970 Bank dispute had delivered an automatic right of promotion to Senior Bank Official grade for women after twelve years. John Titterington, the then General Secretary of the IBOA considered such developments as key stepping stones towards eventual acceptance of the principle of equal pay for equal work, yet the slow pace of change remained a source of frustration. In June 1971, for instance, the Irish Independent ran an article which stated that while 'a girl's chances of flying high in a banking job are improving, it would probably be better for her not to be too ambitious.'

Despite the major progress that has been made over the 100 years of the Union's history and the pursuit of gender equality in banking, there is a very real issue in relation to the gender pay gap in banking and financial services. The FSU has been to the fore in campaigning and lobbying on this issue and is supportive of moves to bring in transparent gender pay reporting and other issues to tackle this inequality. For our submission to the recent Department of Justice and Equality consultation on tackling the gender pay gap click [here](#).