



MANDATE TRADE UNION

Mr Micheál Martin TD
Taoiseach
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

GL/SB
13 January 2021

BY EMAIL AND POST
micheal.martin@oireachtas.ie

Re: **Result of Debenhams (DRIL) Ballot Vote**

Dear Taoiseach

I have been instructed to inform you that following a national ballot of our members the proposal document brokered by Mr Kevin Foley in the above regard has been rejected by a majority of ninety one per cent (91%).

Following a meeting of the national Shop Steward group held today it was unanimously decided to continue with their official dispute which is now entering its tenth month. It is not the blind desire of our members to remain on picket lines during a national health emergency in the middle of winter, but they are absolutely determined to do so until they achieve what they believe to be just and fair settlement to their dispute.

In this regard it is important that you understand what fuels this objective and why such large numbers voted so emphatically to reject Mr Foley's proposal. First, they believe once the Government conceded the principal of making €3m available for a training/education support fund at the very least this money could have been offered as a direct cash payment. There remains a very strong possibility that if a decision was to be made in the future to make the payment in this way then the dispute could be brought to an end. Second, the high level of rejection was also driven by utter despair and rejection of the Government's failure to meaningfully start the process which would allow for the introduction of new legislation that would afford greater protection to workers in the future who are unfortunate enough to find themselves in the same predicament as the ex Debenhams Irish workforce. If a more solid commitment was to be given by Government in this area coupled with the conversion of the €3m fund into a cash payment this would increase even more the likelihood of the current long running dispute being brought to an end.

Our members genuinely believe these demands are both reasonable and fair and most importantly lie within the gift of the Government to concede once there exists the political will to do so. As I pointed out to you and your officials previously the Debenhams dispute is exceptional for many reasons not least the impact of Covid-19 and therefore it requires creative

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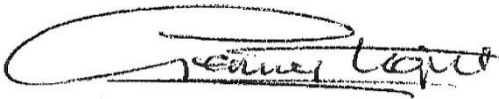
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General Secretary: Gerry Light
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and exceptional measures to bring it to an end which I presume based on previous remarks this is something that you personally desire. A case in point is how the Government of the day in similar circumstances facilitated, through the involvement of an external mediator, an ex-gratia payment to workers in the IBRC at the time of its liquidation.

In conclusion I would ask that you consider the contents of this letter seriously with a view to implementing the requests contained therein.

**Yours sincerely
For Mandate Trade Union**

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

**Gerry Light
General Secretary**