



11th April 1992

A CHRONOLOGY ON LESBIAN/GAY LAW REFORM

1861: August 6 :

Offences against the Person Act passed by British Parliament
Imposes ten years imprisonment or two years hard labour, for
sodomy or indecent assault.

1885: August 14:

Criminal Law Amendment Act passed by the British Parliament.
Imposes two years imprisonment, with or without hard labour,
for gross indecency.

1895: May 25:

Oscar Wilde sentenced to two years hard labour for 'crime' of
sodomy and gross indecency.

1974: June :

Irish Gay Rights Movement founded.

1977: November 21:

Norris v Attorney General (AG) commences. David Norris
challenges the anti-gay laws in the High Court.

1980: July 1, 2 & 22:

Norris v AG tried before the High Court.

1980: October 10:

High Court dismisses Norris' case; declares Ireland's anti-gay
laws are not unconstitutional. David Norris appeals to the
Supreme Court.

1981: September 23:

European Court of Human Rights finds Northern Ireland's anti-gay
laws to be in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights.

1982: November 9-12:

Supreme Court hears *Norris v Attorney General (AG)*.

1983: April 22:

Supreme Court hands down judgement in *Norris v AG*; finds the anti-gay laws are not unconstitutional. Senator David Norris appeals to the European Court of Human Rights.

1987: June:

Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) publishes "Lesbian and Gay Rights in the Workplace: Guide-lines for Negotiators".

1988: June 22:

The Government "Civil Service Policy on AIDS" declares: *'discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation will not be tolerated'*.

1988: October 26:

European Court of Human Rights Judgement, in the *Norris* appeal, finds Ireland's anti-gay laws contravene the European Convention on Human Rights.

1989: September:

Law Reform Commission issues consultation paper on "Child Sexual Abuse" which includes proposals on homosexual law reform.

1989: November 16:

Unanimous welcome for Government amending of Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act to include 'sexual orientation'.

1990: April:

Irish Council for Civil Liberties publishes "Equality Now for Lesbians and Gay Men".

1990: October:

Law Reform Commission "[Final] Report on Child Sexual Abuse" recommends that :

'the same legal regime should obtain for consensual homosexual activity as for heterosexual and that, in particular, no case had been established for providing that the age of consent should be any different'.

1990: December 4:

Criminal Law (Rape) (Amendment) Bill, 1988 debated in Dáil Éireann. The Act repeals the words ",or of any indecent assault

upon any male person " in section 62 of the Offences against the Person Act, 1861. An amendment to insert "non-consensual " - thereby effectively decriminalising homosexuality - fails.

1990: December 12:

Seanad Éireann debates the European Court of Human Rights Judgement. The Minister for Justice promises that:
'as early as I can within a year [a gay law reform bill] will be brought forward '

1991: June 6:

The Minister for State at the Department for Justice reiterates the commitment to *'introduce legislation in the next session'.*

1991: September 25: An Taoiseach, Mr. Haughey, declares that the question whether the law on homosexuality would be changed *'had still to be decided'*

1991: October 17:

Campaign for Equality launched by GLEN in European Communities Office and gains widespread support.

1991: October 18:

Programme for Government announces:

"During the course of the calendar year 1992 the Government will publish and process as speedily as possible ..[a] Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill...to bring the law in line with the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights".

1991: November 20:

On the third anniversary of the European Court of Human Rights Judgement GLEN makes a formal complaint to the Council of Europe about the Irish Government's delay in responding to the Court's judgement. GLEN requests action as part of the Council's six-monthly review.

1992: February 4:

The Minister for Justice states, in reply to a question in the Dáil:
'Work is progressing on the preparation of this legislation as quickly as other urgent legislative priorities and available resources permit. I hope to publish my proposals later this year.'

1992: March 10:

Equal Status Bill introduced in the Dáil by the Labour Party. The first anti-discrimination bill to include *'sexual orientation '*. Welcomed by all the Opposition; the Minister for Labour said he:

'hoped to get the approval of the Government shortly to begin work on drafting a comprehensive Bill on equality to replace the two original statutes.'

The Equal Status Bill is defeated 63 to 67.

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