

Trickle Down Won't Do It!

CAJ recently submitted our responses to the consultations on the Draft Budget, Draft Programme for Government, and Draft Investment Strategy. Overall, while we agreed with the general thrust of the documents, CAJ was less convinced that in practice they would deliver on their aspirations. In particular, the lack of detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) for any of the documents seemed to confirm the suspicion that lofty ideals may not be delivered.

In terms of aims and objectives, there is much in relation to the Programme for Government that we would agree with, not least the assertion from the Executive that:

"Equality is an important issue for the Executive and for society. Inequalities exist, and we must strive to eliminate all forms of inequality."

The problem is that it is much easier to recognise inequality than it is to do something about it. The absence of an EQIA that would, in our view, put some light on how inequality might be addressed is therefore particularly disappointing. We were also somewhat concerned at the faith that the Executive seems to put in growing the economy for delivering on the wider social problems of Northern Ireland. The "rising tide lifts all boats" philosophy is clearly central to the Executive's heart at the moment. Unfortunately, as CAJ and others have pointed out, recent economic growth in Northern Ireland has left the poorest sections of society relatively worse, not better off. In our view, serious actions need to be taken to ensure that economic growth delivers for everyone in society - trickle down just does not do it.

One way in which we believe that economic growth can deliver on providing benefits to those in most need is by looking at ways in which the procurement process can be adapted to deliver on social objectives. The £18 billion earmarked by the Draft Investment Strategy represents a significant resource allocation, which could, in our view, make a significant impact in for example delivering jobs for the unemployed. CAJ welcomes the linking of economic, societal and environmental goals in the draft strategy. However, we expressed disappointment at the lack of an EQIA to flesh out in more detail exactly how the Draft Investment Strategy will deliver on social objectives.

The Draft Budget, like its other two counterparts, is also lacking details on the likely equality impact of the spending plans. This is particularly concerning when one considers the potential "double whammy" aspect of the Budget. Firstly, given the tight fiscal environment, all Government departments are required to deliver 3% efficiency savings over the next three years. This will then release resources for directing towards the Executive's priority areas. Those efficiency savings are meant to redirect resources from the centre of government and put them into frontline services. This approach sounds fine in theory – and indeed could be seen as a typical "TSN-type approach". The problem will be whether government departments actually take money out of their own central pot – or whether "efficiencies" result in spending cuts that impact adversely on those in need. The lack of detail as to how these "efficiencies" will be arrived at would certainly give CAJ cause for concern. We specifically worry that services for those in most need may not go unaffected by any proposed "efficiency" arrangements. There is also a question as to whether efficiencies delivered by one department, might actually store up additional costs for another department in future years.

The other key aspect to the Draft Budget relates to where the additional resources will actually go. Again, the document is light on detail. Notably absent are details on the actual bids that were submitted by each department to DFP in the first place. CAJ is not arguing for every department to get what it asked for – that would be impossible. We are saying however that on the basis of the information available CAJ is not in a position to make an informed comment about the spending proposals.

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My Life, My Right, My Choice - Make YOUR Choice!

There are at least 600 million people with disabilities across the world or approximately 10% of the global population. In Northern Ireland, approximately 21% of the population is defined as having a disability. The incidence of disability is higher here than in the rest of the United Kingdom or in Ireland. People with disabilities often rely more heavily on health and social care than the population as a whole, yet continue to experience extensive barriers in accessing services, making their choices known and having those choices respected. For example the right of everyone to give, withhold or withdraw their consent to health and social care is sometimes not respected. Specifically evidence show that people with disabilities are unequally involved in making these decisions compared to others.

Disability Action's Centre on Human Rights for Disabled People has launched a campaign which aims to increase the level of choice that people with all disabilities have in health and social care. The **My Life, My Right, My Choice** campaign is calling for people with disabilities to have effective choice and control over the treatment and care that they receive.

Respecting, protecting and promoting human rights is central to effective health and social care provision. Under the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (I.C.E.S.C.R.) both the UK and Ireland have committed themselves to respecting, protecting and promoting the right of everyone to the "enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health." This of course includes people with disabilities. Yet the reality is that the human rights of people with disabilities, not least in the domain of health and social care, have often been overlooked or forgotten.

The right to health as specified in Article 12 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), is not a right to be healthy or an unbounded right to medical treatment. Rather, it is the right to facilities, goods, services and conditions that are conducive to the realisation of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. This includes the right to be free from non-consensual treatment, the right to participate in decision making processes and the right to a system of health that is accessible, culturally acceptable, of good quality, and accessible to all.

Importantly, in a general comment the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has specified that:

"The right to physical and mental health [for people with disabilities] implies the right to have access to, and to benefit from, medical and social services..."

All such services should be provided in such a way that people with disabilities are able to maintain full respect for their rights and dignity."

Nonetheless, in practice, people with disabilities continue to experience unequal treatment and discriminatory assumptions about their quality of life.

As part of the **My Life, My Right, My Choice** campaign, the Centre on Human Rights has developed a **Choice Card** to empower people with disabilities to effectively engage with health and social care. For people with disabilities, choice is about much more than simply choosing which hospital to go to or when to see a GP. Choice is about enabling effective and meaningful access and participation in health and social care on disabled people's own terms. The **Choice Card** is a tangible reminder to people with disabilities of their right to make, and participate in, decisions affecting them. The card can be used by people with disabilities to communicate with doctors, nurses or social workers. It is up to people with disabilities what they want to put on the card. For example; 'My Choice is: Do not share information about my treatment with my family' or 'My Choice: Resuscitate me'.

The Centre on Human Rights has also launched a **Toolkit** to promote disabled people's human rights across health and social care. This valuable resource will assist health and social care staff in fulfilling their legal and ethical obligations towards people with disabilities. A CD-Rom incorporating an electronic version of the toolkit with links to additional resources is also available.

Promoting and protecting the rights of people with disabilities is not the responsibility of a selected few, but everyone's responsibility. It is time to ensure that people with disabilities are empowered and enabled to stand up for **Their Life, Their Right, and Their Choice.**

Bronagh Byrne,
Policy Officer
Centre on Human Rights for Disabled People

To find out more about the My Life, My Right, My Choice Campaign and to request campaign materials including A3/A2 posters, choice cards, Toolkit and/or the Toolkit on CD-Rom, please contact the Centre on Human Rights for Disabled People at Disability Action, 189 Airport Road West, Belfast, BT3 9ED; Telephone 028 9029 7880, Textphone 028 9029 7878, Fax 028 9029 7881 or email mychoice@disabilityaction.org

Truth recovery: In principle where do you stand?

The question of how Northern Ireland deals with its past has become commonplace. This mainstreaming marks a major shift. A few years ago the question itself was off limits. That said, exactly how the society should deal with its past remains unclear. Some still favour "drawing a line" under it.

Last year the Consultative Panel on the Past was set up by the British government to provide a way forward on the dealing with the past. Questions remain whether it is the best vehicle to answer these questions, nonetheless work has begun with most adopting a "wait and see" attitude.

Recently the Panel burst into public view with controversies about whether amnesty should be granted and if the conflicts of the past should be labelled a 'war' or not. Although this is a strange place for the discussion to start, it belies wider questions. In terms of amnesty, what compromises will be needed to deal with the past? And for the "war" question, how should the extent of the conflict be acknowledged and whose actions were legitimate?

This is not to say that nothing has been happening on the dealing with the past front. There have been many inquiries; cases before the European Court of Human Rights; and there is the Historical Enquiries Team. At the civil society level, the Healing Through Remembering initiative has made a significant contribution. The project, which has members from all different political perspectives, has presented options for truth recovery, hosted a Day of Reflection, considered methods such as storytelling and provided ideas for a living memorial museum.

So Northern Ireland is, at least to a degree, engaged in a process of dealing with the past. The bigger question is whether more is needed

and how structured this should be. But this question in itself creates apprehension. Some fear any method of dealing with the past will be a republican Trojan Horse to put the British state in the dock. Others fear no one will "come clean" especially paramilitaries and the two governments. There are also those that fear truth is damaging and will destroy the peace process. The question of whether justice will be done for past violations also remains critical, especially for some victims. Many worry that any method for dealing with the past that is not judicial will extinguish hopes of justice.

Working with Healing Through Remembering over the years, and through my own research, I have heard all these arguments (and others) on countless occasions. What is interesting about them from the international perspective is that they are also the arguments used by other countries when arguing for a structured approach to dealing with the past, especially a truth commission.

I have heard people from Liberia to Peru argue for a truth commission because they fear that if nothing is done one version of the past will dominate history. If all accounts of the past are put on the table, all will come out tarnished, even those who think everything they did was correct. Similarly, if no one wants to "come clean" then an independent body with powers such as search, subpoena and seizure should be put in place to investigate the past. Those who do not cooperate, including the state, should be labelled as such. Some victims also voice the need for alternative mechanisms to courts because courts often fail to deliver justice, especially *en masse*. And finally, contrary to the view that the truth is damaging, many argue that if the truth about the past does not come out, it will pollute the future.

So where does this leave the larger questions about the past in Northern

Ireland? For me it highlights how people are better at articulating why the past should be avoided rather than why it should be confronted. What is at the heart of this resistance?

All that can be surmised is that no one is clear whether their view of history and their actions will be vindicated. To this end, one critical question needs to be answered: is truth about past violations a right? Do we think knowing about the past from all sides, including paramilitaries, the two governments, as well as institutions that shaped the past from churches to the media, is important in principle? If so, then surely the next step is not to list all the reasons this will never be possible, but rather to ask how society can ensure truth can be delivered in a way that has political and social backing, independence and integrity.

Dr. Brandon Hamber
INCORE

Human Rights and the Past in Northern Ireland: editorial comment

As Just News readers will be aware a number of past focused initiatives have taken place in Northern Ireland in recent years. Most recently, the Eames-Bradley Commission was established to "seek a consensus across the community ... on the best way to deal with the legacy of the past". CAJ has been actively engaged in conversations about the legacy of the past and has offered its human rights expertise to these. We have developed a set of Principles against which we believe the legitimacy and capacity of any past-focused initiative should be measured. In this issue, we start a conversation which we hope will inform these discussions, but the February Issue of Just News will be focused on past-related processes and expertise.

The War on Terror: Lessons from

This month sees the launch of CAJ's most recent report 'War on Terror: Lessons from Northern Ireland', in which the organisation takes a look at how the conflict in Northern Ireland offers positive and negative lessons to the current global debate on terrorism, counter-terrorism and human rights.

As readers of Just News will know, CAJ was the local host some time ago for a visit to Belfast by the Eminent Jurists Panel. The Panel was invited by the respected international human rights group, the International Commission of Jurists, to undertake a global survey in the wake of 9/11. Their remit was to examine how -in human rights terms- countries around the world were responding to, or should be responding to, the threat of terrorist violence. Most of the countries visited were countries still in the thrall of serious violent conflict, or countries who were leading the "war on terror" at an international level. Countries like Colombia and Sri Lanka were to be visited alongside the UK and the USA.

Initially the Eminent Jurists Panel needed to be convinced that a visit to Northern Ireland, as an area emerging from violent conflict, would be relevant. However by the time the chair of the Panel, former South African Chief Justice Arthur Chaskalson, and his colleague Raul Zaffaroni (of the Argentinean Supreme Court), left, they were clear that Northern Ireland had much to offer – positively and negatively – to their study. The final global study is reaching completion and its publication can be expected later in 2008.

CAJ was clear almost from the outset that there would be a value in producing a NI-specific publication, and this is the report being launched this month. The report carries a detailed synopsis of all the written and oral submissions made to the Panel, and draws out a number of recommendations which CAJ believes have wider relevance.

The report incorporates testimony received by the Panel from a wide range of contributors. Legal academics, legal practitioners, international non-governmental human rights groups, and representatives of the Law Society, Bar Council and the judiciary all met with the Panel and shared their insights and experience. The Director of Public Prosecutions, representatives of the Court Service, and the Chief Constable and other senior officers of the Police Service, gave the perspective of those agencies charged with "managing" the conflict.

The police were able to make particularly thoughtful responses since they were able to compare past and current policing attitudes to the appropriate balance to be struck between "security" issues and "human rights" protections. The Chief Constable explicitly indicated that some of the measures in the past had proved counter-productive from a police perspective, and he and his officers welcomed the more recent emphasis on human rights as a central tenet of policing.

But, not surprisingly, the most powerful testimony tended to come from individuals talking about the human rights abuses they, or loved ones, had suffered. Different sessions were directed at themes such as internment and ill-treatment, the creation of suspect communities, and – most emotional of all – the right to life. In the latter gathering, more than sixteen families attended the session. Despite their diversity – they had lost loved ones at the hands of all the different armed groups – they told their respective stories with dignity and respect for the hurt of others in the same room. In 90 minutes, their stories were necessarily very abbreviated, but the message was loud and clear – victims need answers and some truth telling process must be started.

As noted, the report contains a detailed synopsis of all this disparate testimony. It also, however, argues that Northern Ireland has a lot of experience to share with elsewhere. This is a small jurisdiction, but the number of deaths per capita is shockingly high; the conflict, and the response to conflict, has raged for a very long time – extraordinary legislation has been in place since 1921; and yet, at the same time on the positive side, blueprints have been developed in more recent years about the kind of human rights and equality building blocks that might underpin a fairer and more peaceful society.

One of the building blocks that we might want to share with others is that there is an absolute need to uphold the rule of law during any conflict so as to ensure the safety and security of its citizens and all within its territory. While this may have been the supposed objective of successive emergency measures, no such security was secured during the height of the conflict, and the report cites example after example about how those very security measures often proved counter-productive. Ill-treatment of detainees, harassment of defence lawyers, extended pre-trial detention, limitations on the right to due process all compounded the security threat rather than assuaging it.

n Northern Ireland- “A Synopsis”

CAJ's report clearly details that a balance should be maintained between the rights of the individual and the rights of society as a whole, and that these apparently competing claims are in fact inter-related and complementary. So, this requires that whatever measures are introduced, they must be *legal, necessary and proportionate*.

The report also argues that in order for collective and necessary security measures to be implemented, a sound and independent criminal justice system, together with legislation and policy aimed at protecting human rights need to be in place in order to adequately protect individuals. Reference is made in the report to the enactment of the Human Rights Act (2000) which although it came too late for many, now sets out the obligations and duties of the police and other bodies in upholding human rights. The report recognised that the Human Rights Act is “*a major advance, and an earlier passage of such legislation might have significantly reduced the level of human rights abuses*”.

Moreover, the report deals at length with the need not only for a sound legislative framework to be adopted but also addresses the importance that society's institutions fully comply with their human rights obligations. For example policing is frequently discussed through the report as being a very contentious issue. The police were often accused of discriminatory stop and search practices, lethal force and ill-treatment, and the report reflects upon the thinking that led to the police being re-modelled in order to be more representative, human rights orientated and accountable. This is clearly an area where we have much – positively and negatively – to share with others. Practical changes like a Code of Ethics for police officers, and one that is tied into disciplinary regulations, ensures that the language of change and human rights compliant policing is given real effect.

In addition, the report pinpoints the importance of due process being adhered to even – or perhaps especially – in time of conflict. As the report notes, it may be blindingly obvious but – “to defend the rule of law it is necessary to uphold the rule of law”. People need to retain confidence in the agencies established to protect them, and attacks on traditional liberties undermine that confidence. The experience of Northern Ireland was clearly that long, or indeterminate, pre-trial detention/internment is unacceptable. It also proved counter-productive. So, why have these lessons been totally ignored in Guantanamo or, closer to home, in the parliamentary debates about extensions to pre-charge detention?

Interestingly, the report has to record mixed reactions with regard to the impact of international human rights scrutiny. Over and over again, individuals and organisations cited the great benefits that international scrutiny had secured for Northern Ireland. Pronouncements by the United Nations, the European Court on Human Rights, and respected international human rights NGOs, frequently had a direct and positive impact on local developments. Moreover, the fact that well respected international bodies were holding the government to the same standards as were local human rights groups like CAJ, gave greater credibility to local efforts, thereby also indirectly influencing domestic debates. International criticisms of the dramatic increase in allegations of psychological ill-treatment in the early 90s, led to an immediate drop in complaints. It is rare to see this level of cause and effect, but people in Northern Ireland can testify to the value of international human rights interventions.

At the same time, it is difficult to be entirely positive about the level of scrutiny afforded by external agencies. The report details the persistence of emergency and special legislation – the Special Powers Act introduced in 1921 was only repealed in the early 70s when a series of Emergency Provision Acts (only applicable to NI) and then the Prevention of Terrorism Acts (applicable to the whole UK) were introduced. Whilst routinely “reviewed” they were normally renewed, or indeed added to, rather than removed or weakened. And now these measures are being replaced with a series of Terrorism Acts (UK wide, with some NI particularities). Yet at no time has any inter-governmental body at UN or European level substantively challenged the right of the UK to determine that the supposed national security threat has required the maintenance of special measures for nigh on ninety years!

Northern Ireland provides the clearest possible example of the trend commented upon by UN expert Leandro Despouy to the effect that “*what was temporary, becomes definitive; what was provisional, constant; and what was exceptional, permanent – which means that exception becomes the rule*”. This is obviously one important lesson that we should share with others.

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For copies of the full 120 page report - £15 plus coverage (and/or 12 page free summary) contact CAJ office.

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Book review

Judicial Review, Socio-Economic Rights and the Human Rights Act

Anyone interested in how a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland might protect social and economic rights will appreciate this new publication by Ellie Palmer. This book is useful for those exploring how the protection of socio-economic rights could fit into the political and legal picture here. It gives not only a general overview of how this is done internationally but also shows how the Courts in England have grappled with the aspects of the civil and political rights which impact in the social and economic sphere. It looks in detail at the positive obligation on the state to protect rights. It examines how that obligation sits with delay in providing welfare or health services due to prioritisation of other spending or more controversially, with legislative attempts to prevent groups of people from receiving services.

Palmer's book explores, through detailed analysis of cases which have come before the courts, how senior UK judges have approached their responsibility under the Human Rights Act to interpret legislation in a way which is compatible with the rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). She shows that judges have become more willing to intervene in disputes over welfare or housing provision since the Human Rights Act. She discusses how this more interventionist approach has been developed very cautiously and remains limited in many ways to cases raised by the most vulnerable.

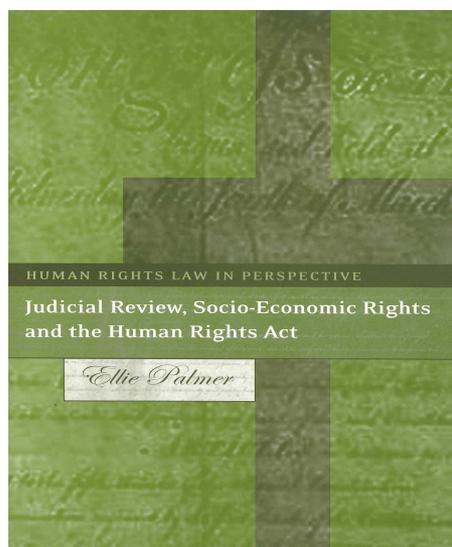
Palmer highlights that where there is legislation requiring assessment of need, e.g. in community care or housing, lawyers have argued, sometimes successfully, that there is a statutory obligation to meet the assessed need. This litigation was undertaken without reference to any requirement to protect the person's human rights. Since 2000 however, the Courts have also referred to the Human Rights Act in such cases, finding that support or services should be provided to avoid a breach of the human rights of the most vulnerable. Case examples given include destitute asylum seekers and people with significant disabilities.

Palmer notes though that the outcome of litigation and the basis of judicial reasoning in this area is still hard to predict. The book will however interest those giving advice and litigating on behalf of clients with welfare problems because it brings together key cases and draws out themes.

Palmer draws attention to the view of Baroness Hale that the ECHR is a blunt instrument when it comes to protecting people's rights in the areas of housing, health and welfare, for example. The book highlights for me the need for specific articulation of social and economic rights for protection alongside the civil and political rights already protected by the Human Rights Act. The Courts are already being asked to look at distribution of resources and deal with rights based claims arising out of statutory provision or the ECHR. A clearer public and political understanding of expectations is needed and would be achieved through setting down key social and economic rights in a Bill of Rights.

The afterword tells us of the JUSTICE project which is looking at the scope for a Bill of Rights in England. It might have been useful for the broader readership if the current

Maura McCallion
Law Centre Northern Ireland



CAJ call for volunteers!

CAJ is currently compiling a register of volunteers who are available to observe court cases & inquiries.

If you are interested in joining this register, please send your CV to info@caj.org.uk

MAKE IT RIGHT!

The Human Rights Consortium launched a major advertising campaign recently, focussed on encouraging the public to have their say on the content of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

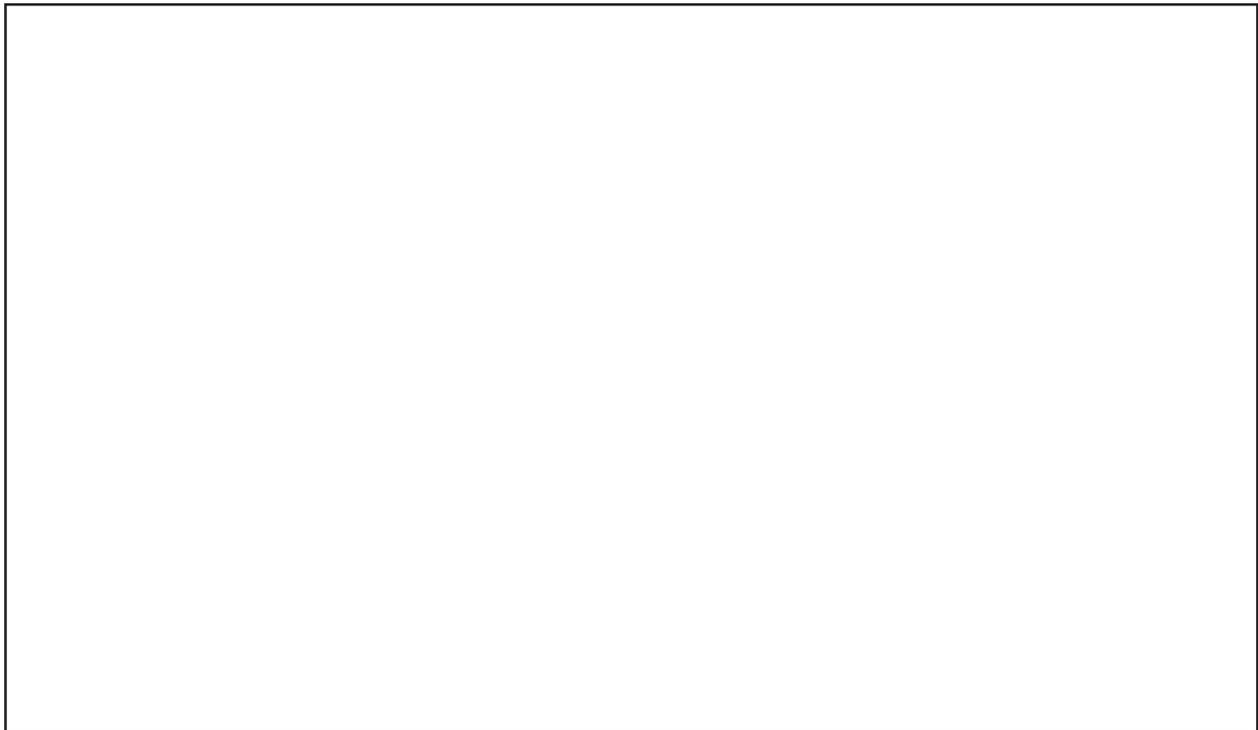
As the Bill of Rights Forum approaches its 31st March deadline of submitting

examples of issues that a Bill of Rights could potentially have an impact upon. The membership of the Consortium feel these are just some of the issues that could potentially be addressed by a strong and inclusive Bill of Rights.

One in three children here live in poverty. At a basic level that means that many children here have no winter

said that a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland was important. This shows huge support for a Bill of Rights and a marked increase in support from the 69% figure highlighted in a 2004 survey by the Human Rights Commission.

A Bill of Rights, instead of dividing people in Northern Ireland could unite



Chris Flack (Youthnet), Helena Maconniac (NICFM) and Fiona McCausland (Old Warren and Consortium Chair) launch the Consortium advertising campaign

its recommendations on the content of a Bill of Rights to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission the Consortium have taken the opportunity to try and encourage the public to have their say in the process.

The ad campaign entitled '**Make it Right**' has begun with bill boards and bus advertisements across Northern Ireland and will be continued in various formats including press adds and outdoor advertising for the next few months.

The campaign has highlighted child poverty, unemployment levels of people with disabilities, protecting older people and sectarianism as a few

coat to wear to school or have no breakfast in the morning. It is on issues like this that a strong Bill of Rights could really help vulnerable and marginalised groups by providing them with protections and acting as a basic safety net. The ad campaign asks the public to make these and other issues right by having their say in a Bill of Rights.

The Consortium campaign has already gained momentum and there has been increased media coverage on the Bill of Rights from a range of points of view. Most recently the Consortium released the results of a pre-campaign survey in which 75% of respondents

us behind a set of shared values, a set of rights that are shared by everyone here and that will be protected for everyone. Our advertising campaign is aimed at asking people to have their say in a Bill of Rights, through the use of a lobbying tool that will put them in contact with the Bill of Rights Forum and MLA's who are currently debating the content of a Bill of Rights.

A Bill of Rights is for everyone and we are asking people to 'Make it Right' by having their say at www.billofrightsni.org.

Civil Liberties Diary

December 4th

Every organisation working with children and vulnerable adults is told that they must register with a new criminal records service. **Access NI** will take over responsibility from the PSNI for providing criminal record disclosures.

December 5th

Senior coroner John Leckey reveals that Chief Constable Hugh Orde has agreed to allow him access to the Stalker/Sampson reports into RUC killings of six unarmed Co. Armagh men in 1982. However, the permission came with severe restrictions and that he would be prevented from disclosing any details to the dead men's lawyers without the agreement of police.

Council for the Homeless Northern Ireland protest outside Stormont and call on Social Development Minister Margaret Ritchie to meet targets on social housing and reduce the problem of homelessness.

December 6th

Figures released by the PSNI show that the number of Protestants applying to join the force has fallen from 6,713 in 2004 to 3,819 in 2007. The number of Catholics has fallen marginally and now stands at 3,310. The 50:50 recruitment scheme is expected to continue until 2010/2011 when the number of officers from the Catholic community rises to 30%.

December 7th

The Police Ombudsman criticises the RUC for refusing to investigate allegations that £170,000 may have gone missing after a series of high-profile football games in aid of the Omagh bomb victims and their families.

Sir Hugh Orde, PSNI Chief Constable, announces the force could start training officers in the use of Taser guns although an Equality Impact Assessment is not complete. Chairman of the Belfast Policing Board

Sir Des Rea accused the Chief Constable of ignoring its objections.

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee at Westminster recommends that the sharing of prison facilities must stop. It finds there "is a pressing need for a self-contained women's facility" in Northern Ireland. The report recommended that no further money be spent on Hydebank Wood where the sexes are currently mixed. The report also recommends that the traditional segregation of republican and loyalist prisoners at Maghaberry should end at the earliest possible date.

December 14th

NI Secretary of State Shaun Woodward announces plans for a new policing training college in Northern Ireland are to go ahead in Cookstown and should be operating by 2009.

December 16th

The Police Ombudsman's Office announces it is to investigate the reasons why a body lay undiscovered in a car in the river Moyola for a week. The PSNI initiated the investigation themselves.

December 18th

A report by the Equality Commission on Northern Ireland's work force reveals that Protestant employment levels have fallen in the public sector by 1.6% and by 1.2% in the private sector while Catholic employment rose by 0.2% and 2.5% respectively.

December 19th

OFMDFM announces the setting up of a Commissioner for Older People to defend the rights and interests of the elderly in Northern Ireland.

December 20th

High Court Appeal by former NI Secretary of State Peter Hain against

an earlier ruling that his appointment of Bertha McDougall as Victims Commissioner was unlawful continues. Counsel described the appointment as a "glaring example of political corruption".

It is announced that the Public Inquiry investigating allegations of collusion in the prison murder of LVF leader Billy Wright will resume full oral hearings in January.

Two blind friends (Andrea Hope & Jamie Coady) who were turned away from a Belfast restaurant are awarded compensation for the discrimination after the owners admitted they had breached the Disability Discrimination Act. Meanwhile a man with a facial disfigurement (Raymond Crowe) who was turned away from a Belfast nightclub receives an out of court settlement after taking his case to the Equality Commission.

Sean Hoey is cleared of all charges related to the Omagh Bombing in 1998. In the judgment Mr Justice Weir criticised the way the police gathered and stored evidence. He also said a controversial form of DNA testing used by the prosecution was unreliable and that key witnesses had lied. Two senior RUC officers described as being "deliberately deceptive".

compiled by Mark Bassett from various newspapers



Just News welcomes readers' news, views and comments.

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