

Press Release: 28 September, 2009

Justice for Magdalenes reacts to the Minister for Education, Mr. Batt O'Keeffe's expression of regret for any offense caused in referring to survivors as the "former employees" of Ireland's Magdalene laundries.

In a letter to Mr. Tom Kitt, TD, dated 23 September 2009, the Minister for Education expressed "deep regret" for earlier referring to women who worked in the Magdalene Laundries as "former employees." His brief letter concluded, "I fully acknowledge that the word 'workers' would have been more appropriate." A copy of Mr. O'Keeffe's letter is attached to this press release.

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) acknowledges the Minister's expression of regret. However, JFM also asserts that the substitution of one word for another—namely "workers" for "employees"—does not materially alter the content nor the intent of the Minister for Education's original letter to Deputy Kitt (dated 4 September 2009) in which he rejected calls for a distinct redress scheme for survivors of the laundries institutions. Moreover, JFM directs the Minister to the State's Constitutional obligation to protect "workers," in particular very young "workers," from abuse and exploitation:

The State shall endeavour to ensure that the strength and health of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children shall not be abused and that citizens shall not be forced by economic necessity to enter avocations unsuited to their sex, age or strength (*Article 45, sec. 4, sub. 2*).

JFM also announces that it has written to An Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen, TD, in light of the State's rejection of our calls for a distinct redress scheme for Magdalene survivors. Our letter requests that the Taoiseach's office coordinate a formal response from a number of government departments that we assert were complicit in referring women and children to the Magdalene institutions. JFM anticipates that Mr. Tom Kitt, TD, will table a Parliamentary Party question concerning the evidence put forth in our letter in the coming week. A copy of our letter is attached to this press release.

Justice for Magdalenes again challenge the State to respond formally to our letter, to offer a meaningful apology to survivors, and to introduce legislation that establishes a distinct redress scheme for the victims and survivors of Ireland's Magdalene laundries.

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Contact: Mari Steed, 1-215-589-9329, mari_tee@yahoo.com
James Smith, 1-617-552-1596, smithbt@bc.edu
www.magdalenelaundries.com

Justice for Magdalenes seeks to promote and represent the interests of the Magdalene Women, to respectfully promote equality and seek justice for the women formerly incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries and to seek the establishment / improvements of support/advisory/re-integration services provided for survivors.