

Conference 23 May 06: Promoting Rights of Migrant Workers

INFORMATION ON SPEAKERS.....

.....Areas of Focus

- **Nigel Harris** University College London
The emergence of a single world economy and a global workforce - the responses of governments: market integration and political separatism. Problems of developed countries - ageing, skill needs. The failure of immigration policy - (i) does not meet labour needs (depends on irregular migration); (ii) abominable treatment of migrants; (iii) robs third world of skilled and deprives of remittances. The problem of xenophobia Towards free migration.
- **Bernadette McAliskey** Programme Coordinator, STEP
Outline the circumstances facing migrant workers in the local context including the impact of current policy, practice and attitudes on the same; will also address the actions that need to be taken to secure the human, civil, economic rights of migrant workers and others.
- **Siobhán O' Donoghue** Director, Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
Overview of research undertaken in the MRCI on barriers experienced by migrant workers in seeking redress and justice in relation to workplace exploitation. The challenge of supporting and enabling migrant workers to become visible and organised for collective action. Naming racism in the workplace and learning the lessons from the past in order to avoid the future.
- **Dr Sonia McKay** London Metropolitan University
Limitations of current employment law in defending all workers; How migrant workers are particularly disadvantaged in exercising their employment rights; Problems regarding status, identifying the employer and enforcing rights; impact of 'illegality' on employment contracts; Whether there is a need for specific protection for migrant workers.
- **Mike Jennings**, SIPTU
Examples of exploitation; degree of failure to enforce rights; political reason for such non-enforcement; danger of racism growing out of creation of two-tier workforce; essential similarity of outcome between 'displacement' and 'replacement'; trade union response; essential need to integrate migrants into trade unions."

Speaker Bios:

Nigel Harris, academic (University College London), writer, consultant (UN, international organisations, British and foreign governments) on economics of urbanisation, cities, migration in developing countries. Former senior policy consultant, European Policy Center, Brussels; Chairman, Migration Commission, Royal Society of Arts. Author: *The New Untouchables: the New World Worker*, 1995; *Thinking the Unthinkable: the Myth of Immigration Controls*, 2003.

Dr Sonia McKay is a senior research fellow at the Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University. She has led the research team on the EEDA project on Migrant Workers in the East of England which specifically looked at the skills of the migrant labour force. She is currently heading a number of other research projects which focus on refugees and on migrant workers. She was a contributor to Labour Migration and Employment Rights, published by the Institute of Employment Rights, London, specifically to the chapter on 'Migrant workers and employment law'. Dr McKay graduated in law from Queen's Belfast and has a Ph.D from the University of Cambridge.

Siobhan O' Donoghue is Director of the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland. She has worked for many years as a community worker in organisations ranging from the Limerick Travellers Development Group to the Community Workers Cooperative. Siobhan was a member of the NESC from 1999 to 2003 and acted as negotiator for the Community Platform in national social partnership talks. Siobhan's experience spans equality issues, anti racism, community work and campaigning at a local, national and global level. She is the Irish representative on the board of the European Network Against Racism and is the author of 'Private Homes - A Public Concern' a report detailing the experiences of migrant women employed in the private home.

Bernadette McAliskey is the Coordinator of South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP). Since her time as an MP Bernadette has devoted herself to the building of successful community infrastructure in her local area of South Tyrone. She has been a keen community activist on a number of subjects, as coordinator of STEP she has assumed management of the organisations four distinct but inherently linked departments – Community Development, Tutor Led Training, Online Learning and the Migrant Workers Programme.

Anastasia Crickley, Chairperson, NCCRI

Anastasia Crickley is a lecturer at the Centre for Applied Social Studies, National University of Ireland, Maynooth. Anastasia, with her late husband, John O Connell and others, is a founder member of Pavee Point Travellers Centre and of the National Travellers Women's Forum. Recently she was elected as the first women chairperson of the European Union Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) based in Vienna. During her tenure, the remit of the Centre is to be extended to monitoring human rights as well as racism. She was previously a founder member and Irish delegate to the European Network on Racism, an EU wide NGO. She has also recently been appointed Special Rapporteur on Racism by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

Peter Bunting, ICTU

Peter Bunting is the Assistant General Secretary for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Peter has the responsibility of co-ordinating and developing the Trade Union Movement in Northern Ireland. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) is the single umbrella organisation for trade unions on the island of Ireland.

Mike Jennings, SIPTU

Mike Jennings is Regional Secretary for Ireland's largest trade union, SIPTU. His Region, the Midlands and South East, has approximately 40,000 members in 27 different Branches served by a staff of 43 Officials and Administrative Personnel. Mike Jennings has been a full-time trade unionist for 25 years and has represented workers in every sector of the Irish economy. For the past five years Mike has been to the forefront in framing his Union's practical and policy response to the exploitation of immigrant workers and he is a member of the NCCRI SYNERGY North South Intercultural Initiative Advisory Group.