

Marlyn Glen

Equal Pay for Women : Remember, Remember the Fourth of November

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Equal Pay Day - a day of national campaigning to raise public awareness and tackle the gender pay - takes place on 4th. November this year.

Across Britain as a whole the full-time pay gap between men and women stands at around 16 per cent.

The 4th. November has been chosen for the Day of Action to demonstrate that the pay gap is equivalent to men being paid to work for all of the year while women, in effect, work for nothing for the rest of the year.

This representation of the gender pay gap poses the question of what value society places on the work of women compared with that of men.

Last year, Equal Pay Day was not on 4th. November but on 2nd. November, illustrating the sluggish rate of progress towards pay equality which, on present trends, is still decades away in the distance, 40 years on from the introduction of the groundbreaking Equal Pay Act.

However, even this 16 per cent gap in pay does not reflect the substantial differences in the manner of working between women and men.

Some 40 per cent of women in Scotland are in part-time employment, more than three times greater than the number of men.

Comparing the hourly pay of full-time men with that of part-time women in Scotland reveals a severe gender pay gap of 34 per cent, over twice the all-inclusive 16 per cent figure.

Traditionally, women are to be found in low pay occupations, and the Fair Pay Network estimate that almost two-thirds of those earning low pay are women in "essential jobs"

They spell out the likely life-long consequences of low pay for women thus:

" The correlation between the low-paid conditions endured by most women and female poverty is more than a mere coincidence.

" The high rates of female low-pay thus contribute to the fact that a woman in Britain has a 14% higher chance of being in poverty than a man

" Over the course of their lives women save less, have smaller pensions, and fewer assets than

men.

" Low hourly pay is a crucial contributor to the tough conditions which many women throughout Britain face on a daily basis. "

Even amongst the security of higher earnings and career opportunities, inequality remains strong.

The gender pay gap thrives in the, by popular perception, supposedly glitzy world of banking and financial services .

In their evidence to the High Pay Commission, UNITE the Union quoted the findings of research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission demonstrating an astonishing gender pay gap of 55 per cent in that sector.

The principal determining factors of the gender pay gap cluster round pay discrimination, undervaluing women's work, the employment penalty for mothers, and gender segregation whereby the vast majority of those in a particular occupation are women and that these occupations tend to be low paid.

These are not the excuses of the unsuccessful.

They are real deterrents which remain stubbornly in force.

The TUC quote Equal Opportunities Commission modelling research which arrived at tangible figures to quantify the pay gap.

Just over one third (36 per cent) was accounted for by differences in lifetime working patterns, with women generally spending less time in full-time jobs than men, taking breaks for family and caring.

Just under one fifth (18 per cent) resulted from gender segregation, with women in smaller, less unionised firms.

Over one third (38 per cent) arose from direct discrimination and the career choices made by men and women.

Just under one-tenth (8 per cent) came from the poorer educational qualifications of older women.

The latest attempt to take action on the gender pay gap comes from the Equalities Act, passed by the previous Labour Government, and described by the Tory *Daily Telegraph* as " the poisonous legacy of Labour's equalities legislation"

Section 78 of the 2010 Act, requires employers in the private sector with 250 or more employees to publish details of any differences in pay between male and female employees.

This requirement acknowledges that employees' right to information about the extent of the pay gap between women and men is a necessary first step towards tackling it.

Compulsory disclosure of such information was to be introduced only if commensurate progress had not been made in doing so by 2013, but the Tory-led Coalition have shown no appetite for this - nor for the radical proposals of the Fawcett Society to transfer the responsibility for closing the gender pay gap from the individual to the employer with full pay audits.

So Equal Pay Day on 4th. November will be the next big national display to raise and maintain public awareness of the gender pay gap and of the personal, moral, societal and business case to end its persistence.

One of the great campaigns of the early years of the 20th. Century was Votes for Women.

In the early years of the 21st century will the 40-year old Equal Pay for Women campaign be, at last, brought to a successful conclusion?

Gender Pay Gap : Local Data

In Dundee, using the Fawcett method of calculation, the gap currently stands at 14 per cent (Average hourly pay in full-time employment, excluding overtime, Men £14.14p, Women £12.23p.)

When the full-time pay of men is compared with the part-time pay of women, the gap stretches out to 30 per cent in Dundee.

(Average hourly pay rate in full-time employment , excluding overtime , Men in Dundee £14.14

Average hourly rate in part-time employment , excluding overtime, Women in Dundee £9.99p)

Links :

Marlyn Glen's website : <http://www.marlynglen.org.uk>

Dundee Labour : <http://www.dundeelabour.com>