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asked him what they had compiled so far. The matter would be at an end. Fr Morris has been described as a kind and gentle man—he would never disobey his superiors and so the statement was despatched and he was moved.

Unfortunately for the 'cleric friends' their move incensed the Clonmany residents who wanted Fr Morris to stay. They said they had been dealt a cruel blow that had caused great hurt which was slowly turning to anger. They vowed to withhold their weekly envelopes, refused to go to bingo or enter the parish draw. They held a mass boycott—they didn't attend the induction of their new priest as they objected to the presence of their own Bishop in their parish.

The people of Clonmany obviously know that Dr Seamus Hegarty is supposed to be a hard-liner who takes no nonsense and runs the administration of his diocese with an iron fist. But this time, perhaps, they have found his Achilles' heel.

Through what they see as his refusal to consider their opinions they have painted a picture of a man who lacks the one ingredient Catholicism is built on—compassion.

The withholding of funds from the parish by its parishioners may not be enough to shelve building work on the Bishop's new house but, at the very least, it sends out the message that he is not the only force to be reckoned with. ♦

The cost of celibacy

Stephen Douds

What is it about Catholic bishops and sex many people must have asked themselves last month after yet another story of love across the altar rails emerged, this time in the staunchly Catholic Western isles of Scotland.

News that Bishop Roderick Wright had been involved with a married parishioner for a number

of years, in a relationship Cardinal Thomas Winning of Glasgow, leader of Scottish Catholics, said "he presumed was sexual" focused attention once again on compulsory celibacy for Catholic priests.

Within days officials from the church's press office swung into action presenting Cardinal Hume of Westminster as a spokesman for the *status quo*. But the wily Benedictine monk did not read from the expected script. In the many interviews he gave he admitted that change could come, that a debate was going on within the Catholic church and recalled how in former interviews he said there were times he would like to have been married.

So is there likely to be a fundamental shift in this area soon? Some commentators have made wildly optimistic forecasts suggesting that within ten or twenty years celibacy could be optional. The argument runs that the present Pope is an implacable opponent of any substantial reform within the church, he's on his last legs and a newly-elected Pope recognising the declining numbers of priests in the western world would abolish the least attractive part of the job description.

Fine and grand if you believe that the College of Cardinals is full of radicals anxious for change but alas reality is rather different. Pope John Paul II has packed the gallery and his successor is very likely to be in his image and likeness. But even if this were not true there is a second and more important reason why compulsory celibacy is likely to remain in place.

Put simply there is very little appetite for change among the majority of priests themselves. Yes, there are some who would like to have married but they are very much in the minority. Vast numbers of clerics enjoy the single life: financially secure, answerable to almost no-one with the chance to put as much or as little effort into their daily life as they choose, life without sex can be made reasonably tolerable.

Imagine a situation in which priests could marry. Not all of them would choose to do so and public attention might then turn to the potentially large number of unmarried and hence sus-



Tommy Clancy

pected gay clergy. Given, for example, the Church of England's track record in that regard the Catholic church might just have to bite the bullet and withstand the calls for an end to celibacy. ♦

Eamonn Casey: another errant Bishop

Dinosaurs not extinct

Monica McWilliams

In recent weeks there has been much speculation about whether or not the Women's Coalition will withdraw from the Forum. We had hoped when the Forum was first established that it would offer a means whereby public discussion could take place about the type of society that people would like to see developing in Northern Ireland. Indeed, there was a possibility that the essence of these broader discussions in the Forum could benefit the climate in which multi-party talks were taking place.

Since the departure of the SDLP from the Forum many now believe that the Ulster Unionist Party and the Democratic Unionist Party have been left talking to themselves. For this reason any

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Rules of Procedure which were to be adopted by the Forum should be deemed to command the support across the main communities in Northern Ireland. We believed that the rules under which this new body was to operate were extremely important and it was for that reason that we asked the Secretary of State to make a decision on whether or not they were acceptable. The most publicised of these was the insertion of the DUP rule that the Union Jack should be flown on the building when the Forum was meeting.

The Secretary of State agreed with the Women's Coalition position that this was not a procedural rule and asked for it to be removed. When the Forum was informed of this an emergency motion was passed which echoed the original rule thereby continuing to create divisiveness.

The Secretary of State has agreed the remaining rules but has insisted that it is up to the Chairperson to ensure that any decisions reached in the Forum should command cross-community support. The Women's Coalition view is that the Forum must meet its terms of reference as outlined in the Act of Parliament and if it does not do this, then it is up to the Secretary of State to close it down. We will now have to judge the extent to which the Chairperson is able to carry out this daunting task. Given the criticisms which have been levelled at John Gorman to date, it may indeed become an insurmountable one.

It is also our view that the Forum missed an opportunity to consult more widely with members of the public and instead rushed ahead to establish committees on agriculture, health,

education and parades. Given that we have such a buoyant civil society in Northern Ireland, it is somewhat depressing that once again its potential remains untapped.

The Women's Coalition will also continue to act as a commentator on the type of behaviour and attitudes exhibited in the Interpoint Building each Friday. Far from fulfilling its objectives of promoting dialogue and understanding, the Forum has provided a platform for some of the most sectarian commentary to reign. There is much made of fair play in Northern Ireland, but there is no fair play when politicians behave like bullies. There is a culture of unacceptable political behaviour which is a major part of our problem here. It has been exemplified by members of political parties here and it has been allowed to pass by others. It has been played out in the Forum by regular interruptions of verbal abuse and speeches which constantly attack others rather than deal with the issues.

The Women's Coalition entered this process because we believed we could make a serious political input into the current negotiations. Now it appears we have another role thrust upon us – that of exposing the bad behaviour in the Forum, much of which we have become the brunt of.

The sexist remarks in particular have been commented upon widely in the media and have helped to expose the antiquated patriarchal attitudes that still exist. On a more positive note, the Coalition has shown that it is important for women to have a public voice in the Forum and to access decision-making within the political mainstream. As we stated in our election posters, we wanted to "Wave Goodbye to Dinosaurs" and we will continue to do this, both politically and socially. ♦

No refuge

Darryl Armitage

The Irish Refugee Council has been dismayed by last month's decision to deport two Ukrainian refugees and their children from Ireland.

The refugees had arrived from Cuba where their children had been receiving medical treatment.

On arrival at Shannon the Ukrainian women claimed 'ecological asylum'. It was noted by the Irish Refugee Council that it was the first instance of asylum being sought for ecological reasons. They claimed that the Ukrainian government could not guarantee proper medical care for the children.

The refugees were allowed to rest in a hostel in Ennis until the Saturday, during which time they were examined by doctors. But before an interpreter was able to get to the refugees they had been put onto a plane for Kiev. Before they were deported a doctor had to be called in order to give injections to one of the children who was clearly suffering from a 'cancer related illness as the result of Chernobyl.'

A spokesperson for the Department of Justice defended the decision to deport the Ukrainian women and their children saying that their claim of 'ecological' asylum and not 'political' asylum clearly presented not to be within the scope of the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees. They failed to address their own 1996 Refugee Act.

The Irish Refugee Council said it was dismayed by the precedent set by the deportation of the Ukrainian women and their children, despite medical documentation indicating that at least two of the three children were seriously ill as a result of Chernobyl.

The Council spokesperson also stated that the Irish law governing refugees (the new Refugee Act 1996 that has just passed into law) had not been properly adhered to:

"Procedures agreed between the Department of Justice and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), which have been by the Irish courts, confirm that the Minister for Justice has given an undertaking that where an application for refugee status has been made to an immigration officer on arrival in Ireland, "an individual will not be refused entry or removed until he has been given opportunity to present his case fully, his applica-