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## AP PEACE FELLOW BRINGS OUT BRITISH PREJUDICE AGAINST IRISH TRAVELERS

June 11, 2007, Dale Farm (UK) and Washington, DC: Zach Scott, a 2007 Peace Fellow with the Advocacy Project (AP), has been criticized in the local British press for defending the rights of Irish Travelers who are facing possible eviction from the Dale Farm site in South East England.

The criticism was inspired by a June 6 profile of Mr. Scott in the Basildon Echo, a local newspaper. Scores of readers wrote in response to the article and many resented the fact that an American student would presume to criticize British authorities.

"Zach can always invite them (The Travelers) to go back home with him" commented one reader. "Also, perhaps he could do something about the plight of the Native Americans while he is about it."

In similar vein, a reader suggests: "Perhaps we should send someone to New Orleans to help the black populace fight against the prejudice suffered against them by their own Washington-based government."

Dale Farm has been at the center of a national controversy since June 2005 when the local council decided to evict 86 Traveler families from 50 properties, even though they owned the land. The case went to the British High Court, which suspended the eviction pending a hearing. But 11 properties were found to have been omitted from the ruling, and the council voted last week to clear them on July 6. Mr. Scott spent his first few days in the UK collecting paperwork from the 11 families, for use in an appeal.

Mr. Scott expressed sympathy for the Travelers in the article, and has since pointed out that half of the Travelers slated for eviction are elderly or terminally ill. The 11 families also include two deaf children, whose special schooling would stop if they were evicted.

Some of the response to Mr. Scott has revealed deep prejudice against the Travelers. "How naïve of Zachary," writes one reader in the Echo. "I bet he thinks he's helping a load of mis-understood Travelers just desperately wanting to be accepted by the local community. I wonder if he will ever see the abuse they give to locals, the crimes they commit, the violence they impose on anybody they don't like the look of, the old people they trick into handing over money for driveways or roof work they never come back to.

"I wonder if he will wonder how they afford...all those expensive caravans while all on the dole, and never doing a day's hard work in their lives."

Mr. Scott was recruited under the AP program Fellows for Peace to help the Travelers develop a communications strategy and expand their local and international contacts. Like all AP Peace

fellows, he is blogging about his work and in one recent blog he described attending a protest by the Travellers at a local amusement park.

The park is sponsored by a firm which supplies bulldozers used in past Dale Farm evictions, and the protest was another sign of the growing desperation of the Travelers. “If it comes down to eviction, it could get ugly fast,” writes Mr. Scott, who is studying for a Master's degree in Eurasian, Russian and Eastern European studies at Georgetown University.

AP has issued several bulletins on the Dale Farm crisis since 2005, using information supplied by the Travelers. These have been used by the Travelers in their campaigns.

\* For more information about Dale Farm and the Travelers visit <http://advocacynet.org/partners/minorities-indigenous/the-dale-farm-housing-association/>

\* For Zach Scott's blogs visit <http://advocacynet.org/author/zach/>

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