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CAMPAIGN ADDRESSES

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NATIONAL CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER
c/o Sheffield Birmingham Six Campaign
34 Burngreave Bank, Sheffield S4 7HL.

Write to the men....

Billy Power
Richard McKenny
Patrick Hill
*Gartree Prison, Leicester Road
Market Harborough, Leics.
LE1 7RP.*

Gerry Hunter
John Walker
Hugh Callaghan
*Long Lartin Prison,
South Littleton, Evesham,
Worcs. WR11 5TZ.*

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NEWSLETTERS

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NATIONAL BIRMINGHAM SIX CAMPAIGN

MAY '90 NEWSLETTER 30p

KEEP UP THE PRESSURE!

All over the country, local councils are preparing resolutions demanding justice for the Birmingham Six. This month, many Trade Unionists will be debating resolutions on the case at their Annual Conferences. The Churches too are coming together in many towns and cities in order to express their concern. Some are demanding that the case be re-opened. Many are already convinced that the Six are innocent and are demanding that they be released and exonerated immediately.

All are aware that the world is watching.

THE HOME OFFICE HAS STILL NOT RE-OPENED THE CASE.

WE HAVE TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE.

PLEASE ADD YOUR VOICE

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When the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd, referred the case of the Birmingham Six back to the Appeal Court in January 1987, he also ordered an inquiry by the Devon and Cornwall police. At the time this was viewed with some suspicion by the Six's representatives, and there were indeed opportunities for the police to tidy up their version of events before it came to court, as Devon & Cornwall investigators inevitably pointed out discrepancies as they went along. But the Inquiry was also more thorough than anyone had anticipated: it unearthed the "Reade Schedule" (see January Newsletter), and it found some witnesses that were useful to the appellants' case - or would have been if the Appeal hearing had been a fair one.

One of the officers supervising that Inquiry was Det. Supt. John Essery, who is now supervising the limited inquiry recently ordered by Waddington. It is difficult to see what else he can find, given that much of the police paperwork was never kept, or has gone missing, or has disappeared into the Lloyd House paper shredder. One development that might help the Inquiry, however, is the disbandment of the Serious Crime Squad and, it is hoped, its reign of terror. There may now be more witnesses, including police officers, who are willing to speak out.

But how much more evidence does the Home Office need, and how long does it expect the Six to wait? This Inquiry, like all that have gone before, is limited. It's limited to investigating matters arising from the dossier of evidence presented to the Home Office before Christmas - assumed to be the treatment of the men while in police custody and the question of the times of the forensic tests and the police interviews at Morecambe.

The Inquiry will therefore not be looking for the original interviews with the IRA informer, a 5-page precis of which formed the document used by Granada in their drama-documentary "Who Bombed Birmingham?". Presumably some mention of the Six's innocence would have been made in those interviews, if not in the precis. But, according to Waddington, this does not constitute new evidence. Ivan Geffen, solicitor to two of the Six, disagrees. In a letter to the Guardian (5/4/90) he said that if the documents do exist, then "the men, their legal advisors, and every court that has considered the case since 1974, have been deceived...Whatever the Prime Minister...may say, the disclosure of the existence of a previously secret police file is fresh evidence".

Waddington himself has a mind-set similar to the judges: he will not look at the case in its totality, but aspect by aspect, each of which he finds ways of dismissing. When pressed by MPs in the Commons (March 22nd) he stuck to his new line: "The basic question is still whether the representations made to me constitute new evidence relevant to the safety of the convictions." No it isn't: the basic question is how long the Home Office and the Judiciary can stand by a police version of events which is not supported by civilian witnesses (apart from Skuse) or any documentation (including the police's own) and has been seriously challenged by numerous witnesses, recent events, and common sense. A jury would dispense with the prosecution case in half a morning.

When the Home Secretary does decide to withdraw his support there will be little chance to limit the damage. The Judiciary are now in too deep to co-operate, so he runs the risk of another Appeal being rejected. If he sidesteps the courts and releases the men anyway (like Willie Whitelaw did in the Luton Post Office murder case) there will be embarrassing scenes flashed all over the world as the Six refuse to leave quietly. If he recommends a Royal Pardon (which is ancient judicial doublespeak for exoneration) he has virtually acknowledged that the evidence of the men's innocence is overwhelming, and he is probably incapable of admitting that.

Waddington is a Tory with a legal background. As such he has little faith in lay common sense and a deep fear of the complete overhaul that this country's judicial system is crying out for. When people see the kind of men that this system has deliberately kept locked up for 16 years, there will be a public outcry. The longer he leaves it, the worse it will be.

At present, he is still dismissing all suggestions that he take the "Guildford Option" as nonsense. Someone should tell him: When you find yourself in a hole, the first thing to do is to stop digging.



POST PHOTO
W 344/21

● CAMPAIGNERS - The Lord Mayor of Nottingham welcomes Margaret McKenny and her sister Siobhan (left), watched by (from left) chairman of the meeting, John Buglear and speakers Conor Foley and Bob Woffinden.

On Saturday March 31st, vigils were held in city centres around Britain as part of the **International Day of Action**. The vigil outside Lloyd House in Birmingham coincided with Geoffrey Dear's departure. Dick Roche TD dropped by on his way to visit Paddy Hill in Gartree prison.

Fund-raising benefits continue to be well supported around the country. Most notable have been events in Nottingham (end of January), and Newark (St Patricks week-end). Many thanks to the organisers and to the bands who played, especially Kelly's Heroes who played at both.

Nottingham Campaign's recent public meeting was attended by the Lord Mayor of Nottingham (see picture). The Campaign has also received messages of support from local Tory MPs Richard Alexander and Andrew Mitchell, and Labour MP Graham Allen.

The Birmingham Campaign's Petition, signed by over 10,000 people, was handed into the Home Office on February 21st by relatives of the Six, accompanied by Birmingham MPs Robin Corbett, Jeff Rooker and Terry Davies and the leader of the City Council, Sir Richard Knowles. Press coverage was extensive in the West Midlands, where the Campaign has gained so much ground that Geoffrey Dear has had to start his own disinformation campaign (see page 9).

As we go to press, Limerick-born Michael Clifford is setting out on a sponsored marathon walk from Birmingham to London, demanding justice for the Birmingham Six. Since 1981 he has walked thousands of miles for charities and good causes. He arrives in London on Friday 27th April, where he will hand into the Home Office those petition sheets

A new **National Petition** will shortly be available from the Campaign. This will call for the immediate release of the Birmingham Six and a full, public, independent inquiry into all the circumstances of their convictions.

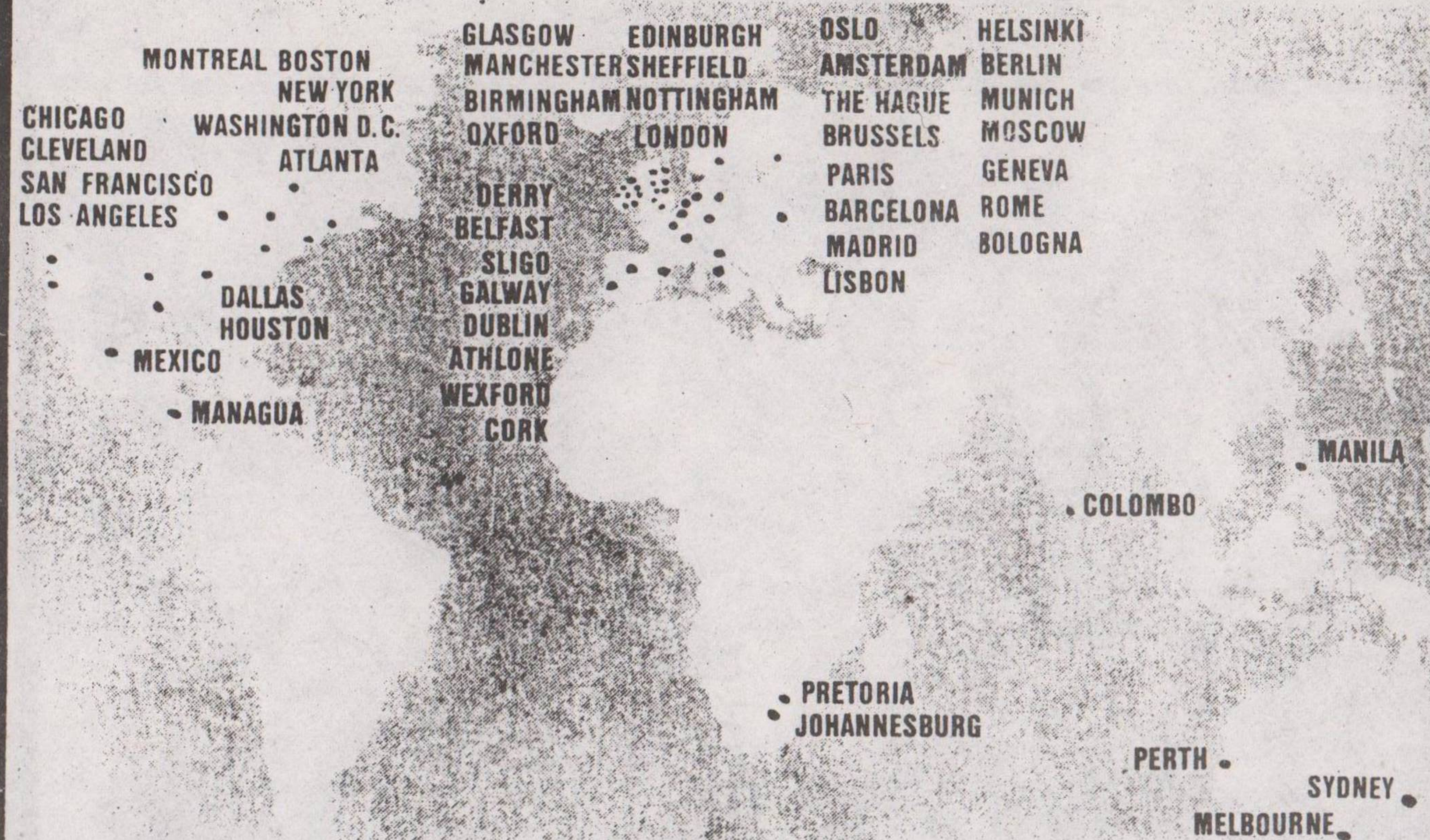
In February, the **Council of Irish County Associations (CICA)**, donated £5000 to the National Campaign. This has been gratefully received and placed in a special fund for the campaigning expenses of the men and their families.

The Campaign Raffle raised £950 (winners on page 11). Over half the prizes were made and donated by the Six; the rest by the Campaign and supporters. Thanks to all involved.

In February **Manchester City Council** followed Birmingham's lead and passed, by an overwhelming majority, a resolution calling for the Shaw Inquiry to be extended and for the Home Secretary to take account of mounting public concern over the convictions. Only 3 Tory Councillors opposed it.

On April 4th, **Sheffield City Council** passed a more radical resolution demanding the immediate release and exoneration of the Six, and the setting-up of an independent public inquiry into all the circumstances of their convictions. The SLD failed to amend it (i.e. "welcoming" the Devon & Cornwall police inquiry, in place of demanding the men's release) and voted against the resolution with the Tories - who are still toeing the tired old line about local government staying out of politics.

Meanwhile, in **Luton** the Conservative-controlled Council will not allow the local Birmingham 6 Campaign group to use Council premises.



On March 31st, the World demanded justice for the Birmingham Six. Vigils and demonstrations were held outside British consulates and embassies in 22 different countries. Messages from the Six were sent to their supporters all over the world; and letters and messages demanding justice were handed in at British embassies and sent directly to the British Government.



INTERNATIONAL DAY OF ACTION FOR THE BIRMINGHAM SIX, SIDNEY

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On November 23rd 1990, the European Parliament passed a resolution on the Birmingham Six (see January newsletter).

The resolution called for a fully independent investigation of the Serious Crime Squad, and also instructed the EC Committee on Legal Affairs to draw up a report on the case. Christine Crawley MEP was one of those who tabled the resolution. She told the Dublin-based Birmingham Six Committee (see their April newsletter) that the European Parliament had set up a process "which will eventually enable it to give a statement of its official opinion on the matter."

It will be a great step in favour of the men if the European Parliament makes a pronouncement to the effect that it believes the Birmingham 6 case to be a massive miscarriage of justice."

She said that awareness of the case in Europe had increased dramatically since the debate on the resolution, and that the debate on the terms of reference of the Legal Affairs Committee's report had been exceptionally well-attended, and "very heated".

An Italian MEP, Rinaldo Bontempi, was appointed "rapporteur". He is presently examining all available material on the case and is appealing for any additional material that might be relevant.

Christine Crawley thinks it possible that the report will look at the case in its wider context of the deficiencies in the UK's appeals and sentencing procedures, and the workings of the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)

Another international human rights platform is the CSCE, which was set up by the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 and is organising a series of meetings entitled "The human dimension of the CSCE" - the first of which is to be held in Copenhagen this June.

The CSCE agreed at its last conference (Vienna, January 1989) that participating states (US, Canada, Turkey and all European states except Albania) could use the meetings to highlight human rights abuses in each others' territories.

Unfortunately, only official government delegations can place items on the agenda and so far the Irish Government has refused to take up this opportunity (see NEWS FROM IRELAND).

However, the Irish Co-ordination Committee on Miscarriages of Justice has been invited to a parallel conference for Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), which will be open to the public. So the Campaign will have opportunities for contact with both the delegates at the official conference, and the world's press. The campaign will be presenting its case on the morning of June 25th.

EUROPE



Christine Crawley MEP Birmingham (Labour)

The Birmingham Six case is now on the international human rights agenda, thanks to a forceful submission made on the men's behalf at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) on February 19th.

UN commission hears plea on behalf of Birmingham Six

A statement, summarising "powerful evidence" of the men's innocence, was delivered in Geneva at the Palais des Nations before the 35-member strong UNCHR. It was prepared by Kader Asmal, senior lecturer in law at Trinity College Dublin, who made the representation on behalf of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL). The IADL, which represents lawyers from 85 countries, has NGO (Non-Governmental status) at the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

Mr Asmal, who is also a leading figure in the Irish Anti-Apartheid Movement, said the submission was "part of the pressure for the immediate release of the Birmingham Six."

"Human rights bodies in the rest of the world will now be aware of the Birmingham Six," he said. "I don't think there has been as much knowledge of the Birmingham Six case as one would like, especially in the legal and diplomatic areas." Mr Asmal has sent copies of the full document to An Taoiseach, Charles J. Haughey, and the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The document's central argument is that the Birmingham Six were victims of a "consistent pattern of discrimination" against Irish suspects in Britain. The six men were stopped and questioned because they were Irish, beaten and terrorised into making statements, and

presumed guilty by the police from the moment of their arrest.

"The six men have never been members of the IRA (Irish Republican Army) and powerful evidence has become available since their trial to show that they are innocent. But they are still in prison," the submission stated. "This is in part because the English Judicial system has no proper procedures for undoing injustice. But more importantly, their conviction and imprisonment are part of a pattern of unfair and discriminatory treatment in relation to Irish suspects."

"This pattern goes far beyond legitimate investigation and enquiry and amounts to persecution and deliberate manipulation of the criminal Justice System by all representatives of the state involved," the document argued. As a result, a significant number of other Irish people have spent many years in prison "convicted of crimes they did not commit". It cited the case of the recently released Guildford Four, who were convicted of "identical crimes in virtually identical circumstances in 1974".

The submission concluded: "We wish to raise before the commission incontrovertible evidence to show a consistent pattern of discrimination in relation to Irish suspects. This discrimination violates articles of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

We assert that the six Birmingham defendants had no effective recourse nationally to uphold rights guaranteed to them under international law; that they have never enjoyed a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal; they have never been presumed innocent until proven guilty; the witnesses for the prosecution have not been examined under the same conditions as witnesses for the defence; the defendants have not been treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person, and they have not been equal before the courts as prisoners who are not Irish.

We ask, therefore, that the Commission on Human Rights consider the issue of such cases in Britain which show a repeated pattern of violations of internationally accepted norms of human rights. Only the focus of the international machinery of human rights can provide justice for those innocently imprisoned in Britain for what they are and not for what they have done."

The submission was made on Mr Asmal's behalf by Englishwoman Jenny Prike. The document will now be distributed to UN member nations, including Britain.

Dublin Birmingham 6 Ctee Newsletter APRIL

AMERICA

US CONGRESSIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS

This committee heard the case on March 12 despite frantic British lobbying to avert it. Possibly a result of this lobbying was the short notice given to the representatives of the Birmingham Six. The hearing itself lasted only two hours, but this proved adequate: the well-attended meeting listened carefully to the submissions from Lord Gifford and Gerry Conlon and gave short shrift to David Waddington's written submission, calling it "evasive". They were also very sceptical of his avowed readiness "to consider representations about the safety of the convictions."

There was one surprise development. A Professor Robert McKay of New York University Law School had been asked by the Home Office to "explain" Britain's anti-terrorist legislation, and was expected to support the British Government's position. But instead he observed that Britain had allowed fear of terrorism to distort its system of justice, and told the Caucus that their concern, and their desire to see the case re-opened, were quite justified - and that their credentials were impeccable.

Gerry Conlon and Lord Gifford discussed the case with Jesse Jackson while they were in the US. Paddy McLikenny, who attended the hearing as an observer, reported that they were all snowed under with requests from the media, and the case was given a lot of coverage while they were there.

CONGRESS AND SENATE

Resolutions in the US Senate and US Congress have been tabled recently. Both call for the case to be re-opened, and the Congressional resolution calls for the convictions to be quashed. Senator Joseph Biden, who tabled the Senate resolution, is an important figure in the key Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Congressman Brian Donnelly, who tabled the Congress resolution, had recently visited Paddy Hill to discuss the case. The resolutions also call upon President Bush to raise these "human rights violations" with the British Prime Minister. Brian Donnelly's resolution was co-sponsored by 70 Congressmen.

PRESSURE ON BRITAIN

The Home Office has received numerous letters from the US: Cardinal John O'Connor of New York, who had sent a representative to the Six's 87 Appeal, has written to Waddington asking for the case to be re-opened, as have Joe and Edward Kennedy and the four co-chairmen of the Ad Hoc Congressional Committee for Irish Affairs. And, as in Britain, ordinary members of the public are writing to the British Home Secretary to express their concern. Says Paddy McLikenny: "The level of interest in America, and genuine support from all quarters for the men is phenomenal - beyond my wildest dreams."

Chicago City Council recently passed a motion calling for the Six's release and exoneration.



Senator Joe Kennedy (D-Mass), centre left, and Co-chairman Congressman Tom Lantos at the Congressional Human Rights Caucus hearing on the Birmingham Six case, Washington, March 12

Unfortunately, when the British Press and judiciary throw the wheels in motion, there is no reverse gear... American politicians have got to be the reverse gear Gerard Conlon appealing for help from the Human Rights Caucus in the US.

CHURCH NEWS

Cardinal Hume has now publicly offered his support to the Six. In an interview with the Sunday Times in March, he said: "I give my support to their campaign; the convictions were not safe or satisfactory". He went on to describe several meetings with Richard McKelkeny and Billy Power, the last being in February. "The more I have looked at [their case] the more I have felt uneasy about it" he said, adding: "One could not help but notice at the Appeal there were four people who questioned the forensic evidence of the original trial, but the judges just dismissed it. It is not all that long ago, within my lifetime, that these six men would have been hanged. That is a chilling thought."

In 1988, after years of private lobbying, Cardinal Hume led a high-powered delegation to the Home Secretary, which was instrumental in the re-opening of the case of the Guildford Four.

Cardinal O Finich, Head of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, has visited the men for the first time, though he has supported their case for many years. In a statement issued at the end of January, he said: "My personal meeting with all of the six ... has strengthened the conviction already expressed by me and by the Irish Bishops that a grave miscarriage of justice has taken place which demands a re-opening of their case with a view to clearing their names." He added that the Six had expressed to him their appreciation of the Campaign now going on in Ireland, Britain, US and elsewhere in the world.

Newark Christian Council of Churches has lent its support to a local campaign initiated by Newark & District TUC (see TRADE UNION NEWS). A spokesperson said "The desire was expressed for a letter to be sent registering our unease that the Birmingham Six, who have always protested their innocence, still remain in prison after 15 years. Surely, if the Birmingham Council of Churches itself has asked for further investigation ... the whole matter needs finally clearing up. To acknowledge this could only strengthen the position of British justice."

300 members of Newark's Catholic community signed a petition launched in the town's Holy Trinity Church by Father Tim O'Sullivan. It was then handed over to the Rector of Newark, the Rev Roger Hill, (see picture) who kept it in Newark Parish Church for two Sundays, commending it to his parishioners from the pulpit. It was then circulated in the town before being handed over to local Tory MP Richard Alexander.



NEWARK ADVERTISER 23.2.90

The campaign for a full independent inquiry is now publicly supported by the Bishops of Southwell and Sherwood and by the Bishop of Nottingham, the Rt. Rev. James McGuinness

"The Christian Community cannot be at peace while innocent people are in prison"
Pax Christi

NEWS FROM SCOTLAND

When Gerry Conlon walked to freedom and expressed his support for the six innocent men still in prison, the Campaign to free the Birmingham Six received an enormous boost.

In Glasgow, this impetus resulted in a public meeting on the Campaign, and from that sprang the Glasgow Committee.

Our first meeting took place in January this year. More than thirty people from different backgrounds enthusiastically set about building an organisation whose sole aims were the release and exoneration of the Birmingham Six. With the help and guidance of the National Committee, this enthusiasm is beginning to show results.

On March 31st, the International Day of Action, the Glasgow Committee launched its CHARTER FOR THE BIRMINGHAM SIX. Over 500 people who attended the Scottish anti-Poll Tax demonstration signed the petition, pledging their support for the declaration that the men are innocent and should be freed.

Copies of the Charter have also been sent to 200 public figures in Glasgow ranging from lawyers and MPs to pop singers and Church leaders. Some have already replied, supporting the Charter, and we hope to use their names in press advertisements.

Recently the Scottish edition of the Observer newspaper published a supportive article about the Glasgow Committee's Charter, and several reporters attended a recent meeting on the case, which was held during the Scottish TUC Annual Conference in April.

Despite a few hitches, this meeting was a success, thanks to the speakers Margaret McKelkeny, Mike Watson MP and Eddie Keane (National Committee). Support within the Trade Union movement is growing: recently the Glasgow Trades Council affiliated, and we'll have a strong presence on the May Day rally, where Clare Short is due to speak.

Committee members are also actively working on gaining Church support, organising fund raising events, writing to the Six, and appealing to all political parties and individuals, to support the Charter.

On May Day we will be unfurling our Birmingham Six banner, commissioned from the Cranhill Arts Project in Glasgow. We fervently hope that this banner will have a short life, and that the Birmingham Six will very soon be free.

FROM: THE GLASGOW BIRMINGHAM SIX COMMITTEE

C/O CLYDE BOOKS, 15 PARNIE ST.
GLASGOW
G1 5RJ

NEWS FROM IRELAND

On February 28th 1990, the private secretary to Gerard Collins (Irish Minister of Foreign Affairs) wrote in a letter to Margaret McKelkeny: "The minister has asked me to assure you that the Government will continue to avail of every opportunity to press the British authorities to undertake a complete review of the Birmingham Six case... The Government have also, on appropriate occasions, supported the raising of the case internationally".

The Campaign is racking its brains to recall the "appropriate occasions" referred to. Not the European Court of Human Rights; not in the European Parliament; and not at the UN. And on February 7th, Collins told the Dail: "The Government's priority lies in having the British authorities re-open this case... In this regard it is not our intention at present to have it raised at the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe." So not there either (see International News), although the Human Rights agenda of the forthcoming CSCE meeting in Copenhagen would seem to be as appropriate as it would be effective.

The Irish Government appears to be pinning its hopes on bilateral discussions with the British, and to be frightened of mobilising International concern. Fortunately the rest of the world has given up waiting for Ireland to take the lead.

Gerry Collins has also reneged on his promises to the men and their families that they would be kept informed of the progress of these bilateral discussions (see January newsletter). A recent letter to one of the relatives did cite meetings with various foreign representatives at which the Six's case was raised, but failed to mention that on most of the occasions it wasn't himself that raised it.

On February 27th, the new Inter-Parliamentary body of Irish and British MPs discussed the case for 2 hours behind closed doors. It was agreed that the case needed to be re-opened, and David Andrews TD is hoping to table for future debate a motion calling for the Six's release.

The Irish Birmingham Six Committee are launching a Petition in Ireland, calling for the release and exoneration of the men. They plan to present it to the British Ambassador during Mrs Thatcher's visit in June, when the European Heads of State meet in Dublin. Also in June, to coincide with this meeting, an advertisement is to be placed in the Irish National press.

The Birmingham Six Committee publish a very informative monthly news-sheet. Subscription for a year costs £5 (Address on the back page of this newsletter.)

Also available from the Dublin office are Derek Dunne's up-dated booklet on the Birmingham Six (£2): "Justice: the seventh victim", (which has also been translated into French and German).

The weekly Saturday vigil continues at the British Embassy, 31 Merrion Road, Dublin 4, from 11.30 to 2.00pm.

Booterstown Support Group. **ALL WELCOME**

TRADE UNION NEWS

The TUC General Council has at last agreed to back the Six and has called on the Home Secretary to re-open the case. This followed a submission from NALGO on both the case and the long outstanding matter of the report by TUC staff which has never materialised.

Support from Trades Councils continues. The Greater London Association of Trades Councils (representing 32 Trades Councils in London) have passed a motion in support, and resolved to submit a similar motion to SE Region TUC. Other Trades Councils supporting the Six now include: Birmingham, Bolton, Buxton, Leeds, Leicester, Newark, Nottingham, Oxford, Preston, Redditch, Sheffield, Hackney, Haringey Bromley and Glasgow.

Buxton & District TUC unanimously passed the following motion in February: "In the light of the recent investigation into the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad's serious misconduct in the case of the Birmingham Six, we call upon the Home Secretary to immediately release the six men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings, and implement an immediate public inquiry to clear their names."

Newark & District TUC have initiated a splendid local effort, bringing together MPs, MEPs, local Church leaders, and the media, to raise funds for the Campaign, spread information, and to raise the case with the Home Secretary via MPs, local petitions and letter-writing campaigns.

NUPE's Executive Council has now joined the NECs of NALGO, UCATT, NUM, and the TGWU in support of the Six. Six NUPE branches have taken resolutions to their National Conference this year. They are: Sandwell Local Govt., Derbyshire Social Services, Newcastle & District, Riverside District Health, Prestwich Health, and Birmingham Social Services.

The Inner London Teachers Association's motion to this year's NUT Conference in Bournemouth was ruled out of order. However the ILTA had organised a successful fringe meeting on the case, and some members are expected to push for support at executive level.

NALGO branches reaffirming their support include Greenwich and ILEA branches, who have also submitted motions to the Metropolitan District Council.

Resolutions have also been put forward to the National Conferences of NALGO, MSF and TGWU and UCATT.

The NUJ Conference have adopted the men's case.

Other TU branches who have recently passed motions of support include NATFHE (London School of Furniture), NALGO (Nottingham City) CPSA (Nottingham), several London branches of GMBATU MSF (Nottingham) and TGWU (Bolton).

PARLIAMENTARY NEWS

In recent months Home Office spokesmen and the Home Secretary himself have pandered to the more mindless of the backbench Tories by joining in the calls for Chris Mullin to name those he thinks were responsible for the Birmingham Six bombings. When names were named, albeit by a different source, suddenly the Home Office made a virtue of having known them all along.

Although the Campaign has never considered this a particularly fruitful line of inquiry (and of little value to the case from a legal point of view), the fact that there is in existence documentary proof that the authorities had this knowledge since 1975 could have prompted questions from Opposition spokespersons on behalf of the bemused general public. It hasn't.

On the other hand, there was no need for Roy Hattersley to congratulate the Home Secretary - twice - on his decision to set up a limited police inquiry into aspects of the new evidence presented to him before Christmas. The deputy leader of the Labour Party did also suggest that a "comprehensive and complete inquiry" could not now be avoided, but he did not go out of his way to demand it and, while Neil Kinnock and the rest of the Labour Front Bench have yet to open their mouths on the case, he is not in a position to do so.

Two weeks later, after the showing of the Granada film and the publication of the new edition of "Error of Judgement" (in which more revelations were set out in detail), Hattersley told the Birmingham 'EVENING MAIL' that Labour MPs now thought that the limited inquiry was not enough, and that it would not satisfy "British public opinion". But with no leadership from the front, these are empty words.

So the scale of the scandal that these revelations point to has yet to be explored. Are the party's elder statesmen having second thoughts? Merlyn Rees, who used to support the re-opening of this case, recently wrote a letter to Mrs Kathleen Doody - longtime supporter of the Birmingham Six and the Guildford Four - that he was not "directly concerned" in the case, and "we will have to wait for the outcome of the May Inquiry". Merlyn Rees was Home Secretary when, according to the "Cronkshaw papers" the Home Office was persuaded to accept total responsibility for the Six's beatings (by the prison officers) in order to let two police forces off the hook. He must have something to say about it.

The official message from the Labour Party is: "Wait until we're elected", but their prevarications now do not bode well for the future, even if we were prepared to wait that long. Meanwhile, the Party as a whole offers no support to that group of MPs who continue to hack away at the Home Office stone wall. And if it were not for these MPs there would be even less information in the public domain than there is at present.

It's expected that an EARLY DAY MOTION is to be tabled this session, calling for the release and exoneration of the Birmingham Six. It will be seeking all-party support.

*see "Error of Judgement", new edition, pages 316-320.

"I WOULD HOPE THE HOME SECRETARY WILL STOP PUSSY-FOOTING AROUND AND RELEASE THEM FORTHWITH."
Sir John Farr MP. March 21st.

UPDATE - The West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad

As cases brought by members of the Serious Crime Squad, before they were taken off the streets, continue to be thrown out of court, the first of a series of Appeals by Squad victims was heard by Lord Lane. Hassan Khan was sent down in 1988 for 15 years, for armed robbery. This was despite the robber having been seen running at full speed down a shopping precinct. Hassan Khan had his foot in plaster at the time. His "confession" was taken down in a police car, in breach of Police and Criminal Evidence Act guidelines (PACE). He was also denied access to his solicitor. The officer in charge of the case was DCI Ray Bennett, Head of the Squad at the time it was disbanded. Lord Lane quashed the conviction.

Meanwhile the Shaw Inquiry continues. In March it reported that it was still looking for 31 files and 14 officers' notebooks, relating to cases which it was investigating. This news came on top of a report that the West Midlands Police only keep documents for two years before destroying them. Someone hastily volunteered the information that copies are always kept. The ESDA test, which detects whether pages have been inserted into statements at a later date, and has helped to bring some Squad members to justice, cannot be used on photocopies.

Civil actions are to be brought for wrongful imprisonment and assault,



cont'd - SERIOUS CRIME IN THE WEST MIDLANDS POLICE

against the West Midlands Police, by Hassan Khan, Keith Parchment, Paul Dandy and Ronnie Bolden. One of the officers involved in the Ronnie Bolden case was involved in the interrogation of the Birmingham Six. (See October Newsletter).

The Birmingham Law School Inquiry is expected to report this summer (see October newsletter). They have received as many complaints as the Shaw Inquiry, but many of these refer to convictions prior to 1984. Apparently there is a clear pattern of misconduct going back to the early seventies, at least.

INDEPENDENT 24.2.90



Several recent documentaries have publicised Crime Squad cases. In February, a World In Action programme highlighted a case where the West Midlands Police misled the Court of Appeal when claiming that two officers, involved in a case before the Court, were not already in trouble for fabricating confessions. The Appeal was subsequently dismissed.

A very informative RTE (Irish TV) programme on the Squad contained an interview with ex-police cadet Adrian Dart whose story is told in "Error of Judgement" (pages 220-2). For testifying against DS Brian Morton for assaulting a suspect, Dart was subjected to the most terrifying harassment, forcing him finally to leave the force. One of his many tormentors was DCI Roger Ball (see below) who was heavily implicated in the torture of the Birmingham Six some years beforehand.

Asked if he was surprised by the revelations about the Serious Crime Squad, Adrian Dart replied: "It doesn't surprise me at all. In fact I expected it to happen because to my way of thinking there's no control over the police force - there just doesn't seem to be any accountability. I complained about my treatment, to Senior police officers and nothing was done. I'm sure senior

officers must have known what was going on with their crime squad. Everyone seems powerless to take any positive action because it reflects badly on them, because there's a sort of ethos in the force that nobody spills the beans on anyone else. That is what seems to be the norm."

Birmingham Six 'quite possibly' guilty Knacker's shock claim

by Our West Midlands Staff
Rhoda Rotunda and John Bulling

Inspector "Knacker of the West Midland Crime Squad" Knacker yesterday flatly rejected the findings of a TV drama series that the Birmingham pub bombings had in fact been committed by the IRA.

Inspector Knacker - who last month suspended himself on charges of falsifying evidence, along with 579 of his colleagues - told a press conference: "We always knew that there were more than six people involved. We knew who they were. But we decided that six was quite enough to be going on with."

"In fact," the Inspector went on, "we always used to call them the Birmingham 57. It is just a travesty of justice that the other 51 slipped through our net, due to staff shortages in the Bogus Confessions department."

Inspector Knacker further claimed that known members of the IRA were behind the campaign to free the guilty men.

Inspector Knacker is 73.

The most publicised programme "Who Bombed Birmingham?" produced a flurry of indignation from past and present officers. The West Midlands Police produced a detailed statement just before the programme was shown. Fortunately, most of the local media are now fairly well-appraised of the case and the Campaign had opportunities to rebut some of the loopier allegations which the Chief Constable Geoffrey Dear made shortly afterwards.

While serving police officers continue to contradict themselves, ex-detectives haven't the sense to keep their heads down either. George Reade, who led the 1974 investigation, still maintains that the evidence against the Six was sound. He, of course, is a proven liar and perjurer (see January Newsletter). And Roger Ball - now Mayor-elect of Leek - has attacked Mr Dear over the disbandment of the Squad, calling the decision "very foolish". He continues to maintain that the Six were not even shouted at let alone beaten, but added: "If we'd done it, I wouldn't even tell my wife or my best friend. The one thing that a bobby learns in this world - you've only got one friend and that's yourself."

VIDEOS OF RTE, BBC2, WORLD IN ACTION PROGRAMMES AVAILABLE FROM BIRMINGHAM CAMPAIGN GROUP

GREAT BRITISH JUDGES

No.2 LORD LANE

Rumour has it that Lord Lane has threatened to resign if the case of the Birmingham Six is referred back to the Court of Appeal. Indeed the absolute certainty with which he dismissed the '87 Appeal is one embarrassing factor in the Home Office's present predicament.

In the recent Appeal of Hassan Khan (see page 8), Lord Lane could not even bring himself to criticise the 1988 trial judge - Mr Justice Judge - who had used his discretion* to admit as evidence the obviously bogus confession which had been fabricated by Crime Squad officers under the supervision of DCI Ray Bennett. Lord Lane called the judge's direction to the jury "impeccably fair".

Not long before Khan's trial, at the Birmingham Six's '87 Appeal, Igor Judge QC was still earning his brownie points as Crown Prosecutor. He had argued eloquently for the credibility of Bennett and Co, calling them "honest witnesses". Lord Lane had been most impressed: his judgement was to echo the Prosecution case point for point.

There are signs now that Lord Lane and his fellow-judges are losing their touching faith in police integrity; but the Lord Chief Justice's faith in his own profession is unshakeable.

* under Section 78 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, which allows judges to pretend the Police and Criminal Evidence Act does not exist.

THE LONGER THIS HEARING HAS GONE ON
THE MORE CONVINCED THIS COURT HAS BECOME
THAT, IF WE CAN'T BE INFALLIBLE,
WE DON'T WANT TO BE JUDGES
AT ALL!



PRISON NEWS

MEDIA

Since the official abolition of their category 'A' status, very full and sympathetic interviews with the Six have appeared in the British Press. These included features on the wives and families in the New Statesman (23/2) and the Daily Mirror (2/2), and a Mirror feature on Billy Power on April 11th. Reflecting the turnaround of public opinion in the West Midlands, the Birmingham Post (February 5th) re-printed in-depth interviews with each of the men, which had appeared in Ireland's Sunday Tribune the previous day.

Most interesting of all, on March 7th the BBC showed an interview with Johnny Walker and Hugh Callaghan which was shown throughout the day, and also picked up by other channels.

This of course amounts to unprecedented media coverage of convicted prisoners, let alone of "convicted terrorists." Underlying all the coverage was the assumption that the Six are innocent.

As far as the TV coverage was concerned, there was no sign of Government broadcasting restrictions being observed, and only the dimmest sections of the British Right made a (small) fuss. 18 months ago you couldn't even sing a song about the Six on the air.

CONDITIONS

Richard and Billy were moved to Gartree at the end of March, where Paddy Hill has been for 9 years. (The Irish Government claims credit for this.) All six are pleased to receive letters and cards from supporters; the worsening conditions in British prisons mean that they are confined to their cells for most of the time.

Despite the physical discomfort, and the stress born of continuing uncertainty, all six are adamant that they will not accept freedom until they have been publicly exonerated.

Hugh Callaghan and Johnny Walker used their BBC interview to make this absolutely clear, and Richard McKenny told City Limits (22/4):

"Under no circumstances will I leave this prison voluntarily until I am declared innocent ... They will have to physically carry us out. We decided that among ourselves a long time ago."

Billy Power's Birthday: June 29th.

*Copies of all these are available from Sheffield Campaign at 50p cost.

PRISONERS

The word caught up with shuffling men in corridors - the Guildford Four were free.

Did Six men still inside our gaols remember darkened rooms, and kicks and blows and one man shouting 'Stretch his balls' abd trousers fouled?

Did Six men still inside our gaols remember judges speak of their release as 'Vistas so appalling' no court of law dared look at them?

The word caught up with shuffling men in corridors - the Guildford Four were free. But Six men slopped out excrement and dreams, doused rising hopes of exit visas, walked back, with empty chamberpots, to cells.

Anne Strain
Sevenoaks, Kent.

T.V.

"Who Bombed Birmingham?" was watched by 9 million people on March 28th. And International sales have started - so far the programme has been sold to Ireland, Holland, US (Cable) and Kuwait.

Although the Campaign did not approve the decision to name the alleged "real" bombers, or expect the prison gates to swing open as a result, the programme deserves great credit for bringing the men's case to a huge audience. It also firmly implanted in people's minds the possibility that the Six's continuing imprisonment has something to do with politics.

Northern World Theatre "Exploding Myths" 7.30pm. A play about the Birmingham 6 KELLY'S HEROES FRI WHOLESOME FISH JUNE 8th Marcus Garvey Centre

NOTTINGHAM PUBLIC MEETING CHRIS MULLIN WED 16th May 1pm PORTLAND LECTURE HALL NOTT'M UNIVERSITY

Jeremy Hardy & Friends - LATE JULY - COMING SOON - COMEDIANS FOR JUSTICE BLOOMSBURY THEATRE London.

Raffle
Draw

1. No. 9755: S. Lloyd, Essex University.
2. No. 19333: H. Ward, Glasgow.
3. No. 4389: Beghal Foodstore, B'ham.
4. No. 4792: K. Madigan, Birmingham.
5. No. 1110: S. Buckingham, Oxford.
6. No. 15565: R. Jeffries, Birmingham.
7. No. 2325: J. Ralph, London.
8. No. 9922: P. McGovern, Birmingham.
9. No. 12852: K. Jones, Birmingham.
10. No. 9803: R. Field, Bristol.

"Sidewind" kicks up a storm

LAST MONTH saw the long-awaited premier of Ray Brennan's "Sidewind" at the Battersea Arts Centre in London. The play, written five years ago, had various readings and false starts but it is only now, in March 1990, after the release of the Guildford Four last October, that it has finally opened on stage.

"Sidewind" tells the story of the Birmingham Six as seen through the eyes of the men's relatives and, in particular, their wives and daughters.

Brennan's play, so strong in its message and content, attracted massive public interest and critical acclaim. The reviews were unanimous in their praise of the fine performances of the sixteen-strong cast and the powerful writing and direction.

Despite the fact that none of the artists received a wage for the four week rehearsal period and the two week run in London, the cast boasted some very fine

actors. The actors, producer Aine O'Connor and the various backers - who included the Pogues - had the unanimous, firmly held belief that "Sidewind" should be seen in England.

It was *The Guardian's* Pick of the Week and *The Independent* said:

"Ray Brennan's powerful play aims to convince you that on the end of the casualty list should be tacked the innocent lives of six wrongfully imprisoned men...and it illuminates in the women's feisty and increasingly wised-up efforts to obtain justice, the logical rickety of the police case."

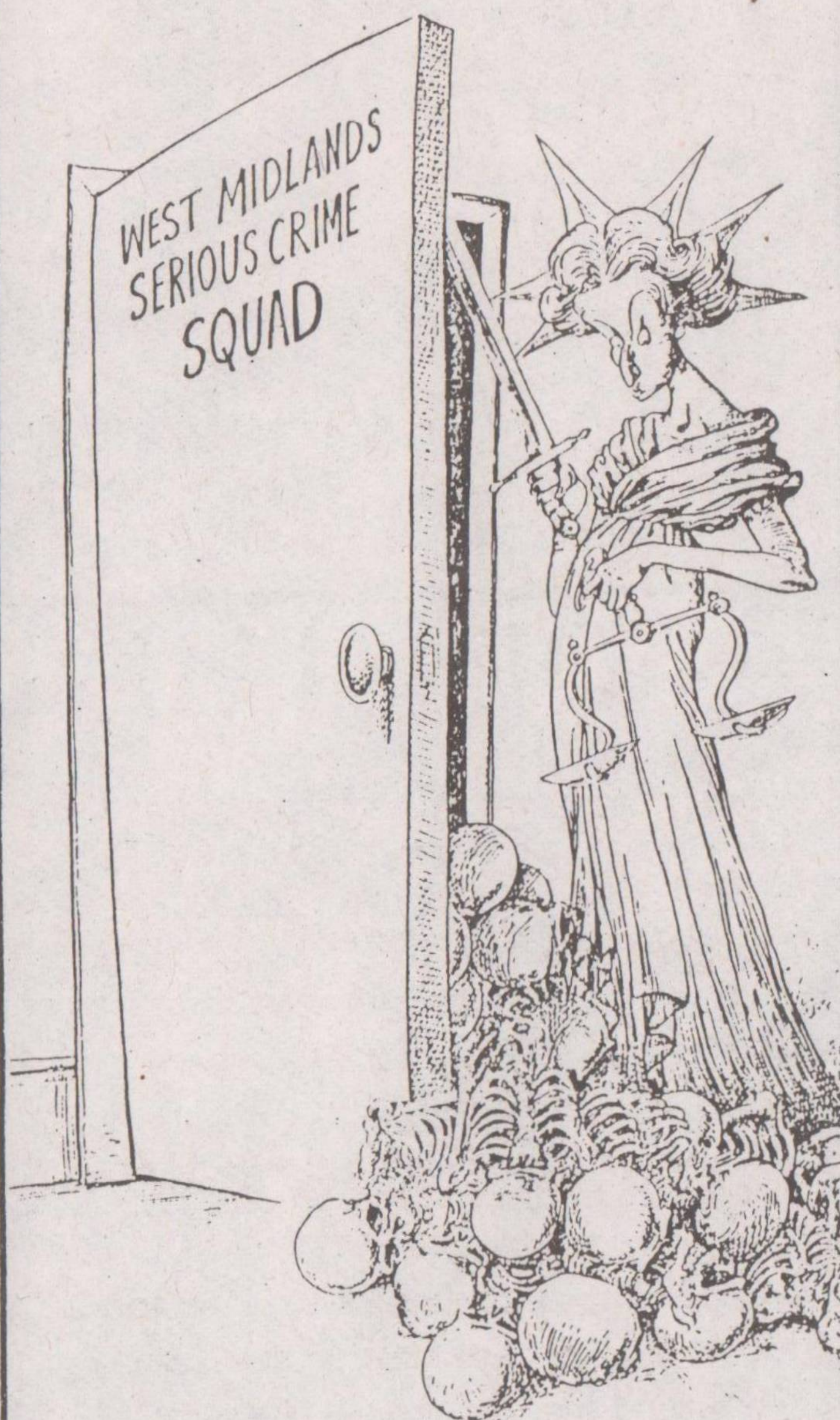
Time Out said simply: "This is campaigning political theatre carrying such clout, that it demands action."

"Sidewind" was a complete sell-out for its entire (though short) ten-day run.

(Dublin BG Chee N/le Hay) APRIL

'Error of Judgement'

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AVAILABLE SOON FROM SHEFFIELD: Cards showing the above design, kindly donated to the Campaign by artist Chris Riddell.

Card (with envelope) 40p or 3 for £1, (not inc. p&p)