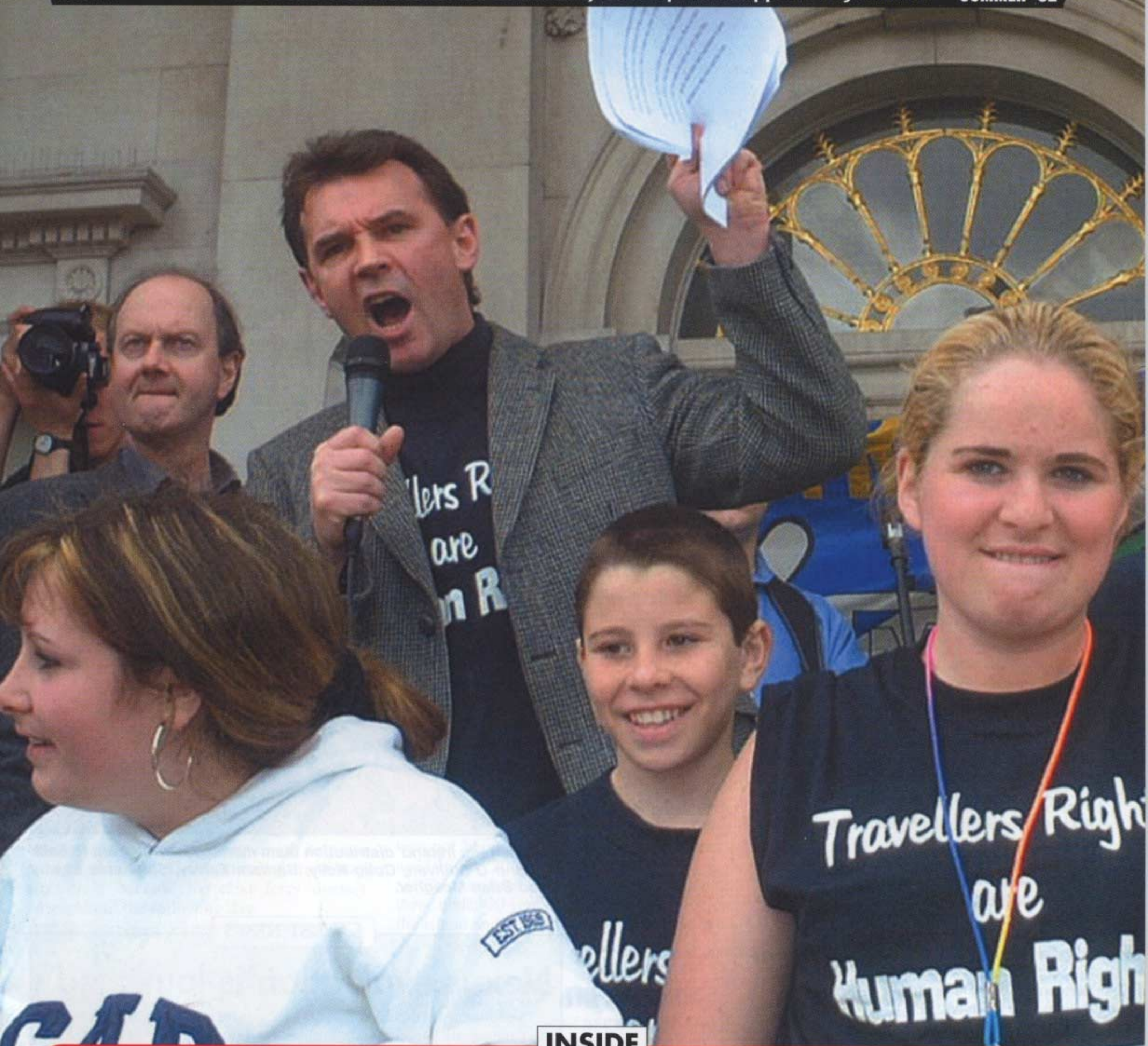


CHANGING IRELAND

ISSUE 4

The National Newsletter of the Community Development Support Programmes

SUMMER '02



INSIDE

- Intercultural Ireland - special 8-page report
- What's the cure to hidden poverty?
- Donegal in the spotlight
- Why go 25 miles to Westport for a haircut?

Produced by the Community Development Network Moyross Ltd., Limerick.

This publication and most projects featured inside are funded by the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.

Happy birthday to us!

The national newsletter of the Community Development Support Programmes is one year old with this, the fourth issue. The project has come a long way since March of last year when the newly-appointed editor was sent off to buy a carpet and furniture for the office in Moyross.

In fact, the blueprint which mapped the way for the publication's development proved a good one – particularly the proposal to recruit community development workers from around the country to be Regional Reporters. The plan also demanded that an Editorial Team be set up to oversee production and content. These elements have provided the publication with a solid backbone, not to mention integrity. And articles sent in by readers, on spec, were often published.

From the beginning, I can say now that, as editor, I had in mind to move beyond the traditional idea of a 'newsletter', believing that workers and volunteers in the community sector deserved a magazine worthy of a place on a shelf in any newsagents.

The upshot of it all is that readers seem to like the results – certainly if our evaluation is to be believed (for which we are grateful to Margaret Casey who was on a student placement). Readers liked the layout, colour, cartoons, photographs and, of course, the content. The mix of serious pieces, human interest stories and humour seemed to work, though there were calls for more articles focusing directly on the work projects do.

Part of the publication's aim is to boost the profile of the CDSPs and a majority of respondents to the evaluation said "they feel more part of a national programme" since they started reading 'Changing Ireland'. A sizeable minority had made links with other projects through articles they read.

Year two will see a website established while more Regional Reporters will be recruited and the Editorial Team's membership expanded.

As to the future of the CDSPs, in one way that is in the readers' collective hands. No matter what happens, 'Changing Ireland' has now established itself and will continue to report on news, developments and challenges facing the community and voluntary sector.

Thank you for your support!

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'Changing Ireland' thanks everyone involved in the production of Issue 4

DISCLAIMER

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the author concerned. They do not, by any means, necessarily reflect the views of the Editor, the editorial team, the management committee of the Community Development Network, Moyross, Ltd., or the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs.



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● 'Changing Ireland' distribution team members - from front to back - John O'Sullivan, Colm Kelly, Barbara Falvey, Stephanie Leamy and Brian Meagher.

LATEST NEWS

Nexus evaluation is launched

The long-awaited publication and official launch of the 'Evaluation of the Community Development Programme' took place in Dublin on June 5th.

The report was largely positive in its findings (as reported in previous editions). It was launched on behalf of Minister Dermot Ahern by his colleague, Mary Hannafin, then the junior minister with responsibility for children's affairs.

The evaluation was carried out by Nexus Research, in association with Farrell Grant Sparks Ltd. The report is now in the public arena and is being posted to all CDP projects.

Nexus continue to work with projects in developing various novel approaches to community work. Software has been developed, for example, for projects who wish to carry out self-evaluation on their work.

If you want a haircut, go to Westport

Allen Meagher reports

IMAGINE if everytime you needed a proper haircut, you had to travel to Westport. That's life for the people of Inish Turk Island. It would be funny if it was the only problem, but of course it's not.

Given the needs, it is not surprising really that Inish Turk Community Development Project is one of the best examples in the country of a CDP with a massive local profile. On an island nine miles off the west coast of Galway, with a tiny population and a shortage of services that mainlanders take for granted, the work of the Community Council - the CDP's management committee - is crucial to the community's very survival. Unusually, the committee are even responsible for running a bar and for community policing.

And, unlike other places, there is no problem in recruiting volunteers for the committee.

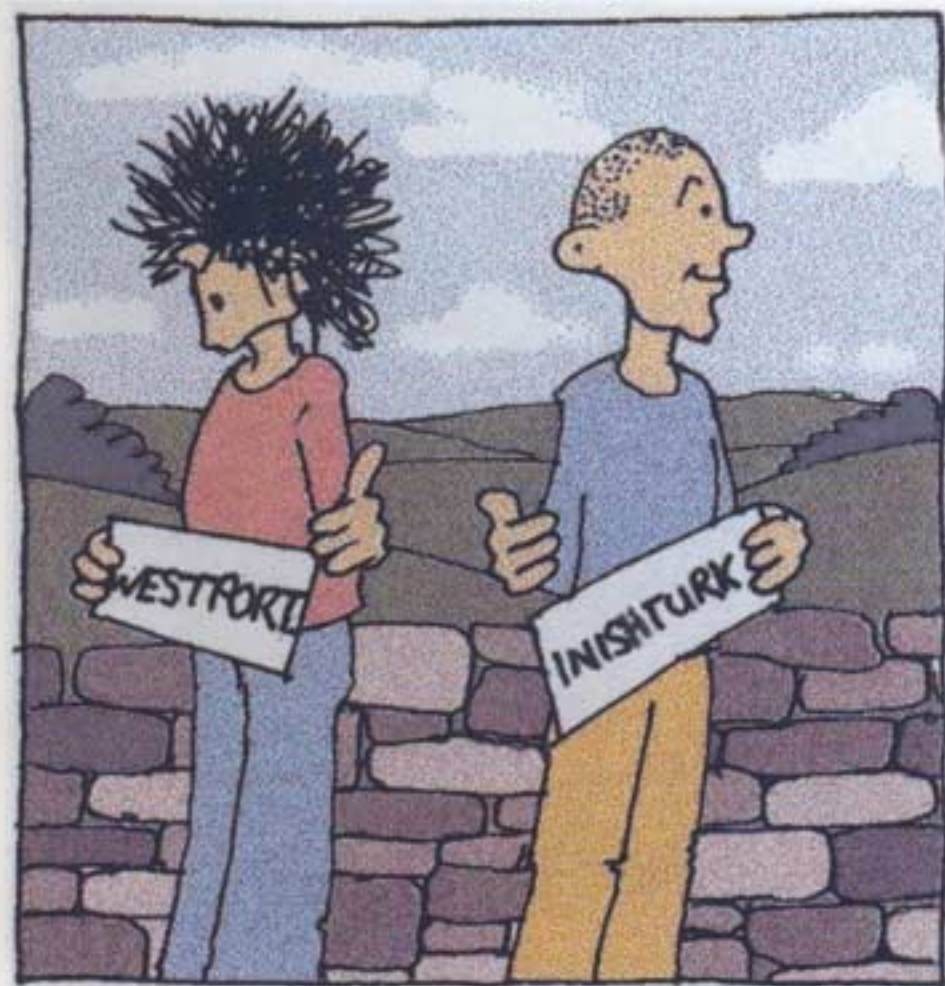
The 'Turk Newsheet' is often published, believe it or not, twice a week and distributed in record time by schoolkids on their way home."

■ POPULATION: 87

"Even though there are only 87 people on the island, it is a very viable, vibrant and hard-working community and the way the people interact with each other hasn't been touched by the Celtic Tiger's downsides," explained Danny Kirrane, project co-ordinator, originally a native of Glenamaddy on the mainland.

"It's almost like arriving into an isolated townland in Ireland 30 years ago, it operates as a real community and there is something very real about the people. They have no pretensions about them and there is a very strong work ethic," he added.

However, the effort involved for voluntary management committee members is staggering. The trip to West Training, the Support Agency based in Galway, is a story in itself. Take the ferry at 10am, arrive in Roonagh at 11am, and the road to Galway has you there at 1pm, ready for a quick sandwich before a meeting at 2pm. Those attending must stay the night because the next ferry doesn't depart until the following day.



● *Inish Turk Island, nine miles out in the Atlantic, is just visible above the waves as the tide roars into Silver Strand Bay in County Mayo. Pic: A. Meagher '95.*

■ WEB BLACK-SPOT

"When you talk about tackling disadvantage in an island setting," said Danny, "you are talking about being cut off from services. There is no secondary school on the island, there is a lack of income-earning possibilities and employment is seasonal. If you want a haircut, you have to go to Westport. The telecommunications infrastructure is out-of-date. The island is a web-blackspot area and we are trying to get that updated but it is difficult when there are only 21 households on the island. We have voice and fax capability only.

"My management committee run the Community Club (with the island's only pub licence) and the Co-op Shop is run by FAS volunteers. We have no problems getting volunteers for the Community Council. However, 40% of the island's population is under-20 and last year it was felt their voice was not being heard, so two new members aged 18 and 20 were brought aboard.

"The main challenge is - how many of these under-20 years will eventually settle on the island and what kind of work can be provided for them?

■ TOURISM NOT THE SOLUTION

"Inish Turk is the least touristic of the three local islands. People here don't want to be over-run by day-trippers, though we are trying organised walking tours and had 30 walking groups last year. But tourism is not the solution to our development problems.

"The key word is 'access', and there is a big debate over air transport at the moment.

"We are the largest inhabited island not on the national electricity grid. We are nine miles from the mainland and it would cost £2.7million plus VAT to connect us to the national grid. If someone on the island wants

to use even an electric cooker, not to mind a welder, the system will crash.

"Over the years the harbour has improved (somewhat) but you cannot over-emphasise the importance of improving access. If we haven't got access, we've got nothing."

Danny ran the Sligo Arts Festival in '98 and '99 and worked with Leader in Sligo.

"I wanted a new challenge and I've liked islands for a long time. There's no drugs problem, no smack and no cocaine, etc. Instead we have a population imbalance, because a lot of the women have left so it can be a quite lonely existence for the single bachelor men on the island. The main employment is county council work and lobster fishing.

So, why would anybody want to live on an island?

"I didn't mind living in Ireland and that's a big island!" retorted Danny. "For the islanders, they are from here. They are as friendly as could be. You can call into any house for tea and it'll be served in the best China. That tradition is still alive on Inish Turk. The island hasn't been swamped by mass tourism and holiday homes - the parish survives."

■ 3rd TIME LUCKY

On June 17/18th, members of three neighbouring island CDPs (Inish Turk, Inisbofin and Clare Island) were to try and hold an inter-island project meeting. It was their third attempt - weather has been bad and so the ferry services have been intermittent. Support agency and departmental staff were due to attend and the meeting was scheduled to be held on Inish Turk.

As Danny remarked, "We're on the hind-tit of development, on the periphery of the periphery."

Oh, for a helicopter service!

'I grew up around that table'

- said 1-in-4 visitors to anti-violence exhibition

By Martine Brennan

"I still find it hard to forgive myself for not protecting my mother even though I know that I was only a child," said an elderly man, crying. He was one of 1,500 people who visited the Siamsa Tire Theatre, Tralee, Co. Kerry, to view the 'Once Is Too Much' exhibition held in early Spring. Hundreds more saw the exhibition as they visited the theatre to attend plays.

A grandfather who visited remarked, "I never realised that women actually die from the violence. I am in shock. Over 70 women in Ireland dead at the hands of men since 1995."

The multimedia exhibition, focusing on violence against women and children, is the work of St. Michael's Family Resource Centre in Inchicore, Co. Dublin. It has toured various parts of the country and is supported by IMMA, the Irish Museum of Modern Art. The host organisation the Open Door Network in Kerry trained 28 volunteers to guide people around and to

properly listen to people's own experience of violence in the home. One in four of the 1,500 people disclosed that they had lived with domestic violence either as children or as adults.

So, the exhibition gave people an opportunity to voice their pain and fears, many breaking the silence for the first time.

- "Now I know why my mother wore sunglasses at breakfast, at the time I just thought she was daft," said one young man with tears in his eyes.
- "I grew up around that table," said a middle-aged man referring to the fear and tension at mealtimes.
- "I have been out of my marriage for ten years now, I thought that I was over the pain but it is still there inside me," said a middle-aged woman.
- "I don't want to grow up to be that man (a violent man). How can I stop myself?" said a teenage boy.
- A teenage girl wondered, "How can I make sure that I don't pick a bad man to marry?"

- "I worry about the impact that living with violence has had on my children. It took me 15 years to leave him," commented a mother.
- "I am terrified that he will kill my mother. I don't know what to do. I can't sleep. I can't eat. I just want it all to stop, but I will have to wait until I am old enough to leave home," said a young girl.
- "It is easy to forget that children are the silent witnesses. We feel so sad for all the little boys and girls who don't go to sleep feeling safe at night," commented a couple.
- **The Open Door Network is an inter-agency group for people working to combat violence against women and children in the county. Its membership includes workers who come across violence, Gardai, nurses, teachers, solicitors, social workers, help-line operators and so on.**
The co-ordinator of the Open Door Network, Catherine Casey, can be contacted on 087-6169704.

What's the cure to hidden poverty?

- ask 220 attending 'In From The Margins' seminar

A huge attendance of 220 people from around Munster attended a seminar on hidden poverty in Ireland recently. All were women and the reason for the high attendance was that the organisers, the National Women's Council of Ireland, made sure the participants received proper expenses for childcare/eldercare, personal assistants and travel so that poverty was not a barrier to any woman attending on the day.

"Women living alone and lone parents continue to be the poorest people in Irish society," summarised Orla O'Connor, policy analyst with the NWCI, speaking at the 'In From The Margins' seminar which was held in Limerick.

The theme of this seminar, the first of three, is creating change to end women's poverty and the day was spent identifying the hidden poverty of women and looking at ways to campaign for a more just society.

Family Resource Centres, Women's Centres, Citizens Information Centres, Health Initiatives, Traveller groups, Community Development Projects, women with disabilities, asylum-seeker and refugee groups were represented.

The seminar was funded under the Equality for Women

measure in the National Development Plan. Meanwhile, the NWCI have launched a campaign encouraging women to vote and advising them of the latest information available regarding women and poverty in Ireland.

- Did you know that only 13% of Irish TD's are women?
- Traveller Women live on average 12 years less than settled women and are three times more likely to die in any given year.
- Fear of poverty is one of the primary factors preventing a woman from leaving a violent partner.
- Most minimum wage earners are women. Women earn 15% less than men on average.

For further information on 'In From The Margins' contact: Anne Brennan at NWCI offices on 01-6615268 or email: ifm@nwci.ie

Their next seminar will focus on anti-racism and will take place in Dublin in September. The last seminar will be on women's health in November in the Northwest region.

Nobody is sheepish in the north-east

By Maurice McConville

MAYNOOTH was the venue for the regional consultation process organised by the Department for the Eastern and North East Regions of the Community Development Support Programmes. And the North East Region input was not sheepish. Instead of giving a woolly

presentation, the North East Region put together a three-part pageant which included a flock of sheep, a snail and a giant map of Ireland for the March 20th gathering.

The pageant was a collective effort with Mary McClory, community develop-

ment worker for Southside CDP, acting as Artistic Director, while Susan Keogh, Drumlin, was the illustrator.

Management committees and workers from CDPs, FRCs and CFGs all played their part in the pageant. This included an animated parable on the 'Black Sheep' which highlighted the futility of empowerment without a vision and the universal redistribution of power. This was followed by a silent protest from the FRCs over the recent changes without consultation - so a shamrock-shaped FRC-logo was removed from the map of Ireland.

The third part took the form of a display of banners focusing on different issues. One represented RAPID as a large snail and another highlighted the desire for decentralisation of power. The presentation was given a great reception and the audience demanded an encore. Who said that community development is boring!



● There was nothing sheepish about the North-East's participation in their regional CDSPs seminar.

History, hope and drama at east's CDSPs seminar

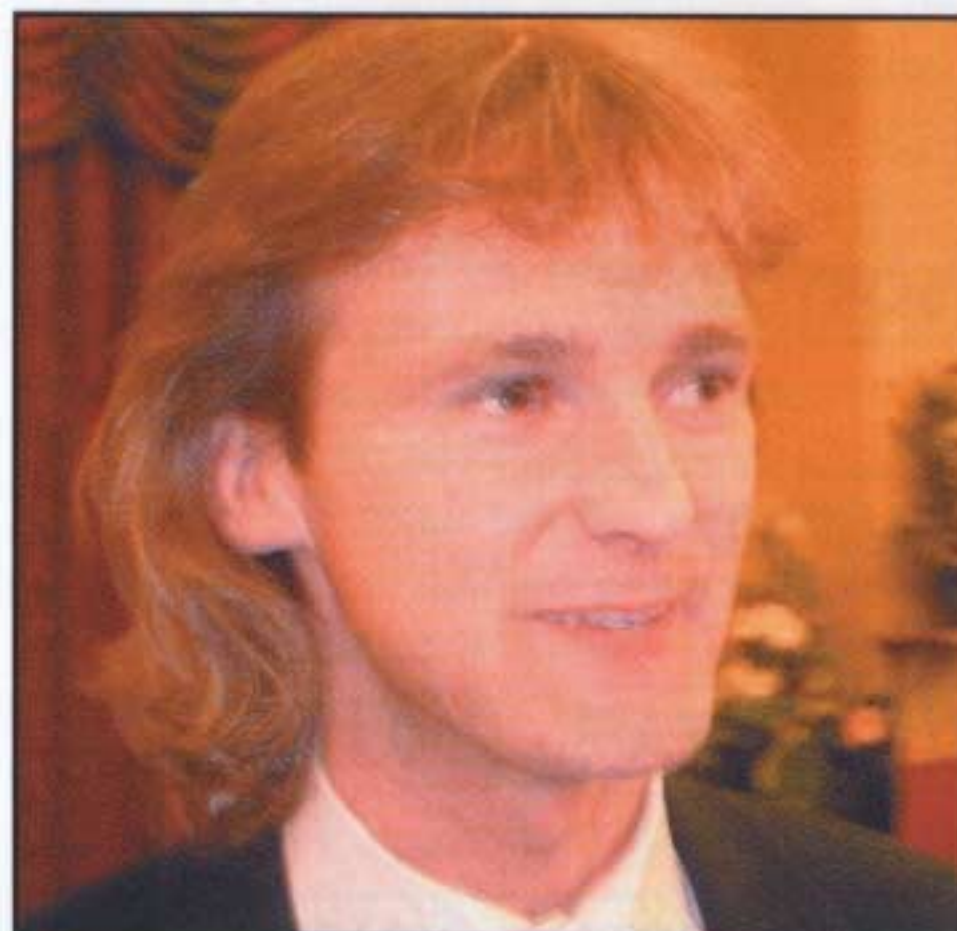
HISTORY was made in the Mansion House, Dublin, on May 16th, when all strands of the CDSPs in the Eastern Region came together for the first time as part of the ongoing Strategic Planning Process. Lorraine McMahon of Parents Alone Resource Centre Coolock (PARC) chaired the day and she referred to the fact that the first Dail met in this room in 1919 and now all the strands were meeting in this region for the first time.

Presentations came from Cecilia Forrestal, CAN Support Agency, Colm McDermott from the Voluntary Community Services (V.C.S.) in the Department, Sarah Kelliher, Lourdes Youth and Community CDP and Joe Grennell, Ringsend CDP. They outlined the progress and process so far; the context and constraints; and the hopes and challenges within the CDSPs. As with the other regional seminars the day was well attended with up to 200 people taking part, a third of whom were voluntary management members.

■ ONLY 15 DEPT. STAFF

One fairly stark fact to emerge is that the staff in the VCS dealing with the 260 projects amount to 15 out of a total of 4,500 civil servants in the entire Department (0.33% of the

total staff!) The good news however is that the Nexus evaluation of the CDP has gone to the printers and will be published in the next couple of weeks. The potential of the proposed Policy Unit was highlighted as one exciting way to assist projects to act collectively. Other issues raised were the ever increasing strain on resources and demands on projects.



● Jim Power from Ballina CDP was one of the facilitators at the Eastern Seminar.

A thought provoking and dramatic presentation from Smashing Times Theatre Company on the issue of racism and asylum seekers certainly stirred up feelings before the rapporteur, Emer Dolphin, broke the attendance into small discussion groups and in the afternoon Brian Dillon of Nexus presented the challenge of building on the impressive impacts at local level to influence government thinking.

■ C.E.CUTS CAUSE ANGER

The implications of the cuts to Community Employment Schemes and the anger within projects were named as a possible rallying point for projects to come together but there was a recognition that our profile as CDSPs is poor as is our history to act collectively. Overall the mix of confusion, disgruntlement and optimism that runs through the projects within the three programmes was evident on the day.

St. Fergal's Resource Centre in Bray took on the responsibility of administering the seminar on behalf of the Regional Organising Committee. An excellent job was done by everyone with Marie Therese Keenan Dowd in the background making sure everything ran smoothly.

Since the launch, last year, of the RAPID programme for 25 urban areas, community groups have invested time and resources into its development. While there has been progress in putting plans together, the process has led to frustration and disappointment. Maurice McConville, co-ordinator of Le Cheile CDP in Dundalk, has been involved in RAPID from the outset and here he gives his own take on the experience.

RAPID needs to speed up

THE RAPID programme was originally trumpeted as a dynamic programme for tackling urban deprivation in Ireland and was described by Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern, in November of last year, as a way of "front-loading National Development Plan funds."

As a community development worker in one of the RAPID areas in Dundalk I could see the potential RAPID has to transform many disadvantaged areas throughout Ireland.

However the reality of RAPID on the ground is that while expectations have been raised with the promises to target funds, to meet local needs and to work for social inclusion (all stated aims of the RAPID), little has happened on the ground.

My problem as a worker is whether or not to continue to encourage local people to become involved with a process which has failed to deliver. Like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow it always seems just over the next hill.

RAPID as an idea has great potential and I do want to see it succeed. However, it could set back community development in the medium term as volunteers become disillusioned with the process.

A number issues need to be addressed to prevent RAPID becoming another 'big idea' which has had its day.

The decision-making process is extremely top heavy and bureaucratic and need to be reformed. All measures under RAPID have to go through to a national committee which is too far removed. Decision-making needs to be

made locally where the local knowledge informs the decisions.

More priority has to be given to "meaningful" consultation and participation with people on the ground in the RAPID areas. The RAPID Area plans were drawn up in such a way that this did not happen. These plans seem more like statutory sector wish-lists than a serious attempt to assess needs and provide solutions to meet these needs.

Funding needs to be made available locally for RAPID to develop. At present the Co-ordinators have to apply every three months for small amounts to develop work.

The role of statutory agencies within RAPID needs to be clarified. Many see RAPID as a vehicle for pursuing their own agenda and do little to consult or work in partnership with others. While there are some exceptions to this, departmentalism often gets in the way of a real understanding of local needs. The Community Development model has a lot to offer these agencies and a "culture change" within statutory agencies is needed – whereby the staff are retrained in participative methods of working.

If RAPID is to be the dynamic programme, as it was supposed to be, then it needs to work on the ground within the designated area. The system has failed these communities and there is a need for real change within the system. RAPID presents us with an opportunity to have a sustained regeneration in many deprived urban areas. I hope we will use it wisely.

Agency cuts clash with promises

Paddy Flannery comments

THE RAPID bandwagon rolled out in early 2001 promising to solve problems by fast-tracking vast resources into the 25 most disadvantaged areas in the country. Moyross in Limerick is included in the Northside RAPID Area and under this programme every Government Department is asked to give top priority to these areas in their spending and service deliveries over the next three years.

The RAPID co-ordinator and the Area Implementation Team (which includes three community reps) worked hard with the local communities to draw up and submit a local plan in December 2001. This identified the need to sustain existing services and over 30 new initiatives to regenerate the local economy.

However, the promise of funding to meet the local needs is not the experience on the ground. The reality is that we are now working with increasingly shrinking budgets in all areas.

Instead of expanding we have FAS announcing massive cuts in their Community Employment Programme that threaten essential services such as childcare and youth work.

The Moyross Health Centre has been reduced to an empty building with all services now based in Ballynanty Health Centre. This might be servicing the Northside but it has a negative impact on Moyross. Corpus Christi School are losing teachers as opposed to reducing class sizes and other projects can no longer employ staff with the loss of existing funding.

Neither have the long approved plans for a shopping centre, pharmacy or library surfaced so far.

It makes no sense to put plans together to improve the future when the excellent work of the past and present is not even being maintained in some cases. We as a community need to demand that all the promises made by Minister Eoin Ryan at the RAPID launch are kept. There should be no reduction in community services currently available and the RAPID plans need to be given the priority promised by Taoiseach Bertie Ahern.

● This report first appeared in the April '02 edition of 'Moywrites' the newsletter for Moyross, Limerick. Paddy Flannery is manager of Moyross Community Enterprise Centre.

THE RAPID STRUCTURE

NATIONAL ADVISORY BODY

COUNTY COMMITTEE

AREA IMPLEMENTATION TEAM

COMMUNITY
REP

STATUTORY AGENCIES

Finding the C.I.C. in Clifden

By Declan Weir

"I NEVER knew there was an information centre in Clifden."

It's amazing, almost 5 years and more than 3,000 queries since Clifden Citizens Information Centre (CIC) was officially opened by President McAleese, that this is the response from many people when told about their local CIC. To the volunteers who put so much into providing the free and confidential service in Northwest Connemara, it's often a matter of much head shaking, but it's one of those things. After all, unless you're looking for specific information, there's no reason why you'd use the service.

We've all heard that 'Knowledge is Power,' and it's difficult to argue with such a truism. Thankfully, recent years have seen a better distribution of this previously well-guarded knowledge through the nationwide network of CICs located in our cities, towns and villages. The CIC is *the* place to find out about social welfare entitlements, employment, health, and housing issues and a host of other important matters, as well as information on local organisations and services. The philosophy is that you have the right to know, and the information providers are there to help you find out. People only need to call in or phone, and, if the CIC don't have the answer, they'll be happy to refer you to someone who does.

Clifden CIC is operated by a part-time administrator and a team of volunteers, supported by Comhairle, Galway CIC and **FORUM – a Community Development Project in Northwest Connemara**. With this support, the CIC now offers regular monthly outreaches to villages like Roundstone, Cashel & Leenane, and a free legal advice service voluntarily provided by a solicitor.

A 'Know Your Rights' slot is broadcast on local radio and published in local media, keep-



● Declan Weir and friend at the Citizens Information Centre in Clifden, Co. Galway.

ing the community informed of the latest developments. One of the most important tasks is to ensure the information is accessible to everyone, and visits have been made to local groups and organisations, targeting as many people as possible, from national school pupils to members of active age groups.

Comhairle's distinctive Mobile Information Unit also visits regularly, even attracting some unplanned publicity by causing a huge traffic jam at last year's Clifden Pony Show.

It's not all hard work though, and social events have included a fishing trip and visits to some of Connemara's finest restaurants, and that's on top of the countless benefits individuals gain simply by volunteering. Like many other centres, Clifden relies heavily on local volunteers, and the fifth training programme

has just been completed, with three new information officers joining their more experienced colleagues to ensure the continued provision of the free, confidential and accessible information service the people of the area deserve.

CICs are always keen to hear from potential volunteers, and sometimes it only involves a time commitment of a few hours a month. So give your local CIC a call and check for details of how you can ensure that your community can benefit from the knowledge and the power that goes with it.

● Clifden CIC is located at the Library Buildings, Market Street, Clifden and is open on Thursdays from 7pm-9pm and on Fridays from 10am-12noon and from 2-4pm. Tel: 095-22000

Community Platform quit p'ship meeting

REPRESENTATIVES of 26 anti-poverty and equality organisations staged a mass walkout from a meeting of the Partnership for Prosperity and Fairness (PPF) in Dublin Castle on April 29th.

The Community Platform said they were frustrated that they had not been consulted about several recent government decisions. The PPF session was the last before the general election.

Donal Toolan, a Community Platform spokesman, said the groups were not walking out of the partnership process but had laid down a marker that this lack of consultation could not continue.

He pointed to the criminalisation of trespassers, the deportation of asylum-seekers with Irish-born children and the referral of equal status legislation to the Liquor

Licensing Commission as examples of the government's disregard for consultation with all concerned groups.

Orla O'Connor, National Women's Council policy analyst, said: "While we sit in one set of rooms and negotiate with the government and their representatives on the issues of inequality and poverty, at the same time in other rooms decisions are being made and deals are being done to undermine our contribution."

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed pointed to cuts in the Community Employment scheme as an example of the lack of commitment to social partnership.

- Excerpts taken from *Irish Times* report of April 30th.

Racism and the class divide

In the questions and answers sessions on inter-cultural Ireland (part of the recent DCU Forum) one participant argued that Ireland had to sort out class divisions before tackling racism. The same person also noted that racism was articulated in different ways according to class. While upper class residents in Ballsbridge, Dublin, used the planning laws to quietly keep asylum-seekers out of their area, rural residents in Corrofin felt the only action they could take was to hold a public demonstration to oppose the arrival of asylum-seekers.

While the methods of resisting inter-culturalism in Ireland differ according to class, opposition to immigrants moving into an area, which can often be an expression of racism, exists across the class divide. The participant concluded by saying, "Why are the working class more physical? Often it is all they have in terms of power."

Health Board embraces empowerment model

By Lorcan Brennan

FOR the past six years, Thelma Blehein has supported people to speak up about how their own health care should be managed. She is one of five community development workers employed by the South Eastern Health Board (SEHB), marking a deviation from the old-fashioned reliance on purely medical models for maintaining health.

Before joining Wexford Community Care in 1996, Thelma spent eight years working in the Community/Voluntary Sector as project leader with a CDP, and as community development coordinator with the Horizon programme for women. The experience has stood her in good stead.

Today, Thelma easily identifies a number of positive and visible outcomes from the work carried out between community development workers employed by projects under the CDSPs and those employed in Wexford Community Care:

- For example, new community projects are emerging through funding provided by the SEHB through Wexford Community Care. Additionally, resources are being allocated to projects under the CDSPs, assisting for example communities in Wexford town and in Enniscorthy.
- Funds and resources for carrying out research that are of interest to the SEHB and to CDPs are also being made available – such as Youth at Risk.
- An increased number of proposals are being included in the Service Plans of Wexford Community Care – having come from projects in the CDSPs.
- As a result of the above there is an increased and growing understanding and respect for the mutual benefits of joint initiatives.
- Finally, the partnership approach to the more global issues of equality, justice and poverty is evolving all the time.

■ LONGEST HOSPITAL WAITING LISTS IN EUROPE

Thelma feels strongly that “the factors that influence a person's health are many and complex.”

“For instance availability of housing, standard of education, nutrition, recreational opportunities, stress levels, quality of environment, unemployment, and in



● *Thelma Blehein, community development worker with the South-Eastern Health Board.*

Ireland the ability to pay, are all known factors which influence a person's health,” she argues.

Why then she asks, “in this country, when we see the diverse range of issues pertaining to health, do we persist in operating a predominantly single model two-tier system of health care, i.e. the medical model, public and private?”

Thelma believes that as a system, “the medical model has traditionally treated people as recipients of a service, has been prescriptive in nature, dependent on high levels of medical expertise, and lengthy administration procedures.”

“This process along the way takes the individual farther and farther away from decisions about their own health care. It has presented us as a nation with the longest hospital waiting lists in Europe, and a public versus private scenario which often ensures, through the inherent inequalities of its structure, that the people who need health care the most are those with the least ability to access, participate in or benefit from this kind of service or structure.”

■ ALL IS NOT LOST!

However, she acknowledges that all is not lost! In recent years, there has been

movement, particularly within the Community Care setting, towards using social empowerment models of health as a way of engaging with people and communities around their own health and related issues.

Both sides hope in the short term to identify or hear more about the health issues within local communities, and to begin to target resources in a way that facilitates a community development response to these issues/needs.

In the long term, it is hoped that the SEHB's relationship with the CDSPs and the whole of the community sector on the ground in Wexford will allow for constructive debate and action. There is a need to strategically build on issues such as access to health care, structural inequalities, participation by the community sector in decision-making structures and the use of social models of health care.

At last – a cure for jargon!

PEOPLE new to community development find the jargon confusing and off-putting. Those who speak jargon constantly often cannot get out of the habit. Both need help and a British-based website might have the answers.

Here's an English council official getting carried away with himself: “...a multi-agency project catering for holistic diversionary provision to young people for positive action linked to the community safety strategy and the pupil referral unit.”

If you understood that, you should log onto the site to learn again how to speak and write properly (the official was talking about go-karting by the way).

On the other hand, if you need to understand a jargon-phrase, the website is equally worth checking out:

www.society.guardian.co.uk

Type “glossary” into the website's search engine and you'll get your answers. The site provides plain English definitions for hundreds of phrases in the public and voluntary sectors and has links to websites where you can find more information.

It also includes advice on how to write clear and concise public documents that will be easily understood by everyone.



● President Mary McAleese enjoying food from around the world after officially opening the country's newest community development project, in Ennis, Co. Clare.

Ireland needs people like you - President Mary McAleese

Allen Meagher reports

On Monday, April 15th, President of Ireland, Mary McAleese, officially opened Ennis Community Development Project in front of hundreds of onlookers.

Minister Síle De Valera was in attendance, as were various dignitaries, though not local councillors - three of whom were specifically not invited due to disparaging remarks previously made about the communities the project focuses on.

At the opening, President McAleese spoke of working against hatred and of the benefits of working together.

During her address, she complimented those ready to condemn racism and discrimination: "Places with languages of racism and gender bias... flourish where people hear it, know it is wrong but haven't the courage to say aloud that it is wrong. We need people like you, to have people with guts and the courage to speak strongly. You are building a dam to stop the coursing of hatred."

The President spoke of "an Ireland where every child can walk out the front door and know they are respected and are not afraid to walk the streets."

"Every morning there are stories of hatred and it has run amok in human hearts and it is an awful potent weapon and the worst hatred is the hatred for other groups of people without even knowing them... We want a different kind of world."

"Our greatest export used to be people," she said, reminding people of the signs which often greeted emigrants - 'No Irish Need Apply'.

"We in this generation are called to remember what this was like for us... and think how we should treat the stranger."

When President McAleese was going to school, if you wanted to find out about another country, you had to look it up in a book. Of 87 children in a school she recently visited they encompassed 30 different cultures.

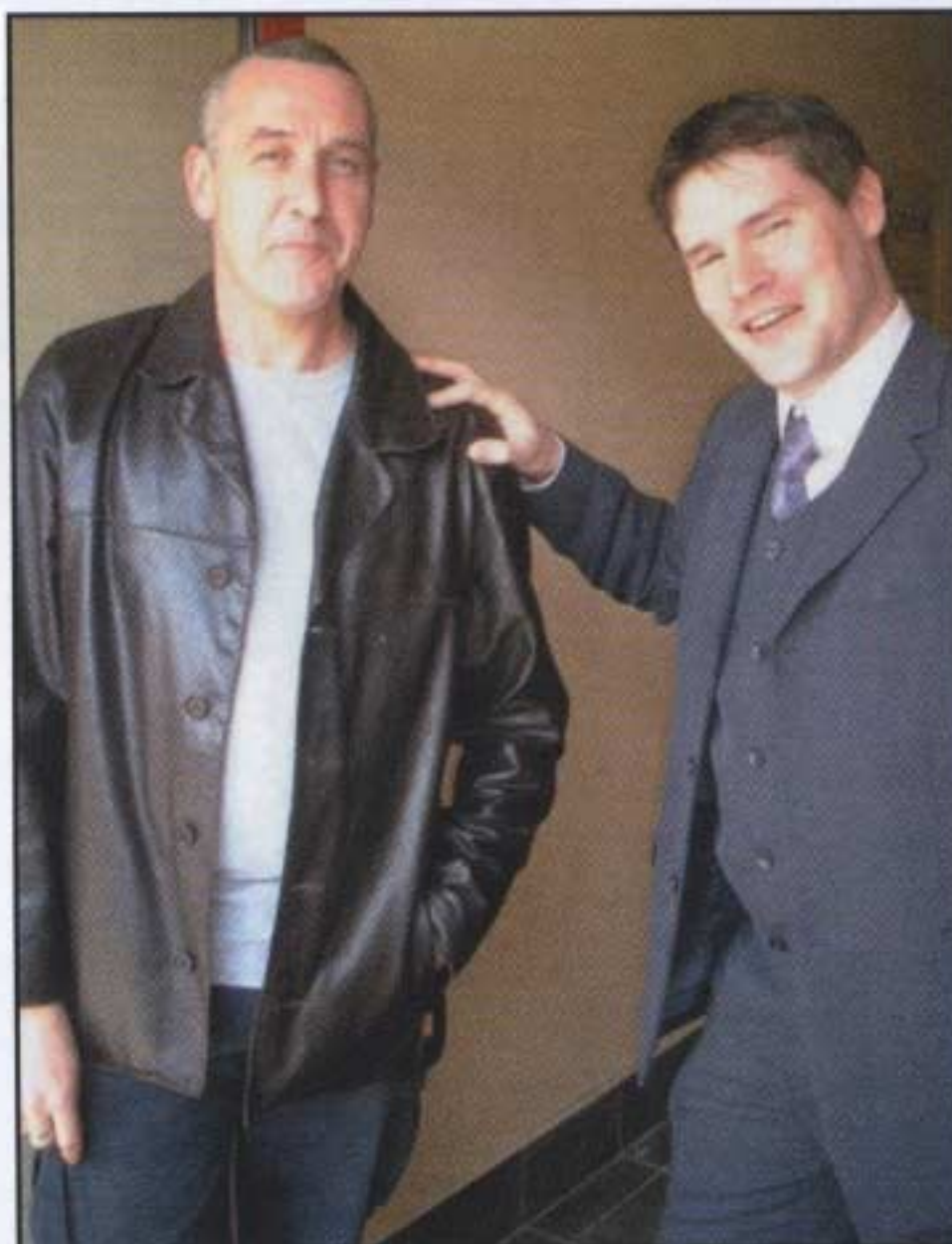
"How amazing! Imagine the joy of turning to

the person beside you and being able to ask what's it like in their country. This is a fantastic rich gift."

"You are in start-up mode. You see a great mountain in front of you, but the Irish are learning that two shortens the journey. You won't notice the time or the gradient."

She complimented the group on attracting support and funding.

"So many people in Ireland feel like spectators in society - we think of Travellers, we think of refugees, we think of children, especially dropping out of school early and they never got to know their own talents. ... If you have strong individuals, you have strong communities."



● Reflecting diversity: colleagues Paul Kelly and Tony O'Riordain from the Mid-West Support Agency, each dressed in their own style for the opening of Ennis CDP by President Mary McAleese.

"This Republic was founded out of a vision that all people will be cherished equally and have rights to respect, dignity and space," she added.

She told the hushed audience that when she was young, growing up in Belfast, people were introduced to each other with "poisonous views".

President McAleese, who was accompanied by her husband, issued her thanks for the invitation and wished the people in the project "energy and courage for the journey you are on."

One of the last remaining Traveller tinsmiths, Martin McDonagh, presented President McAleese with a traditional coal scuttle, while a child from Pakistan presented a scarf. More children from the refugee and asylum-seeker community and Traveller community presented flowers and a badge.

'The Lovely Rose of Clare' was sung by young Traveller, Mary Frances Keenan, after which local African band, Afrobeat, struck up outside.

When the official opening was complete, it was like the 'loaves and fishes' parable as somehow, despite the very large crowd, there was enough food from around the world to fill everyone.

● Ennis CDP is a new project funded through the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs, focusing on, and working with Travellers, refugees and asylum-seekers. One of the main aims is to promote acceptance, understanding, tolerance and equality in relation to different cultures and the way of life of different communities within Ennis. The project aims to emphasise the value of cultural diversity.

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Tel: 065-6869026.
E-mail: deirdretoomey@hotmail.com

'At least Cromwell gave us a choice'

- Traveller spokesman on new law

OVER a thousand Travellers and settled people came to a halt – legally – outside the Department of the Environment and Local Government on May 2nd to protest at recent legislation that could see many Travellers jailed, fined and without even a roof overhead.

They came from projects and communities all over the country – from Donegal to Kerry – and at one stage stretched the full length of O'Connell Street, Dublin as the colourful protest wound through the city-centre.

The government is "criminalising a people", stated Michael Farrell of the Irish Human Rights Commission and the Irish Council for Civil Liberties.

The legislation – brought in and dealt with by the Dail in a single day just prior to the recent election – is seen as disastrous. It means that Travellers can be jailed for a month and/or fined 3000 euro if camped illegally and have their caravans confiscated - 1,200 families are still without official accommodation promised in '95 and are especially vulnerable to the new law.

Mr. McCann, one of a number of orators on the day, put it like this:

"When Cromwell was evicting the Irish by burning or using a battering ram, he said 'To hell or to Connacht'. At least he gave them a choice – this government is giving Travellers no choice."

Travellers from projects and communities throughout the country were there to hear the speeches – hardly a county was unrepresented and people from the settled community also took part.

"This legislation is trying to get rid of Travellers from Ireland forever," continued Mr. McCann. "This is also a direct attack on Travellers' human rights. No country in Europe, either western or eastern, has such legislation, not even Romania which we hear so much about."

Photographers clicked and journalists jotted and the protest made the main evening news and all the daily newspapers the following day – proving that you can get heard when need be. Most of the coverage was positive ('Travellers protest at 'racist' law', read The Star's headline).

"The reason why we are here today is to make our voices heard loud and clear that we are not going to tolerate this attack on Travellers' culture and way of life. And make no mistake about it – this is a direct attack on Travellers," said Mr. McCann, equality officer with the Irish Traveller Movement.

"All the talk about social exclusion rings hollow with the introduction of this legislation. In Bertie Ahern's speech on the steps of the Dail as he left government, he said that participation was the corner-stone of democracy. Why then were Traveller groups excluded from the demo-

cratic process?

"Michael Noonan talks about a compassionate Ireland. If this is what Fine Gael mean by this legislation, then I don't want any part of their Ireland."

"Travellers were here before this state was established. We were here before this government was there or this legislation was brought in and we will be here after this government is gone and after this legislation is gone. Travellers are here to stay now and forever."

Leaflets compiled by the Irish Traveller Movement, Pavee Point and the National Traveller Women's Forum were handed out condemning the new legislation: "This trespass law is targeted at Travellers who have been failed by the government and local authorities. At least 1,200 Traveller families are currently living on the side of the road and awaiting accommodation. These Travellers have nowhere else to go and now are under threat of jail. The government was supposed to provide 2,200 units of Traveller accommodation by the year 2000 (it has provided 111 units)."

Protesters were urged to use their voting power in the recent election to show how they felt about the parties who supported the legislation, the Coalition parties and Fine Gael.

The Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill may yet be tested in the courts, when a case arises.

Supporting the legislation

FINE Gael's Olivia Mitchell previously published legislation regarding Travellers and was one of the Dail deputies who spoke in favour of the amendment during the two hours the matter was debated.

She believed the legislation was "absolutely necessary" and did not believe consultation was required.

"It is completely unacceptable that anybody, no matter how deprived, can move onto someone else's land, destroy it and use it as a location for his or her business or move on to football pitches which have been provided either at public expense or, more often, at great local expense and into which the local community has put an enormous amount of work and effort," she argued.

She did not see the Gardai having the resources "to move in against 200 caravans, move them on and arrest all 200 families" and she did not feel that this was the intention

of the legislation: "If one takes action against one family, it will act as a deterrent..."

The legislation, she claimed, was not aimed "at Travellers in genuine need of accommodation."

She noted that "the legislation does not apply to public roads" and said, "Travellers must have somewhere to live if permanent accommodation has not been provided for them."

She felt that "public attitudes have definitely hardened against the Traveller community as a whole" and added: "Controls are absolutely necessary to stop those Travellers who are not in need of accommodation and who are not deprived in any way from destroying the environment for everyone, including other Travellers."

The full debate, for what it is worth, can be accessed on the government website: www.gov.ie/oireachtas

Is interculturalism bad for women?

AT the recent DCU Forum and speaking on the subject of 'Citizenship Education', David Denby from the School of Applied Language & Interculturalism quoted a number of experts and published academics.

In saying that, "individuals are embedding in cultures and culture is part of the individual," he asked "Is inter-culturalism bad for women?", because for example, of gender discrimination within cultures.

He reminded the audience that when you accept all cultures you forfeit moral judgement of the behavior of people from the different cultures.

He also said it was "an irony" that Ireland, having been a country of emigration, had a difficulty with immigration.

"Colonialism made Irish people strangers in their own country," he stated, adding that this should be explained to people coming into Ireland today.

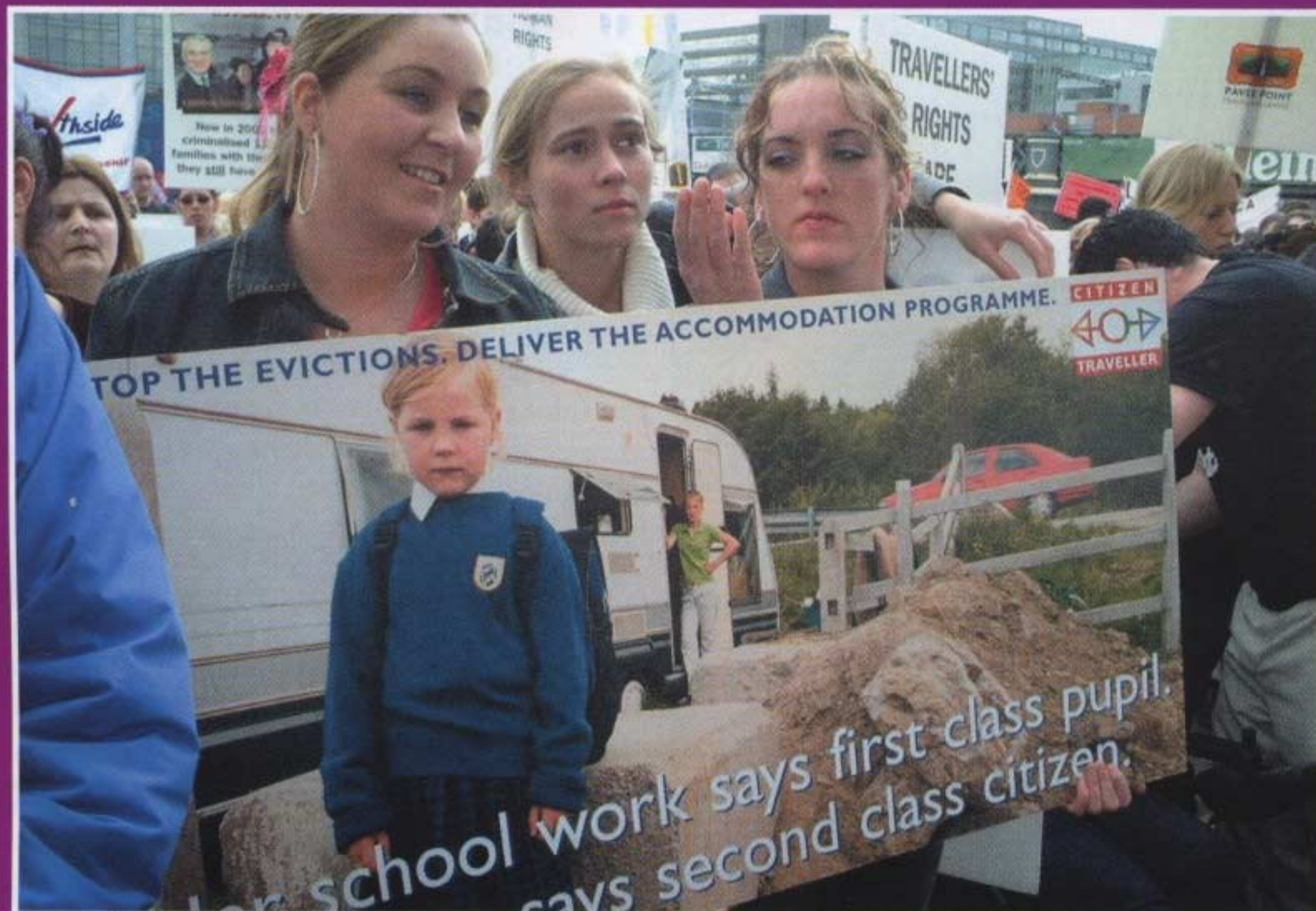


THE EVICTION OF TRAVELLERS

- Is Ireland about to return to 1980's-style evictions of Travellers, as this photograph shows?



- 'We want equal rights'.



- Three young women who do not want to be further treated as second-class citizens.



- Both these protestors had strong voices on the day.



- Thumbs-up for the protest.



- "In 1995 the government promised that..." This man has had it with promises.

Did Mary and Joseph travel

– asks persecuted Nigerian pastor who fled to Ireland

By Allen Meagher

WHILE Bono and U.S. treasury secretary, Paul O'Neill, recently toured Africa for 10 days to see about increasing aid, reducing debt and removing trade barriers for African nations, at least one Nigerian family have decided they intend staying away. The Osims – from the region known in Ireland as Biafra – have secured refugee status and have made Ireland their new home.

"I came here as an asylum-seeker. I almost lost my life," exclaimed Okey Osim, a Born Again Christian and pastor to a 50-strong religious community in Limerick. He operates his church from a room in St. Mary's CDP and feels most welcome in the community; ironically it's a place native Limerick people often dismiss. The area is disadvantaged and has an exaggerated reputation for crime.

With his shaved head, the long gashes on the Pastor Osim's forehead are unmissable

– axe-marks.

"Fighting is still going on in Nigeria," he said, pointing to tragedies where people were killed by the hundred.

"It's a religious war. They are seriously fanatical in Nigeria. In Kano, there are people who say they support Bin Laden. They only know war and killing Christians. They don't abide by the law of government and because Nigeria is a free place, they can follow you around the country. They knew me as a preacher and there was no place safe for me, even our village."

Pastor Osim and his wife Joy sought asylum here and were successful, though they initially had to leave behind their four Nigerian born children, Uka, Thomson, Princess and Iky. And last year, Joy gave birth to a fifth child – Irish-born – and they named her Jemimah.

■ JESUS WAS A REFUGEE

"It was with the help of some missionaries that we got here," said the Pastor. "I

knew Ireland was a Christian state, a good home for Christians, because there are Irish priests in Nigeria."

"If you are facing persecution, it is not easy. The Israelites had to run to Egypt, even Jesus was taken to Egypt when Herod wanted to kill all children under 2 years of age. His parents smuggled him out and I am very sure they didn't travel with correct documents," he stated.

Now that their four children who had stayed in Nigeria have joined them, the Osim family intend to settle here – they have secured refugee status, and have equal rights and responsibilities as Irish citizens.

Do they feel welcome?

"As soon as we arrived here in the community we were invited by St. Mary's Community Development Project to take part in an ECDL training scheme. So I really am a friend of the community," said Pastor Osim.

"It's fine, except that looking for a house is difficult to find. That is the only time we have really encountered racism. Once or twice, we received insults too. Some would tend to call you a 'black monkey' – I forgive that as ignorance because I have not yet come across someone who is educated or who has travelled who will say that."

■ CREDIT CARD FRAUDSTERS

Pastor Osim is a shipping agent by profession and (now that the state allows him to work) he is hungrily seeking employment. The Pastor said he will work at anything to get started.

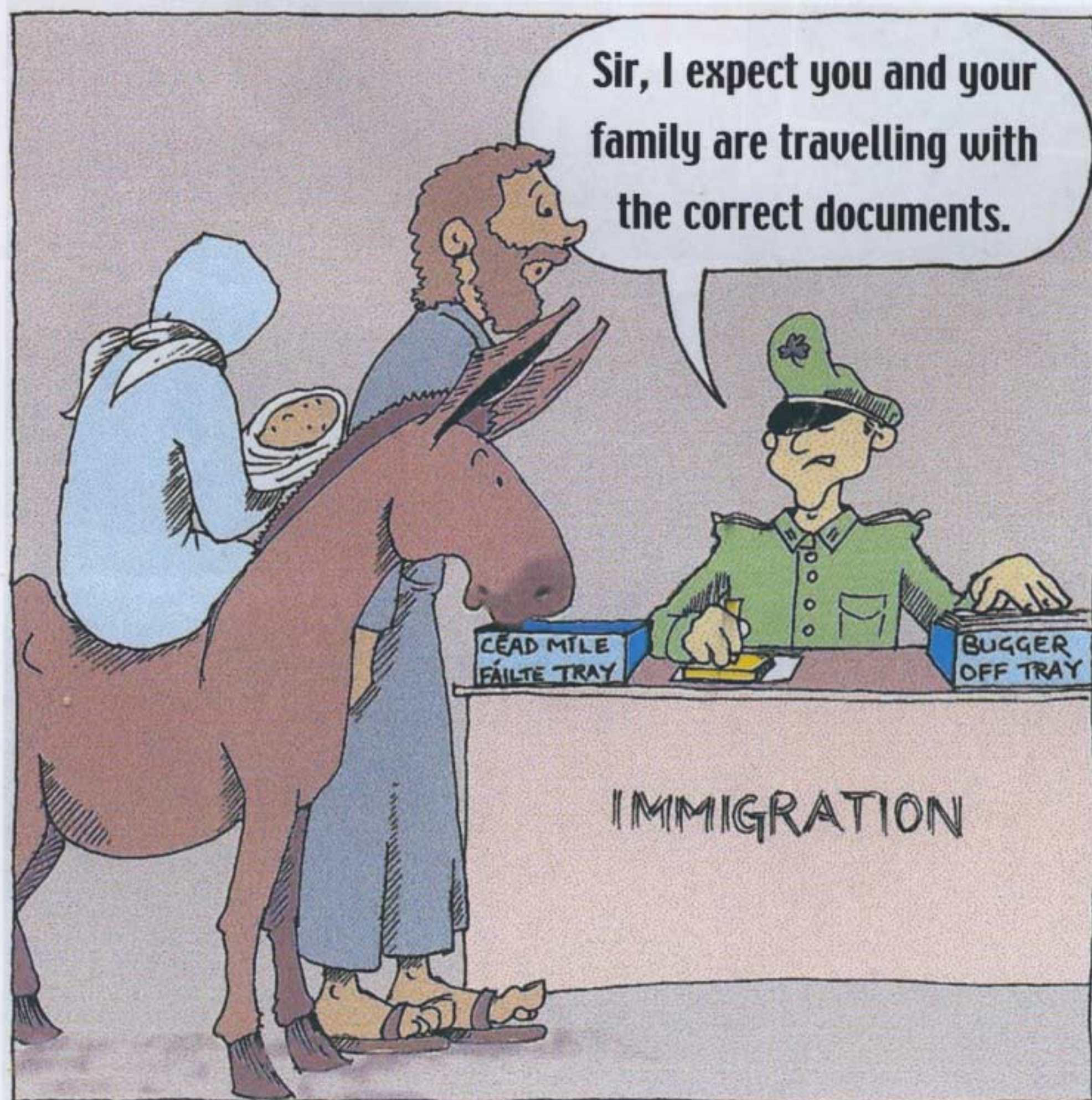
"Through prayers anything is possible," remarked the Pastor

He and his wife look forward to their children "doing sports, attending Christian schools and they will be well fed with the word of God."

"You must live according to the laws of the country you come to," said Pastor Osim, condemning those involved in credit-card fraud, especially Nigerian criminals who give their compatriots a bad name.

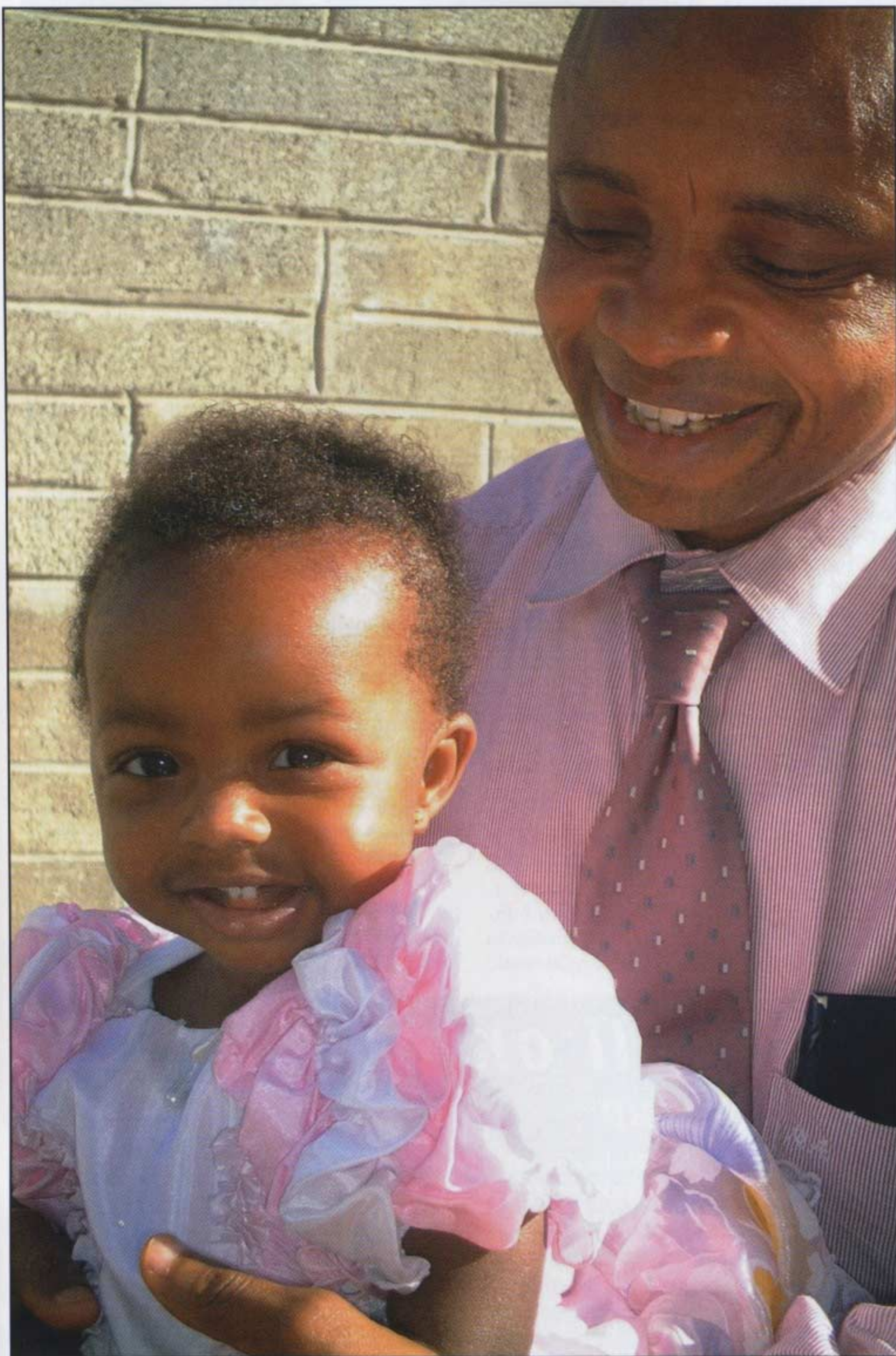
"It isn't everybody," he pointed out. "Some people coming here are bad. You can't say they are all good. And a few bad ones make everybody looks as if they are bad."

"Irish people are rigid, hard-working and



with correct documents?

with his family



● Jemimah Osim in her father's arms.

can go to any length to get what they want, so if you are here you have to be ready to work and earn your living. So thank God I got a work permit."

■ 'THEY EMBRACE YOU'

Joy Osim is impressed by her experi-

ence in Ireland to date: "The people in St. Mary's are so good. It is as if they know you a long time. They embrace you - I am so impressed. They are loving you know. The people that I've met, such as the people working in the Community Development Project, are so lovely, the way they accept

me and the way we interact. There is no criticism, even when we started up the Church here, they gave us use of the hall."

However, she knew that some people were "racist and rough".

"A Nigerian lady was telling me that she and her daughter came here - with work visas - they have work in Shannon. One day they were shopping in Limerick and they were confronted by an old man who was so angry. He was saying 'You black people - you have spoiled England and now you are going to spoil Ireland.' The women didn't respond, but the man blocked their path and wanted to fight them. So the daughter started abusing the man, saying 'You are a drunkard'. The man left then."

"I have heard such stories, especially from blacks, but personally I have not experienced this. People are really very good and helpful. Look at the way people have accepted us. When I was at the hospital to have my baby everybody was treated equal, there was no discrimination."

■ RACISM AND LANDLORDS

"I have not experienced any bad aspect of this country, only for one place, when looking for a house. It is very hard for us to get a house. Once you phone them (landlords) and they hear your accent they tell you 'Sorry, it's gone'. The next week they are still advertising the vacant house. They don't like to give their houses to blacks. Women with babies here are finding it very hard to get housing. We are all equal before God, only the skin is different, nothing else."

Joy wants to study nursing. She took part in the St. Mary's CDP computer course while waiting for their application for asylum to be heard.

Asked about difficulties in settling into Ireland, Joy said she often struggled to understand Limerick accents. And she definitely does not understand the prevalence of cigarette-smoking.

"It is hard for me to see a lady smoking, but here it is the order of the day. Husbands are smoking, wives are smoking, even pregnant mothers. And children are smoking. When I see that, I said to myself, 'Wow! What is going on?'"

Tallaght tackles racism

By Ruth O'Dea

TALLAGHT Intercultural Action (TIA) was set up in 1997 as a response to the needs of the new refugee community in Tallaght. A group of community workers in the area came together to start engaging with the refugee and asylum seeking community. There was also an urgent need to respond to increasing racism in the area which was being whipped up by a local councillor. With the upcoming general election in June 1997 it was felt that it was important to nip these negative feelings in the bud.

■ POSITIVE

The TIA set out to create a positive outlet for integration of the new communities with the local community. The group has continued to work to promote equality of treatment and condition of ethnic minority groups experiencing social exclusion in Tallaght using community development principles. Membership of the group now includes community workers from CDPs, the core-funded Women's Network in Tallaght, Tallaght Partnership, Tallaght Community Arts Centre and refugees themselves.

■ LOCAL-GLOBAL

One of the main activities of the group in 2001-2002 was the organising of a conference in Tallaght called 'Tackling Racism in the Community' which was held in January 2002. The inspiration for the conference was the UN World Conference Against Racism in South Africa in September 2001. TIA felt it would be a good idea to link the local with the global and specifically to concentrate on



● Breda Kinsella, Clement Esebamen and Marie Price-Bolger at a T.E.A. meeting in Tallaght, Co. Dublin.

the community and how we all could tackle racism together.

■ SAFE & RESPECTFUL

The aim of the conference was to provide a forum where ethnic minorities and local communities could discuss racism in a safe and mutually respectful environment. The conference was a great success with a high turnout, a good proportion of whom were members of ethnic minority groups. Clement Esebamen, Equality Officer with Tallaght Partnership, was very enthusiastic about the day:

"The turnout was fantastic and the discussion was very useful. Important links were made between the new communities and the local community."

■ NAME-CALLING

The discussion on the day brought local community groups face to face with the reality of racism in Tallaght, ranging from hurtful name-calling and being refused service in shops to a lack of access to well-paid work,

often combined with a lack of recognition of qualifications and experience obtained outside Ireland.

The conference ended with an open discussion forum where participants tried to come up with a strategy to combat racism in Tallaght. Recommendations came under the following four headings:

- anti-racism education and training;
- cultural awareness;
- the media;
- and, politics and the law.

TIA continues to build on the work of the conference and, for example, held a cultural event to highlight International Day Against Racism on March 21.

● Ruth O'Dea is a member of TIA and works for the Special Project on Long-Term Unemployment, Brookfield Enterprise Centre, Tallaght, Dublin 24. Tel: 01462-3222.

● The TIA can be contacted directly on 01-452-2553.

Umbrellas work well on politicians - prove Limerick anti-racism group

A STRATEGIC alliance of CDPs and other groups in Limerick succeeded, in the run-up to the recent election, in getting candidates from all political parties in the city constituency to sign up to a declaration that they reject racism.

"The event was organized in order to ensure that the election campaigns of all candidates were conducted in such a way that they did not incite hatred or prejudice on grounds of race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins, religious belief, or membership of the Travelling Community," said John Lannon, one of the organisers.

"The aim was also to send a clear and consistent message to constituents," he added.

The work was organized by umbrella organisation 'Limerick Community Network Against Racism'. It includes CDPs in the city, Limerick Travellers Development Group (a Core-Funded Group), Doras Luimni, Amnesty International, Mercy Justice Office, and others committed to building a tolerant multicultural society.

On the day, 10 out of the 15 candidates seeking election in the Limerick East constituency signed the anti-racism declaration and more were expected to sign over the following days. All were thanked for their participation.

At the signing, election candidates in Limerick East were asked to use appropriate and inclusive language when referring to people of different ethnic backgrounds, in order to avoid creating prejudice or confusion. The organisers also stressed the necessity for candidates to be fully and properly informed of the status of the different groups of people that might be targets of racism. It was important, they added, for candidates to avoid using terms such as "refugees", "asylum seekers" and "economic migrants" interchangeably, and for them to refute the negative myths relating to these groups when presented with them on the doorsteps.

Now they've been successful once, the politicians will expect the umbrella to be chasing after them every time. And who knows what else they could be encouraged to declare for or against!

Anti-foreigner bias in the community revealed

Betty Walsh reports

"SEND the f***ers back home... Or put them all on an island and blow it up," said John (not his real name).

"They should not be left in here at all, at all," commented Mary-Lou.

These comments were not made by Osama Bin Laden, Idi Amin or Slobadon Milosovic, but by people working on a community scheme in the Mid-West, when asked for their opinions on asylum-seekers and refugees. Their comments showed there exists a lot of fear, anxiety and even paranoia among Irish people, particularly regarding people who are visibly different.

People are worried that if we continue to take in "black" people there will be no social housing or welfare payments for Irish people. They are also concerned that refugees will be seen as a source of cheap labour for unscrupulous employers and that Irish

people will be out of work as a result. Much talk arises from the mistaken belief that asylum-seekers are being given cars, mobile phones and so on for free by the Government.

"Irish women had to go to Cork to have their babies because the local maternity hospital was full of blacks," declared Michael.

"They are going to shut down all the (community) schemes and open them up again with all black people working in them," wailed Angela. "Wait and see!" she warned everyone.

Some people felt Irish people who are on the poverty line are being pushed aside and that all the resources were being given to the "black people".

Some of the workers were concerned that if "coloured people" who are drunk or disorderly are refused entry to club or pub they can claim they were discriminated against

because of their colour. During the furious canteen discussion over asylum-seekers, the hard core who held mostly negative views about foreigners were the most vocal. While the quieter ones nodded and murmured in seeming agreement, they changed their tune once the anti-foreigner element left the room. Perhaps afraid to air their views in front of others, now they spoke mostly in favour of the asylum seekers.

"I have nothing against black people," said Marjorie. "I met them in England and sure there is good and bad in every race."

Orla said she had met and spoken to a few asylum seekers. "While I have nothing against any of them personally, I don't like to see them begging on the street. ...and why are they entitled to more than us?" she asked.

What do asylum-seekers get for free?

PASTOR Okey Osim runs a church in St. Mary's, Limerick. He is a refugee and drives a car he received as a gift. But, contrary to rumours abounding of 'freebies' for refugees and asylum-seekers, he didn't get it from the government, the city council or any local agency. And he never would have. It was a gift from his Church to help his family in commuting from Shannon while waiting to find a house in Limerick.

Various agencies and state bodies have all stated that there is no special treatment for refugees and asylum-seekers.

However, a survey this year by Amnesty International found that 10% of people in Ireland wrongly believe that "all asylum seekers are entitled to a free mobile phone". In addition, 15% of people had the daft idea in their heads that the government gives these people grants to buy cars. Even more

worryingly, 38% of people believed (again wrongly) that "An asylum-seeking married couple get more generous welfare payments than an Irish couple. 37% knew the statement was false and 25% were not sure one way or the other.

On the plus side, 63% were aware of the actual weekly allowance the government provides – 19 euro per adult. These respondents may largely be from the 65% of Irish people who feel the government is not doing enough to combat the rise of racism in Ireland.

Under the government's dispersal programme, asylum-seekers are offered accommodation in specific locations spread throughout the country. In these units they get full board and the weekly allowance (it is 9 euro for children incidentally).

"They don't get mobile phones or free cars," reiterated a Department of

Justice spokesman.

The Refugee Council commented on the rumours: "No organisation gives out things like that."

Meanwhile, Eileen McGlynn of Doras Luimni, a voluntary group in the Mid-West, pointed out that not all asylum-seekers and refugees are poor: "Some would have had to flee their own country due to political or religious persecution, but may be wealthy in their own right. They would have their own resources to buy a mobile phone or car," she said.

Amnesty International gave a clue as to where the rumours may be coming from, giving the example of one particular unlicensed radio station.

This station "has on a number of occasions made racist comments and have been giving out misleading information regarding benefits which asylum-seekers get," asserted Amnesty.

Tackling racism in schools before it happens

"We received an impetus from the community," said Liz Price of St. Munchin's CDP, when asked why they helped organise a half-day workshop on multiculturalism for 100 teachers from five schools on Limerick's northside.

Asked for a translation, Ms. Price put it more plainly: "The aim was to combat potential institutional racism. There was a general feeling that people were seeing asylum-seekers as problems – because of language difficulties and religious differences. There was a recognition that racism existed and a workshop was a fun way of showing the diversity of cultures, for people to hear music and songs. For people to say 'This is great' and 'Look at what these people coming into our schools are going to bring.'"

FEARS

There were fears, for example, that the children of asylum-seekers could bring diseases to school and the workshop was a starting point towards tackling these fears. All the schools concerned were gearing up to take in asylum-seeking children from a nearby accommodation facility (an ex-army camp that housed Czech refugees during WWII).

The assumption that Ireland is an independent country that could "go it alone" got a knocking when participants discussed holiday destinations, tourism, imports and exports, and the countries Irish people choose to go and work in. Attention was drawn to the benefits to Ireland from people choosing to come and work here in

times of labour shortages. Participants were surprised to learn of the links between Ireland and so many other countries in the world. Without the pineapples from Uganda, the bananas from Vietnam and the Philippines, and the cocoa from Ghana, our Irish diet would be a lot poorer.

WE'D NEED A HANDBAG

However, the main aim of the workshop was to begin to celebrate and welcome the changes in society. Musicians, singers and dancers from Libya, Cameroon, Congo and South Africa performed.

Explained Ms. Price: "Two Nigerian women came running into the workshop room full of 100 people and they were singing and dancing. By comparison, we would need a handbag in the middle of the floor, the lights down and a few pints in us to do the same. It was great to see the freedom and the comfort they had with their own bodies. And such smiling faces. They were so positive."

The day was organised by the Mid-West Development Education Centre and CDPs in St. Munchin's and Moyross.

"When real problems do arise, for example over religion or language difficulties, the MWDEC will be ready to help," added Ms. Price, noting that not just Limerick, but Ireland, was experiencing change.

Now that is an 'influx'!

The Gambia, West Africa, received more refugees in one weekend in May than the Irish republic receives in two months. Remarkably, The Gambia is only the size of Munster and the region the refugees entered (fleeing fighting in Senegal) is barely the size of Clare.

While the region's deputy commissioner, Bakary Jaiteh, was "alarmed", according to the local media, "he assured the refugees that his office would stand by them in their difficult moments."

He called on charitable organisations, the international community and non-governmental organisations to lend a hand.

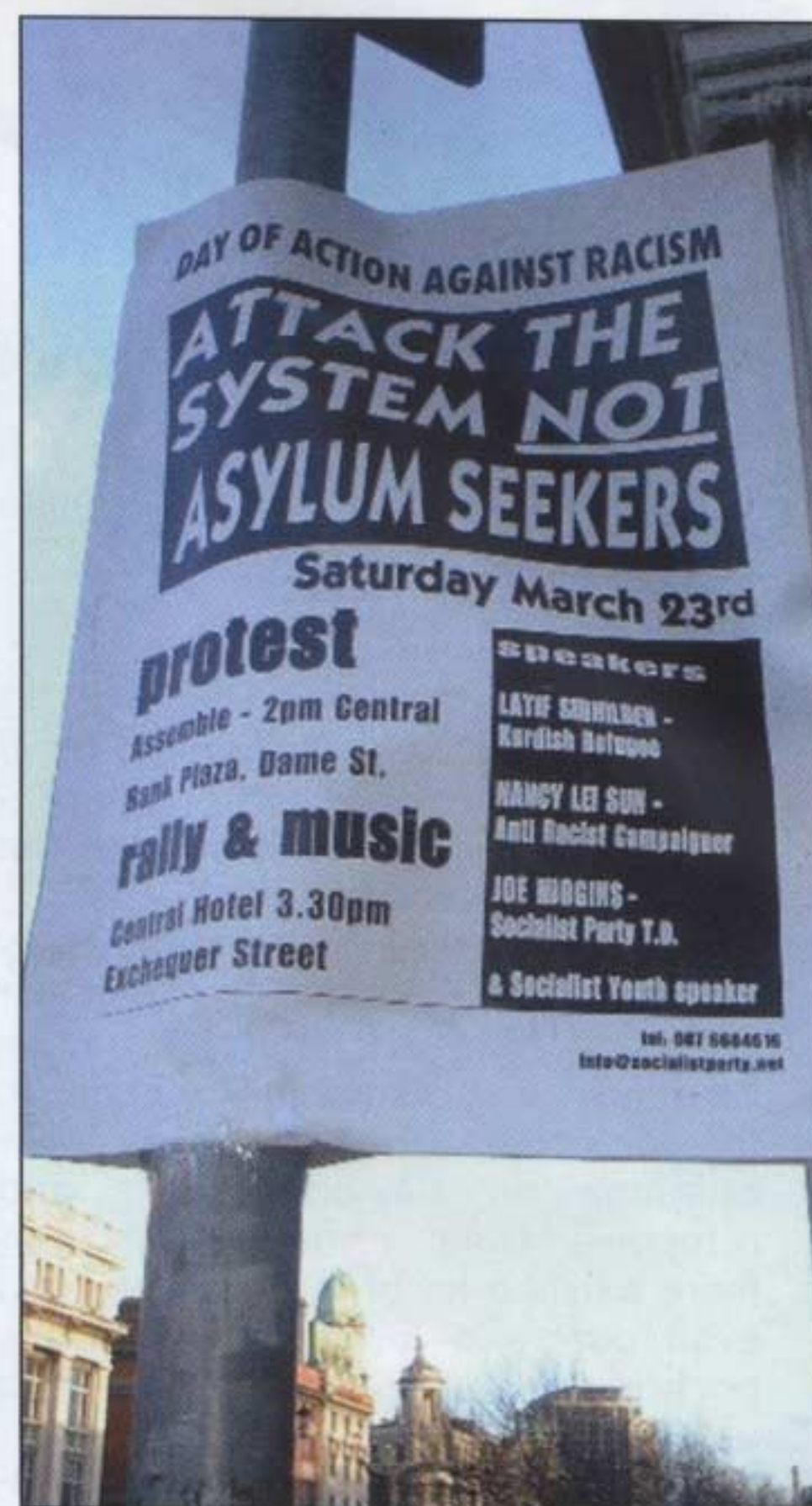
The Gambia's 'Daily Observer' on May 7th further reported that "a lot of unaccompanied children were among

the refugees. Some of the children were reported to have been separated from their families while fleeing the fightings and did not know the fate of their family member."

Most of the 1,765 refugees who entered The Gambia over the one weekend are likely to return as soon as fighting dies down. A low-level war has been taking place in Casamance, in neighbouring Senegal, for 20 years (once earning a notable mention in the western media when two French tourists were killed). The Gambia, with 95% of its population practising Islam, is among the poorest countries in the world. Its people are friendly and have a strong sense of community values.

- By A. Meagher

Source: www.qanet.gm/observer



● Poster outside the G.P.O., Dublin, on National Anti-Racism Day, March 21st.

Vincent Browne condemns new law

BROADCASTER and journalist Vincent Browne, speaking at a musical celebration of Traveller culture (as part of Listowel Writers' Week in Kerry) has condemned the new housing bill that criminalises trespass.

He referred to the dumping by Travellers of rubbish in the Dodder River in Dublin, one of the pretexts for introducing the much-criticised legislation. His point was that there was no comparison between temporary damage to a park and the permanent damage to Traveller health caused by the living conditions Travellers are forced to put up with. He reminded a packed hall that Travellers have an average life expectancy that is similar to that found in under-developed countries. Littering was not the issue.

At the same event, two booklets were launched – one produced by the Kerry Travellers' Development Project, another by Fealeside Training Centre in Abbeyfeale, Co. Limerick. Each was produced by trainees and staff in the two projects and included many smiling faces, fine stories and poems pleading for justice.

Lone parents log on

WEBSITE REVIEW

By Maurice McConville

A LONE parent bringing up children on their own can feel isolated, stigmatised and cut off from the rest of society. However, an award-winning web site, set up by James O'Neill is trying to change this. www.solo.ie is a web site for lone parents run by a lone parent and it has had over 1.25 million hits recorded since it was set up.

James, who lives in Drogheda with his nine-year-old son DJ, told how the web site came about. James was on his own, late at night, on Christmas Eve 1999 and feeling lonely.

"Christmas is for families..." said James "...and I thought, 'Is this it?'"

He decided, at that moment, to build a web-site for himself and other lone parents in the area. He worked into Christmas day on the site. James gathered information on local lone parents groups and activities.

When he went on the web he started with three pages he now has over sixteen hundred pages. After securing the domain name, solo.ie, James went live with this name, in April 2000.

"The response to the site was so big, away beyond all my expectations," he exclaimed.

The site has 8,000 visitors a week. Everyday around 20 lone parents from every walk of life contact James. It covers all of Ireland and much further afield with links to Kenya, Hawaii, America, Iceland and Australia. James said that the site helps lone parent groups to set up, but it is also there for people who would not join a group. It offers welfare information, an advice service and campaigns for the rights of lone parents. Groups have met up through solo.ie and there has even been a few matches made through the site. The site won the Golden Web Award for both 2001 and 2002.

James is aware of the wide variety of lone

parents he is catering for - teenagers, separated mothers, widows and widowers, and older unmarried women who have children. It is a great way for people to communicate. Some use the site for 'venting' (net jargon for getting rid of anger).

James' set-up operates without any outside funding and he doesn't want any. He reckons the site costs around 300 euro a year to run. The site is a family enterprise and DJ has his own page "just for kids".

The amazing thing about James is that he had to overcome one major difficulty to develop the website: "Two years ago, I could not read or

write properly," he said. James left school at 13 with no qualifications to work on building sites. Over the last two years he has worked to improve his literacy ability and he now helps to encourage other adults, with similar difficulties, to return to education.

James understands the struggle that many lone parents face in their everyday lives because he has been there, done that and got the t-shirt. Through his efforts he has created a network for lone parents that offers support and advice and has proved it worth. Check it out at www.solo.ie



● Dad and DJ can smile at their website's success.

'A woman, a Jew, a mother and an anti-racist'

D.R. RONIT Lentin from the Sociology Department, Trinity College, Dublin, wanted to "disrupt the cosiness" in her talk on racism and inter-culturalism. She was speaking at a DCU Forum on Interculturalism held in March. A resident in Ireland for 32 years, she described herself as "a woman, a Jew, a mother and an anti-racist."

Regarding Israel and the Palestinians, she said bluntly that, "A generation ago, we - our people - were subjected to genocide. And what is Israel doing now? We have learnt nothing."

"Racism is a political system aimed at regulating bodies," she said, adding that multi- or inter-culturalism was one response to racism.

"Remember that race is not a reality, but a social construction," she said. She pointed out that sociologists share some blame for promoting the idea that race is for real because they

like to categorise people in society into groups.

Later, she noted that the spokespeople for cultural groups were often "older men who are religious leaders who are not usually elected" and questions needed to be asked about the representation of gender and sexuality within cultures.

She pointed out too that cultures change as time goes by and are not fixed. By way of example, she asked, "Is Traveller culture really as fixed as Traveller political organisations would have us believe? Privately, Traveller women will tell you they don't live as their mothers did before them."

On racism, she reminded the audience that unborn people can now be deported along with the parents.

The government, she warned, was wrong in

thinking that they can have an anti-racism campaign that is effective at the same time as they are also restricting immigration into Ireland. In fact, there is a connection between the two actions. She said we also have to challenge nationalist absolutism and to cut out talk of "us" and "them".

She said we can learn from abroad and do things differently and left her audience with a memorable quote: "Anyone who talks of racism in a polite society (where it is thought better not to discuss the issue) is like someone who craps on the dinner table."

The two-day Forum was held to mark, March 21st, National Anti-Racism Awareness Day. It was organised by the School of Communications and the School of Applied Language & Intercultural Studies, DCU.

The mysteries of policy work

Sinead: "Nobody knew what I was supposed to do in the beginning. I thought a lot of it would be looking at practical issues and developing policy recommendations. The reality is that the infrastructure is not there to carry out that level of policy work. And it is not up to us to come up with policy recommendations. We have to empower the projects and the management committees to look at their own activities and to support them to do policy work, rather than doing it for them. In the long-term, it is more sustainable to do it that way. This is the way we prepare for lobbying for changes."

"A big part of our work is promoting networking and linking up of projects. You identify a core group of people from different projects and bring them together with people such as community development specialists from outside the programmes."

Marie: "With projects they might already be working on something that needs lobbying, for example, violence against women. We support projects in negotiating with statutory agencies, FAS and so on. One question for us is who to lobby, who actually has the power?"

Sinead: "There is a massive weakness within the programmes - because people are so busy working, they have little time to analyse that

Sinead Barrins was the first policy worker in the country to be employed under the Community Development Support Programmes. A politics graduate from TCD, she back-packed in Australia and Oman - "being smelly travelling, getting my nose pierced and my hair braided." She returned to Ireland and worked in Letterkenny Youth Project before becoming a Policy Worker.

Marie Hainsworth worked as a volunteer in The Gambia and later in Uzbekistan with her husband Roger Timmony, a Credit Union official. She has worked as a Policy Worker since April of last year. Sinead and Marie spoke recently to **Allen Meagher**, shedding light on any mystery that might surround the work they do.

work. And the profile of their work is very low. We encourage networking between projects to increase the profile of the work being done by projects. All statutory agencies need to see the work documented. A lot of projects wouldn't have the time or maybe the skills to measure the impact of their work."

Marie: "And put it into a nice glossy publication."

Sinead: "If you have a project going long-term, that gives you confidence and you can use

the County Council structure, but if a project is new, you can get pushed around by existing agencies. You need to know what you're about and work yourself up to a certain level before you can negotiate and bargain and Policy Workers can assist in that. We have to bring people along and that makes it very interesting work for us as Policy Workers."

Marie: "Our work is supposed to be projected, but also we have a role in initiating things. It is very easy to say that projects are not ready

Lifford project celebrates 10 years

HAVING worked for six years in community projects in England, Bríd McMeniman is convinced that Ireland's Community Development Programme model works.

"The communities really do have ownership of the projects. I find there is also more opportunity for networking between community projects here than there is in England," she said.

Now project co-ordinator with Lifford CDP in Co. Donegal, she said her role is "to support the management committee, to advise and

inform them and they make the decisions."

Lifford CDP is ten years old this year, has a staff of three and is responsible for managing the local Community Employment scheme, a youth project and various training courses.

"We focus especially on community education and we bring training to various people. For example, the very poor transport in rural areas is an obstacle to people accessing education."

The project has "very active members", according to Ms. McMeniman.

One of the founder members, Kathleen French, remains involved and, at the moment, one management member is completing a Diploma in Community Development Education while another is due to start on the Diploma. One recently-retired member, Edel Wilson, has gone onto degree level, funded through the CDSP's Scholarship Scheme which covers transport costs, childcare and fees. She has just taken up a new post, being the first woman in Donegal to be appointed as County Civil Defence Officer - she stepped down from the committee to concentrate on her new work. Two more management members, Annie May Harte and Patricia McGranaghan are embarking on a Peer Mentoring Programme.

Each person's involvement in the CDP management, noted Ms. McMeniman, has "paid off" for them as individuals and for the community. The management have a lot of meetings to attend - "The committee meets weekly and there are a number of sub-committees."

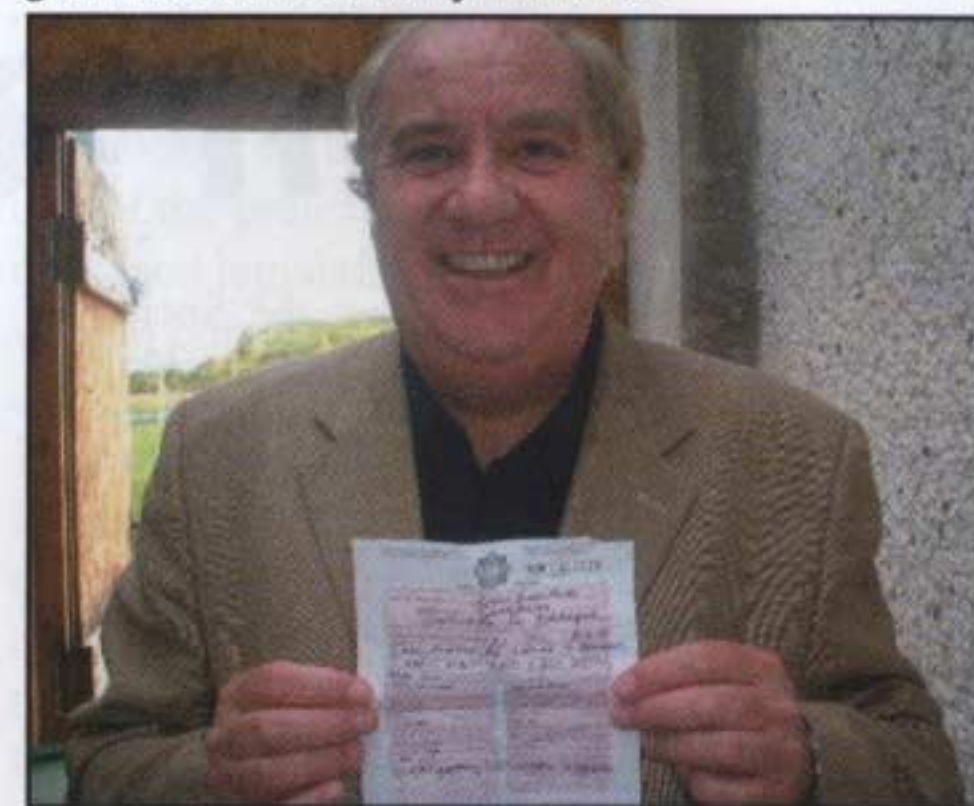
"We have ten volunteers trained in youth-

work and we run rural youth projects, such as homework clubs, organising games and sports and busing them to places. This year we successfully applied for funding to start a cross-border youth programme (Lifford is on the other side of the River Foyle to Strabane in Co. Tyrone). We are already involved in the only cross-border women's centre in Ireland," added the co-ordinator.

Lifford CDP are also involved, by being on a steering group, in drawing up the work programme for the Policy Workers.



● Outside Lifford CDP in Donegal - Bríd McMeniman, CDP co-ordinator, Jim Garvey, Community Employment supervisor, and Mandi Dolan, Rural Development Worker ("outstanding in my field" as she says herself).



● Sean Lawless, co-ordinator of Holywell Support Agency, received a speeding fine in March while 'Changing Ireland' was in the area (the editor was sitting in the passenger seat). For the record, he was caught doing 35mph in a 30mph zone and kept a straight face while telling the Garda his surname.

revealed

and leave them to it. Most projects are already doing policy work, but they don't recognise it as policy work and they're not using policy work lingo."

Both agreed that if they had been called Regional Development Workers, it would have described their work better. Sometimes their role is not fully understood and a typical reaction from projects can be along the lines of "Oh, great, policy workers, you can write up our Childcare Document for us!"

A national CDSPs Policy Workers Network has been established. At early meetings, a lot of discussion centred around the role of Policy Workers, which varies from one region to another, depending on circumstances. In the North-East, a lot of the projects are new, in the North-West there are some old and some new projects, while in Limerick most groups are well-established.

Sinead: "There is a question as to how long we should wait for a project to develop before we start initiating stuff. Sometimes you try and it falls flat. For example, with Voter Awareness, in Limerick the courses were over-subscribed whereas in the North-West, the offer of courses was not taken up - there was some fear as to what it was about."

"Projects are effecting so much change within individuals and within localities, but Policy Workers are the key to effecting change at the national level. For example, there is now mass-funding for Childcare which came from the Partnership negotiations of four years ago (with a push also from I.B.E.C.) and now there is a childcare fund in each county."

Marie: "Thanks to the Peace and Reconciliation Fund, groups from the Inishowen Peninsula are now meeting with groups with similar interests in Ballymote, Co. Sligo. Before, the Inishowen groups didn't even see themselves as part of the rest of Donegal, not to mind having a relationship with other counties. It's about establishing a regional identity and that is the first stage towards establishing a national identity for projects in the Community Development Support Programmes."

Sinead: "It's difficult organising meetings because it takes four hours to drive from one end of the region to the other, but we have always pushed the regional identity."

Marie: "A lot of people are living on the poverty line, just existing."

Sinead: "But they have great pride. It's shown in a closeted way; people won't leave you into their homes to see what they don't have. I am from Dublin and people are more open about their poverty there. In the North-West, you see houses and you don't know what is behind the front door. People are very isolated."

Marie: "A national lobbying campaign is building around the issue of domestic violence. Projects are developing the strength to have some bite and are ready to start lobbying T.D.s, councillors and so on. It has taken a long time to reach this point and lobbying takes a lot of energy, but the groups' frustration with domestic violence is now so high that it is motivating them."



● **Enjoying a break and some chocolate cake – policy workers Marie Hainsworth and Sinead Barrins.**

Sinead: "The Irish political culture is not straight-forward and most people working in community development are the antithesis to slap-on-the-back politics, yet you've got to engage with the politicians. In Sligo town's Northside, there is no street lighting or proper park for children and the place has become run-down and therefore got a bad reputation. But the local CDP wanted the Corporation to invest in the area and they knew RAPID was coming and thought it was a pot of money. So the project lobbied councillors to make sure the Northside was included in the RAPID. There was big disappointment when it was realised that RAPID did not bring new funds, only prioritisation. However, it was a big step for the meetings to have taken place between residents and the Corporation and an estate manager was appointed out of it."

Marie: "Compared to development work in other countries, the CDSPs work is very diverse and projects and people are at a stage where they want to see where they can effect change at a high level."

Sinead: "It is rewarding work because there is so much good work going on on the ground. Support Agencies can bring people together and that can be a catalyst when people start looking together at issues. Policy Workers, until we were appointed, were the missing part of the jigsaw because it is very difficult for an isolated project to lobby on its own. By the way, an interesting development is taking place in Dublin where a Policy Unit is being set up for projects, separate from the Support Agencies. I love the work, it's inspirational, it's fabulous work."

Big ambitions

MARGARET Lyon, project co-ordinator with Letterkenny CDP, highlighted one of the management's biggest ambitions – "to build a facility that isn't a pub or a hotel. There are enough of them. Our plans include building an indoor football hall."

She said there is "definitely a good community spirit" in the area, giving the local St. Patrick's Day Parade as an example: "It took an hour to pass."

"Youth is one of our greatest priorities," said Ms. Lyon.

The project recently facilitated the setting up of a Youth Forum for Letterkenny. Eight teenagers organised a question & answer session and invited people from the Sports Council, the Health Board, Dr. Jim McDaid, T.D., and the VEC to hear what teenagers had to say.

When your son is addicted and running from the law

MARGARET Toner from Letterkenny doesn't have to look far to find motivation for her voluntary work in drug awareness. Her son, Tony, started with Tippex when he was an adolescent, ended up stealing to pay for drugs, in prison and then on the run.

"He started stealing and he got caught. The Youth Liason Officer tried to help him but he ended up in a detention centre. I always felt too that he got drugs in prison and often was worse getting out than when he went in. He was in an open prison in Cavan and he escaped from there six years ago and hasn't been back here since," explained Ms. Toner.

Margaret Toner is a member of the Drug Awareness Information and Support (DAIS) group, founded by concerned parents in Letterkenny. She works as project administrator with Letterkenny CDP in Co. Donegal. One of the project's management members is also a member.

"My son is still on drugs but less than before, he's able to survive on cannabis, though he's very depressed on that. He has never fully matured and has never had a decent job and that is because of drugs."

■ CONCERNED

"I have worked in drug awareness for the last 12 years. I worked with parents and spoke

at meetings with the Gardai and youth liason officers and approached councillors and ministers for funding to promote drug awareness. We always felt the money was going to Dublin, Limerick and Cork and that it was thought there was no real problem here. But we knew better. Parents were concerned over abuse of alcohol, solvents, cannabis, e's and speed.

"The DAIS group got together, with support from the CDP, and problems I faced years ago are still there. You get satisfaction from the DAIS work, but you see a lot of sadness too. We wanted to set up a helpline for County Donegal because many small towns outside of Letterkenny have as big a problem as we have.

"We met the Health Board and got support for running a 'Drugs Questions and Local Answers' course and it was very worthwhile doing it. They we applied for funding to do research because the Gardai and Health Board kept saying 'Where are your facts and figures?' We didn't get the funding unfortunately, but we will keep trying. There is a Regional Drugs Strategy and we hope to apply to them.

"Meanwhile, we have an information line here at the CDP to explain what DAIS is about and to give membership details. The line is open from 9-to-5, Monday to Friday.

"We have good links with the Health Board,

with the Chief Superintendent and with the Garda Drugs Task Force."

■ REWARD

On motivation and reward, Margaret said, "You get involved in something close to your own heart and then you meet other people who are equally concerned. And if we don't do something, nobody else is going to. The biggest thrill is if you make a change in the area, for example, the summer scheme for children who otherwise wouldn't get any holidays away from here. We get a lot out of organising that. Should you only get into something because you get paid for it? There are a wild lot of people who got involved because they want to see the community improving, because we are in danger of losing the community otherwise. Individuals have no voice, but groups have and you can be proud speaking up as part of a group."

Among other things, Letterkenny CDP runs a playschool that involves 200 children from the area and also works with lone parents.

"It's a good start," commented Ms. Toner. "There is great potential there. Half the people in Ballyboe/Glencar are under-40."

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Sean Lawless, Holywell Support Agency co-ordinator, with Letterkenny CDP's Margaret Toner, Administrator and Margaret Lyon, Co-ordinator.

Wanted to 'give something back'

TRIONA Sweeney, a young management member of Letterkenny CDP, is the picture of 'active citizenship' in action and suitably modest about her volunteer work.

"It is important to put something back into the community," she stated simply.

"I previously worked on a cross-border project for healing and personal development. When the funding ran out, I had to get a proper job (she does layout in a newspaper) but I felt I wanted to give something back. When you look around and see kids in the community, everyone has a responsibility for them. I'm not married and I don't have children, but we all have a responsibility. You see the poverty and some people can't cope with parenting."

She continued - "There are a lot of children acting the goat at night-time and sometimes it's hard trying to maintain a sense of community in the middle of all that. The community should be a safe place where you have a sense of belonging."

Ms. Sweeney sees plenty to admire in Letterkenny and had no trouble listing off facilities.

"Letterkenny has Finn Harps based nearby, there is St. Eunan's, the local G.A.A. club. In July, the Errigal Arts Festival will be held in town and it's second only to the Galway Arts Festival. We have a multi-functional theatre built with donations from the public. It is only three years old and has the second-biggest stage in Ireland for a theatre. There is also a community centre in the town and an Athletic Club...."

She also mentioned the mosque, the environmental scheme, residents association and Tidy Towns Committee.

Ms. Sweeney is "looking for more training in management committee work because I still don't read most of the CDP stuff that comes through the post - I'm not at the mature management level yet!"

Loving the job!

THE FAS Scheme in Letterkenny is supported by the local CDP and Mary Rose Sheridan is the supervisor. She is "the best FAS supervisor in the country", quipped Sean Lawless, co-ordinator of Holywell Support Agency.

Ms. Sheridan wouldn't comment directly on such wild praise, but explained how the scheme has been successful.

"The Part-Time Job Option Scheme run by FAS is for over-35s who have not been working for three years. Workers here provide: care assistance for people with disabilities; childcare; youthwork; environmental work; computer and arts courses; and they work with Donegal Travellers. We place great emphasis on training and 85% get jobs after their three years on the scheme. One scheme participant, John Boyle, joined the scheme with the aim of earning a licence to drive a car. He passed the test and recently sat another and is now a licensed bus driver. Now he is aiming for the HGV licence before his three years on the scheme are up."

Commented Mr. Lawless, "Once someone develops confidence, they can go anywhere."

The Holywell man talked joyfully of his own job as Support Agency co-ordinator. "I love it. I haven't got up on a morning yet when I didn't want to go to work. It's very rewarding."

Incidentally, Mr. Lawless previously worked with a rights organisation for children and was largely responsible, after an extensive campaign, for children in the E.U. being granted full citizenship rights under the Maastricht Treaty.

Wexford platform "not just another talk shop"

By Lorcan Brennan

THE Wexford Platform for Inclusion & Equality is the place to be," according to Murt Flynn, co-ordinator at Templeshannon Community Development Project, Enniscorthy.

"It's logical for CDPs to be involved in something like this. Also, because CDPs are anti-poverty focused, there's an obligation on us to tackle issues of poverty and equality and through the PIE Platform some of that can be achieved. Now, all the projects in County Wexford are involved together at a deep level," he said.

Mr. Flynn is adamant that the Platform is not just another talk shop.

"I think it's different because its membership of 40 groups makes it very broad, but all the member organisations share common views around making sure that those experiencing poverty and exclusion are actively involved in how decisions are made - that's what the Platform is all about. They have been ignored in terms of how policy has been developed up to now."

"Despite all the good work carried out by the CDPs and other community and voluntary groups and despite all the learning that is taking place, no one in authority had seen fit to go back to the communities. The PIE is not just going to be a group of people who meet every six or eight weeks to talk, it will actually prioritise the issues that all community and voluntary groups experience and try to respond locally, regionally and nationally to make a difference."

LOSING FAITH IN PARTNERSHIP

Regarding the Platform's work with state agencies, Mr. Flynn is uncertain if it qualifies as a Partnership approach, "because recent actions undertaken by the state would undermine a lot of your faith in partnership."

"For example, the Education and Disability Bill was rushed through without proper consultation. Also, the decision by the Minister for Justice to refer aspects of the Equal Status Act to the Liquor Commission - when it should have been sent to the Equality Authority - went against the grain of social partnership and even the unions have said that. Thirdly, the criminalisation of trespass contained in the Housing Amendment Act 2002 is an appalling piece of legislation and will criminalise hundreds of Traveller families. This absolutely undermines the principle of partnership."

FRAGILE BEGINNINGS

The idea for setting up the PIE platform came with the reform of local government. In 1999, the County Development Board called a meeting of groups dealing with poverty, inequality and racism so a rep could be chosen from the community and voluntary sector. The meeting served as a catalyst for the PIE and from these informal and fragile beginnings, the Platform took shape.

"At first", recalled Mr. Flynn, "there was a changing membership - different people from organisations would come along and it provided an opportunity for feedback to them regarding what was happening through the County



● Murt Flynn, Templeshannon CDP co-ordinator, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford.

Development Board but the Platform also began exploring wider issues and began looking at the relationship between the community and voluntary sector and the state sector. It also began looking at the issues of community education, youths at risk, and homelessness."

LOOSE STRUCTURE

The Platform still regards itself as "loosely structured so as to encourage participation and contributions from as many people as possible. It provides an unique opportunity to be heard on issues of inequality in Wexford. But it also sees its role as one of promoting events, workshops, debate, discussion and lobbying together," said Mr. Flynn.

SUCCESS

PIE has achieved successes. The County Development Board and the Platform applied successfully to the Combat Poverty Agency for funding to do research and consult with groups in the community and voluntary sector. After a draft County Development Plan was published, the Platform organised a day-seminar where very creative and innovative methods were used to put together a response to the plan.

The response was accepted by the County Development Board and incorporated into its final publication. Other highlights to date have been the development of greater awareness and understanding among groups around shared issues affecting their lives or project, like community education, Traveller issues, equality issues, and asylum-seeker and refugee issues.

PIE is backed by and has support from Framework Support Agency and the Community Workers Co-Op.

● Murt Flynn is co-ordinator at the Templeshannon CDP, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford. He is an active member of Wexford Platform for Inclusion and Equality and is the sector's representative on Wexford County Development Board representative from the sector.

Experienced people on new Technical Group

A NEW Technical Group has been established for the Community Development Support Programmes. While the group includes members from projects throughout the state, the group is not a representative body. Membership is based on experience and expertise of community development and is reflective of the wider context in which the Programmes now operate. The new group has the following functions:

- a) Advise the Minister on applications received from groups for funding under the Community Development Programme (CDP) and the programme of core-funding to locally-based Community and Family Support Groups (CFGs);
- b) Advise on applications for the Family and Community Services Resource Centre Programme (FRC) until such time as the Support Agency provided for in the Family Support Agency Act is established and has the capacity to take on this function;
- c) Provide ongoing advice as required on relevant matters arising from the establish-

ment of new CDPs and CFGs projects and on the identification of new areas for the expansion of the Programme taking into account priorities identified in CLAR, RAPID Programme (Strand I and II) and city/county strategies;

- d) Advise on the operation of additional supports that may be appropriate within the Programmes taking into account the overall resources available;
- e) Advise generally on the Department's overall package of support for community development, i.e. matters relating to linkage between the different schemes and support and progression routes for groups as they develop from one level to the next (but not advise on individual applications under Level I and Level II grant schemes).

The Group are expected to meet shortly for the first time for an introductory meeting and to set out the remit of the group. The new Group will sit for a one-year term at which time a review will take place. Membership of the group is as follows:

Murt Flynn, Templeshannon CDP, Co.

Wexford; **Bernie Broderick**, Duagh FRC, Co. Kerry; **Jackie Brown**, Kerry County Network of People with Disabilities; **Maureen Kavanagh**, Aontas, Dublin 2; **Morgan Mee**, West Training & Development Ltd.; **Sean Lawless**, Holywell Trust Support Agency, Co. Donegal; **Liz Sullivan**, Combat Poverty Agency, Dublin 8; **Denis Leamy**, Area Development Management Ltd., Dublin 2; **Eamon Kinch**, Avenue Road, Dundalk, Co. Louth; **Gerry Finn**, Border & Midlands Regional Assembly, Co. Roscommon; **Ray O'Leary**, Southern & Eastern Regional Assembly, Waterford; **Marie Dempsey**, Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Dublin 2; **Pat Gallagher**, Director Of Community & Enterprise, Westmeath County Council; **Pat Ryan**, DSCFA Regional Co-ordinator, Tallaght; **Colm McDermott**, DSCFA Voluntary & Community Services; **Angela O'Gorman**, DSCFA Voluntary & Community Services; and **Albert O'Donoghue**, DSCFA Family Affairs Unit.

Just one strategic seminar to go

Since the last edition, two further consultation seminars have taken place. The first of these, for projects in the North East region and Wicklow and Kildare, was held on March 20th in the Glenroyal Hotel, Maynooth, and more recently, on May 16th, projects in the Greater Dublin area had an opportunity to input at the Mansion House. The seminars, true to form, were very well attended and both generated healthy debate on the future of the Programmes. (Further reports on these two seminars are published on page 5, telling how sheep were involved in one – now you're really interested!).

In each region, local committees took charge of organising the seminar and their sterling work has ensured the smooth running of proceedings on each occasion. The Strategic Planning Group is grateful to them and particularly to projects who undertook administration duties for each seminar, Tullacmongan Family Resource Centre in the case of the Maynooth seminar and St. Fergal's Resource Centre, Bray, who did the honours for

the seminar at the Mansion House.

The final regional seminar will take place on June 27th in Ballygarry House Hotel, Tralee, for projects in Cork and Kerry. A regional committee has been formed and Duagh Family Resource Centre will look after administration for the day. In keeping with the trend to date, the organising committee in the Southwest has taken to the task with enthusiasm and dedication.

The Strategic Planning Group also intend to organise a workshop in the near future with a view to including external Departments/Agencies in the consultation process. A sharing of information/views with those operating in the wider community development arena is considered vital to an informed strategic plan.

An interim report including detailed notes from the first four seminars has been compiled by Emer Dolphin, who has acted as facilitator for the process from the outset. This report has been circulated to all projects in the relevant regions. The Strategic Planning Group has also established a Review Group

charged with the task of compiling a draft Strategic Plan for the CDSPs. This group has met on a few occasions already and it is expected that a draft strategic plan, to be presented to the National Advisory Committee, will be finalised by year end. The Review Group is made up of the Strategic Planning Group and representatives nominated by the Regional Organising Committees in regions that have held seminars. Two representatives from the Southern region will join this Review group following the Tralee seminar.

The Review group will examine the notes from each seminar and its work will also be informed by any submissions received from individual projects/support agencies in relation to strategic direction. The Strategic Planning Group gives an assurance that all submissions/contributions to the process will be considered by the Review Group. Some people have already made contributions, for which the Review group is grateful.

- This report was submitted by the Strategic Planning Group

'Changing Ireland' is a parade winner

'CHANGING Ireland' was part of a winning team entry from Moyross that swept the boards in Limerick's St. Patrick's Day Parade this year. The Moyross Combined Youth entry won 'Overall Winners' and 'Most Entertaining' on the day.

The 'Changing Ireland' entry involved two green-faced volunteers, editor, Allen Meagher, and community crèche worker, Valerie Began, donning sandwich boards and dancing down the streets. The sandwich boards depicted blown-up front-covers from the magazine which marks its first birthday with this issue.

On the way to the winner's enclosure, the editor was stopped short by three smiling young Traveller men – the trio who made the front page in the Spring Issue. Congratulations were issued in both directions!

Quality over quantity

BRIAN Dillon of NEXUS Research believes, "The easiest thing to do is to count numbers – for example, how many people call into your centre – but that evaluation method is dangerous, because you could have 400 people calling to a centre, but there might be no work-impact at all – they might be just lifting leaflets. Whereas other centres might only work with two groups in the community over a period of three years and yet succeed in completely transforming the situation."

Is it multi- or inter-culturalism?

THE DCU Forum held in Dublin recently focused on "inter-culturalism", in preference to the term "multi-culturalism". The latter term is the most frequently used, while it can be argued that the former term has a different meaning.

David Denby from the School of Applied Language & Interculturalism, felt there was a significant difference between the two terms.

"Multi-culturalism pins labels on groups and cements existing blocks and therefore becomes a charter for apartheid. Inter-culturalism is about groups entering into dialogue, communication, interchange and exchange (and) helps to bridge the gap between different moral norms and viewpoints."

At least one of the speakers, Dr. Ronit Lentin, happened to disagree.

"I think there is no difference between multi- and inter-culturalism because both terms are imposed from above," she claimed.

The Diary of Horace McDermot

(Community Development student and former faceless bureaucrat)

■ MONDAY 12.00 pm

The work placement in Carrickstown CDP was good. The big issue apart from the Smoker's Equality Campaign was the cut in C.E. Schemes. The local TD said on the radio that there are now more CE places than long term unemployed and that the people on CE should be able to go out and get 'real jobs'. Hannah, the chairperson, rang in and asked why not cut the number of Dail places and let politicians go out and get 'real jobs'.

■ TUESDAY: 1.12 pm

The exams are the big thing right now. I think reform of the exam system is needed. I suggested to the tutors that it would make it more efficient if, instead of having to write pages and pages of script on an exam paper that we could just e-mail them the website address where the answer could be found. What's the point in us searching the Net for the answers, downloading the information, then having to read it, try and remember it and then write it out again if the tutor then has to try and read 20 different versions in different bad handwriting. When all he'd have to do is click on the site, read it and give the best mark to those who found the best sites. The tutor said, "Would you give me the address of a watchmaker if I wanted to know what time it is?" Obviously not when there are plenty of street clocks around.

■ WEDNESDAY: 4.00 pm

The college refused to take my idea on board. They cannot see its energy efficiency and environmentally friendly merits. Gail Gore, her friend, Ann Archist, and myself organised a protest demonstration to Reclaim The Exams. 20 community development students formed a human chain by linking arms across the main road. The Gardai broke up the protest by using disproportionate under hand or under arm tactics. They started to tickle the others and me until we let go of each other.

Martin Luther Keane has decided to start a tribute band. It's in honour of the Garda Band who play at the Rose of

Tralee. They're called 'Crunchin' Truncheon and the Head Bangers.

■ THURSDAY: 2.56 pm

The election had me fierce confused. First why did the politicians encourage people not to vote? Up to 40% followed their advice and voted for no one. As the slogan on the posters said Vote No 1. They obviously shortened "one" to 1 to appeal to the young text-messaging generation.

Also, why do town and city people need more reminding to vote than country people? The number of posters on poles in the city is way more than the few scattered round the country.

■ FRIDAY: 2.22 pm

Organised a clean up of the college campus and we collected over 220 plastic bags. I wiped them down and then brought them to the supermarket to claim a refund but they wouldn't give me any money so I stood outside and tried to sell them to the shoppers at a discount price of 10cent a bag.

■ SATURDAY: 3.30 pm

As part of the course we did a research module so I've just completed the results of a poll I carried out on opinion polls.

- 74% of people polled had never been polled in an opinion poll before;
- 6% said they don't know;
- 22% refused to answer more questions as they'd already filled out the Census Form;
- 36% of people were of the opinion that the opinions given in opinion polls were not people's real opinions;
- 60% said they don't know what the question meant;

When asked about methods of protest

- 20% felt Custard was for the Birds;
- 3% didn't know which they'd throw first – a chicken or an egg;
- 10% would throw a brick as it can be recycled and used again;
- 41.5% have thrown too much money in the direction of politicians by way of tax.

Africans were in Ireland before Brian Boru

BOOK REVIEW

By Allen Meagher

IF you think the dribble – and that's all it is – of refugees from Africa seeking shelter on this island from the mid-90s onwards were the first Africans to visit this country, you'd be very wide of the mark. For there were Africans in Ireland well before Brian Boru was born!

Vikings, in 867, raided Mauritania and "brought a great host of them captive with them to Ireland" where they stayed for a long time, according to historical annals.

Shooting forward in time, to 1798, there were people with black skin among the ranks of the French forces that landed in Killala, Co. Mayo, to help free Ireland from Britain.

Two centuries later, Black Americans were offering to send 40,000 troops to help liberate Ireland, because some of their leaders had seen great similarities between the Irish fight for freedom from British rule and the Black American struggle for freedom from slavery.

■ STARTLING FACTS

Much, if not all, of this information is probably new to readers – a great reason to buy 'Encounters: How Racism Came to Ireland'. The book is littered with startling facts – some you'll be proud to hear, others that will shame you as an Irish person – about the relationship and encounters over two millennia between Irish people and Africans and people of colour.

Authors Bill Rolston and Mick Shannon argue – in a very readable style – that the roots of Irish racism are much deeper and older than the present experience (of refugees and asylum-seekers). To demonstrate, they take the reader through a 112-page tour of history as it was never explained to you in school.

If there is one flaw in the way they present

their argument about racism and Ireland, it is this. They only once mention Travellers. In so doing, they overlook a key aspect in the recent historical development of racism in Ireland – and how racism against Travellers feeds into the racism that greets newcomers to Ireland (especially those who appear visibly different).

To the authors credit, they have published a story that was crying out to be told – the Irish have been involved in slavery, but also in combating slavery over recent centuries.

Notable historical personalities, Daniel O'Connell for example, were to the forefront of the campaign to abolish slavery in the U.S., and in the U.K. which then of course included all of Ireland.

■ SLAVE SHIPS IN IRELAND

Yet, while O'Connell collected 60,000 Irish signatures urging Irish-Americans to support abolition, the ports of Belfast, Limerick, Waterford and Dublin were home to slave ships. (Incidentally, the crew of one boat that sailed from Dublin were killed when the slaves revolted).

'Encounters: How Racism Came To Ireland' looks abroad in some detail – examining the relationships between Irish emigrants and people of colour in America, Australia and Africa (including missionaries). The 'penny for the black baby' phenomena of the 1950s also receives due attention.

And facts that might surprise include the following:

- The British Empire operated with the loyal service of countless Irish administrators and soldiers, all of whom are implicated directly or otherwise in the task of subjugating, ruling and often slaughtering people with black, brown or yellow skin.

- Black Minstrel Shows in Ireland promoted the idea of 'black' slaves in America as objects of fun (as well as pity)

- The Fenians sought to arm the Zulus against the British army in South Africa.

- In Australia, Irish immigrants wrote letters home saying that 'nigger hunting' was the only pastime available to them in the bush.

- Escaped slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass visited Ireland for four months in 1845 and loved it.

■ SHEDS LIGHT

It is obvious to see, even from the above examples, that the Irish behaved as both racists and anti-racists, sending out an ambivalent message. However, as the authors state, "Within that ambivalence lie the roots of contemporary international solidarity in Ireland, as well as the roots of racism. And to begin to uncover (this) is to shed light on the task at hand for those who wish to combat racism in Ireland."

If all this is news to you, you'll learn much in a short and enjoyable read.

Priced at Stg£6.99, 'Encounters: How Racism Came To Ireland' is published by 'Beyond the Pale', a small company based in Belfast that specialises in books about Irish politics and culture. Check your local bookshop or contact them directly (from the R.O.I. tel: 02890-438630; or check their website: www.btpale.com)

P.S. A more theoretical and substantial (272 pages) book was published in May by the same publishers. 'Racism and Antiracism in Ireland', edited by Robbie McVeigh and Ronit Lentin, is "the first collection of writings by activists and academics to take seriously international commitments to combat racism." It includes provocative chapter titles such as 'The web of self-identity: racism, sexism and disability' and 'Travellers in Ireland: an examination of discrimination and racism'. The latter makes up somewhat for leaving Travellers out of the picture in 'Encounters...'



● Martine Brennan, regional reporter with 'Changing Ireland' for Cork and Kerry, chases a deadline while keeping an eye on the mince.

Governor McCarthy beheaded!

THE main square in The Gambia's capital, Banjul, was called 'McCarthy Square' until the late 1990s. Off the square is a street still called 'Allen Street'. These are clear reminders that Irish people were involved in the European colonial conquest of Africa.

A few Nigerians even have Irish surnames – possibly being descended from slaves of Irish masters.

For the record, McCarthy, a Munster man, governed The Gambia for some years until British forces were called upon to subdue the powerful Asante nation (in modern-day central Ghana). McCarthy led the British troops and was beheaded in a decisive battle, one of the few times that colonialists lost. They British went to war with the Asantes a second time and won. Today, the story of McCarthy's demise is told to tourists visiting the old British barracks in Kumasi, the capital of the Asante Region.