



SENATOR
MARIE SHERLOCK

Seanad Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Commissioner Drew Harris,
An Garda Síochána Headquarters,
Phoenix Park,
Dublin 8.
D08 HN3X

24th April, 2021

Dear Commissioner Harris,

I write with regards to events that took place at the loading bay of Debenham's shop in the Illac centre, Dublin 1 in the early hours of Friday 24th April.

I am alarmed to learn of the scale of the Garda presence with those present suggesting that there was between 50-60 gardaí in attendance. I am also deeply concerned about the heavy handed nature of policing and the manhandling of former workers in an disproportionate and utterly excessive manner.

Furthermore, it is alleged that there was a garda escort for an unmarked truck with no registration plate away from the premises, which is totally unacceptable. No company should be above the law- road traffic or otherwise in this country.

Commissioner, you are well aware of the Debenhams issue at this stage and the situation of the former workers seeking to get a fair redundancy payment. I find it extraordinary, that in the circumstances, that An Garda Síochána would allow itself be drawn into the situation on the scale and nature that it did. There was ample public information available to suggest that the former workers outside the Debenhams premises were in no way violent.

In addition, I understand that it was known to the liquidators that the former Debenhams workers were planning to ballot members on the €3m training fund within the next two weeks.

Commissioner, I appreciate that An Garda Síochána have a specific job to do but there must be a balance between the rights of businesses and the protection, safety and dignity of workers. Unfortunately, based on the reports to me, this was lacking on Friday morning.

There are thousands more redundancies most likely due to take place over the coming months and with that the prospect of workers seeking to vindicate their entitlement by means of a sit in or blockade. It is absolutely incumbent on An Garda Síochána that proportionate, constructive and sensitive policing practise is applied to any of these situations. The public will not tolerate apparent favour been shown to property owners and businesses in these circumstances.

Yours Sincerely,

Senator Marie Sherlock
Labour Party Spokesperson on Employment Affairs