

Order of Business - Seanad Eireann - 28th June 2012

I was a little delayed in attending the House this morning because I was attending the launch of a very important conference in Dublin Castle, the conference of the European Gay Police Association. The Garda Commissioner, Mr. Martin Callinan, spoke very effectively, while the Minister for Justice and Equality, Deputy Alan Shatter, spoke extremely well. I compliment the extraordinarily courageous gardaí who have arranged the conference. It is only the sixth such conference. It was given a great welcome and superbly organised. There is a very large number of delegations from countries across Europe, one of which includes superintendent Herman Renes.

It is worth putting on the record that Sergeant Paul Franey did this country proud. One reason I mention the conference is it is an historic event. Another is to ask the Leader to keep an eye out for the reforming legislation to which the Minister for Justice and Equality, Deputy Shatter, used this important conference to give a public commitment as a matter of urgency. This is the matter that troubled many Members, including myself and Senator Bacik, the leader of the Labour Party in the House, namely, the question of children being excluded from the considerations of the Civil Partnership and Certain Rights and Obligations of Cohabitants Act 2010, about which the Minister, Deputy Shatter, spoke. It is extremely heartening that he stated this was being brought to the Government as a matter of urgency. This was stated in front of representatives of the police forces of Europe and it is important that Members maintain discreet pressure to ensure that this happens. One point

by which I was a little taken aback was that in the list of human rights areas to be protected, sexual orientation came last. I understand one of the first was the Traveller community. As the person who introduced those measures and fought first of all against the former Minister for Justice, Gerard Collins, who refused to accept them and then, curiously, Ray Burke, who did accept them, I note they work together. Statistically, the number of gay people both in the Garda and in the general community is higher than in any of the other groups, perhaps with some exceptions. However, it certainly comprises a large group and should be moved up to be perceived as a priority.

Finally, I listened with amusement to the political programme, "The Late Debate", on RTE radio last night, because the level of narcissism between politicians, the media and the broadcasters reached such a level that it actually blew the fuse on my transistor radio. Consequently, I was spared from listening to the end of the programme. However, I refer to the degree of self-congratulation and the completely nonsensical and unsustainable idea that the media consistently deal with issues, rather than stories and personalities. I am sorry my radio broke down because I would have liked a further laugh at the end of the day. It always is good to go to sleep on a laugh and the contributors certainly provided that. However, it was a laugh at the narcissism and lack of reality of those who pose as commentators.