



# Dr Máire O'Shea Support Campaign (London Area)

c/o Irish In Britain Representation Group,  
Box 3, 136 Kingsland High Street, London E8

Dr Máire O'Shea, a 65-year-old consultant psychiatrist who is well known for her work in Irish political and community affairs, was arrested on 5th January under the Prevention of Terrorism Act and is now facing the possibility of spending the rest of her life in jail, having been charged with 'conspiracy to cause an explosion in the U.K.'. She strongly maintains her innocence.

Máire O'Shea had been on holiday in Ireland and learnt that her home in Birmingham had been raided by the police. She contacted the Dublin government and also obtained coverage in the media while friends in England got in touch with MPs, councillors and the British press. On her return from Ireland she was arrested and then charged four days later with 'conspiracy'.

Although suffering from arthritis and bronchitis she was remanded in solitary confinement for a further four weeks before being released on bail. She was one of 13 people detained at Christmas and New Year under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA). Five of those were similarly charged. One man, William Gallagher, after four months in jail has been released with all charges withdrawn.

## CONSPIRACY LAWS

Any charge following detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act has to be treated with suspicion, particularly charges under the conspiracy laws, such as Máire's. The laws of conspiracy were used extensively against the emerging labour movement in the nineteenth century. More recently Peter Hain (Anti-Apartheid Movement), the Shrewsbury pickets (building workers' strike 1971), the Bradford Twelve and currently 130 striking miners have all been charged under these laws.

In shifting the responsibility onto the defendant of proving her innocence, rather than onto the prosecution to prove guilt, the conspiracy laws are eminently suitable for political trials where the police have little or no evidence against the accused.

## MAIRE O'SHEA IS INNOCENT

Máire has worked in the National Health Service for over 30 years, most recently as a consultant psychiatrist in Birmingham. She has always been politically active both in her union ASTMS and other legitimate political organisations.

Máire has received support from 8 Trades Councils, 53 MPs and MEPs, and over 120 Councillors. Numerous Constituency Labour Parties, women's groups, the National Conference of Labour Women, black groups, the Young Liberals and many Irish community organisations are supporting her.

### ASTMS (IRISH POST, JUNE 22, 1985)

An emergency resolution pledging support for Dr. Máire O'Shea was passed unanimously by her union, ASTMS, at its annual conference in Harrogate.

The resolution, which was proposed by Birmingham, reads: "Conference notes the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and conspiracy laws against trade unionists and deplors their use against Dr. Máire O'Shea, an ASTMS member. The conference therefore commits the union to giving every possible assistance to Dr. O'Shea and calls for an ongoing campaign against the PTA and the conspiracy laws, involving the union at every level, including the parliamentary committee".

# THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM ACT

The PTA was introduced as an 'exceptional' and temporary measure by the last Labour government in 1974 and has been renewed by successive governments. For the last eleven years it has cast a shadow of fear over the Irish community in Britain. Over 6,000 people have been arrested under it. Only 2.5% were ever charged and less than half of these convicted, some as a result of blatant frame-ups.

In one year alone, 1983, the total number of people stopped and 'checked' under the PTA was 44,906 with only 0.4% detained. Arrested persons go through a terrifying ordeal often lasting up to seven days and nights, alone in a windowless cell. They are usually refused access to a solicitor or contact with relatives, interrogated for hours on end, deprived of adequate food and sleep, forcibly fingerprinted and photographed, strip-searched and made to feel degraded.

Physical assault and threats of deportation or prison are used to coerce detainees. The PTA is a legal cover for mass surveillance and intimidation.

The present Tory government has extended the PTA to refer to supporters of liberation causes throughout the world. Last year a SWAPO cultural delegation and an anti-nuclear supporter were detained under the Act.

## DROP THE CHARGE

Dr O'Shea has been sacked from her job and she had been denied legal aid. Her defence costs could exceed £60,000. The Dr Maire O'Shea Support Committee exists to raise this urgently needed money and to publicise her case because Dr O'Shea must be defended and all charges must be dropped. **It is not a crime to be Irish; it is not a crime to speak out publicly for British withdrawal from Ireland.**

### HERE'S WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- 1 WRITE LETTERS calling for the charges against Máire to be dropped to:
  - a) Your MP or MEP, c/o House of Commons, Westminster, London SW1.
  - b) The Home Secretary, The Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1.
  - c) The Attorney General, The Royal Court of Justice, London WC2A 1LL.
- 2 GET SIGNATURES on the National Petition.
- 3 GET INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS TO TAKE UP THE CASE, e.g. Councillors, Trade Union and Labour Party Branches, Women's Groups, Law Centres, Community and Ethnic Organisations. Invite speakers from the campaign. Use the Information Pack on Máire O'Shea (50p each including p&p) which contains a model resolution.
- 4 ORGANISE DONATIONS AND BENEFITS for the Defence Fund.
- 5 HELP ORGANISE THE CAMPAIGN by coming to the London Area meetings. Contact the address above for details.

I/We wish to affiliate to the campaign (charge: £20)/ .....

I/We enclose a donation of .....

Name .....

Address .....

Phone number ..... Organisation .....

Cheques should be made payable to 'Dr Máire O'Shea Support Campaign (London Area)'.