

Needed - Civil Legal Aid For Island Citizens

Prepared by the P.E.I. Civil Liberties Association

There is no civil legal aid for low income citizens of P.E.I. This means that low income citizens who sometimes desperately need a lawyer in family matters, landlord-tenant problems, labour and consumer problems, welfare and unemployment insurance problems, etc. are being denied their basic rights.

The Canadian Bill of Rights states that it is the "right of the individual to equality before the law and the protection of the law". That is why most provinces in Canada have established legal aid plans for low income citizens in criminal and civil cases.

However in P.E.I. there is only legal aid for criminal matters. We have two Public Defenders who handle criminal cases for people charged with a criminal offence and who cannot afford to pay a lawyer. These two government paid lawyers also handle juvenile delinquency cases.

The P.E.I. Civil Liberties Association, a voluntary association that is open to all people living on the Island, considers the lack of civil legal aid on P.E.I. unjust and has repeatedly urged the Provincial Government to establish civil legal aid here.

The Association, along with many other organizations, presented a brief to the Family Court Committee. Most of these organizations and even the Family Court

Committee have recommended that the Provincial Government immediately establish civil legal aid for the Family Court. This Family Court, hopefully, will start up this fall and handle in one court all family legal matters and juvenile delinquency cases.

Obviously civil legal aid is not happening overnight in P.E.I. When the P.E.I.C.L.A. found out this August that the Provincial Cabinet initially turned down a provincial request for \$60,000 to establish civil legal aid for the Family Court, it responded in a news release that unless the Government establishes civil legal aid it will be another instance of justice for the wealthy and no justice for the poor. It is obvious that \$60,000 is a low cost for justice in the Family Court and that cost is not the main reason why there has so far been no indication there will be civil legal aid for the new Family Court.

In the past year the P.E.I. Civil Liberties Association has handled over 300 complaints and inquiries. Most of these were civil legal cases such as family, landlord-tenant, labour, consumer, welfare, unemployment insurance, etc. Many of the people involved could not afford a lawyer. The Association has no lawyers. Thus these people are denied access to the court and to justice.

The Association supports, as the best method of delivering legal aid services, the neighbourhood legal aid clinic or storefront law offices. It is our view that neighbourhood legal clinics should be community run, th-

at is with a community board with low income citizens on that board.

The first step must be civil legal aid for low income citizens who need lawyers in family matters for the Family Court. The P.E.I.C.L.A. is aware of cases where low income citizens desperately need lawyers in family matters. The Association consequently feels that there is an urgent need for full time lawyers specializing in family law

who can provide legal services to low income citizens and who could work on a full time basis doing legal education work.

The Association feels it is essential that the Provincial Government establish civil legal aid for family legal matters and all other civil type cases. It has already written all the M.L.A.'s on this and hopes to have public meetings to push for the basic right of civil legal aid.

British Journalist To Visit UPEI

Katherine Whitehorn, noted British journalist, will deliver the first in the fall series of University Lectures on Tuesday, October 7, in the Duffy Amphitheatre. A columnist on The Observer since 1960, Ms. Whitehorn will speak on women in journalism. The lecture will begin at 8:00 pm.

Born in London, she studies at Cambridge University where she received her Bachelor of Arts Degree, and later took graduate studies at Cornell University. She worked on Women's Own and The Spectator before joining The Observer as a fashion editor, a job she gave up in order to cope with a growing family of two boys. Her Sunday column "Only on Sundays" she writes from her home.

From 1965-1967 she was a member of the Latey Committee on the Age of Majority which brought the age of majority in Britain down from 21 to 18 years. She was a member of the BBC Advisory

Group on the Social Effects of Television, and is a member of the Board of the British Airports Authority which runs most of Britain's major airports. She sits on the Civil Service Selection Board.

Her interests include a variety of issues, especially equality of education, abortion reform, the Common Market, and a unified Germany.

Her publications include Cooking in a Bedsitter, 1960; Only on Sundays, 1966 (a collection of her Observer articles); and three in a Survival series: How to Survive Socially, In a Hospital, and to be published this fall, How to Survive Children.

She is married to Gavin Lyall, a thriller writer whose books include The Most Dangerous Game, Midnight Plus One, and most recently, Judas Country.

The Cadre gratefully thanks Topics for the material presented here.

Student Aid

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economic and other forces can be manipulated to shape the entrance profile of our universities, then our society is in for trouble.

Reactions from the various student councils has been reserved. However NUS is confident that support will rise with the circulation of a petition supporting their position.

I am asking all students to carefully consider NUS's proposals and to voice their support.

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