

Ireland Recycles

By Charlene LaVoie, Community Lawyer

On a recent trip to Ireland, Community Technologist Susan McGoey and I met Mary Robinson, the President of Ireland and Sean Loftus, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, to talk about recycling, solid waste disposal and other environmental issues.

The Environmental Information Service (ENFO) is the information service of Ireland's Department of the Environment. The main office in Dublin has a research library open to the public, an exhibit area and an extensive resource area offering free materials to the public on issues from water filtration to garden composting to recycling.

On January 11, 1996, ENFO held a reception for the opening of an exhibit entitled, "The Value of Rubbish". This exhibit was developed by the group Self Help, a County Carlow based third world development agency founded in 1984 in response to the Ethiopian famine. The exhibit shows how Africans have used ingenuity to create household implements, agricultural tools and toys out of "rubbish."

Prior to the opening of the exhibit, we talked with the Dutch ambassador to Ireland who told us that in the Netherlands, space is in such short supply that recycling is of paramount importance and people recycle willingly and thoroughly. He remarked that Ireland has only recently started to make a significant effort to inform citizens about the need to recycle.

Mrs. Robinson's opening comments focused on the important efforts of Self Help and ENFO and stressed the ingenuity of

people to make something of nothing. Her words reminded us that we all share responsibility for the environment as the world gets smaller.

At the reception which followed, we were introduced to Sean D. Dublin Bay-Rockall Loftus, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, who wore his gorget, the ornamental sash with the seal of the city. The Lord Mayor refers to himself an environmentalist and notes that in 1981 he was the first environmentalist elected to parliament without support from either of the two major political parties. His motto "Job Opportunity with Environmental Responsibility" is printed on his interesting business card which also includes his photograph and a caricature drawing of the Lord Mayor as a "watchdog"! His interesting name is the result of an environmental battle he won to prevent the building of an oil refinery in Dublin Bay. The famous Dublin Bay-Rockall fight pitted the interests of the big oil companies against the environment and he uses the name proudly to remind people of the event.

The Lord Mayor is a vocal supporter of Ralph Nader and issued him an invitation to visit Dublin and speak to the people, saying "I've been trying to get Ralph Nader to Dublin for years, tell him we need to hear him talk about the important issues of the day."

The Lord Mayor travels extensively in the United States and he has assured us that on his next trip to New England, he is looking forward to visiting Winsted.

The next issue is February 15th. The deadline