

27 March 2015

Mr Gerald Nash TD
Minister of State
Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation
23 Kildare Street
Dublin 2

RE: Dunnes Stores National Dispute – Thursday 2nd April 2015

Dear Minister

You are probably aware at this stage that our 6,000 members employed in Dunnes Stores will partake in a national dispute with their employer by placing pickets on the company's 109 stores on Thursday 2nd April 2015.

Throughout all stages of this current dispute Mandate Trade Union has maintained that whilst it was and remains entirely avoidable it was none the less inevitable. For our part we have done everything one could have reasonably expected in order to find a negotiated settlement. This culminated with a Section (20) referral to The Labour Court in November 2014. Not for the first time the Court found that we had fully exercised our obligations set out in the terms of a national collective agreement negotiated with Dunnes back in 1996. Conversely the Court found that the Company had not acted in a similar fashion and further recommended that they should engage with the Union in an effort to resolve the issues in dispute. Again, not for the first time, Dunnes chose to ignore the Court's findings. Consequently, our members have now arrived at a point where they have simply no other option but to take the course of industrial action. It is clear that the pressures are significant not to alter the voluntarist nature of the Irish industrial relations system. Many argue that the current model has served the country well and that there is no persuasive case for change. Such a sweeping generalisation only serves to conveniently ignore the plight that our members in Dunnes presently find themselves in. The records show that the vast majority of Section (20) cases to The Labour Court are taken by workers or their representatives. The reasons for this are obvious and points to a reality that the voluntarist model of engagement serves one side's interests more than the other. What we need now is some initiative which, whilst it may not create the perfect balance in the system, it does have the effect of some reconfiguration in favour of workers.

It is clear to us as we head into this major dispute that one such initiative would be the speedy introduction of the long awaited proposed collective bargaining legislation. This would serve to give some hope to the Dunnes workers and the many thousands of others who find themselves in similar circumstances. Their employers cannot simply and conveniently seek protection behind a veil voluntarist disengagement particularly when the employees concerned have clearly behaved both responsibly and reasonably in pursuit of an orderly resolution.

Mandate Head Office

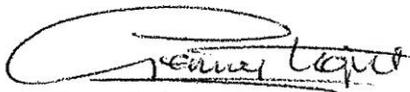
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General Secretary: John Douglas
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Therefore, we are calling on the Government to immediately announce the likely date on which the collective bargaining legislation will be introduced. I respectfully suggest that at this most difficult time our members in Dunnes deserve nothing less.

**Yours sincerely
For Mandate**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerry Light", written over a horizontal line.

**Gerry Light
Assistant General Secretary**