

HATCH 33

NEWSLETTER of THE LIMERICK CENTRE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Free Copy

Summer Issue 1995

The Poverty Trap NO WAY OUT?

For unemployed people it must sometimes feel that for every step forward they take to improve their financial circumstances they are forced to take two backwards.

This is particularly true in relation to the income ceiling of £60 per week which can be earned by a person without affecting their spouses/partners social welfare payments. You only have to look at how this ceiling affects people to realise how ludicrous the situation is. Take an unemployed man on long term Unemployment Assistance with two children and an adult dependant. His rates are as follows:-

	£
Claimant	62.50
Adult Dependant	37.50
2 Children	26.40
	<hr/>
	126.40

however, if his partner earns £61.00 he will lose the adult dependant allowance and half the rate for each i.e. $37.50 + 13.20 = 50.70$ leaving him with 75.70. Both partners combined income will now stand at £136.70.

When you take into account that the working partner will also have to pay P.R.S.I. and travel expenses there really is no financial gain for the family. So in spite of their attempts to better themselves the system ensures that they remain in the poverty trap.

Over the years, we at the Centre along with others have campaigned to have the earnings limit tapered. This would mean that the adult dependants allowance would not be reduced completely as is the current practice once the earnings limit is reached. We would once again ask the Minister for Social Welfare Proinnsais De Rossa to review this ridiculous situation with a view to allowing unemployed people to gain some degree of financial independence. As it stands, the system does not help people to climb out of the poverty trap which is part and parcel of unemployment. It needs to be changed as a matter of urgency.

Joan Condon

Aiming For Full Employment

Unemployment continues to be the scourge of Irish society both North and South. While in recent times there have been some hopeful signs of arresting the upward trend, the overall situation remains grave and extremely worrying.

Unemployment leads to poverty, despair, social exclusion and a host of other problems not least of which is crime and juvenile delinquency. Whole areas of our cities and towns have become notorious unemployment blackspots with rates of joblessness in excess of eighty per cent. Within these areas there are many dedicated community activists who daily toil at implementing an array of local, state and EU initiatives and programmes aimed at improving the quality of life and stemming the tide of hopelessness generated by the effects of unemployment. It is also becoming increasingly clear that unemployment is not only a problem in areas and classes along associated with it, but is affecting people across a broad spectrum of society both urban and rural.

It should be obvious that the solution to unemployment is job creation. Consequently, it behoves all concerned - the unemployed themselves, employers, trade unionists, community activists, politicians of both government and opposition, and policy-makers at local, national and European level - to concentrate their minds and energies on finding the means of creating the numbers of jobs necessary to effectively turn the tide of unemployment. At the very least, all political parties must have as their objective the creation of full employment. Even if this is considered unrealistic at present or in the short to medium term it must be

a social target to be aimed at. Aiming for full employment and formulating and making an honest attempt to implement policies consistent with this aim would be immeasurably better than the present policy of simply controlling the upward trend and settling for "acceptable" levels of unemployment.

It is often remarked that there is no longer any such thing as a permanent pensionable job. For many in our society the more urgent concern is simply whether there is any such thing as a job and for young people coming fresh into the labour market this is indeed a very pertinent question. Finding a satisfactory answer to that question is an urgent challenge facing the whole of society.

CHARTER OF RIGHTS FOR SCHEME WORKERS

In March 1995 there were over forty thousand people working on FAS administered Community Employment schemes. These schemes are operated by a wide range of sponsors from local authorities and schools to community and voluntary organisations. Much very worthwhile work of immeasurable value to society is performed by CE workers.

Such workers, however, have major problems relating to their rights. These can be summarised as lack of rights, violation of rights and inadequate rights. In order to remedy this situation the Irish National Organisation for the Unemployed (INOUE) has drawn up a Charter of Rights for Scheme Workers which

was launched in May of this year. It is calling for its adoption by the Minister for Enterprise and Employment who has overall responsibility for the schemes.

The eight -point charter calls for the following:

1 Voluntary participation on Schemes: Your decision to take part on a CE scheme should be totally voluntary and without compulsion by any authority.

2 Recognition as part-time workers: All employment legislation and full PRSI coverage should be extended to CE workers.

3 Trade Unions: You should be informed of your right to join a trade union when starting a scheme.

4 Contract of Employment: You should be provided with a contract of employment which clearly outlines your job description, informs you of your rights and entitlements and contains a disciplinary and grievance procedure.

5 Extensions of scheme: You should be made aware of the exact procedure which is used for deciding to grant workers and extension on CE. This must be applied with maximum transparency.

6 Work Experience: CE schemes must provide quality worthwhile work experience that is relevant to your search for full-time employment.

7 Development Training: Training on CE should meet your needs, be related to labour market opportunities and be certified to standards acceptable to employers.

8 Opportunities for progression: Built-in support to explore your options and help in progressing to further paid employment or training/education programmes.

In order for the charter to be effective, the INOUE is calling for the establishment in each FAS region of "watchdog" bodies. Their function would be to resolve problems and implement the charter within their region. Increases in wages and tax-free allowances are also called for. The Charter of Rights is supported by SIPTU, ATGWU, NUJ and IMPACT. For copies of the Charter of Rights for Scheme Workers contact the Limerick centre for the Unemployed or the INOUE 6 Gardiner Row Dublin 1: 01-8788635.

Lifting the Lid on SUPPLEMENTARY WELFARE

Supplementary Welfare ... what is it?, who can apply and how? who is the Community Welfare Officer? These questions and many more are answered in a new booklet entitled "Everything you need to know to get a Supplementary Welfare Allowance" recently published by the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed.

Despite its somewhat unwieldy title this is a very attractive, readable and easily understood guide to the whole range of

welfare allowances administered by the Health Boards. Everything from the basic allowance to urgent needs payments are explained clearly and concisely. Rent Allowance, Mortgage Interest Supplement and the Back to School Allowance and much more are covered. Also dealt with is the role of the Community Welfare Officer and how s/he is likely to decide for or against your application for payment and the procedures for appealing the decision of the CWO should it not be in your favour.

Since its publication earlier in the year the booklet has received great praise from many sources including welfare rights workers and ... Community Welfare Officers! Need we say more. We are delighted to note that Maggie Phayer, a former social welfare advisor at the Limerick Centre for the Unemployed and now with PAUL, had a role in producing this excellent publication.

Copies are available at the centre or from the INOU Dublin.

FAMILY INCOME SUPPLEMENT

The Family Income Supplement (FIS) is a weekly allowance to help families dependent on low paid employment. You may qualify if you are working at least twenty hours per week. Your partner's working hours may be added. You must have at least one child dependant. A child is regarded as being a dependant up to the age of eighteen, or up to twenty-one if in full time education. Lone parents who are at work may qualify.

Taken into account for assessment are:

Gross pay - yours and your spouse's -, overtime, bonuses, allowances or commission, any other income excluding the following - Child Benefit, Carers Allowance, Orphans Allowance or Pension, Supplementary Welfare Allowance, Rent Allowance, Domicillary Care Allowance, Foster Child Allowance, income from rent or

interest or savings, income from casual employment such as home help, income from a charitable organisation.

Check out this example -

FIS income limit	£200
Your income	£140
Income difference	£ 60
Weekly FIS (60% of difference)	£ 36

If you qualify, you will get a book of orders which you can cash weekly at your local post office. You will continue to

qualify while working for 52 weeks and will not be affected by changes in your income or short periods of illness. You may also get assistance under the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Scheme and the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance. At the end of 52 weeks you may re-apply if you think you still qualify.

Get your claim form from your local Social Welfare office - and do pass the word! There are many people totally unaware of FIS.

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Biographical Notes

Ellen Moore grew up near Edenderry in Co. Offaly and is now living in Limerick.

She has won numerous prizes for storytelling and is preparing to launch a collection of her stories later this year. She has been published in various magazines and has won the Mayor's prize in two consecutive years. She loves the creative writing classes at the centre and has been attending faithfully since last year.

Mary Randles, Emmanuel Clancy and "Audrey" are relative newcomers to the class and are already showing much promise.



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The Saga of Sheila

By Ellen Moore

I remember well the day Sheila came into our lives. My oldest brother Dessie said to Ma "just think on it for a while, an ass and cart for ONLY fifteen pounds, and that's not all, she's in foal, due any day now and wouldn't the children have great fun and crack out of her and indeed everyone here. Think of it, Ma, you could go to the bog and drive the ass and cart at you leisure".

Now I'd say that's what really clinched the deal. For the thought of owning your own ass and cart sparkled to my mother just as owning a Rolls Royce or a Mercedes would capture the imagination of today's modern person. But to own your own ass and cart, now to my poor sainted mother, that was her life long ambition.

So the deal was done. For a mere fifteen pounds we were the sole owners of a fine ass in foal and a good strong cart. Dessie said the ass's name was "Sheila" and so the name stuck. Sheila was put out to grass in a field, at the back of our yard, with the kind permission of Mr. Mc Carthy who owned all the land and the back of all the houses on the road.

Anyway, Sheila became the most important lady in confinement. Watched over, pampered and cared for in every sense of the word. We waited for the vet to come and do the job and deliver the foal. He arrived and went straight into action down the field, but of course I was not allowed to look on or get in

anyone's way. So patiently, I waited until I heard a lot of laughing all the way up the yard. It all seemed to be over very quickly.

We breathed a sigh of relief, thinking everything must have gone grand. But the news was not good. Not what we expected at all. A voice was heard- "Jeasus, YOU of all people! Wouldn't you think that you'd have known better", It was the vet's voice we heard shouting at my brother. Dennis, you should have known the ass was a "Sean" and not a "Sheila". The only thing wrong with him is that he is overfed, over-nourished and the living is too good for him and has caused a severe dose of colic".

Well, the name calling and the slagging went on for weeks, after that event all was too much for my brother, so he kept out of the way as much as possible. So my mother said, addressing the ass, "Sheila was your name and it will stay Sheila", and from that day on the ass was always known as Sheila. Straight away, Sheila had to go on a diet and we were told to take him to the bog and work him in order to trim him down.

Later on, in the dying days of summer, my brother Dennis came home and announced that Sheila had died in the bog. We were all heartbroken to hear of the poor ass's death. So, the following morning, a glorious sunny day, Ma issued her orders to my two younger brothers, Georgie and Sammy, "get out the spades, go to

the bog, and bury poor Sheila".

The two lads got up on the pushbike with one of them on the crossbar carrying the two spades in his hands. They traveled the three miles to the bog. After a little searching, they found the ass lying on his side on a bare piece of bog which he had often used for rolling in the turf mould, as ass's do, to keep the flies away in Summer. After much careful planning, a decision was made. As one of them said, "a brainstorm struck". "We'll dig a hole beside the ass and roll him into it so as to save an awful lot of pulling and dragging", "A good idea, to be sure", they both agreed.

They dug the hole so deep that water started to come into it and they both knew that this was deep enough now. but when they commenced to roll him into the hole the ass jumped up and ran away in fright. Well the two edgits almost had a heart attack and worse was to follow, for one of them stood on the top of a turf bank to watch the poor ass run for his life, when he spotted another ass on the ground about two hundred yards ahead of them. This time they checked and double checked to be certain that they got the right ass and to ensure that it was dead before starting another hole. So another one was dug in the burning sun and finally Sheila was laid to rest.

Funny things happen with people

and animals and all this helps to enrich our lives. And I am sure, in many years to come, the Saga of Sheila will be told over and over again in my family.

And Ma, I only hope that you are in the cart driving Sheila around at last wherever you both may be up there in that great big bog in the sky.

UNDERSTANDING

In a room of noisy people
My hearing's made feeble,
Don't turn away when you speak
For it's you face and lips I seek.

Come take my hand
Please understand,
The woods are not clear
In my troubled ears.

You don't need to shout
Or even spell it out,
Let me be clear
I cannot hear.

If you want me to know
Just face me; go slow,
Now I can see words clear
That is the way I can hear.

If you see my puzzled frown
Then! you must write it down,
Don't worry if you look odd
I'm speech-reading; watch my
nod.

Emmanual Clancy
First published by Link Magazine 1995

DEFLATED EGOS

Yes! it had happened
It was finally here
The class we had awaited
for weeks, it was here.

This was our chance
to prove what we thought
about our talents; like Joyce
Our work soon'll be bought.

This was not what happened
we didn't impress
the co-writers we met
'Amateurs' we guessed.

Yet the stories they told
proved they were not tales
both new and old,
it's real talent they've got.

And so it happened that day
or so the story goes
we got our comeuppance
deflated ego's.

Written by Mary Randles
2nd May 1995

A WHITE KNIGHT

At fifteen a white knight was my only wish.

The armour, the princely looks, a gentle kiss.

He did not come my way - So I went in search

To find him and drag him to a church.

At nineteen I found him not in a distant land.

Excalibur! A pool cue in his hand.

Armour? I'd say, more like a hard crust of dirt

On his jeans, his shoes and his faded shirt.

Oh my Camelot "Came a lot" - But not to my rescue.

No bridal gown for me, a maternity dress in lieu

And the promises of undying love and devotion.

Died - responsibility the lethal potion.

His dowry - stretch marks and emotional imbalance.

Oh, and of course the Lone Parent Allowance.

But I thank him for assisting me in the creation

Of my son; a true source of elation.

Written by Audrey



THE UNION OF RETAIL, BAR AND ADMINISTRATIVE WORKERS

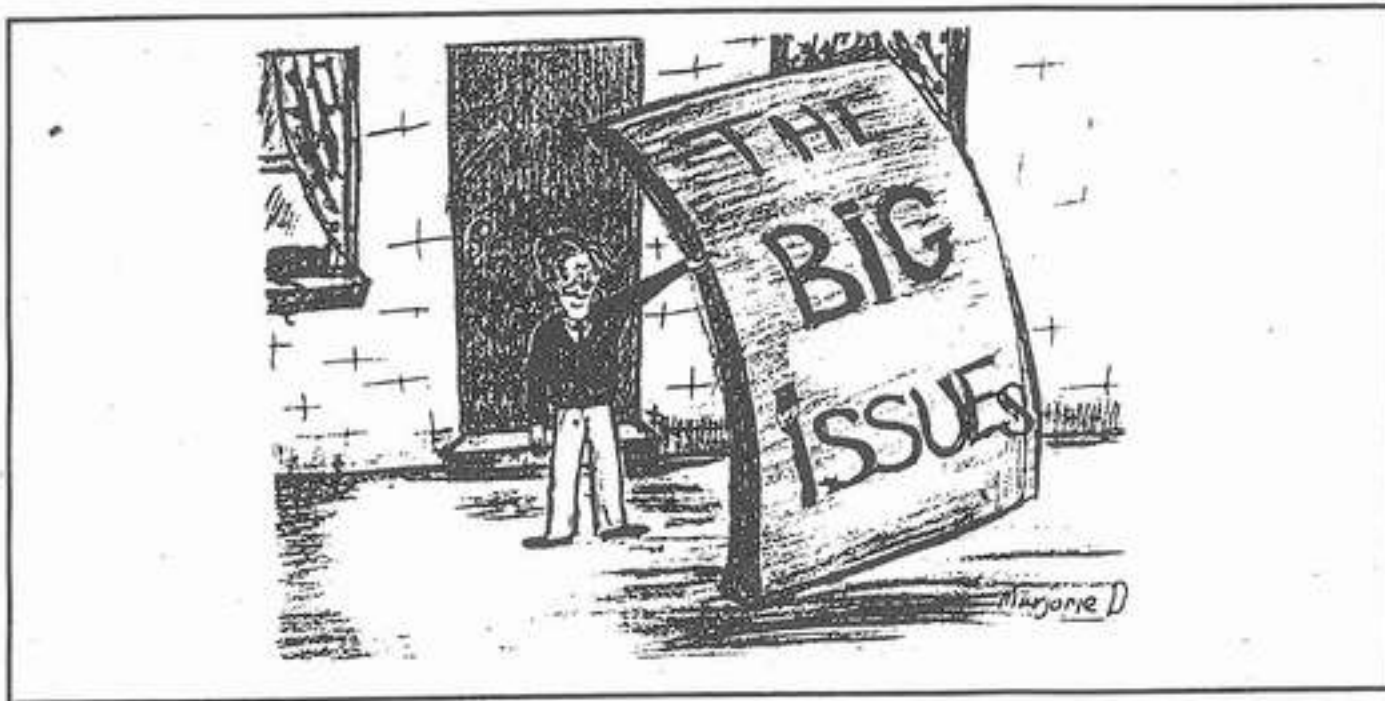
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DIVISIONAL ORGANISER: BRIAN HIGGINS



First Published in "The Big Issues"
(Issue 18 May 1995)

The Penny Rent

Daniel O'Connell formulated the system of the Penny Rents to fund the political action for the repeal of the Penal law and Catholic Emancipation.

In 1823 O'Connell launched an organisation to campaign for Catholic Emancipation. This was the Catholic Association which opened its membership to vast numbers of ordinary people. These people paid a penny a month to the association. This payment was collected at the gates of Catholic chapels and became known as the "Catholic Rent."

At one stage, the Catholic Rent was bringing in over £1000 a week. This money was used to fight the campaign for emancipation and to assist tenant farmers who had been victimised for refusing to vote in the way their landlords told them as election time.

my proposal is we introduce a system similar to the "Penny Rents" and also called the same but it would be one pound a week collected all around the thirty-two counties. The money would be used to fund aid and set up businesses for unemployed people. To give some sort of an incentive to people, to participate, forty pence= in the pound could be used for some form of lottery, ten per cent on commission and fifty per cent to the fund. I'm sure the public would willingly participate in such a project. I believe that the public is alarmed at the frightening high

unemployment figures. Some people feel that this country is on a downward spiral economically. A drastic action is called for. I believe that this proposal will go a long way in helping to solve this problem. I believe the public would welcome an opportunity like this to get personally involved in solving this problem of chronic unemployment.

John Griffin
Vendor 6
Limerick.



The Big Issues is a fortnightly magazine which has been sold regularly on the street of Limerick since February. It is no ordinary magazine.

Based on a similar publication in Britain, the Big Issues was launched in 1994 as a non-profit venture with the clear aim of assisting the long-term unemployed, homeless and socially excluded. The street vendors who sell the magazine retain half the selling price of £1.00 with the remainder going toward the operating costs of the magazine. Any profits are used to help set up jobs, clubs and social housing projects.

The Big Issues should not be confused with other street-sold publications which appear occasionally and claim to assist the unemployed. These usually shoddy efforts bear no comparison to the Big Issues which is professionally produced and whose accounts are open to scrutiny. Also, the street vendors genuinely benefit from their efforts and are expected to adhere to a strict code of conduct in their dealings with the public.

A wide range of topical issues are covered in the magazine along with film and music reviews and celebrity interviews (a recent issue carried an interview with President Robinson). Two strikingly unique features are the missing persons page and the space allotted to the literary efforts of the street vendors themselves. This well produced and readable publication is indeed exceptionally good value for £1.00.

Contributors include Eamonn McCann, Suzy Byrne, Fr. Pat Buckley and Shane O'Dohery.

In Limerick, the Big Issues operate out of the Williams court Shopping Centre, William Street. New vendors are always welcome - enquiries to Mr. Joe Spencer.

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About The Centre

The Limerick Centre for the Unemployed was opened in January 1987 under the auspices of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions. It is part of a network of thirty such trade union centres nationwide. Its purpose is to provide a range of services for unemployed people and to campaign on issues which affect them.

Services provided by the centre include:

- Social welfare advice and assistance with welfare and employment appeals;
- Free adult education classes (see overleaf);
- Preparation and typing of C.V.s;
- Advice on enterprise and self-employment;
- Photocopying;

The Director of the centre is Joan Condon who has held the position for nearly five years. There is a total staff of 27 of whom two are full-time and the

remainder on Community Employment.

The centre is affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed. It works closely with the PAUL Partnership, Limerick City VEC, Limerick

Adult Guidance Service, FAS and many other statutory and voluntary agencies.

The centre is located at 33 Thomas Street (next to the old Fire Station) and is open Monday to Friday 9.30am - 5.00pm. Phone 416056/416090.



Classes at the Centre



Here at the centre we surely have a class to suit your interests and provide you with a broader horizon. They are subject to demand and subject to change and they are free. They run Monday to Friday through three terms - sign on now for next Autumn.

BASIC COMPUTERS - Come along and you will learn how to slip a disk without hurting your back ... and that it is okay to have a mouse in you house.

ART - Walk that straight line to the centre and sign on for the art class. You might have that unsuspected flair. If van Gogh had this environment he'd never have chopped of his ear.

FRENCH - The language of romance and food, pillow-talk and spuds. Spot the difference between au revoir and au reservoir? I can't - I haven't taken the class!

GERMAN - Michael the tutor will converse with you in his native tongue - and your native tongue. Handy for your

holidays in Berlin.

ENGLISH IMPROVEMENT - Dangling participles, punctuation, plain old fashioned grammer and the terrifying apostrophe are all dealt with painlessly.

GUITAR - Learn to strum along to your favourite tunes and rock around the clock all you want.

CREATIVE WRITING - Writers, poets and dreamers of all ages are welcome. There's lots of support and encouragement for shy talent to express itself.

YOGA - Improve your mind and body through exercise, relaxation and mediation.

TYPING - Brush up your typing skills or acquire same. Keep within the speed limit!

**R E L E X O L O G Y ,
AROMATHERAPY & HAIR &
BEAUTY** - Is there no end to our largesse? Seems not, and because we all have to eat we also have Basic Cooking.

Presentation of Education Certificates

"I never cease to be amazed at what is often achieved by people who use the Limerick Centre for the Unemployed". So said Mayor Dick Sadler when he spoke at the presentation of Certificates to those who had completed courses in the Centre over the past year. In congratulating those concerned Cllr. Sadler said that he was "proud to be associated with the work of the Centre" which he described as one of the most positive community aspects of the city.

This year's presentation, which was held on 24th May in Costello's Tavern, Dominic St., was well attended by students, tutors and guests. Opening the event Joan Condon, Director of the Centre, said the ever increasing interest and participation in courses at the Centre gave the lie to the oft repeated assertion that unemployed people do not want to work or improve themselves. Trades Council President Peggy Hansbury who presented the certificates thanked the Director and staff of the Centre for their continuing work and commitment.

Along with Cllr. and Mrs. Sadler, other guests in attendance were Trades Council Vice-President Cecil O'Dowd, Secretary Mary Kehilly, Cllr. Joe Harrington, Eamon Doyle of FAS and Neil Walker of the Paul Partnership.

Students who were unable to attend the presentation are reminded that they may still collect their certificates by calling in to the Centre.

ATTIC ARTISTS ON SHOW

Current and past members of the art class at the Limerick Centre for the unemployed have formed a new artists group. Called Attic Artists, the name is derived from the art room at the centre which is located at the top of the building.

A successful exhibition of their work was staged at the Belltable Arts Centre during the last two

weeks of June. There was a large attendance at the official opening on Monday 19th June which was performed by deputy mayor Ald. Jim Kemmy, T.D. Present at the function were many local artists and art lovers along with the Director of the L.C.U., Joan Condon, Trades Council officers Peggy Hanbury, Mary Kehilly and Cecil O'Dowd, Adult Education Officer of Limerick City V.E.C., Deirdre Frawley, FAS representative Declan O'Sullivan and local artist and tutor of the art class, Lorraine Murphy.

The exhibition consisted of some fifty works by fifteen artists in oils, watercolours and pastels and was highly praised both for the quality of the works and as an example of the talent and commitment of unemployed people. It is the intention of Attic Artists to continue in existence and to mount further exhibitions in the future. The Limerick Centre for the Unemployed is very happy to be associated with their endeavours.

EDITORIAL NOTE

Hatch 33 is the newsletter of the Limerick Centre for the Unemployed. Its purpose is to inform the public about the work of the centre and other related matters of interest. However, all opinions expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the centre.

We are very grateful to our contributors and sponsors:

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Cllr. Dick Sadler, Mayor of Limerick, with the director, and members of the board and students from the centre