



# I.B.R.G. HARINGEY

## IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

c/o Hornsey Library,  
Haringey Park,  
Hornsey N.8.  
348 3351 Ex3.  
7th February 1986.

Dear Friends,

It would appear that W.H.Smith are responding positively to our continued pressure in that they are "reconsidering" their stock policy regarding the whole range of 'joke' books.

The whole saga has received a good deal of coverage and support notably from the Irish Post and Haringey Council's leader Mr Bernie Grant.

Not only have we contented ourselves with 'paper' action but on December 14th Haringey I.B.R.G., supported by members of other Irish Community Groups staged a picket and disrupted trade at W.H.Smith's in Wood Green London N22.

The Wood Green branch no longer stocks the offensive joke books, but whilst this can be seen as a temporary victory it is only a small one in view of the many branches of W.H.Smith that still find space for these racist books on their shelves.

It is in this context that we must realize that victory can only be truly claimed when W.H.Smith irrevocably change their policies and cease the sales of these offensive 'joke' books nationwide.

This will not come about by just a few people in Haringey and elsewhere criticising W.H.Smiths racist stance and their policies of selling material, that denigrates Irish people by reducing them to negative stereotypes. Although W.H.Smith have told us that that they have received letters of support for these anti-Irish joke books from within the Irish community. We maintain that to support this questionable form of humour, is to promote the same negative stereotypes and poor self image that Britain has continually employed as a means of justifying it's interference in Irish affairs for the past 800 years.

cont/.....

W.H.Smith & sons have repeatedly hidden behind their defensive statement "We are not censors". In view of the nature of the many controversies surrounding their stock over the past years, (Gay News, Private Eye etc) few people could take this defence seriously.

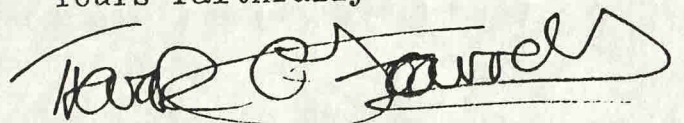
As for their suggestions that we should complain to the publishers, ( Futura/Macdonald fiction, Maxwell House, Worship Street EC2. owned by Robert Maxwell ) it should be obvious that these books would not be printed unless there were large commercial outlets available who were prepared to sell them for a profit, i.e W.H.Smith & Sons Ltd.

We therefore ask groups and individuals, to write to the chairperson of W.H.Smith & Sons Ltd, Mr Simon Hornby at;

Strand House  
7 Holbein Place  
London SW1W 8NR,

urging him to cease W.H.Smith & Sons' insidious anti Irish racism.

Yours faithfully



Trevor O'Farrell

( Haringey IBRG coordinator )



# W. H. Smith rebuffs Irish complaint

The newsagency chain W. H. Smith is to continue selling anti-Irish books, despite a complaint by Bernie Grant, the leader of Haringey borough council in north London.

Cllr. Grant invited the management of Smith's to meet him to discuss its policy of stocking books such as *The Official Irish Joke Book* and *The Irish Kama Sutra*.

But now he has received a letter from the company's managing director, Malcolm Field, who says: "Part of our responsibility as booksellers is to fulfil the legitimate demands of our customers and part is that we do not set ourselves up as censors."

"While we have no wish to cause offence, it is inevitable that all viewpoints cannot be pleased all the time. For example, at the same time as your Irish representatives accuse us of being racist, we are being criticised by the opposite end of the spectrum for selling the *Institute of Race Relations* book, *How Racism Came To Britain*".

The letter goes on to say that the Irish joke books "are simply books of humour and of course humour is a matter of personal taste. Some may not find these books amusing, but very many others, including many Irish people, find them harmlessly funny".

Malcolm Field also claims to have received telephone calls from several Irish people urging Smith's to continue stocking the joke books, with one woman stating that "the Irish are proud of their sense of humour".

Cllr. Grant wrote to Smith's after members of the Irish community in Haringey complained to Haringey Council. The council's ethnic minorities committee then considered the issue and condemned the production and distribution of racist literature, with specific reference to "so-called" joke books, posters and such like which "belittle and ridicule Irish people and Irish culture".

Expressing his disappointment at the reaction by Smith's, Cllr. Grant said: "Racism against the Irish is just as insidious and evil as against any other ethnic group. The fact that its usual form is so-called jokes means that a lot of people might not take it as seriously as they should. Haringey Council is totally opposed to racism in all its forms and we shall be doing what we can to ensure that the sale of this offensive material stops".

## Books chain rejects criticism

The IBRG has accused the newsagency chain W. H. Smith of "promoting racist material" by continuing to stock anti-Irish joke books, despite repeated complaints from the Irish community, writes CAROLYN QUINN.

The IBRG wrote to W. H. Smith requesting that the company review its policy of stocking such books as *The Official Irish Joke Book* and *The Irish Kama Sutra*, claiming that they degrade and insult Irish people.

But, in a reply, W. H. Smith's managing director, Malcolm Field, says that they do not intend withdrawing the books from their branches. He recalls his reply at the close of last year to a similar request from Bernie Grant, the leader of Haringey Borough Council in north London. "There has been no change in our views since I wrote that letter", he says.

His letter to the IBRG goes on: "I should perhaps add that the sales of these books clearly indicate that there is a public demand for them, notwithstanding the fact that they are not on sale at all our branches, very little shelf space is devoted to them and we do not actively promote them. Our role as booksellers is to try and make available books for which there is a

public demand. Perhaps you would think it appropriate to address your complaint to the publishers of these books, rather than to the booksellers?"

In its complaint, the IBRG asked why W. H. Smith is not stocking Liz Curtis' book *Nothing But The Same Old Story*, which deals with the history of anti-Irish racism in the British media. Malcolm Field has replied saying that they have no knowledge of the book but that if the publisher approached them they would consider stocking it. Responding to the reply from W. H. Smith, the IBRG's PRO, Patrick Reynolds, says they will continue their campaign to have racist Irish joke books banned and are urging all concerned Irish organisations and individuals to write to Malcolm Field at W. H. Smith's headquarters in London's Holbein Place.

"W. H. Smith say that they do not set themselves up as censors. That will be news to many. We accuse them of being partial to books which stereotype and degrade Irish people, while ignoring the classics of Irish literature", Patrick Reynolds said.

## Craven Irish 'comics'

I have lived in this country for nigh on 50 years and have heard many anti-Irish jokes. Whilst I resent them, I have learned to put up with them, ignore them or, when needs be, reciprocate with an anti-English joke.

But what I find hard to take is the increasing number of Irish so-called comics who cravenly seek popularity with English audiences by denigrating their own.

What such people should ask themselves is: when did they last see an English comic denigrating the English?

MICHAEL F. O'FLYNN  
29 Stanton Road,  
Southmead,  
Bristol.

## We have the message, but we won't deliver it

With reference to the anti-Irish drivel of Labour MP Joe Ashton and the selling of offensive Irish joke books by W.H. Smith (your reports of November 30), it must be said that the Irish have never effectively stood up for themselves in such areas.

No columnist, even in *The Star*, would denigrate the Jewish community in such a manner. And let's not forget what happened when British television screened *The Death of a Princess*. The then Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, had to pull out all the stops in an effort to placate the Arabs — and rightly so.

There are sufficient Irish in Joe Ashton's Bassetlaw constituency to convey to him their displeasure and give him to understand that they may express it in electoral terms. But will they?

Likewise, hundreds of thousands of Irish people in Britain each week made purchases in W. H. Smith shops. Why don't they protest on seeing on sale items which denigrate them? If they did so in sufficient numbers and made plain that they would be making no more purchases in W. H. Smith until those items were removed, then you can bet on it that those books would soon be taken from the shelves. Such is commerce.

We Irish always seem to have the message but not the will to deliver it. Hence the present state of things.

P. S. MAC GIOLLA CUMGHALL  
11 Sherwood Road,  
Worksop,  
Notts.



Why

We are

NOT

Laughing...



# BECAUSE RACISM ISN'T FUNNY

Despite numerous appeals by members of the Irish Community and by the Leader of Haringey Council, calling for the withdrawal of Racist material, W.H. Smith have continued to sell so-called Irish 'joke' books.

The roots of all kinds of racism lie in the misguided belief that one 'race' of people is culturally and intellectually superior to another.

In fact what it reveals is a deep rooted ignorance and an unwillingness to accept other cultures.

## W H SMITHS MAKE MONEY OUT OF RACISM

The Anti-Irish racism portrayed in these books is no less vicious than racism used against Blacks, Asians etc.

Anti-Irish prejudice is deeply embedded in English culture and is a direct result of the Imperialistic relationship between the two countries.

This tradition continued today by politicians, journalists, cartoonists and TV comedians serves to obscure the truth of Britain's role in Ireland and sets back the prospect of a solution.

This isn't a case of lacking a sense of humour. What lies behind these books is nothing less than Racist ideology, and the inability to accept a multi-cultural Britain. Furthermore it is used as a justification for Britain's continual interference in Ireland.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP US COMBAT THIS 'INSIDUOUS' FORM OF RACISM.

--- Boycott these offensive books

--- Make your views known to the manager of W.H. Smith either in person, by letter, or by phone (01-889 0221), demanding the withdrawal of the books.

Haringey Irish in Britain Representation Group, Box 20,  
Reading Matters, 10 Lymington Ave, N22 (GLC funded).



17th November 1985

The Manager  
W H Smith & Son LTD  
Head Office  
7 Holbein Place  
London SW1

Dear Sir

ANTI-IRISH RACISM

I am writing to you at the request of Irish representatives of the community in Haringey with regard to the stocking of material in your Wood Green Branch which they regard as offensive and racist. I am sure you realise that we live in particularly sensitive times so far as race relations are concerned and I would ask you to examine critically your Branches policy with regard to this.

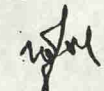
In Haringey we have an Ethnic Minorities Joint Consultative Committee and it was at the previous meeting (30.10.85) of that Committee that the following resolution was passed:

"In keeping with this Council's anti-racist policies this Committee condemns organisations and individuals who produce and/or distribute racist material. In particular, we condemn those who produce and/or distribute so-called 'joke' books, posters, etc., ridiculing and belittling Irish people and Irish culture. In the interests of racial harmony we demand that such practices cease forthwith".

The representatives inform me that they have approached the Book Manager and Shop Manager in Wood Green Branch before with regard to this but have failed to get a positive response. Additionally a letter from the Irish in Britain Representation Group dated 19 November 1984 to Head Office to which you responded on 23 November 1984 produced an equally negative response.

I would ask to look again at your policy in this respect and would be pleased to discuss the Council's racial equality policies with you or your representatives at any time.

Yours faithfully

  
For Bernie Grant  
Leader  
Haringey Council

c.c. Mr Follett  
Book Manager  
W H Smith & Son LTD  
110 High Road  
London N22

From Malcolm Field  
Managing Director

26 NOV 1985

22 November 1985

W.H. Smith & Son Limited  
Strand House  
7 Holbein Place  
London SW1W 8NR

Telephone: 01-730 1200

Councillor B Grant  
Members Room  
Civic Centre  
Wood Green N22

Dear Councillor Grant

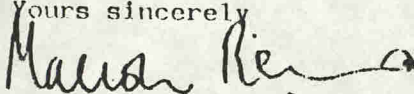
Thank you for your letter of 13 November. I am sorry if anyone thinks we sell 'racist' books - at our Wood Green branch or anywhere else.

We are very conscious of our responsibility as booksellers. Part of that responsibility is to fulfil the legitimate demands of our customers, and part is that we do not set ourselves up as censors. While we have no wish to cause offence, it is inevitable that all viewpoints cannot be pleased all the time. For example: at the same time as your Irish representatives accuse us of being racist, we are being criticised at the opposite end of the spectrum for selling the Institute of Race Relations' book, 'How Racism Came to Britain'.

The Irish books we stock are in no way racially motivated. They are simply books of humour, and, of course, humour is a matter of personal taste. Some may not find these books amusing, but very many others, including many Irish people, find them harmlessly funny. Indeed, following Press publicity about your letter to me, we were telephoned by an Irish lady, living in North London, who said the Irish were proud of their sense of humour, derived great pleasure from this type of book, and urged us not to consider taking it off sale.

I am grateful to you for writing, because I feel it is important to know the views of all sections of the community. But I cannot agree that these humorous books are 'racist', nor to give ourselves the role of self-appointed censors.

Yours sincerely



Malcolm Field





# I.B.R.G.

HARINGEY

## IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

W.H.Smith & Sons Ltd.  
110 High Road  
Wood Green  
London N22.

c/o Hornsey Library,  
Haringey Park,  
Hornsey N.8.  
348 3351 Ex3.

Dear sir / madame,

I was heartened by the news (passed on to me by one of our members) that there are no longer any Irish 'joke' books or Irish karma sutra books on your 'humour' section bookshelves.

Is this due to a shortage of stocks ?, or have you finally decided to cease your racist activities?.

Please could you inform me as to your position in this matter,

yours sincerely

T.F.O'Farrell  
( coordinator)

P.T.O.





From L V F Hammond  
Public Relations Manager

*Chairman*

**WHSMITH**  
Mr Simon Harcourt  
W.H. Smith & Son Limited  
Strand House  
7 Holbein Place  
London SW1W 8NR

3 February 1986

Telephone: 01-730 1200

Mr T F O'Farrell  
Irish in Britain Representation Group  
c/o Hornsey Library  
Haringey Park  
Hornsey N8

Dear Mr O'Farrell

I write in reply to your undated letter referring to 'Irish Joke Books', and addressed to our Wood Green branch.

Following the big Christmas sales period, we no longer hold stocks of these books at our Wood Green branch. We will be reconsidering our stock policy regarding the whole range of joke books, and at this stage it is too early to reply in more detail to your letter.

Yours sincerely

L V F Hammond