

Travellers to Lobby Parliament

Liberty, (formerly the National Council for Civil Liberties) in conjunction with various Traveller's groups are organising a lobby of Parliament to protest against the Government's proposals to reform the 1968 Caravan Sites Act.

The lobby will take place in the House of Commons' Grand Committee Room on **Wednesday 10th March between 2.30 - 4.30 p.m.** and will also mark the launch of Liberty's *"Charter of Human Rights for Travellers"*.

When the Government published its consultation paper on the reform of the Act in the autumn of last year many of those who responded believed that the already precarious rights and freedoms of Travellers and Gypsies were being threatened further.

The main thrust of the consultation document appears to be to strengthen eviction powers against Travellers, criminalise Travellers who endeavour to maintain their traditional lifestyle and force Travellers off sites, off the road and into houses.

The document does not address the failure of local councils to provide sites and many Traveller's groups have responded to the consultation document pointing out that if the 1968 Act had been properly implemented and enforced, with each local authority in England and Wales providing sites that they were supposed to then the problem of illegal camping would not be the problem that it is perceived to be.

Some groups pointed out that the Government's own figures published in the Consultation document acknowledged that **only 38% of English local authorities have "deemed to have provided sufficient pitches"**.

How You Can Help

- Contact Tanya Shinon at Liberty for more information about the Lobby of Parliament and a copy of the Liberty campaign pack. "Liberty", 21 Tabard St., London. SE1 4LA. Tel. (071) 403 3888
- Attend the Lobby of Parliament on 10th March
- Write to your MP with your objections to the proposals contained in the Government's Consultation Paper on Reform of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 and ask him/her to meet with you if you are attending the lobby on the 10th (a sample letter is enclosed inside this edition of the newsletter)
- Write to the Home Secretary and ask him why local authorities are not providing enough sites as required by law
- Write to your local authority and ask them if they are providing sufficient sites within their area; also ask them to oppose the Government's proposals

Racial Discrimination against Irish People - A New Initiative

Discrimination against Irish people in Britain has a long history. Yet, it is considered that the actual number of reported incidences where formal complaint has been made under the appropriate legislation has not reflected the magnitude of that experience.

There is an increasing awareness that the Irish, as a recognised ethnic minority, have recourse to the protection and enforcement of the Race Relations Act (1976) to challenge anti-Irish discrimination, particularly in relation to employment, education, housing and accommodation and provision of goods, facilities and services.

A number of Industrial Tribunals have established case-law where discrimination against Irish people seeking employment was proven on the grounds of race, national origin and racial stereotyping:

- **Killian v. Boots 1989** - refused interview because she was Irish and therefore likely to get homesick and run off. Discrimination on grounds of race proven.
- **O'Driscoll v. The Post Office 1990** - during the interview, Mr. O'Driscoll asked about his nationality and "did he have a problem with drink?" Decision that complaint about racial stereotyping was well founded.
- **Chapman v. STC 1990** - worked as a temp. secretary; offered permanent post; offer was later withdrawn because of her Irish nationality and background caused security clearance problems. Unlawful discrimination on grounds of national origin proven.

In a new initiative, AGIY is working to increase awareness amongst the Irish community of how to challenge and complain about Racial Discrimination.

AGIY is producing a comprehensive pamphlet which will provide information on defining racial discrimination, describe Irish people's experience of racial discrimination and outline people's rights under the Race Relations Act.

The leaflet will also provide information on what the actual complaints procedure involves and a contact list on where to get further advice and information will also be included.

The leaflet will be aimed generally at Irish people in Britain, at Irish community organisations, at Irish advice, welfare and housing services and also at mainstream service providers who work with Irish people.

AGIY also intend to initiate a series of workshop/seminars for Irish community advice/welfare workers who could assist Irish complainants in challenging racial discrimination.

Standard Case of Racism?

Thursday, 18 February, 1993

Donkey riddle

IRELAND'S foremost thoroughbred racing donkey, Toby from Co Antrim, has disappeared. Although the beast is close to the end of his track career, he is valued at around £1,200 because of his stud prospects. There's concern that the chestnut-coloured star will end up in Dublin, home of the Irish parliament. Obviously identification might then be tricky.

Featured above is an editorial comment which was taken from the London "Evening Standard" on 18th February 1993. The article has already provoked a storm of criticism from individuals and Irish community groups.

On 19th February AGIY raised our concerns with the Irish Ambassador in London and contacted Mr. Dick Spring T.D., the Tanaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Mr. David Andrews T.D., Minister for Defence to ask them to raise our concerns about the "Evening Standard" editorial with their respective British Government counterparts.

Groups or individuals wishing to register their objections to such editorial comment could also raise the matter with the "Evening Standard" itself, the Press Complaints Commission and the Commission for Racial Equality.

Irish Groups Lobby Department of Health

Irish community groups are currently attempting to meet with ethnic minority advisers at the Department of Health to ensure that the National Health Service includes an Irish ethnic category in its forthcoming monitoring programme which is due to commence on 1st April 1993.

The Irish groups have recently met officials from the Commission for Racial Equality about this issue and the CRE have indicated that they may be willing to meet again to discuss the implications of the Irish Groups' request.

Benefits Agency to Listen to Irish Concerns

The Benefits Agency, the Government body responsible for administering social security benefits have agreed to meet with AGIY on 10th March to discuss the problems experienced by Irish people attempting to claim benefits.

The meeting follows previous representation made by AGIY and members of the London Irish Youth Forum to both the Commission for Racial Equality and the Benefits Agency over the past six months.

A dossier of cases illustrating the difficulties experienced by Irish people attempting to claim benefit as a result of stringent identification checks has already been presented to the Benefits Agency and these will be discussed in more detail at the forthcoming meeting with officials from the Equal Opportunities Division of the Customer Services Branch of the Benefits Agency.

If your agency have any recent cases which indicate some of the difficulties experienced by Irish people claiming benefit please get in touch with Joan or Dave before the 10th March so that they we can raise them on a strictly confidential basis; we would not need to know the client's name, address or any personal information, just the circumstances surrounding the difficulties making the claim.

AGIY to Publish Educational Equivalents Information

A common problem reported by numerous welfare agencies providing services to young Irish emigrants is that many young Irish people are unsure whether they have the necessary qualifications when they apply for jobs in Britain. They are for example unaware of the English equivalent to their Irish qualification. This problem is also compounded by employers' mis-understanding of respective educational equivalents.

In AGIY's own research into the education, training and employment situation of young Irish people in London which was published in *"Over Here - Young Irish migrants in London"* in 1991 the study revealed that there was a clear mismatch between the quality of employment obtained and young Irish people's level of educational attainment.

70% of those surveyed had for example obtained their Leaving Certificate but 60% were employed in office/shop work and a further 23% were employed in unskilled manual work. Only 7% were employed in professional occupations.

As a response to these issues AGIY are currently preparing an information leaflet which examines how Irish and British qualifications can be compared.

It will contain information on:

second level, third level and vocational education and should be of interest to young people, job seekers, the Careers Service, employers and advice centres. Watch this space for further information about the publication of the leaflet.

Kilburn Irish Youth Festival

The seventh Kilburn Irish Youth Festival will take place on Sunday 18th July 1993 at Grange Park, Kilburn. The Festival planning group are looking for volunteers to help them organise the event. If you are able to spare some time and would like to help please contact:

The Kilburn Irish Youth Project,
c/o Kingsgate Community Centre,
107 Kingsgate Road,
London. NW6 2JH.
Tel. (071) 372 1764.

New Living in London Programme

The Safe Start Foundation have recently announced the dates for their new Living in London Programme which is targeted specifically at: new arrivals to London (up to 12 weeks) who are currently unemployed and seeking long term employment opportunities. Participants should be registered for unemployment benefit or income support.

The Programme consists of a one week series of seminars from Mon - Fri (9.30 am - 4.30 pm). A comprehensive follow up service, based at the Safe Start office is available to all course participants in subsequent weeks. This includes pro-active job search and direct introduction/placement with employers and where appropriate with training providers.

The Programme is run in conjunction with Employment Services who act as a point of referral through the Job Centres New Claimants Advisers. Direct referral can also be made by contacting the Safe Start office.

The Programme will be held at the Safe Start Foundation on the following dates:

March 8 - March 12; March 22 - March 26.

For more information contact:

Ruth McKeeman, Co-ordinator,
Living in London Programme,
Safe Start Foundation,
189 The Broadway,
West Hendon,
London. NW9 7DD.
Tel. (081) 203 7788.

Forum File

Forum Fee

The majority of agencies have now subscribed to the London Irish Forum and "AGIY-INFO" for the current year which runs from September 1992 to September 1993.

There are however several subscriptions outstanding so if you would like to continue to be a member of the Forum and/or wish to continue to receive "AGIY-INFO" please return the enclosed form with the appropriate cheque payment as soon as possible.

Diary Date

The next meeting of the **London Irish Youth Forum** will be held on:

Thursday 25th March 1993 at 2.30 p.m.

in the London Irish Centre,

50 Camden Square,

London. NW1.

FUNDED BY



"AGIY-INFO" is produced bi-monthly by the Action Group for Irish Youth (AGIY)

AGIY is funded by the London Boroughs Grants Scheme, the Irish Government and the City Parochial Foundation.