

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

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Relatives for Justice Committee,
c/o 7 Aspen Park,
Twinbrook,
Belfast BT17 0JY
Tel: 620593

1st February 1984

Dear MR FITZGERALD,

I am writing to you on behalf of Relatives for Justice as a matter of urgency. Our committee has been in existence for nearly two years now and is made up of relatives and friends of prisoners held on the uncorroborated evidence of an alleged accomplice, who is commonly known as a 'supergrass'. I am enclosing our constitution and some relevant material which I hope you will find useful.

At present there are over 450 people being held on remand solely on the word of a 'supergrass'. Some prisoners have been over two years on remand and do not expect their trial to be held before late 85 or 86 which means they will have served the equivalent of an eight year sentence.

The British Attorney General, Sir Michael Havers ruled in 1972⁷ after "Operation Countryman" that no cases should come to trial on the uncorroborated evidence of an alleged accomplice. But yet here in the North this ruling does not apply. Coupled with this as I'm sure you are aware, the 'supergrass' gives his evidence in a non-jury Diplock court thus the safeguards under British Law where a judge would direct the jury of the dangers of convicting on uncorroborated evidence do not pertain.

Relatives for Justice is extremely concerned that the due process of law has been so radically undermined by this iniquitous practice that it has resulted in severe alienation of both the Protestant and Catholic communities in the North from the law itself. This, I am sure you will agree is a very dangerous

situation.

On this basis we have successfully invited a series of International Lawyers to observe these trials, all of whom have been profoundly shocked at the abrogation of legal and civil rights that people are supposed to have under British Law. I enclose here a transcript of a Press Conference given in Belfast by an American observer.

Over the past few months many public figures have condemned the use of this type of evidence to convict people, most recent of whom was the eminent British lawyer Lord Gifford. We are aware that certain members of the Dail including Mr Noonan, Minister of Justice and members of the legal profession have spoken out against the use of this type of evidence being used but we feel that many others are not aware of its full implications. It is to this end that we request that you meet with us in order that we may present a submission to you. Some of the Committee will be in Dublin on the 23rd February and will be available to meet with you on one of the following dates, the 22nd, 23rd and 24th February.

We would be grateful if you could indicate which of these dates would be suitable.

Yours in anticipation,

Moirá Berkery,

M. Berkery
Chairperson, Relatives for Justice Committee

Relatives for Justice Interim Constitution

Aims and Objects

- 1) To obtain justice, in line with the provisions of both the European and Universal Declarations of Human Rights, for those people arrested or imprisoned as a result of the allegations of informers.
- 2) To achieve the end of the informer system.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be open to relatives of persons arrested, charged, remanded or sentenced as a result of informer allegations. All members have speaking and voting rights at internal meetings.

SUPPORTERS

Individuals who are not relatives may join as supporters. Supporters do not have voting rights, but may speak at internal meetings.

AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

Organisations may affiliate to Relatives for Justice, either at Group level or to the campaign as a whole. Their status shall be similar to other supporters. They may send up to two representatives to internal meetings.

ORGANISATION

Groups may be organised on either a district or city wide basis, depending on circumstances. Each group should prefix itself with the district or location for eg. Turf Lodge, Armagh.

Upon formation, each group should elect a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer. Unless the Group decides otherwise, the Chairperson will also act as Spokesperson.

Each group should also elect a representative to attend Co-ordinating Committee meetings.

CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

A Co-ordinating Committee shall be formed from representatives of each local group.

Upon formation, the Committee shall elect an Officer Board consisting of Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Co-ordinator.

CO-Ordinator

The co-ordinator will have three specific functions:-

- 1) To co-ordinate the activities of local groups, and to act as organiser for such centrally organised activities as may take place.
- ii) To ensure efficient and effective distribution of information and publicity material and, where necessary, its production.

- iii) To ensure that all local groups are kept fully informed of organisational developments.

INTERNAL MEETINGS

All Groups and the Co-ordinating Committee shall meet at least once a month. Voting at meetings shall be by show of hands. All decisions will be carried by simple majority.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

All Groups, and the Co-ordinating Committee shall have an annual general meeting once a year. This meeting will receive reports from elected officers, elect officers for the coming twelve months, and decide future policy.

CONFERENCES

A conference may be convened at any time by the Co-ordinating Committee. An annual policy conference shall be convened once a year, to receive reports from the Co-ordinating Committee and to decide overall policy. Conferences shall be open to all members and supporters.

NOTICE

At least one month's notice shall be given to members prior to conferences, at least two weeks notice for all other internal meetings.

FINANCE

Each group shall make its own financial arrangements. Where funds are donated or collected for the organisation as a whole, these shall be centrally held for disposal by the Co-ordinating Committee.

Relatives For Justice is a strictly non-party political group comprising of relatives of 142 people named by 10 informers. R.F.J. is in existence since March 1982 and in that time has campaigned on every informer case regardless of political persuasion, the issue is over and above and one consideration. It is a manipulation of judicial process - an abandonment of justice and is a danger to any society established on accepted principles of law.

The points below will cause you consternation that this is all proceeding in your name under Guise of British Justice:

- * 55 people convicted by the uncorroborated evidence of men induced to testify in return for immunity or the promise of a early release from prison.
- * 350 Charged on the word of self-confessed murderers and sectarian killers
- * Unrelated defendants given mass trial
- * Most defendants denied bail even on minor charges
- * RUC MEN charged with murder given bail within weeks of remand
- * Bill of indictment used to deny defendants the basic right to hear evidence against them.
- * It cost £8.4 million a year to keep these people in prison
- * Cost of legal aid unknown and immeasurable.
- * Black Trial cost over £1 million
- *****
- * Bennett (Informer) gave evidence in return for immunity page 40 of Bennett ruling "My immunity was for murder and other crimes I was involved in".
- * Bennett was a proven degenerate who said "my usefulness was measured by the number of men I would put away". Judge Murray convicted 14 men on Bennett's word.
- * Black (Informer) described by Judge Kelly as a "Perjurer and a murderer" Judge Kelly convicted 34 people on Blacks word .
- * Lord chief Justice Lowry described Mc Grady's (Informer) evidence as "Unsatisfactory and Inconsistence, contradictory and in some respects incredible and bizarre".
- * Commenting on Mc Grady's alleged conversion to christianity Lowry said "Mc Grady's act estranged from worldly calculation".
- * Lowry said "Mc Grady had a vested interest in convicting", Lowry convicted.
- * Grimley (Informer) discharged BA as a psychopath emotionally unstable, Grimley was a long history of mental illness, criminal activity and sexual Activity
- * Grimley has 22 people waiting trial since March 1982
- * Kirkpatrick (Informer) royal wedding bomb - plotter, 5 times convicted murderer has named 44 people in return for an early release from prison. Witnesses will testify to this.
- * Leon Britton stated police killers will serve 20 years - Bennett, Black, Gilmore, Quigley, Grimley, Goodman, O'Rawe, Morgan, McGurk, Lean, Kennedy have immunity and will escape the penalty for murder and serious crim.
- * Mc Grady, Allan, Kirkpatrick, Crockard, Smith, Skelly, etc etc will obtain an early release after conviction of murder and sectarian assassination.

- * Spectators not related to defendants have been denied access to Informer courts by R.U.C.
- * Spectators must give I.D. to R.U.C. before admittance to an Informer court.
- * R.U.C. enter spectators name and address into a book under a defendants name.
- * R.U.C. do not allow spectators to take notes in court (not against the law).
- * Defence witnesses kept outside court until giving evidence.
- * R.U.C. witnesses compare notes and remain in court even during a colleagues evidence.
- * R.U.C. harrass relatives in the court - a wife has been barred from court for smiling at her husband (Defendant)
