

HATCH 33

NEWSLETTER of THE LIMERICK CENTRE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Free Copy

Winter Issue 1995

Declaration of Independence

I would like to attack the notion of dependency and all that it entails. Dependency is acceptable for infants or young children. It is not acceptable when adults are deemed and termed as adult dependents.

I am referring here to the position that many unemployed adults find themselves in and in most cases it's women.

It is unusual to have men termed as adult dependents. This archaic system goes back to the setting up of the welfare system in Britain which was founded by Sir William Beveridge who wrote that "in any great measure of social policy in which regard is had to facts, the great majority of married women must be regarded as occupied on work

which is vital though unpaid, without which their husbands could not do their paid work and without which the nation could not continue.'

We inherited this notion of female adult dependency which is not alone demeaning but also in practice effectively means that the system is saying that the main claimant (the person receiving the payment) needs more money to exist than the adult dependent. It is also saying that the adult dependent is less important and has less economic needs. The assumption is made that the adult dependent should eat less, need less basic necessities, because after all, this is all social welfare payments allow you to purchase.

For example, the following rates apply

£60.40 per claimant
£37.50 adult dependent.

The refusal to allow individual adults to claim social welfare in their own right acts as a barrier to women being allowed to work in Community Employment, take part in most training courses, or gain access to Vocational Training Opportunities Schemes (or second chance education). Being lumped together as a family renders women invisible - the adult dependent.

It is time to end this ridiculous situation and make sure that the system is more equitable and is seen to be so. Each individual should have their claim for social welfare based on their own individual circumstances and should be given a payment in their own right and not be seen as an appendage of somebody else.

Even though in theory it doesn't matter whether it's the man or woman who is the claimant, it is the dependent who suffers. In most cases, the role of dependency falls on the woman's shoulders and this is grossly unfair in this day and age. In fact if she puts in a claim as the claimant, barriers can be put in her way to prevent her from claiming.

JOAN CONDON
Director



Dealing With Social Welfare. . . .

The whole area of social welfare is very important to the Limerick Centre for the unemployed. Since its inception in 1987, the centre has endeavoured to provide a comprehensive information service to the public on all matters relating to social welfare. The Centre provides a drop-in facility where people can discuss their problems with a social welfare information officer. This service is rendered in complete privacy and confidentiality is assured. This means that the usual levels of bureaucracy are non-existent. This type of one to one service has proved to be very popular and has been a key factor in the Centre's success in dealing with matters relating to social welfare.

The office is open Monday to Friday from 9.30am to 1pm and from 2 to 5pm in the afternoon. It is manned by trained personnel who offer help and practical advice in a relaxed and discreet atmosphere. The accent is on providing immediate help and nothing is put on the long finger.

The problems being dealt with cover all aspects of everyday life ranging from disability benefit and invalidity payments to queries regarding free schemes covering electricity, television

licences and telephone rental. Contributory and non-contributory pensions are another very confusing area. People having problems with housing have also availed of the Centre's social welfare service with rent arrears and problems such as undue delay by the Corporation in having essential repairs carried out.

Of late, a whole new set of problems seem to have emerged in the lives of the unemployed. These issues being addressed include equality payments where people don't know their entitlements. The centre has sent letters to Social Welfare departments on their behalf for the appropriate application forms. The area of part-time work is often a complicated situation. Where, the main issues concern hours and adult dependents. Unfair dismissal is another major area which we deal with. The basic situations are in turn referred to experts for their opinions and advice. We deal with social welfare appeals. In fact, we act as mediator in many difficult and confusing situations.

Also on our agenda are matters regarding the homeless. Our staff have secured accommodation for some and arranged deposits for others or approached St. Vincent De Paul on their behalf.

Our centre is more than just a building, it is a vital part of the community

JOHN O'REGAN

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Limerick Centre For The Unemployed

For Information About The Many
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MOYROSS SURVEY FINDINGS

An important survey on unemployment levels in the Moyross area was carried out in 1994. The findings have now been published in a report called '**SKILLS SURVEY**'. There are some very interesting facts when compared to the previous survey of 1989. The information was garnered by MECO JOBS CLUB.

The Main points revealed were the relative skills and work experience of the local population. In 1989, 17.86% of the area sampled were in employment compared to 29.4% in 1994. The skill levels remain unchanged, but unemployment is down

11% although still at a shocking 70.6%.

For every adult in employment there are two unemployed. Within the sampled households 12.4% are employed.

The level of participation in community activities is extremely low. Of those surveyed, 20% would like to start their own business.

Reading the report, one feels that something radical will have to be done to redress the balance in favour of employment in Moyross. The success of the jobs club can be seen as a heartening move towards providing employment in an area that is internationally known as a black spot regarding employment and the lack of it.

JOHN O'REGAN

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National Anti-Poverty Strategy

A United Nations world summit for social development was held in Copenhagen earlier this year. A declaration committing countries to eradicate poverty and inequality through decisive national actions and international co-operation was adopted. Arising from this, the Irish government has approved the development of a National Anti-poverty Agency (NAPS). This is to be put in place by the end of 1996.

An Interdepartmental committee has been established to oversee the preparation of the strategy. They have set in train an extensive consultation which specifically targets the views of those who are affected by poverty and social exclusion.

In Limerick, this process is being fully availed of by community and social organisations. On September 20th thirty organisations came together in Moyross under the umbrella of the Paul Partnership to hammer out a submission. Among those represented was the Centre for the Unemployed which has also tendered its own submission concentrating on issues relating to women and poverty.

If the NAPS is to mean anything, it is not enough that such views are politely listened to, they must be taken seriously and there is a particular onus on the government to ensure that this is so.

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Equal Treatment Arrears Payments

There seems to be a lot of confusion about the Equal Treatment Arrears Payments currently being paid out by the Department of Social Welfare. The Centre has been inundated with queries relating to this matter and there is a misconception that these payments apply to all women irrespective of their marital status or whether they were living with their spouses during the years relevant to the payments.

Therefore, in order to clarify matters, it needs to be firmly stated that these payments apply only to women who

were married and in receipt of a social welfare payment in their own right during the period December 1984 to November 1986. Women who were single, separated or widows during that period do not qualify for any payment.

We feel it is necessary to emphasise these points in order to save people disappointment and needless worry. As for those women who fulfil the above criteria and feel they are entitled to payment, the Centre will be more than happy to assist them in processing their applications.

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About The Authors

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Teri Murray is a native of Kent and now resides in Limerick. Besides being a member of the above class, she is an active member of the Penfriends writing group. She is an award-winning writer who has had numerous short stories published. Get her autograph while you can!

HYPOCHONDRIAC BLUES

I've a pain in my head,
My eyes are all red,
And my stomach is like a balloon
I've been sneezing all day
No one hears what I say
Cause my voice has been missing since noon.

My forehead is burning
My stomach is churning
My varicose veins are like ropes,
My tongue is all furry,
My eyes are all blurry,
And my pimples have ruined all my hopes.

I'm a physical wreck,
I've a pain in the neck
Did I tell you my gall stones are back?
'Tis lucky for John
My appendix is gone,
I'm beginning a panic attack.

Oh how will I cope?
I'm beyond having hope
I'll make an appointment tomorrow
I'll drag myself 'round
To this doctor I've found
And unburden my sad tale of sorrow.

I'm a pitiful sight,
I'm in pain day and night,
But my troubles I keep to myself.
Oh! nobody knows
But that's how it goes
'Tis no wonder I'm left to myself.

©Mary O'Shea

Status?Simple

Teri Murray

From where I stood I had a wonderful view of the top of his head. 'Status?' he asked, never taking his eyes from the pile of forms. I hesitated for a moment, or maybe it was an hour.

'Are you married, single or separated? Voting yes to divorce? Voting no? A lone parent? Are you co-habiting? Have you ever done so? If so, did you conceive through intercourse? Artificial insemination? Or any other method not mentioned?' For some reason he seemed to find my silence irritating.

'I used to be married ... but then...I'm a single parent ... but ...; Then, my status hit me in the face, like a bully. 'I know, I'm an adult dependent, usually female.' He raised his head, as if to confirm my gender, then changed his tactics abruptly; "Dependent?, Dependent on whom?". "A ... a ... man", I averted my face to conceal the guilty flush. "Is this man your husband?" I shook my head. "Sooo, this man is not your husband, does this person contribute any monies to your household?" "Yes", I admitted, miserably. "How much?" The tone was harsh, intimidating. "Every penny, I'm totally dependent on him?" A fanatical gleam showed in his eye, "Have

you informed the Department about this?" The face that had haunted me for so long emerged from the depths of my consciousness. I had repressed all the memories, refused to confront the shadow, but I was forced to admit the truth, the terrible consequences of my foolishness. I believed every word of his impulsive promises, stood firmly behind him as he climbed the precarious ladder of success.

Oh, the money comes every week, perhaps once in a while I get a note, and illegible scrawl, obviously written by someone in the office. I knew that there were other women, he never made a secret of the fact.

The man in front of me drummed a pen against the desk, discordantly, and his eyes bored into mine. "I want the man's name, there's no point in being evasive, we will find out, we always do."

I had no choice, I could not conceal my guilty secret any longer, my tone reflected my sense of defeat. I choked and stumbled on every word.

- "He ... he's he's the Minister for Social Welfare".

OLD PIET

© Tim O'Connor

It was the Queen's birthday in Holland and a national holiday. Among the freedoms extended to the Dutch on this day was the right to sell whatever they wished. Many Dutch streets would overflow with hawkers and bargain-hunters. The previous evening a senior government Minister had made a national television broadcast.

"...and I'd just like to let you know that tomorrow a lotta people are gonna try to sell you things that maybe you shouldn't oughta buy."

He then glanced around nervously as if expecting to be tripped up on his use of the vernacular. Even Old Piet, watching the programme down at his local, knew that there was something wrong with the construction, whatever about the sentiment.

Old Piet woke early that morning in his dingy, one-room flat. He threw the blanket and overcoats off of him and went to the sink. He filled his only saucepan with some water and put it over the bunsen burner.

He looked around his tiny flat. Everything was shabby or just not there. He had very, very few possessions. The previous winter he'd sold his only curtains in order to pay for a trip to an old friend's funeral. He knew very few people now. Most of his friends had died. He was still a healthy seventy-two. He was very active and usually went for a two-mile walk each day. And today he was going to get a large dustbin liner and void the flat of its contents. Let's see! What could he find to sell? Those old editions of "De Telegraph" might interest someone. And what about these? Old picture postcards from England. There was still a market there, he thought. Then there were all those old pairs of socks although he might have to wash them first. And all those used

shaving blades would go fast. There was the dustbin itself. My! what garbage he'd collected in it!

He went to the window and opened it. This place was still his 'fridge' even though it was now almost summertime. He noticed that his favourite cap had blown onto the cement yard in front of his window. It was made of cardboard and had looked tattered for many years now. It was bright red in colour and dotted with little yellow stars. "UP AJAX AMSTERDAM FC" was written in large green letters across the top of it. He'd bought it at the 1973 European Cup Final. He went out, fetched it and came back into his flat sporting it.

After a breakfast of black tea and two biscuits (there were only two left), he began to cast his belongings into the plastic bag. It would be a good day if he could flog the bag as well, he thought. He heard somebody at his door. It was the postman. This was a very rare occurrence. But there it was. One letter. Plop in the box. He opened it noisily in the draughty corridor. It was from the local Old Folks Club. They were sorry about the late notice but he was invited to attend a party for the elderly that evening. At midnight there would be a fireworks display. That would brighten up his night, he thought, ha ha.

Old Piet picked up the rubbish bag of junk and threw it over his shoulder. He began walking towards the Leidseplein. At first the pavements were quiet but soon he walked down very lively streets. It seemed as though everyone was hawking today. All forms of life were there; chirpy accountants, dazed psychiatrists, elated depressives, refugees from massage therapy, restless Yogis, twisted winos and bemused three-year olds.

He found a place beside an old woman and began laying out his

items. First up was his dead brother's cardigan, from his sailing days. It was moth-eaten and covered in holes. It might fetch two guilders, he thought. Then he took out the small cracked mirror. It had a fake gold-painted frame and would fetch more than its cost price. Crafty devil. Placing the cassette head cleaner directly in front of the mirror gave the impression that he had two for sale, another lateral leap that he complimented himself on. He placed the three week old tulips against the wall and then laid out the soiled underwear meticulously. He then decided that the unwashed socks would look best beside these. Soon he was completely immersed in the presentation of his goods. Eventually Old Piet was quite proud of his display. He thought that that little perceptual trick would attract attention. He'd arranged his eleven socks so that they formed a diamond and a question mark. Yes, very clever and the tourists would definitely go for it.

After an hour and a half, Piet had his first customer. It was a teenage skinhead. He eyed Old Piet's wares for about half a minute. His eyes strayed over the used shaving blades, the unwashed socks, the soiled underwear, the shattered mirror and the brown jumper which was riddled with holes. The youngster directed his gaze at Piet. His eyes settled on a point above Old Piet's eyes.

"Are you sellin' the cap?" he asked sarcastically.

But Old Piet was quick. "I've only two words for you" he began.

"Aw Jeez! Not that one again!" the boy sneered. He turned and walked away, his studs clattering on the cobblestones.

He noticed that the old woman next to him was doing great business. She seemed happy to let a large wad of money on display. She'd sold countless dresses and skirts. What surprised Piet was that the dresses had all been washed and ironed. "I'm sitting beside a real pro" he thought, "I may pick up

some tips here". Indeed he had plenty of opportunity to do so as very few people were interested in his goods. Some buyers would look at the cardigan a second time, fingering it for width and warmth, before throwing it back in his face.

His first sale was to a couple who were looking for a rag with which to mop the kitchen floor. They snapped up the cardigan for two guilders fifty. "That's the first beer tonight" thought Old Piet. Some winos came along and bought the twenty shaving blades. A snip and one guilder. The postcards and newspapers were bought by a misguided history student, the socks by German tourists, the head cleaner by a punk, the faded flowers by an Italian film director, the dustbin by newly-weds and the dustbin liner by a refuse collector. It had been a good day. The only thing left was the mirror. It was now 7pm and he set about leaving. The old lady next to him was also clearing up.

"You haven't sold the mirror" she said.

"No, but it's been a good day".

"Well I'm going straight to an Old Folks party now and I'd like to make myself pretty" she said, fluttering her eyelids.

"Here. Take it" said Old Piet, handing her the mirror.

"No. As I've had a good day, I'll give you three guilders for it along with this old hammer"

Piet looked at the hammer. Its handle was splintered lengthwise. It had definitely seen better days.

"Done!" said Piet. He never liked the mirror anyhow and the hammer might come in handy if he came across those addled junkies again tonight.

He walked home in his out-size clothes, the hammer hanging from his hand. Old Piet now had twenty one guilders fifty in his pocket. Yes, it had been a good day and there was still the party ahead.

Exchange At The Exchange

'We want the dignity of work," we cry

They look surprised and ask us "Why?"

We give you money every week

And now you have the cheek to speak

Like this, signing on the dotted line

Most of you are lazy swine

And the rest are double jobbing

Our great country you are robbing

Christmas bonus spent on beer

Doled out faithfully every year

In the pub or in the bed

By the state you're being fed

How dare you ask us for respect

While you're living off our cheques

No, you shall not be dignified

Have you considered suicide?

And we are never ever wrong

'Tis in the gutter you belong

Stay on your knees, move along;

INTERVIEW WITH *Minister for Social Waffle and Straight Answers* ©Liz Hepburn

Q. What is your name, Minister?

A. Ah, well, now, you must understand the concept of cabinet confidentiality, but, ah er, at this point in time I can assure you that the matter is getting my undivided attention and that of my cabinet colleagues, er ah, -

Q. What is the difference between you and a head of cabb-

A. You already asked me a question and you won't let me answer it, that's typical of the treatment by the media. I am on call day and night at my clinics and my job is on the line at every election if my constituents aren't happy and it's not an easy job, but to answer your question, ah, er, what was it?

Q. Is it true that the number of unemployed is nearer 500,000 than 3000,000?

A. No, no, no, there's a lot of women in that number who used to be content to be homemakers like my own dear mother, God bless her, but ah, er, these are changing times and the changes aren't always for the better. My mother could teach these new women a thing or two. She saw her work as rearing her family and we always respected her and thanked her for it, so that number is nowhere near the correct figure, er, um, ah, in fact half the people included in that are not looking for work at all, at all. They are on FAS schemes, FAS courses or not in the slightest bit interested in work.

Q. Do you think your credibility was damaged by the 'jobs for the boys scandal' in the government?

A. No, no, no, no, that was blown out of all proportion by the media and the PD's.

Q. Don't you think it might have been a bad idea to give your father the job of driver at £300 a week?

A. Er, ah, um, no. It might have been perceived like that at the time, but you must realise that it has always been part of what we are ...I think you're trying to screw me personally, this is a smear campaign ... at least I have a father, not like those miserable Fianna Fail and PD bas...

Thank you, Minister
My pleasure, my dear.

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Reverse Cuts in VTOS Now

The decision of the Minister for Education, Niamh Bhreathneach to cut the number of places on the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme is a disgrace and should be opposed by all who are interested in creating a more equitable society in Ireland.

The VTOS was established in the late eighties to facilitate access to post primary education for the long term unemployed. It allows unemployed people to study for the Junior and Leaving Certificates while being able to maintain their income. It is the only programme for the long term unemployed run by the Department of Education and one of the few such programmes which has been both successful and popular. The VTOS received a major boost in the 1995 budget with provision being made for 1,000 extra places. By March of this year there were 4,600 people studying on the programme.

Taking back what was given in January will represent a saving to the exchequer of £2.5m which will form part of the overall package of £77m government spending cuts demanded by Finance Minister Ruairi Quinn. The fact that Ms. Bhreathneach has chosen to target the VTOS for cuts while at the same time providing over £30m to finance the abolition of University fees - a move which largely benefits the better off in society - indicates a total lack of concern for the unemployed and unprivileged - not to

mention a lopsided sense of priorities.

A recently published survey of the Moyross area of Limerick indicated that only 4% of residents had been in third level education while 27% had not progressed beyond primary level. Another survey published in the Sunday Tribune (Oct 1st) showed that less than 1% of school leavers in deprived areas of inner-city Dublin progressed to third level education. In stark contrast, the corresponding figure for the affluent Castleknock area of Dublin is 60%

It is now well established that there is a clear link between lack of educational qualifications and long term unemployment. Cutting back on the VTOS will only assist in further copperfastening such inequality not just in the education system but throughout all levels of society. Pressure must be maintained on the government to ensure the immediate reversal of these insane cuts.

P. Malone

HATCH 33

Hatch 33 is the newsletter for the Limerick Centre For The Unemployed which covers the work of the centre and related issues. Articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the board and management of the Centre

LIMERICK CENTRE FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

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Limerick Money Advice and Budgeting Service

The Limerick Money Advice Service, a joint initiative between the PAUL Partnership and the Mid-Western Health Board is now in its fourth year of operation. The aim of the service is to provide support and advice to people experiencing debt or who are finding it difficult to manage their money from week to week. If you are considering getting credit the Service can help you look at what steps you should take and what the best choice of credit might be. The Service promotes the Credit Union as a source of low cost credit.

What Happens When You Contact The Service?

If you have a query or would like to make an appointment to see a Money Adviser, you can phone the Money Advice Line at 400200 Monday to Friday between 10am and 12am, or contact your local Community action Centre where an appointment can be made for you. Alternatively you can contact the Health Board advisers directly at 310620.

What Happens When You Meet an Adviser?

The adviser will ask you about your situation and will answer any questions you may have. Once the adviser has an overall picture a budget sheet may be completed. This will show what

money is coming into your household on a weekly basis and what money is going out. If you have debts the adviser will use the budget sheet to determine how much money is available for the repayments of debts and how much each creditor will get. The adviser will check that you are getting all your entitlements. If you are in difficult circumstances (i.e. facing eviction or disconnection of electricity supply) the adviser (with your permission) will contact the creditors and inform them of your circumstances and that you are working with the service with a view to making an offer that is suitable to both you and the creditor. The service operates with the co-operation of the major creditors like the Corporation, E.S.B. and Telecom, minimum payments are often accepted on the basis that a little money regularly is better than large irregular payments. It may take a long time before you eventually find yourself out of debt, but in the meantime you will be able to maintain a basic standard of living and will have the ongoing support of the service which is completely confidential and free.

Courtesy of
AUDREY CONWAY
Paul Partnership

Review of 'Working for Work'

(second edition)

The second edition of 'Working for Work', a handbook for unemployed people published by the INOU, has just been launched.

The book focuses on social welfare entitlements for unemployed people and it points out the criteria which an applicant must pass before receiving a payment. It deals with everything from how to make a social welfare claim to how a means test works.

Due to the fact that much of the misery associated with unemployment is caused as a result of the inadequacy of social welfare payments, the book includes a full chapter on coping with poverty. This chapter looks at entitlements under the Supplementary Welfare allowance Scheme and it goes through money management.

Tips on how to go about looking for work are elaborated in a separate chapter. This section lists the various places where you can register for work and it outlines how to draw up a comprehensive Curriculum Vitae.

Figuring out how part-time work will affect your payments is very confusing. The book attempts to cover all of the in's and out's associated with working part-time and it lays down some tips to help you obtain the maximum income in your circumstances.

The final chapter focuses on employment schemes, training and education. As well as providing useful advice on taking up a course or scheme, the chapter outlines details of 17 different options for education and training open to unemployed people.

'Working for Work' contains an update of all social welfare payments and it looks at the changes that have occurred over the past 12 months, including the establishment of the Local Employment Service. The book also contains a comprehensive list of addresses which may be helpful to readers.

Courtesy
INOUBULLETIN
JULY 1995

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