

Unite pays tribute to Walter Cullen



Walter Cullen, whose retirement from Trade Union Unite was marked on Friday last.

Trade Union Unite marked the retirement of long-serving officer Walter Cullen last Friday with a function attended by over 100 people from workplaces across the country.

Mr Cullen was first appointed as an officer with Unite 28 years ago and also worked with the union at a national level for six years, as the Regional Co-Ordinator.

Amongst the speakers on the night was Sean Maher, formerly Waterford Crystal, who described the work undertaken by Walter and Unite in bringing the fight for pension justice to the European Court of Justice as “unparalleled in Irish industrial history”.

Sean spoke of the many occasions that Walter – himself a former cutter – had supported the Waterford Crystal workers over the years – ‘in good times and bad’ – during prosperity, the strike, the closure and the pensions fight.

Sean Kelly, who MC’d the event, presented Walter with a piece of glass from the Irish Handmade Glass Company made by Tony Hayes, son of the late Tom Hayes.

At one point in Walter’s career, Sean said, Unite would have had about 6,500 members in the Waterford and Clonmel area.

“Every single case was approached by Walter in the same manner, treated as being of the utmost importance, regardless of how many other cases he was handling at that time,” he added. Sean also thanked Unite staff Denise Kelly and Breda Ellis for their ‘immense help’ in organising the retirement party.

Other speakers on the night included Walter’s daughter Solange, Tommy Hogan, chair of the local branch, Pat Coady from the Carrick branch and Jimmy Kelly, the union’s Irish Secretary, all of whom paid glowing tributes to Walter’s negotiating skills and

interest in every case he handled. Several presentations were made to Walter by local branch members.

A number of old photos were also shown of Walter at a young age, causing great amusement amongst his colleagues, family and friends.