

ESG radio slot on a view on littering in our community

It must have been at least 15 yrs ago that we were repeatedly urged-almost ad nauseum- to put our litter in the bin. Over and over again, the voices of a children's choir reminded us of our duty as citizens to dispose of litter appropriately. Well, it seems as if the time is upon us when Gibraltar should embark on another major anti-litter campaign. Of course there are many other, far more serious, issues regarding the environment, with rather more deadly consequences than that of litter. Nonetheless, it is a fact that if we don't even think twice about disposing of rubbish any old how, we are hardly likely to take on the more onerous responsibilities of recycling, for example, or of choosing a greener lifestyle, by walking more, using water and electricity more sparingly, where possible, and so on.

On the 16th and 17th September, Gibraltar will be participating in Clean Up The World Day for the second year running. Last year it was a success in so far as over **300** people participated, whether in groups or as individuals **in the cleaning and several hundred more in a parade and exhibition connected to making a better environment.** **It** certainly raised awareness of exactly how bad the problem of litter is, here, of how much rubbish lies scattered all over so much of our small land. This year it looks as if even more people are going to join the effort and that is great....but not enough. We need to work towards a time when it will no longer be necessary to have a clean up Gibraltar day; when everybody will take responsibility for their rubbish and not assume that somebody else will come and clean up after them. Unfortunately, this slovenly attitude is prevalent amongst too many in our community. We need to teach our children, and our adults, if necessary, that cleaning services are there to clean up what gets dirty, inevitably, and NOT what somebody dirties through sheer laziness. This message needs to be put across at home and in schools and it is obviously being done successfully in that a majority of people are not litter bugs. Nevertheless, there is a significant minority which mindlessly litters wherever it goes, be it in town, the school playground, the beach or up the rock. These are the people who need to be reminded, through a concerted campaign-Govt-led ideally, that they need to change their bad habits.

And, as we all know, bad habits are not easy to break out of so it needs time and a consistent effort on the part of the campaigners before we can expect to see improved habits. Moreover, as well as education, we need enforcement of laws against littering. It is an unpleasant fact of human nature that some individuals only respond to punitive measures; no matter how hard you try to convince them rationally. As was done successfully regarding dog-fouling, many years ago, a few timely fines could shake the recalcitrant few, wonderfully. The pertinent authorities could start by fining all those who dump rubbish, on a daily basis; on those spots which a large sign claims is a NO DUMPING area. Maybe the message will then begin to filter through and maybe, after a while, we'll be able to concentrate on the really big environmental issues which affect us all, whether we think about them or prefer to ignore them. Like the tons of litter that lie strewn all over Gib, they're not going to go away unless we do something about it.