

4 November 2013

AN OPEN LETTER TO MR JONATHAN GLENISTER, HEAD OF M&S IRELAND

Dear Mr Glenister

For the sake of clarity and fairness I feel that I need to deal with some of the issues contained in your general correspondence dated 3rd December which was issued to all staff. I also want to address comments which are being attributed to your leadership team in the follow up discussions with staff.

Your belief that we are in some way not honouring our obligations regarding the period of notice prior to a strike occurring is simply not correct. Provision for a twenty-one day notice period as contained in the 1996 agreement refers specifically to individual store based disputes and nothing more.

Contrary to the impression that your team is attempting to portray in stores today, our current dispute does not only specifically relate to the unilateral removal by the company of the long established defined benefit scheme. It clearly also involves the attempt by management to totally and permanently remove the much valued Christmas Bonus along with reductions in Sunday and Public Holiday Premia. The most sinister part of your current proposals is the plan to make a number of our Section Manager members compulsorily redundant. I understand in conversations with staff your team has referred to the defined benefit scheme as a "Rolls Royce" entitlement. Clearly this implies that in the eyes of management this well established term of employment is seen as something of a luxury item. Let me assure you that this and other conditions of employment secured by our members through the years are not luxury in nature and are very much essential in order that they and their dependents can sustain a decent standard of living both now and in the future. This type of dismissive and inflammatory use of language on the eve of a potential industrial dispute is most regrettable and shows a distinct lack of willingness by senior management to deal with the issues before us in a constructive fashion. Clearly this behaviour only serves to worsen the situation and makes a satisfactory resolution to the current dispute more difficult to achieve.

Finally, I want to reject your false assertion that the unions have in some way been responsible for unnecessarily delaying proceedings by not engaging in meaningful negotiations. At this stage it is the company who have gone ahead and actually removed, without agreement, valuable entitlements from our members. It is the company who have threatened the permanent removal of other entitlements and indeed some of our members from their jobs. It is the company who have failed to give us full access to the accounts of the Irish business in order for a proper assessment of your position across all issues in dispute to be made. Surely the efforts and time of you and your leadership team would be better served by engaging with the unions in an effort to avert next Saturday's industrial action.

Yours sincerely
For Mandate



Gerry Light
Assistant General Secretary

Mandate Head Office
O'Lehane House
9 Cavendish Row
Dublin 1

t (01) 8746321 / 2 / 3
f (01) 8729581
e mandate@mandate.ie
w www.mandate.ie

General Secretary: John Douglas
Registered Number: 604T