

IRISH DISCRIMINATED AGAINST IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Harry Fletcher, Assistant General Secretary, National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO), speaking at AGIY's Annual General Meeting on 9 December 1992 in Camden said that a study in Middlesex, case material, reports from Probation workers, and figures from a study into the working of the PTA, all point to discrimination against Irish people in the criminal justice system.

Mr Fletcher stated that the Irish had been excluded from the Home Office's first report under Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act which places a duty on the Home Secretary to publish information for the purpose of "*avoiding discriminating against any persons on the grounds of race or sex or any other improper ground.*"

This was the result of "**a collusion or convenience between the state, the media, the pressure groups and indeed even some members of the Irish community itself to keep the issue of discrimination against Irish people off the agenda.**"

A study in Middlesex showed that Irish persons receive sentences that are most adversely removed from the recommendation in the probation report and that **Irish persons are 20% more likely to get jail sentences than their white European counterparts.**

Mr Fletcher also cited some cases in north London involving Irish people which demonstrated anti-Irish discrimination.

In one case, 2 young men from Belfast, who were attacked in a pub in Fulham, were kept in custody for 3 weeks on charges of Drunk and Disorderly and Criminal Damage.

They were eventually fined £100. The Magistrate who remanded them in custody remarked that *if they didn't like their housing status they should go 'back to Ireland!*

In another case, 2 young men from the Republic, homeless in London, broke a window trying to gain entry to a squat.

They were arrested and kept in custody for 3 weeks charged with Criminal Damage.

When they appeared before a Stipendiary Magistrate they were heavily fined.

The Magistrate remarked that he wished he could fine them more in the hope that they couldn't pay and therefore be sent to prison as he was fed up with "*Irish people coming over and plundering England.*"

Probation workers in London and the West Midlands say that these cases are not unique and while young Irish people may not be more likely to be stopped and searched by the police, they are more likely to have their premises searched if they are stopped.

Turning to the workings of the PTA, Mr. Fletcher pointed out that of the 7,000 or so people arrested under the PTA only 3% were charged and that of those 3%, a quarter were acquitted and half received non-custodial sentences.

Mr Fletcher concluded by making three recommendations :

- making constructive use of Section 95 of the Criminal Justice Act;
- a campaign to highlight discrimination;
- proper monitoring of justice system to identify discrimination, leading to policies for its elimination.

CENSUS '91 DATA EMERGING

Data from the 1991 Census on population, housing and socio-economic information is now available for the London area on a borough by borough basis.

The information includes statistics on population figures, residents by age and sex, economic characteristics - including data on full and part time employment, unemployment levels and students, level of home ownership, kinds of dwelling occupied, household composition; country of birth and ethnic group.

The data is produced in 2 reports - the **OPCS County Monitor: Inner London** and the **OPCS County Monitor: Outer London**.

They are available from:

HMSO, 49 High Holborn, London WC1C 6HB
Tel. 071 873 9090. Cost : £2.00 each.

IRISH DATA

Specific information on the Irish in London is contained in a number of the Census data tables.

It is presented in 2 ways - (a) data based on persons born in Ireland which describes the "first-generation" emigrant experience only and includes both Rep. of Irl. and N.Ireland; and (b) data based on country of birth of household head.

The second category (b) includes information on the partners and families of Irish heads of households; it does however omit data on the significant % of Irish women who reside in households where the head is of a different nationality.

It will be some time before the analysis and interpretation of the data on the Irish in London will be complete.

AGIY hopes to provide a series of Census briefings throughout 1993 which will provide, in composite form, data and information on the Irish housing experience, the Irish employment experience, the demography of the Irish in Britain, Irish women's experience and the Irish health experience.

An initial reading of the data for London demonstrates the strength of numbers of the Irish community and highlights the statistical impact of the 1980s wave of emigration.

- **The population of the Irish in London as recorded by the country of birth of the household head is 326,707 equalling almost 1 in 20 of the population of London.**
- **The Irish born population in London, as recorded in April 1991 on Census night, is 256,440.**
- **The Census also recorded the number of migrants to London by recording the number of residents who had a different address one year (in 1990) before the census - the figure for Irish born people in London in this category equalled 37,137.**

AGIY acknowledges Crown copyright on Census material and the assistance of the London Research Centre in providing the data.

Recent data from the Central Statistics Office in Dublin covering the 40 year period 1951-1991 highlights the disparity between emigration patterns and the level of return amongst emigrants.

During this period the net emigration figure is estimated at a total of 796,000 - with the heaviest recorded outflow in the period 1951-1971.

In contrast, net immigration data, which only succeeds in being recorded in consecutive years between 1972-1979, stands at a figure of 113,000 over the 4 decades '51-'91.

Liberty - UN Rights Initiative

Liberty (National Council for Civil Liberties) is planning a major new initiative to focus public attention on the UK government's failure to protect fundamental rights and freedoms.

After the Second World War the United Nations agreed to an International Bill of Rights in the hope of getting governments to adopt certain basic standards of behaviour towards their own population.

The UN International Bill has three sections - a universal declaration of human rights, a covenant on civil and political rights, and a covenant on social and economic rights.

The Human Rights Committee of the UN receives reports on Governments' records on civil and political rights and how these comply with the UN's Covenant on civil and political rights.

The next report for the UK will be made in **August 1994** and Liberty believes that a co-ordinated alternative report from a wide range of organisations concerned with human rights would have a major impact on public and international opinion.

Liberty have approached a range of voluntary organisations, including black and ethnic minority groups, Irish organisations, lesbian and gay groups, prisoners rights groups, groups concerned with the rights of people with disabilities, refugees and migrant workers to sponsor this initiative.

A launch meeting is planned for May 1993 and a wider Human Rights Assembly in Autumn 1993.

AGIY have attended the initial organising meeting and will keep readers informed of developments.

Irish Housing Associations' Role Questioned

During the past few weeks there have been a series of letters published in "*Housing Associations Weekly*" which is published by the **National Federation of Housing Associations** from housing professionals questioning the *raison-d'être* of Irish housing associations and wondering whether "*we had better form special needs groups for the English, the Welsh and the Scots before it's too late.*"

This correspondence has prompted several forceful responses some of which point out that ethnic minority housing associations would not have developed if the housing establishment had themselves responded to the disadvantage and discrimination evident to people within ethnic minority communities including the Irish.

The National Federation of Housing Associations does collect statistical information on Irish housing need and the Government backed Housing Corporation also provides financial resources to some Irish housing associations who are attempting to meet the needs of the community in London.

New Information Resources Available

Resource Handbook

AGIY have recently published a "Resource Handbook - Data and Information on the Irish in Britain" which draws together statistical information from a variety of research studies carried out in the 1980's including data from the 1981 Census on welfare issues which affect the community in Britain.

The Handbook which was supported by the Thames/LWT Telethon Trust includes information on the Irish in Britain, anti-Irish racism, housing, employment, social security benefits, education, women and health issues affecting the community. The Handbook consists of 32 pages and also includes a chapter which provides an overview of the Irish voluntary sector in Britain.

Copies of the Handbook which costs **£2.00** (including postage and packing) are available from AGIY.

Housing Information Poster Pack

The Leaving Home Project (LHP) have produced a new Housing Information Poster Pack for use with and by young people. This A2 poster outlines a variety of housing options that may be available to young people. Space is provided for users to add addresses of local advice agencies. The pack comes complete with ideas for educational charities based on the poster such as budgeting, living with others, finding a place to live and issues around housing and homelessness. It includes a useful resources and contact list for further help.

Up to 5 packs per order and pay for postage only.

1 pack - £0.34; 2 packs - £0.68; 3 packs - £1.02; 4 packs - £1.36; 5 packs - £1.70

Send an A4 stamped addressed envelope to LHP, The Basement, 38 Great Pulteney Street, London. W1R 3DE. Tel. 071 287 8928

New Committee

Following AGIY's Annual General Meeting on 9th December the composition of the new Management Committee is as follows:

Seamus Taylor	- Chairperson
Geraldine Brandon	- Secretary
Susan Cosgrove	- Treasurer
Eithne O'Flynn	- Vice - Chair

Ada Burns	Luke Tierney
Bro. Ignatius Galvin	Julie Hamilton
Ian O'Rourke	Siobhan Crozier
Charlotte Curran	

Diary Date

The next meeting of the London Irish Youth Forum will be held on Thursday 28th January 1993 at 2.30 p.m. in the London Irish Centre, 50 Camden Square, London. NW1.

Nollaig Shona Duit

Happy Xmas!

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