



Irish in Britain Representation Group (IBRG)

Cumann Ionadaíochta na n-Éireannach sa Bhreatain

Policy on Anti-Irish Racism

Racism is a practice which assumes innate superiority by a dominant people or nation towards a subject or formerly subject people or nation and which also assumes the innate inferiority of the subject people. Racism can be seen as a system based on power relationships between the oppressor and oppressed groups.

IBRG recognises that the imperialist and colonial policies of Britain have been and continue to be the primary determinant of racism in this country.

In Britain this racism is endemic and is interwoven into the culture, history and traditions of Britain. The structures and institutions arising from this ideology have been created by Britain both at home and in its colonies to maintain its colonial domination and have developed forces intended to divide and thereby rule those subjected to its colonial ambitions. This racism and division is also reflected in the policies and practices of the labour and trade union movement in Britain from whom oppressed groups should be able to expect complete support in their struggle for equal rights.

Both the denial of the difference between Irish and British culture and the denial of the existence of anti-Irish racism has resulted from a history of colonialism and a policy of stripping Ireland of its resources and culture. This leads to pressure on Irish people to assimilate and the appropriation as British of successful Irish people and the emphatic identification as Irish of any aspect of Irish culture or people perceived as negative.

Anti-Irish racism in Britain takes a number of forms. These include discrimination in terms of education, employment, housing, health care, culture and freedom to play a full part in the social and political life of country without fear of harassment or abuse from individuals or the security forces. Whether a person who identifies as Irish is obviously Irish or not, they see and hear all around them evidence of the belief that they and their people are inferior to the English.

IBRG is profoundly opposed to anti-Irish racism in all aspects of British society. IBRG stands for the right of every Irish person to absolute equality in terms of the goods which society has the power to dispense or withhold. IBRG also stands for the right of every Irish person to complete pride in their Irishness and the right to lead their lives unhindered by stereotypes and prejudice. No Irish child should grow up hearing that the Irish are stupid, violent, alcoholic, unreliable, superstitious, objects of fun, etc. and having to fight against internalising such stereotypes.

IBRG therefore demands for the Irish in Britain:

- a) Equal rights to education at all levels which fosters in each individual a sense of pride in her/his heritage and identity.
- b) Equal opportunities in employment with adequate pay, safe conditions and the right to organise.
- c) Enough decent housing at affordable cost.
- d) Adequate and appropriate health care.
- e) The right to participate in and have resources allocated to cultural activities reflecting Irish heritage.
- f) Freedom from discrimination and abuse.
- g) The right to play a full part in the social and political life of this country without fear of harassment and imprisonment by the security forces.
- h) Adequate and unbiased coverage of Irish issues in the media, the provision of programmes of Irish interest.
- i) An end to the institutional practices in employment, housing, education, health and social services which have caused disadvantage to our community.

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IBRG believes that anti-Irish racism should be seen in the context of racism against all groups. The struggle against anti-Irish racism is part of the wider struggle against racism.

IBRG is resolved to challenge anti-Irish racism wherever it is met. IBRG will encourage and support its members and all other Irish people to develop their awareness of anti-Irish racism and their confidence in challenging it. IBRG will campaign to eliminate anti-Irish racism. IBRG will work with other ethnic minority groups on the elimination of all forms of racism.

Irish Travellers face dual racism based on both anti-Irish racism and anti-Traveller prejudice.

The Irish should be recognised as an ethnic minority group and included in all equal opportunities policies and programmes. Such recognition should be based on the definition of the Irish as "those persons who originate from Ireland or whose forbears originate from Ireland and who consider themselves to be Irish."