

Catholic Public Policy digest

promoting the common good in public life

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Spring 2007



News from the Secretariat of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales

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The Equality Act (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2007

A key issue of concern for the Church has centred on Catholic adoption and fostering agencies. The draft regulations published on 7 March 2007 contain significant and important exemptions for organisations relating to religion and belief but propose a time-limited exemption for the adoption and fostering agencies to the end of 2008, together with a statutory duty to refer homosexual couples to another agency. The 12 Catholic adoption agencies deal with only 4% of adoptions in England and Wales but they have an excellent record, particularly with finding stable homes for 'hard-to-place' children and sibling groups. An exemption was sought to enable these agencies to continue to operate as they do now.

The Catholic Adoption Agencies will continue to provide their services for vulnerable children during the transitional period over the next 21 months.

The regulations are being studied and legal advice is being taken to explore all options to secure the future of these agencies so they can continue their work, recognised by the prime minister as both excellent and valuable, into 2009 and beyond. The agencies will also work with the independent body, to be set up by the government with a view to retaining and developing the valued and needed services provided by these agencies.

The position of the Church in relation to these regulations is clearly set out in a number of documents:

A note on the Government's decision by Archbishop Peter Smith: <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/cn/07/070205b.htm>

The letter sent by Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor to the Prime Minister on 22 January 2007 <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/cn/07/070122.htm>

The Submission made by the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales to the Government consultation

in June 2006: http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/citizenship/documents/FINALSubmissiontoDTI_9606__2_.pdf

Contact: Philippa Gitlin, Director, Caritas-social action, philippa.gitlin@cbcew.org.uk, 020 7901 4834; Charles Wookey, Assistant General Secretary, Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, charles.wookey@cbcew.org.uk, 020 7901 4812.

Science and Technology Committee inquiry on chimera embryos

A consultation has been held by the Science and Technology Committee on the creation of animal-human hybrids and chimeras, following the Government's proposal to ban such creation initially, while enabling it to be permitted under licence at some future date. The Linacre Centre for Healthcare Ethics made a submission to this consultation on behalf of the Bishops' Conference. This is available on the Centre's website at <http://www.linacre.org/topics.htm#Hybrids/Chimeras>. Contact: Dr Helen Watt or Anthony McCarthy, 020 7266 7410, research@linacre.org

Submission to DCLG Consultation on Integration and Cohesion

The response of the Catholic Bishops' Conference calls attention to the many different groups in our society who, for different reasons, are separated, and in some cases alienated, from the mainstream. It outlines the role the Catholic community has played over the past 150 years in supporting migrant, ethnic minority and other marginalised groups and helping them to integrate into society. With the current arrival of many new migrants in the UK, the Church here is being called on to play a similar role today. Finally, the Bishops are concerned about relations between faith communities and secular authorities, who too often work with a narrow concept of secular society which would exclude religion from the public arena. The full text of the CBCEW response can be found at: http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/citizenship/documents/ComIntegCohesResptoConstn_26Jan_.pdf. For further information please contact Richard Zipfel at richard.zipfel@cbcew.org.uk



News from the Catholic Education Service (CES)

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Concerns regarding funding for Sixth Form General Religious Education

The CES is in critical talks with Secretary of State, Alan Johnson and his officers and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to secure ongoing funding for sixth form general religious education courses approved by the National Accrediting Board of Studies (NABS), a body working on behalf of the Bishops' Conference. Original funding for Catholic sixth form colleges and religious education was agreed under the Further Education Funding Council (FEFC) in the late 1990s and for Catholic schools in 2003. However, from September 2007, the LSC has stated that only courses on the National Qualifications Framework will attract funding i.e. excluding the NABS courses. This means that we will have no means of funding provision for religious education for the thousands of students in the sixth form for whom a general religious education course via NABS is the only route at the appropriate level in the limited time available to students. The CES is lobbying to ensure that funding continues to be available for these NABS courses; a Catholic sixth form education without continued religious education is not acceptable.

Community Cohesion

Ensuring that Catholic schools and colleges make more public their very positive contribution to community cohesion is a high priority for the CES. We are surveying our schools and have volunteered our expertise to ministers and government agencies as they plan their evaluation of community cohesion. Religious education inspection frameworks (section 48 inspections) are being updated to put in place criteria against which inspectors can judge commitment to promoting social cohesion. The CES is also working with Ofsted to compare their findings with those of the section 48 inspections. This data-sharing activity and joint planning is much valued by the CES.

Further Education & Training and 14-19 issues

The CES is monitoring the passage of the Further Education and Training Bill, having been involved in negotiations with the DfES and LSC over the draft Bill last year. We are also keen to ensure that the

restructuring of the LSC and extensions to its powers does not have a negative impact on the Catholic sector, given the potential repercussions for the 14-19 age group in Catholic schools and colleges.

We remain strongly committed to access to Catholic education for 14-19 year olds, even where some of their education takes place off site in other institutions or the workplace. The CES continues to monitor the development of the new diploma courses and the Gateway process for admission to them. We will be looking to establish access to diplomas with appropriate planning so that young people can continue to stay on the roll of their Catholic school. Catholic provision for students must not be sacrificed to economies of scale and notional efficiency.

Education & Inspections Act 2006

We are most grateful to those parliamentarians who gave us their support on the Education and Inspections Bill. Thanks to this, the CES was successful in avoiding any imposition of quotas on admissions and improved the original proposals regarding school transport and support staff.

Code on School Admissions

The Government has now published its new Code on School Admissions. The CES worked closely with officials to negotiate provisions in the Code which would allow Catholic maintained schools to serve the Catholic community effectively and to protect and develop their Catholic ethos. While Ministers remained committed to outlawing the use of 'first preference first' and 'conditional' criteria, used by a minority of Catholic schools, the extent to which the concerns of the Catholic community have been reflected in the Code is pleasing.

The CES is shortly publishing guidance on the Code to ensure that Catholic school admissions authorities understand its implications, which in some cases will require admissions arrangements to be changed. This will be available on our website: www.cesew.org.uk.

CES Parliamentary Reception

6 June 2007 4.30-6pm

This year we are celebrating the contribution of Catholic schools and colleges to community cohesion. All Catholic parliamentarians will be invited and Archbishop Vincent Nichols will be in attendance. The event is to be hosted by Geraldine Smith MP.

Further information: Laura McCann, lmccann@cesew.org.uk, 0207 901 4854 / Oona Stannard, ostannard@cesew.org.uk

News from**The Department of International Affairs of the Catholic Bishops' Conference**

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email: international@cbcew.org.ukweb: <http://www.catholic-ew.org.uk/international>**International Affairs**

The annual Co-ordination of Episcopal Conferences in Support of the Church in the Holy Land (Holy Land Co-ordination) took place in January. The aim of the Holy Land Co-ordination is to act in solidarity with the Christian community of the Holy Land and share in the pastoral life of the local Church. This year the Holy Land Co-ordination visited communities in Nazareth and the Galilee region, and the group was joined for the first time by bishops from the Irish Episcopal Conference.

One of the key focuses of this year's meeting was to encourage more Christians to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The Department of International Affairs will shortly be setting up a webpage with spiritual and practical advice for those wishing to go on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

For more information, please visit www.catholic-ew.org.uk/international

Office for Refugee Policy**New Borders Bill – fifth legislation in eight years**

The Borders Bill, the fifth piece of immigration legislation in eight years, was published on 26 January 2007. It will equip the new Border and Immigration Agency with a wide range of new powers to 'deter, detect and deport those breaking the rules and ensure that foreign nationals legally in the UK play their part in upholding the rules.' The key measures in the Bill are:

- Arrest those suspected of fraudulently acquiring asylum status and investigate their crimes with powers of entry, search and seizure.
- Detain people suspected of committing crimes at ports of entry.
- Access data from HM Revenue and Customs to track down illegal immigrants.
- Arrest people-smugglers and traffickers even if their crimes are committed outside the UK.
- Oblige foreign nationals legally living in the UK to apply for and carry a biometric immigration ID, or face fines up to £1000.
- Automatic deportation for all foreign nationals if they are convicted of serious crimes such as terrorism, drugs offences or crimes against children; they will not have a right of appeal from within the UK.

The Bill is part of the ongoing reform of the Immigration

and Nationality Directorate ordered by the Home Secretary. The reform will ultimately see the split of the Directorate from the Home Office as a more independent Border and Immigration Agency. For more information, visit the ORP homepage at www.catholic-ew.org.uk/international/OfficeforRefugeePolicy.htm

**News from****The Catholic Association for Racial Justice**

One Race - the Human Race

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The Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ) has appointed Cecilia Taylor-Camara its National Co-ordinator for England and Wales. Originally from Sierra Leone, Mrs Taylor-Camara has worked with the British High Commission, the United Nations, ActionAid and Action in International Medicine in Sierra Leone and the African Women's Welfare Group and the Schools department of the London Borough of Enfield in the UK.

CARJ is an independent charity and an agency of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. The Association is committed to enabling Catholics of diverse backgrounds to work together to bring about a society which values, respects and affirms the dignity of all.

CARJ schools project

At present CARJ is developing a project to support black and minority ethnic pupils in Catholic primary schools. Working with 10-11 year olds, and their teachers and parents, the project seeks to address the concern of many in education at the underachievement of some ethnic minorities, especially in the transition from primary to secondary school. Having established a relationship with young people at the end of primary school, CARJ will continue to support them as they move into and through secondary school. The project is being piloted in north London and is intended to be expanded to other areas. It has received positive feedback from headteachers.

Financial support is critical to the success of this project and CARJ welcomes any donations to help with this important work.

Abolition of the Slave Trade bicentenary

CARJ is also developing a programme to mark the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. Information will be sent to parishes, schools and local groups, and a conference is being planned for 30 June.



News from CAFOD

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Livesimply

On Tuesday 27 March, Room M at 12.45pm: The All-Party Parliamentary Friends of CAFOD (PFOC) will be holding a Lenten Reflection for parliamentarians. The guest speaker will be Archbishop Ignatius Kaigama of Jos, Nigeria and will focus on the *livesimply* challenge.

CAFOD, with other Catholic organisations and Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor are supporting and promoting the *livesimply* challenge. *livesimply* is based upon a radical idea: that God calls us to look hard at our lifestyles, and choose to live simply, sustainably and in solidarity with people living in poverty.

On 27 March, CAFOD will be asking parliamentarians to make a *livesimply* 'promise'. The promise is a way to commit to do something as an act of solidarity with people living in poverty. But when MPs and peers make a *livesimply* promise it is on the condition that a specified number of other parliamentarians also promise to do it too!

The inspiration behind *livesimply* comes from Pope Paul VI's encyclical *Populorum Progressio* ('On the Development of Peoples') whose 40th anniversary we mark this year. This prophetic document sets out the social teaching of the Church in the face of growing poverty and injustice experienced by those in the developing world.

Many CAFOD supporters were part of the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** campaign, which challenged the structural injustices that keep people in poverty. As a next step, *livesimply* looks at our personal responsibility for creating transformation and change, both in ourselves and in the world.

Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)

Trade between the European Union (EU) and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries can lift people

out of poverty, but only if it is governed by fair rules which allow the growth of farming and industry in developing countries. There has been growing disquiet about the way in which these negotiations are being conducted and there has even been discontent expressed within the European Commission.

ACP countries are concerned about:

- the European Commission's inflexibility around its demand that ACP countries must open their markets to allow 'substantially all trade' from European goods;
 - the European Commission's insistence on pushing its own attacking interests including areas where the ACP countries have already clearly expressed no desire to negotiate;
 - a failure to provide 'alternatives' to EPAs
 - the European Commission's rejection of several 'development friendly' proposals from ACP countries.
- CAFOD is calling upon the European Commission to:
- listen and act upon the concerns of poor nations and EU member states;
 - actively create space for discussion of alternatives to EPAs;
 - ensure that poor countries are not forced to negotiate on issues they have already rejected at the WTO;
 - and ensure that any new trade deals do not pressure poor countries to open their markets to unfair competition.

Germany G8

Archbishops and Cardinals from across the developing world will be meeting politicians in the UK and Germany at the end of April, ahead of the German G8, before going on to meet Pope Benedict XVI in Rome. Invited by CIDSE (an alliance of 15 Catholic development organisations from Europe and North America) and Caritas Internationalis, the delegation will be supporting the call for donors to meet their 2005 G8 commitments on quantity of aid and asking that aid be focused effectively on poverty reduction.

The delegation will include Archbishop Musengwo from Democratic Republic of Congo; Archbishop Onaiyekan from Nigeria; Cardinal Toppo from India; Cardinal Rodríguez from Honduras and Cardinal McCarrick from Washington.

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