

Bulletin of the Committee on the Administration of Justice

CAJ testifies before Congress

This year's St. Patrick's Day events in Washington gave little if any indication that a new United States administration would herald an end to US involvement in the peace process. In his remarks at the White House reception on 15th March, President Bush stated that the resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland was in the national interest of the United States. Given this he suggested that the US will continue to offer whatever assistance it can.

the importance which the Administration continues to attach to the various human rights concerns in Northern Ireland. The contents of the Reports were referred to by a number of the Members of Congress who participated in the hearings. While still not entirely satisfactory the entry on the United Kingdom represents a clear improvement in terms of the thoroughness and accuracy of its observations.

The Congressional Sub Committee on International Operations and Human Rights also organised hearings on the implementation of the human rights aspects of the Agreement. These took place on 15th March, the anniversary of Rosemary Nelson's death. They provided an important opportunity for CAJ and other human rights groups to place on record our continuing concerns about policing, criminal justice, equality and the bill of rights process. Congressman Chris Smith (Rep) chairing the hearings has had a long interest in human rights questions worldwide and especially in Northern Ireland. He stressed that he and other members would be working closely with the Administration to

ensure that the human rights aspects of the Agreement were fully implemented.

The recently published Human Rights Country Reports which are produced by the United States State Department also underline

The annual trek to the United States for St. Patrick's Day has become something of a ritual. Nevertheless it provides an important occasion to check in with those in the US who have a strong interest in Northern Ireland. On this occasion it was particularly important because it provided an opportunity to meet a number of new faces. These included Condoleezza Rice and Richard Haass who will be closely involved in the new Administration's work on Northern Ireland.

Martin O'Brien

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Children's Commissioner

Those campaigning for children's rights got a welcomed boost on 29 January 2001 when the First and Deputy First Minister's announced that the Executive had agreed *in principle*, as part of an overall strategy to address children's rights and needs, to the establishment of a Commissioner for Children.

"We are, therefore, pleased to announce our intention to bring forward proposals as soon as possible to establish an independent Commissioner for Children for Northern Ireland." David Trimble, First Minister, NI Assembly 29 January 2001. The announcement commanded all party support.

The announcement also indicated a commitment to consult widely, including children and young people, and the NGO sector, before finalising proposals. In light of this, the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Group to "advise" on the establishment of a Children's Commissioner which did not include the NGO sector was disappointing. However this was to some extent ameliorated by the announcement by Junior Minister Haughey (3/4/01) of the establishment of an NGO Forum to assist in the process.

We are currently in a pre consultation phase which it is hoped will inform the nature and content of the consultation document. Children's rights organisations have been very encouraged by the commitment shown to date to engage in an open and inclusive consultation process. The formal consultation process, which it is hoped will begin in June, is being carried out to define and identify the various functions of the proposed Commissioner by the Human Rights Unit in the OFM/DFM.

'There are of course complex issues to be worked out in terms of precise role and remit of the Commissioner; the statutory powers and responsibilities that the office will have; and the relationship with other statutory authorities. We need to consider issues such as how the Commissioner could best represent children's interests and advocate their needs. The Commissioner's role might, for instance, include challenging public authorities and investigating complaints. It might involve advising Government on policy, including the measures needed to meet our commitment under key international human rights instruments such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child'.

(Statement by the First Minister, 29th January 2001)

Children's rights organisations believe that the effectiveness of the post depends on a number of key elements. The Children's Commissioner must be able to protect the rights of all children in this jurisdiction, including children in the justice system. It is also essential that the Commissioner has all the powers and resources necessary to act effectively for children when their rights have been denied.

Children's organisations are calling for a model which will ensure that the Commissioner will be able to take cases on behalf of children, will have all the powers necessary to effectively carry out investigation, and will be equipped to monitor the state of children's rights. It is also imperative that the post is fully resourced, located completely independently from government structures and that the appointment process be open, transparent and totally independent.

It is the opinion of those within the children's sector, that if the Children's Commissioner does not stand totally independent of government, is not adequately resourced and does not have all the necessary powers, it will fail to address the ongoing denial of children's rights and fail to make a significant impact on the lives of our most vulnerable children.

The proposed Children's Commissioner should have statutory powers to among other things:

- Act as an independent watchdog and champion for the rights of children living in Northern Ireland, including children who are ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland.
- Childproof existing/new legislation, policy and practice for compliance with domestic and international human rights standards.
- Be a source of advice and information for children and young people about their rights
- Take cases in its own name or fund children to take cases where there has been a denial of rights.
- Be able to enter any place where children are to ensure their rights are being respected.
- Receive adequate resources to fulfil all its functions.
- Intervene appropriately in any legal proceedings that may have implications for children's rights.
- Actively engage with and consult directly with children and young people and children's rights organisations.
- Have all the powers necessary to undertake effective investigations in respect of children's rights.
- Encourage, resource and conduct research into children's rights.
- Monitor the delivery or denial of children's rights for compliance with domestic/international human rights standards, and especially in respect of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Have remit for all matters pertaining to children including those matters currently reserved.
- Act as an advocate for children's rights and a channel for children's voices.
- Promote understanding and education of rights.
- Have the necessary powers to compile information and statistics on children and to produce an annual report on the state of children.
- Promote a culture of children's rights.

Paddy Kelly

Director, Children's Law Centre

The first in a series of lectures hosted by
CAJ on a Bill of Rights for Northern
Ireland begins with

**“Socio-economic rights in a domestic
charter of rights:
a Canadian perspective”**

to be delivered by
Bruce Porter

Executive Director, Centre for Equality Rights in
Accommodation and Co-ordinator, Canadian Charter
Committee on Poverty Issues at the

Great Hall, Magee College, Northland Road, L'Derry
Wednesday 9th May 2001 at 7.30 pm

and

Wellington Park Hotel, Malone Road, Belfast
Thursday, 10th May 2001 at 7.30 pm

Contact CAJ on (028) 90961122

**Posters calling for an independent
international investigation and judicial
inquiry into Rosemary Nelson's murder are
available from the CAJ office.
Call Liz on 90961122.**

Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission

Register of Researchers



NORTHERN
IRELAND
HUMAN
RIGHTS
COMMISSION

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission invites applications from competent individuals or research organisations who wish to be included on a register from which research into matters of human rights importance can be commissioned. The research will be used by the Commission to help with the formulation of its views on existing or

proposed laws, policies or practices affecting human rights in Northern Ireland. On occasions the Commission may decide to publish the research.

Selections from the register will be made as appropriate and remuneration will be agreed in respect of each piece or research commissioned.

Those interested should send or ring for an application form to: The Investigations Unit, Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Temple Court, 39 North Street, BELFAST BT1 1NA Tel: 028 90 243987

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission was established by Parliament under section 68 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Up to date with CAJ

Martin testified before US Congress on human rights in Northern Ireland (see front page)

Meetings have taken place of the Equality, Membership and the new Bill of Rights sub group.

Several new members attended the new members meeting, and it proved to be very successful. September 20th 2001 is set for the next new members meeting.

Tim undertook training for NICEM on Section 75.

Paul attended the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Report in next month's issue.

Staff attended memorial masses for Rosemary Nelson in Lurgan and Belfast.

Martin, Aideen and other members of the Ad-Hoc Human Rights Consortium spoke at the Civic Forum on a Bill of Rights.

Martin and Paul met with visitors from Ghana University Maggie attended the Memorial Lecture given by Ed Lynch from US and organised by the Rosemary Nelson Campaign and attended an Association for the Prevention of Torture Board meeting in Geneva.

Liz McAleer

Bringing Rights Home for Children

“Bringing Rights Home for Children” conference organised by the Children's Law Centre will be held on Thursday 10 May 2001 at Malone House, Belfast.

Keynote address will be given by Trond Waage, the Norwegian Children's Ombudsman, on “The role of a Children's Commissioner in protecting and promoting children's rights”. Other speakers include Mr. Justice Gillen, High Court Judge - Family Division, Dr. Ursula Kilkelly, Lecturer in Law; Heather Stevens, head of the Human Rights Unit OFM/DFM; Karen Fox, Chair of the Assoc of Lawyers for Children.

For further information contact: Therese McCaffrey at the Children's Law Centre, Tel: 028 9024 5704 Fax: 028 9024 5679

In the Headlines

CAJ holds newspaper clippings on more than 50 civil liberties and justice issues (from mid 1987- December 2000). Copies of these can be purchased from CAJ office. The clippings are also available for consultation at the office.

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

CAJ look ah

As is usual at this time of the year, the executive and staff spent a day and a half in planning mode. The following highlights some of the key themes which emerged. While CAJ encourages a healthy debate we are concerned about an environment which may appear hostile to the creation of a sustained human rights culture in Northern Ireland.

Political Context

As a first step, we reviewed current developments and the context within which CAJ will be working in coming months. Events such as the forthcoming elections (in Britain, Northern Ireland, and possibly also the Republic), the change of Secretary of State, the change in the US Administration, and high level negotiations amongst local politicians could all have an important impact on the human rights agenda. We also noted that CAJ, and even more the NI Human Rights Commission, had experienced a recent spate of hostile media coverage and been the focus of a number of PQs. While the attacks come from a variety of sources, there appears to be some coordination.

CAJ's changing role

We also looked at the broader picture and realised that over time the human rights and equality agenda has increasingly moved centre-stage, with both the advantages and disadvantages that that implies. Resultingly, CAJ must expect to be more frequently criticised by those who are fearful of, or antipathetic to, the human rights agenda. At the same time, CAJ must ensure that it is able to meet the new challenges. The organisation needs to operate within the mainstream but not be co-opted by the 'status quo'; we need to be constructive and continue to press our views in public and in private without hesitation; we need both to retain our activist edge while maintaining a reputation for expertise and professionalism. Most importantly, of all, perhaps we need to shift our focus from creating human rights institutions and tools, to ensuring that they work. Increasingly, CAJ will need to see its task as "monitoring the monitors". Are the HR and Equality Commissions, sufficiently resourced to carry out their legislative remit? What is the Oversight Commissioner doing and saying to ensure an effective transition in policing change? Is the system of independent investigation of police complaints working as well as it might? Is the section 75 duty, whereby all public bodies must promote equality of opportunity, working and if not why not and what can be done about it?

On the positive side

Looking back over recent years, we realised that a lot has been accomplished in the human rights domain. CAJ has worked with many many others to ensure that:

- a human rights commission was established;
- a debate about a Bill of Rights was launched;
- major reviews were carried out into policing and criminal justice;
- police complaints would be independently investigated;
- changes occurred in the emergency laws;
- Holding Centres would close and audio-video recording of interviews would take place;
- an inquiry would be held into Bloody Sunday; and
- a strong equality duty would be imposed on all public authorities.

We have sought, and secured, a higher profile for a number of very serious individual cases of human rights abuse, and in general terms human rights activists have much greater access now. This access allows us to focus steady attention on the international human rights standards that should be guiding Northern Ireland's new institutions and new arrangements.

And all the work still to do!

But no-one involved in the weekend's discussions was suggesting that we rest on our laurels - far from it! So, it is great to have a human rights commission, but if it does not have the powers or the resources to carry out its work effectively, then will it not only succeed in disappointing the very people who most need it? Yes, the Bill of Rights debate has been launched, but will it engage and excite people; will it secure cross community consensus; will it make any difference for the people who most need it? Given the roll-back from Patten on the policing legislation, what can be expected when the draft legislation is tabled further to the criminal justice review? Will the apparent human rights and equality advances made in the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement be lost because of active opposition, sullen resentment and quiet undermining?

Action programme

Accordingly, the CAJ reconfirmed the organisation's priorities:

- Bill of Rights,
- Equality,
- Criminal Justice/Emergency Legislation; and
- Policing.

ad in 2001

A number of practical and programmatic decisions were taken in each of these areas and a lot of time was spent on talking through how best CAJ could contribute to the Bill of Rights debate over the coming months.

To carry out the activities, the executive agreed that CAJ should seek to work more and more effectively with other groups to create broad alliances of common interest. If a culture of rights is to be generated and sustained, then human rights needs to be on the agenda of an ever broader range of social actors: churches, trade unions, business, the community and voluntary sector, politicians, and the ordinary person in the street. Whereas in the past, CAJ might have been relatively isolated in considering itself a human rights group, there are now many individuals and groups describing themselves in these terms, and this is a very very positive trend.

Conflicts of interest?

However, the executive also realised that with this plethora of groups (voluntary and publicly funded) working on human rights, there might be some cause for confusion. The opportunity was taken to reiterate that CAJ is a membership organisation open to anyone who applies formally, pays a membership fee and agrees to support and comply with its constitution. We currently have several hundred members. As long as membership and activities in other organisations do not bring CAJ into disrepute (for which there are suspension and expulsion procedures), CAJ members are entirely free to belong to as many different groups as they choose.

Individual members are, equally obviously, neither excluded from, nor under any obligation to advance a human rights agenda or specific CAJ policies in these other activities. Members in no sense represent CAJ in these other arena. Accordingly, conflicts of interest are rarely likely to arise for individual members of the organisation. At the same time, if people serving on public bodies also happen to be individual CAJ members, they should as appropriate register their membership, so that in the event of any real or perceived conflict of interest, this can be addressed.

At the same time, the executive recognised that it might be necessary to be more restrictive vis-a-vis any reality or perception of ambiguity in the role and function of CAJ staff and/or the CAJ chair and vice-chair. To avoid all such ambiguity, the executive agreed formally that anyone working or voluntarily serving in any other organisation is there in their personal capacity, and that accordingly staff members and the chair and vice-chair (who frequently represent the CAJ in public fora) cannot normally hold dual membership. Exceptions to this rule can be agreed by the executive where such dual membership clearly creates no

possibility of either a real or a perceived conflict of interest for CAJ, or for the broader human rights agenda that we seek to promote.

Next Steps

The meeting, as ever, was exhausting. We reminded ourselves both how far we have come and how far we still have to go. The work is changing. For many years we have been working hard to secure a policing review, and a criminal justice review, and a debate around a Bill of Rights. Now we have to start working to ensure that those gains are built upon. The work may well be less exciting and less innovative - though we hope that will not be entirely true - but as everyone agrees "the devil is always in the detail". CAJ will need to monitor the detail closely to ensure that the human rights and equality gains of the Agreement and since become increasingly more entrenched. This phase of the work will offer different challenges to those we have previously faced, but those challenges will be no less important!

Mary O'Rawe

MEMBERSHIP 2001

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How to Pay:

Payment can be made by postal order or cheque mad3e payable to CAJ, or more conveniencly for you and us by Standing Order Arrangement.

The Emergency is Still With Us*

Despite government assurances that normalisation of political and legal systems in Northern Ireland is well advanced, some scepticism on this matter is warranted. While the United Kingdom has recently removed its derogation to the European Convention on Human Rights, emergency laws still form an integral part of the local legal landscape. This unpalatable fact is demonstrated by a review of the statistics concerning the operation of the Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act (EPA) and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

While the number of persons charged and subject to pre-trial and trial procedures under the emergency laws has diminished hugely, it is of ongoing concern that the government has not yet repealed the emergency laws. Instead the state continues to leave emergency laws 'on the books' for activation at any point, in violation of international human rights principles.

A brief overview of the operation of the EPA from January to September 2000 illustrates the point. In that period only 7 persons were charged with scheduled offences by the RUC under the EPA. The number arrested is small but the principle is critical. The argument that these arrest powers continue to be warranted is undermined by the paucity of their use and by the obvious capacity of the ordinary law to cope with suspected offenders.

A close examination of the 'certifying out' process is also instructive. This is the legal means whereby a person charged with a scheduled offence can apply through the Attorney-General's office to have the offences taken out of the emergency system and processed through the ordinary criminal courts. Between January-September 2000 there were 870 offences involving a total of 592 persons subject to the certifying out mechanism. Of these offences, 754 were de-scheduled while 116 remained within the Diplock non-jury system. Once again, we need to be reminded that the removal of the right to jury trial within the common law system is one of the most fundamental encroachments on a person's due

process rights. Given that the reasons presented for removal of jury trial are now defunct (and never empirically substantiated) – there can be little credible defence of the regime of scheduled offences and the de-scheduling process. Regrettably, there are no statistics available through the RUC from April 1999 concerning the number of indictable offences tried in non-jury courts in the same time-frame.

There is some welcome news for persons charged with scheduled offences. The waiting time on most parts of the pre-trial process is diminishing each year. Obviously, this has to do with less frequent use of the arrest powers. For example from July-September 2000, the average processing time from remand to committal was 25 weeks (33 weeks in 1999), 9 weeks from committal to arraignment (6 weeks in 1999) and 4 weeks from arraignment to hearing (9 weeks in 1999).

Another matter of interest to civil libertarians is the right of access to legal advice and the right of an arrested individual to have another person informed of their arrest. Section 46 of the EPA regulates the right to inform another, and between January-September 2000 91 such requests were made by detainees. Of these, 90 persons had their request granted - only 1 request was delayed. Again, the statistics raise the question as to why such a power is still in force, rather than repealed. As regards access to legal counsel, regulated by section 47 of the EPA, 144 requests were made for access; all granted.

This is a welcome departure from the previous year in which access was delayed to legal advice for 19 detainees. However, it remains problematic that such corrosive powers continue to sit in waiting. Instead, the government should seek to restore the equilibrium of the common law.

Other interesting statistics raise similar issues a. Between January - September 4 premises were searched by the army under the EPA power (section 20) and 271 by the RUC; and b. Compensation of £924,682 was paid by the Compensation Agency in respect of property requisition, damage caused during security force searches of property and damage caused by security force patrols (the 1999/2000 amount was over 3 million).

As regards the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), a similar picture of patchy use but persistent retention of powers presents itself. Between January-September 2000, 222 persons were arrested under the PTA. Of this number, 18 were subject to extended detention. In all cases of extended detention the individual concerned was released within 4 days. This indicates that the practice was within the parameters laid down by the European Court of Human Rights, and confirms that the removal of the United Kingdom's derogation to Article 5 was long overdue. Notably, no exclusion orders under the PTA were issued between January-September 2000. In fact, no exclusion orders have been issued since 1995. This is very strong evidence that the retention of this power is wholly unnecessary.

The statistics indicate that despite the falling usage in emergency powers by the state, they are not defunct. A small but significant number of individuals continue to experience the abrogation of their most fundamental legal entitlements in contexts where they are entitled to expect parity of legal treatment. In a democratic state this is not acceptable.

Fionnuala Ni Aolain

* All statistics are made available from the Statistics and Research Branch, Criminal Justice Division, Northern Ireland Office.

Continuing the series of perspectives
on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland

*Director of the Law Centre,
gives his perspective on
A Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland*

Writing what I want to see in a Bill of Rights in a short article is rather like trying to choose eight pieces of music to take to a desert island. Where do you start and what do you leave out?

A personal interest is to see economic and social rights at the heart of the Bill of Rights. The fact that the United Kingdom has signed international and European treaties that guarantee economic, social and cultural rights and yet, not are directly enforceable domestically is disappointing. This reality has diluted the significance of social and economic rights by comparison with their political and social counterparts. CAJ and Amnesty International have advocated a broadly similar list of economic and social rights. These include the right to safe and adequate housing, to an adequate standard of living, to education, health, a clean and healthy and protected environment and the right to work. This list is one I would endorse and the case for each of these rights has been eloquently made elsewhere. (for example, by the Human Rights Commission's advisory groups).

What I am particularly interested in is the development of social and economic rights to encompass the right to civic and social care. The nearest human rights instruments have got to this is in the concept of social assistance (for example Article 13 of the European Social Charter contains a reference to a right to advice and personal help to alleviate personal or family want). Social and civic care would give meaning to social assistance by embracing the right of the elderly, the mentally ill, people with physical or other disabilities, to live independently at home, or in other settings that enhance independence.

Whilst waiting lists for health care and treatment have captured public headlines and kept health at the forefront of the political agenda its twin - community and social care - has suffered in comparison. The lack of availability, of aids and adaptations to allow a person to remain at home, inadequate social services support to sustain independent living, access to respite care, and a limited range of age-related appropriate accommodation for young adults needing residential assistance, have all gone relatively publicly unnoticed.

A right to social care strikes to the core of the concept of participation in society. A person can no more

properly participate in society, without appropriate social care and support than without an adequate income. Moreover, it sets social and civic care within a framework of rights. Unlike health and social security where the idea of right to treatment or a benefit is firmly embedded, there is no equivalent sense of entitlement to social services or other support. The right starts with the person requiring assistance, but, will also extend to those providing care particularly where questions of respite care and the carer's right to participate fully in public life is considered.

The counters to the articulation of such an explicit right will quickly come to the fore. They will include concerns around resource implications, and particular circumstances unique to Northern Ireland to justify such a right. The resources question will occur with any class of economic and social rights, nonetheless, assuming that enforcement of such rights entails the concept of proportionality in decision-making it is little different from the current dilemmas facing public authorities when balancing expenditure against enforcement of existing domestic statutory duties. The need for care and support to maintain independence is no more unique to Northern Ireland than unemployment, ill health, or homelessness. Nonetheless, the extent of ill health and disability related to the physical and psychological impact of political violence, and the prevalence of social deprivation, is significantly greater than elsewhere in these islands.

An explicit right to social and civil care would be both radical, innovative and potentially a unifying feature of the Bill of Rights. The need for personal care and support, and the requirement to play a role as a carer, cuts across all communities in Northern Ireland. Inclusion of such a right will send out a clear message that social rights are broadly defined and address real issues facing people in local communities.

Les Allamby

The reports of the working groups set up by the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission on a variety of issues such as socio economic; language and equality among others, are now available from the NI Human Rights Commission. For copies or for further information on the consultation process contact Miriam Titterton on (028) 9024 3987.

Civil Liberties Diary

Mar 2 The annual report of the Lay Observer for Northern Ireland was published. In it, Professor Vincent Mageean commented that people making complaints against the Law Society are at a disadvantage compared to complainants in Great Britain and do not have adequate redress.

Mar 3 £5000 was awarded to Danny McNamee, for injuries inflicted by prison staff following an attempted escape from the jail. Mr McNamee's conviction for involvement in the Hyde Park bomb in London, was overturned by the Court of Appeal in 1998.

Mar 5 The family of Patrick Finucane, the solicitor whose murder in 1989 has been the subject of collusion allegations, stated that they did not wish the case to be investigated by the new Police Ombudsman whose office will receive some retrospective powers from April. The family, and many human rights organisations, believe a full independent international judicial inquiry should be initiated.

A Senior Civil Service Review was launched to examine, among other things, under-representation of various groups including women and Catholics. The Review team is being chaired by Sir Herman Ouseley, former Chair of the Council for Racial Equality.

Mar 7 Ed Lynch, national coordinator of the US-based Lawyers Alliance for Justice in Ireland, addressed a public meeting in the offices of the Northern Ireland Law Society to commemorate the murder of solicitor Rosemary Nelson, two years ago. He was joined by high-profile legal figures from the US and Britain as well as local lawyers.

Mar 13 Colin Worton, an ex-UDR soldier who was arrested and held on remand for three years, with other soldiers who became known as the "UDR 4", launched a campaign calling for an inquiry into the case. 16 men were arrested for the murder of Adrian

Carroll in 1983; 4 were convicted but all convictions were overturned.

Mar 14 A member of the "Birmingham Six" called for the British government to apologise publicly on the tenth anniversary of the group's release after wrongful conviction for the Birmingham pub bombings in 1974.

Mar 15 A series of events commemorated the second anniversary of the murder of solicitor Rosemary Nelson. Campaigners held a vigil outside Downing Street in London and a mass was held in New York to remember both Ms Nelson and Patrick Finucane. Former Labour Northern Ireland spokesperson, Kevin McNamara MP, tabled a motion in the House of Commons calling for an independent inquiry into the murder.

A new organisation called 'Front Line' was set up in Dublin to lobby for greater protection for "human rights defenders" in Northern Ireland.

Voluntary groups including trade unions, charities and community groups joined together to form the "Human Rights Consortium" to lobby for a strong inclusive Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland.

A new report 'Taking the Initiative: Promoting Young People's Involvement in Public Decision Making' was launched by Save the Children and the Carnegie Young People's Initiative.

Mar 16 CAJ and other NGOs, testified to Congress on human rights - 3 years on.

The family and supporters of the Finucane family briefed US politicians on Capitol Hill and New York on the state of their campaign for an inquiry into his murder.

A poster campaign was launched to highlight European Week against Racism, from March 19 to 25, and

International Day Against Racism on March 21. A series of events were organised to mark the week also. RUC statistics show that from 1996 to 2000 the number of "racial incidents" reported jumped from 39 to 246 and a fear remains that many attacks go unreported.

Mar 21 The Citizens' Advice Bureau published a report "Birth Rights" showing that many women still lose their jobs when they become pregnant and suffer damage to their careers when attempting to resume their job.

Mar 22 A conference examined the training package to address discrimination against Travellers. The "Anti-discriminatory Practice With Travellers" is designed to tackle racist views towards the Travelling community and to highlight ways of including them in society.

Mar 24 Mark Barr, William Gary Hutchinson and Paul Alexander Givens who were convicted in January of possession of documents relating to the Stevens Inquiry were released with suspended jail terms.

Mar 30 A second application for judicial review of the army's decision to retain Guardsmen Fisher and Wright, began in Belfast. James Fisher and Mark Wright returned to posts in the army having served six years for the murder of Peter McBride.

Compiled by volunteers from various newspaper sources.

Just News

Just News welcomes readers' news, views and comments.

Just News is published by the Committee on the Administration of Justice Ltd. Correspondence should be addressed to the Editor, **Fionnuala ni Aolain, CAJ Ltd.**

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The views expressed in Just News are not necessarily those of CAJ.