

CAJ 's AGM marks its 25th anniversary

CAJ held its Annual General Meeting on Wednesday 25th October, marking the 25th anniversary of its creation. Those members brave enough to venture out, on what was a truly winterous night, participated in the approval of the formal business and later enjoyed insightful presentations from Michael Farell and Mark Kelly, former and current faces of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties (ICCL). There was also an opportunity to reminisce about the last 25 years, through a photographic display of CAJ AGMs, events, staff and volunteers past and present.

Chairperson, Fiona Doherty, kicked off the formal proceedings with a brief summation of CAJ's activities throughout the past year in the four main areas of work: equality; policing; criminal justice; and the protection of rights. She thanked staff, volunteers and members for their hard work and support throughout what has been a difficult year for CAJ, due to the illness-induced absence of three out of six core staff simultaneously. A special point was also made of thanking funders for their continuous contributions to the running of CAJ.

Following approval of the minutes of last year's AGM and the annual report, and a presentation of CAJ's accounts by the auditor, Membership Secretary Barbara McCabe took to the floor briefly to remind members of the valuable role they play in CAJ. She encouraged members to avail of the direct debit facility now available to pay membership fees and asked if they would consider recommending membership of CAJ to family and friends who may have an interest in our work.

The newly elected Executive Committee was announced, They are; Chairperson – Fiona Doherty; Vice-Chairperson – Kieran McEvoy; Treasurer – Les Allamby; Parliamentary Liaison Officer – Paddy Hillyard; Minutes Secretary – Fiona McCausland; Membership Secretary – Barbara McCabe; Just News Editor – Fionnuala Ni Aolain.

Where we have come from.....

To mark the occasion, Michael Farrell (former vice and co-chair of ICCL and now Commissioner with the Irish Human Rights Commission) spoke about the role of, and relationship between, CAJ and ICCL over the last 25 and 30 years respectively. Both emerged amidst conflict, at a time when it was difficult and unpopular to call for the rule of law to be administered. Michael described how it was CAJ, however, who pioneered a new way of tackling civil liberties, appealing for international standards of human rights to be adopted domestically, and establishing strong affiliations with international NGOs and funders. Such activism inspired ICCL during a bad patch in the early 90s, and gave birth to the close relationship between the two organisations that has developed since.



Where we are going.....

Mark Kelly, current Director of ICCL, took the helm to speak about the future of ICCL and CAJ. With a combined 55 years of advocating for human rights protections and civil liberties, its important for both organisations to now reconsider the role of human rights on the island, to understand where our role for the future lies. He has already begun this process with ICCL as they now embark on a program of organisational development that includes the increased number of staff and the adoption of three key areas of focus for their research and policy work; fostering a human rights culture; promoting justice and accountability; and securing equality.

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INTERNATIONAL PANEL PUBLISHES COLLUSION REPORT

The Report of an Independent International Panel on Alleged Collusion in Sectarian Killings in Northern Ireland was published in November. The panel, established by an initiative of the Pat Finucane Centre had examined 25 linked cases, and found evidence pointing to collusion by members of the RUC and the UDR with loyalist paramilitaries in at least 24 of the cases-involving a total of 74 murders.

Background

The panel were invited to investigate these cases in 2004 by the Pat Finucane Centre. The PFC had been researching a series of killings where there was evidence of collusion between loyalist paramilitaries and members of the security forces. The research had begun in 1999 when the families of two men and a teenager killed in a gun and bomb attack at Donnelly's bar in Silverbridge, Co Armagh on 19 December 1975 approached the Centre.

Evidence emerged that this was not an isolated attack but was linked to a number of killings on both sides of the border, including the Dublin and Monaghan bombings in 1974. The cases centred around the activities of several members of the RUC and UDR who often operated with loyalist paramilitaries out of a farm owned by a RUC Reservist in Glenanne, Co Armagh. Links were established between cases based on ballistics information, prosecutions, and other evidence in the public domain. This included the testimony of former RUC Sergeant John Weir who was convicted in relation to his part in the activities of the so-called 'Glenanne group'.

The seriousness of allegations surrounding the 'Glenanne group' and frustration with other available mechanisms prompted the bereaved families and survivors to request an external examination of the allegations by a panel of eminent legal experts.

'A Case to Answer?'

The panel consisted of Professor Doug Cassel, Susie Kemp, Piers Pigou and Steve Sawyer, with Thomas Vega-Byrnes serving as counsel.

The panel commenced their investigation in May 2004. They interviewed families, witnesses and other relevant parties, including former Sgt John Weir, and met representatives of criminal justice bodies. They also engaged in extensive correspondence, including requests for information from various public bodies, although responses to date have generally been disappointing. Detailed scrutiny of documentary, testimonial and ballistics evidence was conducted, focusing on an examination of

the compliance of the state with its human rights obligations.

Findings

The panel's report, which had been provided to the government, the Police Ombudsman and the PFC for comment prior to publication, concluded that there is indeed a case to answer, finding that available evidence suggests collusion in at least 24 of the cases, representing 74 murders. The panel found:

- evidence of direct participation by RUC officers and UDR soldiers in many of the attacks;
- that superiors within the security forces were aware of these activities yet failed to act to prevent, investigate or punish them, and possibly even condoned participation;
- evidence in some cases that would arguably suffice to 'a *prima facie* showing of State responsibility';
- evidence demonstrating a broader pattern and practice of collusion;
- police investigations were inadequate;
- mechanisms currently available for victims are deficient in terms of providing restitution in line with international law and standards.

Key recommendations include:

- investigations to be conducted meeting obligations under Article 2 ECHR, including investigation of individual cases and, furthermore, 'the broader pattern and practice of collusion of which they appear to be a part';
- implementation of measures of moral reparation and satisfaction, such as state acknowledgement of responsibility, official apologies, and symbolic measures to demonstrate respect for, and to vindicate the dignity of, victims and their families;
- a thorough and inclusive consultation to determine the most suitable mechanism to deliver investigatorial and moral responsibilities.

The panel also investigated a number of cases of victims of republican violence in the same geographical area during the mid-1970s, and made recommendations in relation to these cases accordingly.

A case yet to be answered...

Although a wealth of information has come to light, families await answers to many more questions, especially in terms of which agencies knew about, or were involved in, these attacks; why their loved ones were targeted; and the nature of official post-attack responses. The report brings further pressure on the state to respond meaningfully to allegations of state complicity in these cases.

The final report of the international panel is available online at <http://www.patfinucanecentre.org>.

Johanna Keenan

CAJ welcomes human rights and equality provisions in the St. Andrews Agreement

As this issue of Just News goes to press, the future of the St Andrews Agreement is being hotly debated (albeit largely behind closed doors). As usual, CAJ takes no position on this agreement – just as we took and take no position on the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement. However, as with the 1998 Agreement, St Andrews contains many human rights and equality provisions that CAJ warmly welcomes.

On the 'plus' side, CAJ was delighted to see Annex B to St Andrews committing to publishing an Anti-Poverty and Social Exclusion strategy that would tackle deprivation on the basis of objective need; introduce legislation to address the needs of victims; work rapidly to introduce a Single Equality Bill; introduce an Irish Language Act; give long-delayed powers to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission; and address issues of equal access to civil service jobs.

While most of these measures were long overdue and, in some cases, appear to have been deliberately 'held back' so as to be added to the mix of measures on offer for political negotiation, they are essentially welcome. Some of these initiatives have moved forward in the intervening few weeks – with ministerial meetings, launches, and parliamentary debates underway on most of the topics cited.

Full Speed Ahead?

It is this very speed that, ironically, makes us somewhat wary of other initiatives cited in the same annex. So, while CAJ has long campaigned with Human Rights Consortium members and others for the creation of a forum on a Bill of Rights involving politicians and civil society, we wonder if an inaugural meeting of the roundtable in December is realistic? We believe that an independent, internationally respected, and highly adept chair will be crucial to this roundtable being effective – can a person who can command widespread cross community support be found in the time allowed? Having delayed for years, it would be very unfortunate if the push to get the roundtable up and running in a matter of weeks led to bad decision-making.

In other arena, the significance of the proposals are far from clear. What is meant by the expression that the government "firmly believes in the need to enhance and develop the Ulster Scots language, heritage and culture" (is the designation of Ulster Scots formally as a language intended to effect government's international commitments?). A further review of parades is promised

– will it add anything further to the variety of reviews that have been held over the last few years? Guidance for employers to reduce the barriers to employment for ex-prisoners is also promised. While any exchange of good practice is to be welcomed, it hardly seems sufficient; ex-prisoners are facing legal obstacles and discriminatory practices, and an exchange of good practice is inadequate to respond to such needs. On policing, the Patten targets of 50/50 will lapse when the figure of 30% of Catholic officers has been reached – but it is widely recognised that that 30% of an under-represented group must be seen as a minimum not maximum. CAJ has never argued for an open-ended retention of the quota system, but neither does it accept that the goal of a fully representative police service will be met within the timescale envisaged by Patten.

The additional powers for the NIHRC are welcome but were necessary when the institution was established in 1999 – we will follow the specifics of the proposed legislation closely. The same is true for entry requirements to the civil service, since it is not clear if the proposals will go as widely as they ought.

CAJ's concerns

However, the main concern that CAJ articulates about the St Andrews Agreement and human rights protections lies not in annex B (entitled Human Rights, Equality, Victims and Other Issues), but in annex E ("Future National Security Arrangements in Northern Ireland: paper by the British government").

Here, we are misleadingly assured, that the hard-won Patten accountability mechanisms will be unaffected. In fact, the paper says "there will be no diminution in police accountability. The role and responsibilities of the Policing Board and the Police Ombudsman *vis-à-vis* the police will not change" (emphasis added). But transferring policing functions from the police to MI5 will mean that while the police accountability bodies stay as they are, they will oversee a much narrower range of activities.

From a human rights perspective, it is worrying that national security, which is often the most contentious area of police work, is undefined and is about to be handed over to a body that is not answerable to the Policing Board, Ombudsman, future minister(s) of policing/justice.... The effort by Patten and many others to render policing locally accountable, and human rights compliant, will be undermined if these proposals are not challenged in a fundamental way.

Introduction

A few weeks ago Healing Through Remembering launched their discussion document outlining options for truth recovery regarding the Northern Ireland conflict. This report, the result of almost two years deliberations, was drawn up by the Truth Recovery and Acknowledgement Sub-group of that organisation.

This unique grouping includes former loyalist and republican combatants, a former British army officer, members of the PSNI, victims of the conflict, people from church and civil society backgrounds and a range of others. Although the subgroup have very diverse views as to what should occur with regard to truth recovery, all shared a common sense of exasperation at the shallowness which has characterised much of the debate over the last few years. In effect, often discussions have narrowed to 'either you are opposed to any further movement on truth recovery or you are in favour of a South African style Truth and Reconciliation Commission' with little room for nuance or subtlety in between. The subgroup therefore sought not to provide a simplistic 'right answer' to the debate but rather to provide sufficient information to offer it some structure and depth and then let make people make up their own minds.

The international context

The report includes an analysis of a range of international contexts and the relevant international law. Thus the question relating to whether there is a 'right to truth' is addressed ("probably" is the answer), the jurisprudence on the right to a remedy and reparations, the question of amnesties and a range of different types of truth commission and other models of truth recovery are all examined. The experience of these different styles of truth recovery in places as diverse as Chile, East Timor, Argentina, Guatemala, Rwanda, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, South Africa, Spain, the US, Canada, Australia, Uganda and elsewhere are all explored in so far as they may contribute to the debate regarding Northern Ireland.

Ongoing initiatives

The report also critically examines the range of ongoing initiatives in Northern Ireland and the Republic. In part this was in response to a shared concern that even these initiatives were not necessarily to the forefront of public consciousness as forms of truth recovery. Thus ongoing and historical processes including the Bloody Sunday

Making Peace *Options for Truth Recovery I*

Inquiry, the post-Cory inquiries, the work of the Police Ombudsman, the Patten Commission, the right-to-life cases before the local and European courts, the Historical Enquiries Team, the Stalker Inquiry, as well as a range of community based initiatives including the Ardoyne Commemorative Project are explored as well as the Barron Inquiry into the Dublin and Monaghan bombings.

Five Options

The report outlines five options for dealing with the past regarding the conflict in and around Northern Ireland. These options were not designed to be either exhaustive or indeed mutually exclusive but rather to concretise discussions that have often moved little beyond the abstract. The pros and cons of each option are then discussed at length.

Option One : Drawing a Line Under the Past

The "drawing a line under the past" or the "do nothing else" option would mean that the ongoing patchwork of processes would continue. However, no additional formal steps would be taken towards a process of truth recovery. In effect this is an articulation of the position of those who argue either that no further process of truth recovery is necessary, or possible, or that truth recovery would 'open old wounds' for victims and others, or destabilise the fragile political process or indeed that it might serve to criminalise those who were involved in acts of political violence. As noted above however, there are many ongoing initiatives such as Bloody Sunday, the post-Cory inquiries, the work of the Police Ombudsman as well as individual cases before the courts. Thus, for those who oppose this option, the obvious criticism is that all of these 'truths' will continue to emerge as before, albeit in a haphazard and piecemeal fashion which is neither co-ordinated nor properly managed. This view too is discussed in the report.

Option 2: Internal Organisational Investigations

In this option, organisations which have been involved in acts of violence including loyalist and republican paramilitaries as well as state agencies would take primary responsibility for assisting as much as possible in providing victims with the truth about what happened to their loved ones. The organisations would become involved voluntarily, in order to meet victims' requests for information, and would build on their experience in conducting internal investigations. A variety of possible formats, including tribunals or investigations by group members at an internal level, could be available. This option could provide ex-combatants and the security forces with the opportunity to

with the Past : n and About Northern Ireland

make a commitment to social and individual healing and reconciliation. It is also likely to be the option wherein there would be a greater level of trust from former paramilitary or security force personnel in the process if those who were interviewing or investigating past events were former comrades and colleagues. At the same time however, there might well be considerable public mistrust of organisations investigating incidents in which they themselves had been involved. This option might deliver information about what happened to individuals, if victims and families were prepared to ask for investigations. It would not however lead to prosecution or the naming of names, nor would it directly help in transforming institutions or political leadership.

Option 3: Community-based “Bottom-up” Truth Recovery

As noted above, there are existing local models of communities devising and carrying out their own forms of truth recovery. The involvement of local people in collecting and documenting local truth would take advantage of this skills base, and would itself be a mechanism for communal healing and reconciliation. This model could take into account structural issues, combine with storytelling and local history as well as “top-down” truth recovery (e.g. from a truth recovery commission), and could vary from one community to another. It could give voice to victims and marginalised communities, record previously untold stories, underline the validity of different experiences between and within communities, and emphasise the importance of individual and grassroots experiences, thus providing an alternative to dominant “macro” narratives. Of course as a localised mechanism, it risks varying greatly from one community to another, or focusing within single identities, and therefore not holding to account all institutions and protagonists. This option would again not lead to prosecution or the naming of names, but a broad collection of stories and narratives about the past.

Option 4: Truth-recovery Commission

Such a commission would focus on events of the past over a specified period of time. It would explore the causes, context and consequences of violence as well as examine specific events and patterns. Set up by legislation by the Irish and British governments, with independence from both, it would have the power to compel witnesses, grant amnesty, recommend prosecution, order reparations, and present a report with recommendations. A Truth-Recovery Commission could build on the truth recovery work that has already taken place, but do so in a much more inclusive fashion. It could also try and persuade those that committed acts of violence to reveal information by, for

example, offering to expunge criminal records or a guarantee against future prosecutions in exchange for truth telling. Such a commission would be a practical and symbolic expression of the willingness of society to deal with its violent past as part of the transition to becoming a more inclusive society. It would contain both “carrots” and “sticks” to reach the truth. It would work best if it were independent, included eminent international figures, avoided an overly adversarial and legalistic way of working, and saw itself as part of the wider process of making peace with the past rather than the only vehicle. Whether it could be established, and succeed, would depend greatly on the trust, participation and confidence of victims, ex-combatants, and institutions within society.

Option 5: A Commission of Historical Clarification

The primary focus of this option is historical (i.e. upon the causes and consequences of conflict) with less emphasis on either victims or those who had been involved in past acts of violence. The emphasis would be on devising an independent, authoritative, historical narrative about what occurred during the conflict and why, in order to encourage a broader sense of collective (rather than individual) responsibility for what happened. An agreed narrative would limit misperceptions and disagreements about what actually happened, and thus help to prevent future cycles of violence based on grudges and manipulation. This narrative would be developed by an independent body over a period of time. This option would probably generate less political opposition, be less expensive, and could be the start of a broader public debate on what happened. It would produce a report, and could make recommendations. However, this type of Commission would have no evidentiary powers, no power to compel witnesses, grant amnesty, or prosecute, so it would not enable individuals to discover what happened in particular incidents, nor would it be able to name names or push for prosecution. Also, it would be unlikely to meet the needs of victims, and would risk seeming distant and scholarly, both of which would limit public ownership of its results.

Conclusion

The *Making Peace with the Past* document from Healing Through Remembering is not designed to offer a definitive view on how or whether Northern Ireland should have some form of a truth-recovery process. It is hoped that it will contribute to the public debate. Across all sectors in society there is a widespread consensus on the desirability of processes and structures which prioritise the needs of victims. If we accept that many victims want to know the truth about what happened to them or their loved ones and why, then at the very least there is a moral imperative for all of us affected by the conflict to engage seriously in such a debate on truth recovery.

The views expressed are personal to the report's author, Kieran McEvoy. Copies from HTR (028 9023 8844).

Toward Improving the Role of National Human Rights Institutions in Promoting Economic Rights

For the past four months I have been traveling around Europe, interviewing national human rights institutions (NHRIs) as to whether they address social justice issues in the workplace and economy. In each country under study, I then spoke with community advocates, nongovernmental organizations and other people in the voluntary sector to gauge their impression of NHRIs involvement with economic rights. Not surprisingly, there was a gap between NHRI self-perception and the general public perception. In all cases, even if the NHRI was doing *something* to address economic injustices, they could have been doing much more.

The kind of activities that NHRIs undertake to further the promotion and protection of socio-economic rights ranged include; hearing individual complaints about socio-economic injustices (relate to pensions, health care, public welfare, etc.); conducting regularly scheduled and surprise visits to state institutions charged with promoting public welfare (i.e. hospitals and orphanages); monitoring state compliance with international treaty obligations; advising government so that domestic laws and practices are in line with international human rights standards, designing human rights education projects that address social justice; participating in international standard setting; and, supporting the work of community activists with their own projects designed to promote socio-economic rights.

Certainly there is no cookie-cutter formula that suits every NHRI. Context matters. Two factors wield disproportionately strong influence over the long-term strategies and day-to-day work of a NHRI: whether the country has recently emerged or is presently emerging from violent conflict; and whether the motivations for NHRI work on economic justice are supported by a voluntary sector as in accord with their own ideas, and not as a foreign agenda or irrelevant domestic imposition.

The findings emerging from my study depend greatly on the answers to these two questions. The following list of suggestions apply to places like Northern Ireland that answers "yes" twice (yes, there has been a violent conflict; yes, the voluntary sector in Northern Ireland has long waged its own struggle for social justice.)

- **Look forward, not backward:** Other institutions of a more temporary nature can address wartime violations of human rights. A successful NHRI founded in postwar times finds a way to address present and ongoing violations and to adapt and evolve as the state matures and evolves. Mistakes in the structural design of NHRIs are to be expected, especially if the institutions are created under the cloud of war, are they should be recognized and addressed as soon as possible.

- **Prepare for new sources of conflict:** In deeply divided societies, the expectations for NHRIs are incredibly high and the personal stakes are great. In such circumstances, NHRIs can provide a structure for addressing past grievances, but in so doing they may create new sources of conflict.

- **Consider a focus on socio-economic issues as a conflict resolution strategy:** Socio-economic grievances reach across populations and thus are often good choices for the initial focus of NHRIs. This general principle does not hold true, however, when the socio-economic grievance in question incorporates central political concerns or where they require such a significant allocation of resources that they attract greater controversy.

- **Adopt very open complaint procedures to remedy public mistrust of state institutions:** The NHRI can contribute to the enhancement of public opinion by providing a professional, highly accessible complaint system. Where a country is undergoing rapid economic transitions, it should be expected that such complaints will tend to address economic issues.

- **Enhance reach of NHRI through regular inspections of state-run institutions and investigatory "special reports":** Even the most modest NHRI can expand its reach significantly by adding to its mandate the regular inspections of state-run institutions, such as prisons, hospitals and orphanages, and by including in its work special reports on systemic abuses.

- **Continue to cultivate relationships with the voluntary sector:** An important part of a NHRIs mandate is cultivating its relationship with the voluntary sector. NHRIs can serve the voluntary sector by providing relevant training, library resources, access to documentation and other support tailored to specific joint projects suggested and initiated outside the NHRI. From a purely instrumental perspective, NHRIs need input and ideas from the voluntary sector. NHRI legitimacy depends on voluntary sector "buy in" to the selection of issues selected by the NHRI and to manner in which they are addressed.

It is no secret to anyone that has followed the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission that that creating and running a successful NHRI is not easy. "It's the toughest job I ever had," more than one Commissioner told me. With a new board and a new year, the Commission can have a new start. As in other countries, the Northern Ireland Commission has the potential to be a leader on social justice issues.

Julie Mertus
Professor at American University and Sn Fulbright Fellow

Movement at last towards a Bill of Rights?

Readers of Just News will be aware that a roundtable forum involving political parties and representatives of civil society to bring the Bill of Rights forward is a proposal that has been around for some time. The government committed itself to this process in 2003 as part of the Joint Declaration; a further commitment to move it ahead was contained in the proposals for the peace process published by the two governments in December 2004; and earlier this year expectations were built when Minister Hanson indicated his intention to push ahead with the Forum and began consulting with the parties on the issue. It came as somewhat of a surprise therefore, that after such a long period of gestation, the St Andrews Agreement suddenly announced that the Forum was to hold its inaugural meeting in December. This led to a two-week long consultation on elements of its operation.

CAJ's response to the government's consultation paper on "A Forum on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland" endorsed the general principles for a Roundtable Forum developed and distributed by the Human Rights Consortium in 2005 as providing a sound and considered set of benchmarks against which decisions about the Forum and its membership should be taken. There are a number of areas where the government's proposals clearly fall short of these benchmarks, as the Consortium's submission to the consultation document points out. For its part, CAJ drew particular attention to problems with the proposed purpose and terms of reference of the Forum, as well as the unhelpful and divisive approach taken to representation from civil society.

The proposal to convene a Roundtable did not develop in a vacuum – it came from a recognition that the Bill of Rights process up until that point had not sufficiently engaged political parties, and the delays in the process had resulted in a loss of momentum and engagement from wider civil society. It was also clear that the task was proving too big and too difficult for the NI Human Rights Commission for a variety of reasons.

From the perspective of CAJ and its colleagues in the Human Rights Consortium, the potential of the Forum in

broadening out debate, and reaching agreement between political parties and civil society was and still is seen as pivotal in developing the groundswell of support and ownership necessary to guide these proposals through a Westminster parliament.

It is clear that the process of debating what should be in a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland will not be easy; it therefore follows that any proposals agreed will be a huge achievement and should be given the necessary political weight and status. It seems incongruous therefore that the government is proposing that the role of the Forum will simply be to inform the work of the NIHRC, which presumably

leaves it open to the Commission to accept or reject the Forum's proposals as it sees fit. It also mandates the Forum only to "consider the structure and content of a Bill of Rights", rather than reach agreement. One must then question what the point of the Forum will be? To invite politicians and civil society to engage in what will be difficult and challenging discussions, only for them to be ignored is rather pointless in our view.

roundtable graphic

CAJ agrees absolutely on the need for the Commission to be independent, and for its statutory role to be respected. However, there is a way to involve the Commission and respect its statutory role which the Human Rights Consortium has suggested - let the Commission "human rights proof" the recommendations from the Forum to ensure they adhere to international human rights standards. We therefore suggest to government that the purpose and terms of reference of the Forum as proposed in the consultation document fall far short of a standard that would encourage meaningful participation.

Equally problematic is the approach taken in the document to representation from civil society. Rather than present options or propose structures, the paper provides a "non-exhaustive" list of sectors, and seeks views on which organisations should be represented. This approach is clearly designed to solicit responses of individual nomination, rather than consideration of how the diverse views of civil society could be heard in the process. This will then allow government to hand down decisions on the basis that there was no agreement in the responses. CAJ will be challenging the government to provide a clear rationale for any appointments, founded on human rights experience and knowledge.

If properly chaired, constituted and given sufficient scope and resources to operate, the Roundtable Forum will clearly be an extremely important initiative in enabling the people of Northern Ireland to discuss and debate the rights that they want to see protected in a Bill of Rights. There is much to work for in the coming weeks if this is to become a reality.

Civil Liberties Diary

October 2

Police Ombudsman says she has not identified a need for tasers to be introduced in Northern Ireland.

October 4

European Court of Justice rules that employers cannot lawfully pay some workers much higher salaries than others solely on the ground of long service.

A number of prison officers called as witnesses in the inquiry into the prison murder of LVF leader Billy Wright have applied for anonymity.

October 9

Under proposed new legislation children are to be allowed to express their opinion and feelings personally to the judge deciding custody in divorce cases.

October 10

The families of some of those murdered in the Northern Ireland conflict have met to discuss possible state involvement in the killing of their loved ones. The meeting was attended by John Allen, Raymond McCord, Paul Ilwaine, Mark Sykes, Jean Fegan and Clare Rogan.

Figures released show that the number of senior women police officers has more than doubled in the past decade from 30 in the RUC in 1996 to 63 now. However this still only represents 11% of senior officers.

October 11

Irish Ombudsman for Children expresses concern that emergency legislation that was passed last June discriminates against boys and involves the potential criminalisation of young people in respect of consensual sexual behaviour.

A new police led community initiative to combat racism in Newtownabbey begins.

Lisburn City Council will no longer fly the Union flag all year round. It will only fly on 19 designated days throughout the year in accordance with a ruling from the Equality Commission in July.

October 13

Sinn Fein and the PUP launch a joint project to deal with sectarianism in interface areas of the city of Derry.

October 18

The government announces that it is considering using covert phone tap evidence in Northern Ireland, which is currently inadmissible in the courts.

October 19

Government drops plans to merge 5 watchdogs in the criminal justice system in Britain, included among them was the Chief Inspector of Prisons, after the measure was comprehensively defeated in the Lords.

October 23

Parents of Gerard Lawlor have asked the Police Ombudsman to examine whether their son's murder was properly investigated amid concerns that the original PSNI inquiry was "seriously flawed" and may have been thwarted to protect police informers. Gerard Lawlor was shot by the UDA in July 2002.

October 25

Legislation is to be passed on the appointment and remit of a Victim's Commissioner - the Victims and Survivors (NI) Order 2006. Under it the Commissioner is to be responsible to the OFMDFM.

October 26

A public inquiry into allegations of state collusion in the murder of solicitor Rosemary Nelson has been delayed for at least nine months.

The NI Secretary of State has put a cap on how much money can be

claimed by legal representatives working on the Billy Wright Inquiry following criticism on the cost of previous such inquiries.

October 26

Launching a review of its procedures, The Parades Commission revealed that in future the 11/1 form used when applying to parade would be made simpler and more clarification would be given as to what parades, flags and emblems are deemed contentious or illegal.

The final report from Saville into Bloody Sunday will not be published until at least the end of 2007.

Compiled by Mark Bassett from various newspapers.

CAJ requires volunteers for court and inquiry observing. If you are interested, please contact the office on:

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Human Rights in Northern Ireland

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

Making Peace with the Past :
Options for Truth Recovery In and About Northern Ireland