

Bulletin of the Committee on the Administration of Justice**The Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000**

After a lot of painful negotiation and late-night debates in the Commons and the Lords, and in many other venues besides, the new policing legislation is now on the statute books.

By comparison with the initial draft that the Secretary of State brought to parliament, the final text is very different. Government itself claims that over 70 substantive amendments were made (there were hundreds of amendments in total). This simple fact alone is astonishing given that government has constantly reiterated that the initial Bill sought to reflect "the spirit and the letter of Patten".

The key issue now, however, is whether the final legal text passes muster. There is no easy answer. As the political debate rages, CAJ is essentially concerned about the human rights benchmarks which we have consistently argued must be the test of a new policing service. Many of these benchmarks were articulated at a cross-community conference organised by CAJ in advance of the Patten report and were echoed in the report itself.

Do the new policing arrangements, for example, address concerns around composition, recruitment and training? Well, there is little in the legislation about civilianisation of the policing service; there is little about training; and there is limited reference to human rights (other than to the Human Rights Act, which all public bodies are subject to), and no reference at all to international human rights standards and norms. For the record, these omissions are not due to any oversight on the part of government. Detailed amendments have been proposed at various stages of the legislative debate on these issues and have, for the most part, been vigorously opposed by government.

On the other hand, there is to be an independent recruitment agency, and there are clear and ambitious plans to recruit more Catholics, and to set targets and timetables for the recruitment of women. Government refused to set targets and timetables for ethnic minorities, on the grounds essentially that there were too few people of ethnic minority background to necessitate the setting of recruitment goals. Shades of government's reasoning in the 20-year delay in extending British anti-racist legislation to Northern Ireland!

Does the legislation address issues of culture, ethos and symbols effectively? Here again the picture is mixed. CAJ argued for a neutral working environment, more civilianisation and a more pluralist environment. Several of these issues are not addressed explicitly in the legislation though they are likely to be addressed in the more detailed Implementation Plan, due to be re-issued very soon (see on). The legislation did of course address the issue of the name. By law, the police in future will be the "Police Service of Northern Ireland (incorporating the Royal Ulster Constabulary)". There has been much media debate as to whether this is a gain for unionists (retaining the name of the RUC in the title deeds) or for nationalists (ending the use of RUC in anything other than the legislation). There has, unfortunately, been very little media debate about the value for *everyone* of developing a neutral environment for police officers, and the public they serve. There has similarly been little real debate about what 'neutrality' might mean in the Northern Ireland context.

Most importantly of all, does the legislation deliver real police accountability? Certainly the legislation delivers *more* accountability than now. It is more difficult to assess if it delivers the level of accountability that is urgently needed. Certainly, the signs are not positive. The government, and one must assume therefore, the policing establishment, opposed many important proposals. Some changes were never accepted; other crucial points were only conceded after a lot of lobbying. This does not bode well for the promised "new beginning" to policing. Whether government's stance was a complicated negotiating ploy, or reflected serious reservations about the changes proposed, the result was the same - distrust outside of government in the level of commitment to change.

For example, operational independence - or responsibility as Patten called it - has still not been defined in the legislation. Indeed, now, according to Hansard, the local police commanders are also to be given "operational independence" in their areas. CAJ obviously shares the concern that policing decisions should not be dictated by partisan political considerations. No one wants either

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What's Screening in Your Neck of the Woods?

Ask the average punter in the street what they understand by screening and they'll probably think of what's on show in the local cinema. Ask anyone *au fait* with the workings of the Good Friday Agreement however, and the word 'Screening' won't conjure up any images of Brad Pitt, Julia Roberts, or over-priced popcorn. No they'll tell you that it's to do with identifying those government policies that most affect their lives. In fact, at the moment, in relation to the promotion of equality within Northern Ireland, it's the most important game in town.

Regular readers of Just News will by now be familiar with the new statutory duty, (emanating from the Good Friday Agreement), which requires public bodies within Northern Ireland to promote equality of opportunity.

The way in which public bodies are supposed to do this is by assessing how their policies impact across the nine categories covered by the legislation, (namely, religious belief, political opinion, race, gender, disability, dependents, age and marital status). Clearly however, not every policy of every public authority, will impact on every one equally.

Looking at some of the equality schemes produced so far, it is difficult to imagine for example that many of the groups covered by Section 75 will be rushing out to the 'Warrenpoint Harbour Commissioners' to examine the impact of their planning strategy. On the other hand however, it is likely that most groups covered will be extremely interested in the inward investment policy of the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. Other policies relating to individual public bodies can also be seen to have particular interest for particular groups. For example, one can see the obvious interest of the gay community in health promotion strategies, Travellers in education policies, and the unemployed in the work of the T and EA.

The key question however, is how does one go about ensuring that those policies that most affect the relevant

groups are 'impact assessed'. This is known as screening. According to the Guidelines, the purpose of screening is to '*identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity so that greatest resources can be devoted to these. It requires a systematic review of existing and proposed policies*'. Unfortunately however, the Guidelines are, at best, rather vague as to how this might be achieved. The Guidelines state that for each policy a number of criteria need to be considered, such as 'is there evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups'.

Clearly however, this approach by itself, is potentially problematic in that there may not be any evidence of higher or lower participation or uptake by different groups. This does not mean of course that problems in relation to uptake or participation do not exist. Veterans of the fair employment debate will recall that for many years public bodies in particular denied that there were any problems in relation to the composition of their staff. It was only after formal investigations were carried out by the FEA, which went *looking* for the evidence, that the scale of the problem of Catholic under-representation was realised. This of course contributed to the introduction of tougher fair employment legislation in the form of the 1989 Act, which among other measures, introduced compulsory workforce monitoring. The lesson is worth remembering - no evidence, ergo no problem, is a false premise.

So, given the problems vis a vis evidence, how does a public body identify those policies which are likely to have a significant impact on equality of opportunity for the nine categories. Well, the Guidelines also require that public bodies ask the groups themselves. This is what in effect is happening at the moment. Every public body covered by the legislation, from the largest government department down to the Fisheries Conservancy Board for NI is trying to identify those policies which it will be carrying out impact assessments on for the next five years.

There are two problems here for constituents however. Firstly, if policies are screened out of the Equality Scheme at this point, it will be very difficult to screen them back in. Therefore it is essential that constituents ensure that those policies, *which matter most to them*, are screened in.

The second problem however, is more difficult than the first, as it involves the constituencies identifying those policies that matter most to them. On the surface, this may seem rather straightforward, in that the various constituents merely list the policies that matter most to them. Thus, one might assume that for religious belief/political opinion those policies to do with new job creation are prioritised. Fine in theory, until one discovers that there are a number of overlapping areas of responsibility. Clearly the DETI/IDB has a role to play, as does DHFETE (which includes especially the T and EA); as does the Department of Education, and the Departments of Social and Regional Development etc. etc. CAJ is working closely with other members of the Equality Coalition to ensure that constituents identify particular priority areas, and develop a strategy vis-à-vis key public authorities. In the coming weeks CAJ will be organising a series of public and private events to try and establish how all this work can best be organised. Watch this space!

Tim Cunningham
CAJ Equality Project worker

Belfast hosts Amnesty International world lawyers meeting

Some of the world's leading human rights defenders were in Belfast in October for Amnesty International's world lawyers' conference. The event was hosted by Amnesty's Belfast Lawyers' group with organisation by local AI staff and volunteers.

Amnesty International lawyers came from thirteen countries around the world to join with Northern Ireland lawyers and campaigners to discuss the latest moves to use the law to ensure justice for the world's oppressed.

The United Nation's Special Rapporteur Param Cumaraswamy and Elisa Massimino, of the New York based Lawyer's Committee for Human Rights joined rights defenders from closer to home such as Prof Brice Dickson, head of the NI Human Rights Commission and Jane Winter, Director of British Irish Rights Watch, for the conference. CAJ's Martin O'Brien and Mary O'Rawe gave valuable contributions from a Northern Ireland perspective.

The event tackled major issues such as truth and reconciliation, prosecutions of human rights abusers in the wake of the Pinochet case, and the need to protect human rights defenders around the world.

Geralyn McNally of the Belfast AI Lawyers' Group said: "This was an important event for Amnesty's International lawyers' Network and for local activists. We were delighted that campaigners in Northern Ireland were able to join with colleagues from the worldwide human rights movement in looking at both local and global issues. Everyone learned a lot and left inspired to keep working to defend rights wherever they are under threat."

Amnesty International's Northern Ireland Lawyers' group is calling on any local barrister, solicitor or legal academic to join the group and help with its work for rights worldwide. They can be contacted as follows:

Geralyn McNally, AI Lawyers' Group, Bar Library, Royal Courts of Justice, Chichester Street, Belfast BT1 3JP or enquiriesni@amnesty.org.uk.

African Studies Association of Ireland is holding its Inaugural Conference. The conference which takes place on **16th December 2000, 10.30am - 5.30pm in the Swift Theatre (2041) Arts Building, Trinity College, Dublin** will mark the formal establishment of the African Studies Association of Ireland. Keynote speaker is Prof. Shula Marks, the leading historian of modern South Africa. Following on from the keynote lecture, a panel will take place examining the issue of human rights in Africa today and one which will look at the relationships between Ireland and Africa, past and present.

For further information contact Dr. David Dickson, Dept. of Modern History, Trinity College, Dublin.

Up to date with CAJ

The AGM was very well attended. Guest speaker was the newly appointed Ombudsman, Mrs. Nuala O'Loan. See report on page 5. We hope by now, that all members will have received their copy of the Annual Report, if not please contact the office. Once again, the time has come for renewal of membership and subscription fees for 2001. membership rates remain the same e.g. Waged - £17.00 Unwaged - £5.00 (UK & Ireland) International - £23.00 Organisation - £28.00 There have been meetings of the equality and policing subgroups.

A training event on Section 75 - Screening and impact assessment will be held on 13th December - contact the office for further details.

Martin spoke on Truth and Reconciliation at the Amnesty Lawyers Conference.

We had a stall at NIVT 21st Birthday celebrations at St. George's market where CAJ's membership group provided information on CAJ throughout the day.

Maggie attended the Northern Ireland Council on Ethnic Minorities (NICEM) Annual General Meeting. We would like to take this opportunity to welcome volunteers Gemma, Katie, Karen, Oude and Sarah to the CAJ.

Please accept our apologies for the delay in this month's issue of Just News.

Finally, we would like to thank the outgoing executive for all their work over the past year and to wish them all the best for the future.

Liz McAleer

Action Column

CAJ has produced a simple, easy-to-use Information Pack on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland (see enclosed flier). The pack contains some background information on human rights and a Bill of Rights and a couple of simple exercises designed to encourage debate on a Bill of Rights, as well as a feedback form for submission to the Human Rights Commission.

The Pack is designed for use by community groups, youth groups and women's groups without the need for a 'human rights expert' to be present. The Pack is FREE and copies can be obtained by contacting the CAJ office.

If you have any ideas about groups who should get a copy of the Pack and/or fliers, please let the office know or copy the flier to the groups in question.

The case of Francisco Notorantonio

The family of Francisco Notorantonio has experienced a deepening sadness yet again. Over the years they have learnt to live with similar feelings, but recent media revelations surrounding the murder of their father have again opened old wounds and plunged the family into a fresh grieving process.

Francisco Notorantonio was gunned down on October 9, 1987 in the bedroom of his home beside his wife Edith in Ballymurphy. The UDA claimed responsibility for the murder but the recent media revelations suggest that a secret unit within the British Army, the FRU, ordered the killing of the father of 11. Further media reports on his murder took a twist in September when the Sunday People reported that the 66-year-old pensioner was shot to protect an IRA agent. This information is said to have materialised from the seizure of thousands of intelligence documents belonging to the Army and the FRU by the John Stevens investigation team who are presently investigating the murder of Belfast solicitor Pat Finucane.

According to other reports, the killing of Notorantonio was sanctioned at the highest levels of the British Army and the MI5. Apparently the decision to persuade the UDA to target Notorantonio was taken during a meeting at Army HQ in Thiepval barracks, Lisburn, which was attended by senior officers from MI5 and the specialist military intelligence body known as the Force Research Unit (FRU). Their decision to kill Notorantonio was believed to be sanctioned by a high ranking British Army officer, not connected to any other intelligence agency. It is believed that his decision would also have been known about and agreed by MI5's then controller in the North.

In what was presumably a desperate bid to prevent further exposure on this case Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon took out an injunction against the Sunday People after their investigation into the workings of the Army's dirty tricks unit, 'FRU'. What was widely believed by many was that senior Army personnel who were supposed to be protecting lives were actually involved in the taking of lives.

The Ministry of Defense's injunction was successful and an immediate gagging order was placed on the Sunday People banning them from telling the public what happened. The paper was censored three times and banned from making any further revelations. The High Court injunction also prohibited the paper from reporting the terms of the injunction itself. Despite this they vowed to take a stand for freedom of the press over their Army death squad story and went back into court to challenge and have the gagging order lifted.

The director of the London based human rights organisation British Irish Rights Watch, Jane Winter, accused the government of colluding in illegal acts by seeking the 'gagging orders'. BIRW has lodged a complaint with Abid Hussain, the Special Rapporteur appointed by the United Nations to report on freedom of expression. He has also been asked to raise the subject in his next report to the Commission on Human Rights.

Court 18 of the High Court was the scene of the renewed attempt by the Sunday People to persuade a judge to let them report on the murderous activities of a British Army unit, the gagging order and its terms. All proceedings are normally recorded, but the Secretary of State's solicitor asked that these proceedings not be recorded and even checked that the tape machine beside the judge's side of the court had been silenced. After three weeks of censorship, and the MOD paying out over £100,000 in High Court bills to gag the Sunday People, the judge ruled that the paper must seek written approval from the government before publishing any more collusion allegations.

To accuse a government of murdering its own citizens is not an accusation anyone would make lightly. The information that has emerged so far, if it appeared in a work of fiction would beggar belief and yet this appears to be just another victim of FRU.

After five court room battles the Sunday People newspaper finally overturned all but one of the gagging orders imposed on them by the MOD.

There should be no doubt in anyone's minds that there was a policy of selecting and targeting people to death.

The question that needs to be resolved is do you believe there should be an international independent public judicial inquiry into the murderous activities of FRU. I am positive the family of Francisco Notorantonio would wholeheartedly agree, then again so would mine and all the families of victims of state force collusion.

Martin Finucane

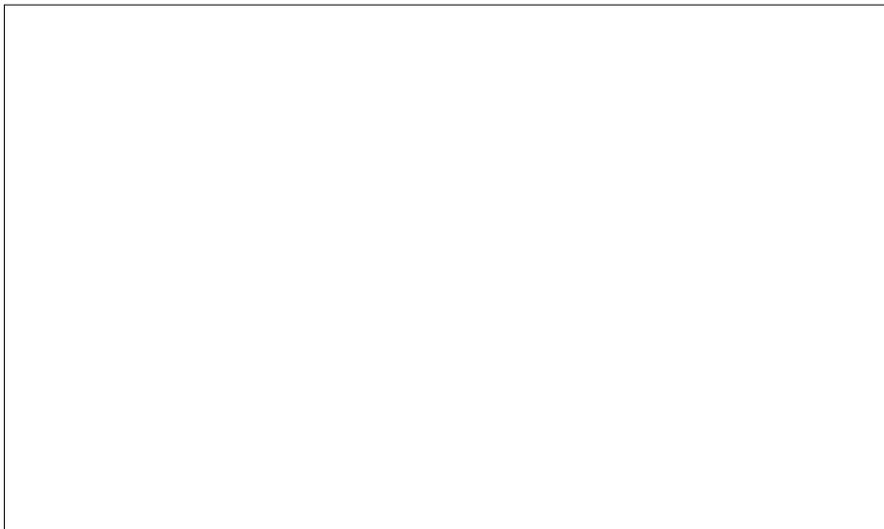
In the Headlines

CAJ holds newspaper clippings on more than 50 civil liberties and justice issues (from mid 1987). Copies of these can be purchased from CAJ office. The clippings are also available for consultation at the office.

Anyone interested in this service,
should phone (028) 9096 1122.

CAJ's Annual General Meeting

The formal business of the Annual General Meeting for 1999-2000, held last month, in the Law Centre's Offices in Donegall Street, passed without controversy. Stephen Livingstone chaired the meeting in the absence of Mary O'Rawe (unable to make the meeting due to illness). Reports on the financial affairs of the CAJ and the Human Rights Trust were presented and developments in respect of membership matters, particularly in regard to the induction of new members, were outlined and those nominated for the various positions were returned unopposed. The list of Executive Committee members for 2000-1 is set out below.



In keeping with a recently developed tradition, an invited speaker addressed the AGM on a topic of interest and this year we were happy to host the Police Ombudsperson, Nuala O' Loan, shortly before she took office. Mrs O' Loan, outlined the powers of the office, the composition of the staff and her vision of the role of the office.

Powers of the Ombudsperson

In explaining the Ombudsperson's powers, she informed the meeting that she had successfully lobbied for the augmentation of her powers, with the help of CAJ and others, for which help she was grateful. Fielding questions from CAJ members she emphasised that she considered the role was about

dealing with complaints and not dealing with the past *per se*, though such complaints might be dealt with depending in the availability of physical evidence, for example.

Policy matters too, she explained, would be dealt with in the context of complaints. Therefore, any investigation of policy matters, like, for example, the use of plastic bullets to control public order, would occur in the context of complaints made about their use.

Some major tests lie ahead for the Police Ombudsperson, and so, for example, the complaints against police activity (or more correctly inactivity) during the kicking to death of Robert Hamill in Portadown has now been transferred to her office and the Ombudsperson's report on that complaint will be eagerly awaited. As an organisation that has long campaigned for the independent investigation of police complaints we wish Nuala O' Loan a fair wind in her task. Ultimately, the effectiveness of all ombudsperson institutions depends on their ability to deal with the most frequent source of complaints against the bodies within their jurisdiction. Clearly a key issue in Northern Ireland is public order policing, and the Ombudsperson's oversight will be particularly critical. The ability of the Ombudsperson to deal with the serious allegations levelled against police officers in policing public order will, I imagine, be the yardstick by which her performance will be judged.

Ciaran White

CAJ Executive Committee for 2000-2001

Chairperson	Mary O'Rawe
Vice Chairperson	Fiona Doherty
Parliamentary Liasion Officer	Kieran McEvoy
Minutes Secretary	Ann Godfrey
Membership Secretary	Lesley Emerson
Treasurer	Stephen Livingstone
Editor of Just News	Fionnuala ni Aolain

School rules ... on rights

On 10th December 2000, Malone college will celebrate the first anniversary of the passage of the school's Bill of Rights. Professor Brice Dickson, Chief Commissioner of the NI Human Rights Commission launched the Malone College Bill of Rights in December last year. The Bill was devised and adopted by the school community as the key document guiding how every member of Malone College should treat each other. This event is to be marked each year by a special rights assembly at the College.

The story of how Malone College adopted their Bill of Rights really is a remarkable one, and one which should serve as an inspiration to other schools around Northern Ireland. On 10th December 1998, a special assembly was held in Malone College to raise awareness of the origin of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and human rights issues locally, nationally and globally. Arising from this the school embarked on a process to draw up an internal Bill of Rights. This was a pupil-led initiative which began with the appointment of a Human Rights Commission. Interested pupils applied to join the Commission and were interviewed by a panel including a teacher, a parent governor and a member of non-teaching staff. Thirteen pupils aged between 12 and 13 were appointed in June 1999.

Following discussion amongst the Commissioners about a Bill of Rights, it became clear that it was essential to consult with the entire school community. All pupils, staff (teaching and non-teaching) and governors were invited to make submissions. These submissions were co-ordinated by a representative of each of the above groups and presentations were made to the Commission at a special meeting in September 1999. After many hours of discussion and debate, a draft Bill of Rights was produced.

Two Commissioners met with the Principal of the College to discuss the Bill and recommendations arising from it. After further discussion, the Bill was amended and accepted as school policy.

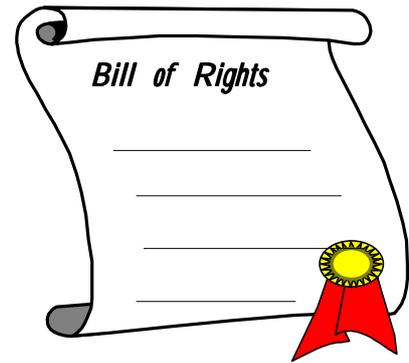
The purpose of the Bill is to ensure that the rights of all members of the school

community are equally protected and to raise an awareness of the duty of all to protect the rights of others. The Bill is all-encompassing, with some provisions aimed directly at the protection of rights of pupils, and others encompassing the rights of teachers. Thus, for example, the principle that "no group should ever be punished because of the behaviour of some of its members", means that teachers cannot punish a whole class if they cannot find the guilty party. Further, the principle that "no-one should be subjected to degrading treatment" means that the tradition of taking advantage of substitute teachers is deemed unacceptable.

The Bill is a defining document which clearly describes the essence of the College, and other schools could considerably benefit from undertaking a similar process.

Indeed such an exercise would be very timely as it could tie in with the broader consultation process being conducted by the NI Human Rights Commission on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. This would be the perfect opportunity for pupils and staff to consider what rights are important to them, as well as the very positive effect that a Bill of Rights can have both on the school on a smaller scale and Northern Ireland as a whole on a larger scale.

Evidently, the integrated education sector is leading the way in this discussion of rights in schools. I recently had the privilege to facilitate a number of workshops at a conference organised by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, which was attended by students from integrated schools across Northern



Ireland. The workshops covered a broad range of areas, from abortion and marching to victims' rights and environmental rights.

I thought I was facing an uphill struggle when I asked the students in my group why they had attended and what they hoped to learn, and was met with such responses as "I wanted to miss double maths" and "to get a day off school", but they were soon displaying a genuine enthusiasm for the issues involved. Some initially very strong opinions on certain topics such as marching and ex-prisoners were visibly softened when they engaged in role-plays which forced them to consider the rights of other groups. In the concluding discussion and feedback, many admitted to having learned a lot about human rights and to now being able to see certain issues in a way they never had before. Not a bad day's result for people who just wanted to miss Maths!

The day's events really brought it home to me how key young people are in this debate – they are the future generation and if they can learn to communicate in the language of rights and develop in a human rights culture which respects all traditions and communities, there really is hope for Northern Ireland. CAJ urges anyone who is in contact with young people, whether in a youth group or club or indeed a school to involve them in the Bill of Rights debate. For ideas, contact NI Youth Forum, Childre's Law Centre, or indeed see CAJ's very own Information Pack (flyer enclosed).

Aideen Gilmore

The Police NI Act 2000 *contd from front page*

the Police Board or the local District Policing Partnerships to determine who is to be arrested, and why! At the same time, retrospective talking-shops are no good either.

The initial legislation placed many obstacles in the way of the Policing Board powers. It seemed impossible for the Board to exercise any real power in calling for reports or inquiries. Indeed, initially, the Police Authority, which has been much criticised in the past, itself suggested that its successor would have even less power than it had had. During parliamentary debate, a number of the most objectionable barriers were withdrawn. The Secretary of State can still however stop an inquiry being held by using any one of a number of justifications which go beyond the limited grounds Patten suggested. Nor does the Policing Board have any power to carry out retrospective inquiries. Very importantly, the Secretary of State retains the authority to determine who will head up a Policing Board inquiry. This extraordinary power risks fatally undermining any perception of the Board's independence. Combined with his/her ability to issue regulations to cover any and all aspects of the Board's work (a provision which got very little attention in the parliamentary debate), one must have serious doubts about the Policing Board's authority.

Ombudsperson's role

Another building block in holding the police to account is the post of the Ombudsperson. Some of the early legislative proposals limited the Ombudsperson's powers. She was to be prevented from naming names, or providing information allowing identity of the individuals involved to be ascertained. She was constrained to making "reasonable" requests for information, and retrospective time limits were established on her investigative functions. Some of the deficiencies of that initial draft have now been remedied, and the current Ombudsperson has indicated that she is essentially satisfied with the powers she has. CAJ is not - we are very disappointed that a recommendation from Patten to clarify and strengthen the Ombudsperson's powers in the area of policies and practices was not pursued.

Human rights protection was at the heart of Patten, but not at the heart of the Police (NI) Act 2000. There are, now, more than the three original references to human rights (one in the oath for new officers and two to the Human Rights Act). A role is now, for example, envisaged for the NI Human Rights Commission at several places in the text, though there was persistent opposition to any reference being made to international human rights norms and standards. And, despite assuring parliamentarians that the Human Rights Commission would be consulted about anything to do with human rights, the government simultaneously refused to agree that the Human Rights Commission should be consulted about plastic bullet guidelines. The oath to uphold human rights, that Patten wanted all new and serving officers to take, will only be taken by new officers.

Implementation Plan

Attention will of course now turn to the detailed Implementation Plan that government intends to re-issue in early/mid December. The legislation could never bear the full weight of the changes Patten envisaged. Many important issues of training, human rights ethos, civilianisation, re-structuring, decentralisation, Special Branch, community policing etc. have had little exposure in the legislative debate. The Implementation Plan (issued in June 2000) indicates what action will be taken on each of the 175 Patten recommendations, and who will take lead-responsibility. CAJ expressed its very serious reservations about the proposals, since most of the follow-up was left in the hands of the Chief Constable and the NIO. Ironically, apart from those recommendations which related directly to the appointment and function of the Oversight Commissioner, his role is only alluded to in terms of encouraging applications from the nationalist community.

Oversight Commissioner

CAJ has a very different perspective on the role of the Oversight Commissioner. Once the dust dies down, and crucial decisions are taken by political parties and others about their involvement in the Policing Board, the focus will turn to the Plan. The Oversight Commissioner is the key external scrutineer of the process. We expect that he should report to the general public on a regular basis about progress - or lack of it - across the whole range of Patten's recommendations. What is happening in terms of human rights training? Has the independent Recruitment Agency been created and is it working effectively to promote outreach in under-represented groups? Is the Policing Board working effectively and have they drawn up protocols with the Ombudsman? Is the Human Rights Commission being consulted on issues relating to human rights and policing? Are non-police involved in the design as well as the delivery of police training? What is happening community policing? What problems, if any, have arisen with the creation of District Policing Partnerships? Has the timetable for changes to Special Branch been followed? What is happening in the study of alternatives to plastic bullets?

The risk, once the political and media interest around Patten fades, is that policing will fall off the public agenda. The reports of the Commissioner will provide a mechanism to allow public scrutiny to be maintained. The signals so far suggest that government is far from totally committed to the project for change. It is the responsibility of groups like CAJ, and many many others, to continue to monitor developments as closely in future as they have done to date. The vision of a new policing service respectful of human rights, accountable, and representative of the whole community, is too important an objective to leave to government alone.

Maggie Beirne

Civil Liberties Diary

Oct 1 The Human Rights Act came into force bringing into domestic law the European Convention on Human Rights. A conference for the legal profession was held in the Waterfront Hall to discuss the implications of the legislation.

Members of the Hamill family met the Secretary of State at Stormont and reiterated their calls for a public inquiry into the murder of Robert Hamill. A spokesman for the Secretary of State said he was "moved and impressed" by the family's appeal.

The Maze prison also known as 'Long Kesh' which held prisoners convicted of terrorist offences, was finally closed.

Oct 4 Reg Weir QC, resigned from the Bloody Sunday Inquiry in advance of its resumption in November. The Senior Counsel had been representing some of the families of the deceased.

Henry Barron, a former Supreme Court judge, was appointed to the inquiry into the Dublin, Monaghan & Dundalk bombings of 1974. The bombings were claimed by the UVF but there have been allegations of involvement on the part of the British army.

Oct 5 The NIO ran advertisements for applications to join the proposed new Police Board. This came despite continuing concerns that the Patten Report is not adequately reflected in the Police Bill, which had not yet concluded its final stages at Westminster.

Oct 6 The Law Centre announced that it had lodged half a dozen cases with the ECHR on the rights of widowers to the same benefits given to widows. Women who lose their husband are entitled to a payment of £1,000, a weekly widowed mother's allowance (if she has children of school age) worth £67.50 and £9.85 per child. Widowers must rely on means-tested awards such as income support.

Oct 7 At a conference for business people and legal experts in Newry, the Human Rights Chief Commissioner Brice Dickson said

that the new Human Rights Act "has implications for employee relations. Private bodies will need to ensure that those employee rights listed in the European Convention are not broken. The rights of workers to privacy and trade union membership must be observed."

Oct 9 It was announced that a consultation paper would be published proposing a reduction in the criteria for the public funding for Irish-language and integrated schools.

Oct 10 Concerns were expressed by the Chief Commissioner of the NIHRC and others when the BBC screened a documentary in which it named people it suspects of involvement in the Omagh bomb of 1998. Legal moves failed to have the programme banned.

Oct 12 A mother was granted leave under the new Human Rights Act to apply for judicial review of a Ministerial decision denying extra time to dyslexic children taking the "11 plus" selection examination.

The High Court in London overturned an injunction imposed on the Sunday People preventing publication of allegations about loyalist and security force collusion and the activities of the British Army "Force Research Unit". The government was asked to pay £100,000 costs. The decision followed the publication of a report in the paper that a British officer ordered the murder of an innocent Catholic pensioner to protect an agent within the IRA.

Oct 15 The Sunday People published allegations that an undercover unit of the security forces received several warnings but did not act to stop a car-bomb attack which killed John McMichael UDA chief.

Oct 17 Research by the Life and Times survey under University of Ulster found that many people face poverty in old age due to misunderstandings and incorrect

assumptions about the state pension.

Oct 18 Don Mullan, author of "Eye-Witness Bloody Sunday" published a new book, "The Dublin Monaghan Bombings" relating to the atrocities of 1974.

Oct 20 Age Concern called on politicians to give more consideration to the rights of older people, following a report by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency showing that the number of pensioners would rise by 24% over the next 13 years.

Oct 21 The Council for Education in World Citizenship (CEWC) organised a millennium model United Nations Summit for school-children from all over Ireland who came to Belfast to discuss key global issues.

Oct 27 Irish language newspapers, La based in Belfast and Foinse based in Galway, were awarded grants totalling £1 million by the new north-south body for the Irish language An Foras Na Gaeilge. The Ulster-Scots Agency announced a three-year development plan including the creation of the first two-way dictionary for the language and a school of Ulster-Scots at the University of Ulster.

Compiled by volunteers from various newspaper sources.

Just News

Just News welcomes readers' news, views and comments.

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