

Irish Welfare Bureau  
Hammersmith  
London



**ELEVENTH ANNUAL  
REPORT  
1981**

## INTRODUCTION

This is the Bureau's eleventh annual report and we are happy to share with you the comings and goings of the past year. In keeping with the depressing picture that we are all so familiar with, it will be no surprise to you to know that the Report is but another story in the long saga of the less fortunate now falling further and further behind in the poverty, accommodation and bread-line stakes. At the outset that is our overall feeling about the past year. It is based on the types of problems that faced us and the sharp rise in the numbers of people of all kinds and ages calling on us for help of every conceivable kind.

To meet these increasing needs, to feel capable of supplying the various wants, a tremendous back-up operation is necessary, and so this year I would like to say something to those people who by their caring attitude have become part of the operation that enabled us to cater for last year's 4436 callers.

The importance of your role cannot be emphasised enough. When we at the Bureau consider the tons of men's or women's clothing, the furniture, bedding and household goods that are distributed by the Bureau in a year, we begin to ask ourselves questions. We wonder where so much goodwill came from, and only then do we realize the importance of a caring community's involvement in the Bureau's operation. I know from experience that some people would be anxious to help at this level if they were approached. It is only a matter of spreading the gospel of our needs for goods and especially clothes as well as for finance.

In responding to the various appeals that I make for clothing etc., you are acknowledging the dignity of the human person. You are helping someone to achieve respectability, you are telling him he is wanted and needed, and for someone who for most of his life has been put down and kept down this is indeed a step forward, a real breath of fresh air and a shot in the arm. So often when they call they are at rock bottom. Did you ever realize when you were handing in a suit, shoes or underwear or having us call for bedding, furniture etc., that you were enabling us to build up and create a presence, a new appearance and status, that signified hope, a new assurance and faith in themselves — more hope in looking for a job too, or lodgings, with the new self-respect of wearing clean and decent clothes.

The Bureau has always set out to improve the quality of life of those people we meet every day, and I feel that this was achieved admirably during 1981. Without reporting on new projects I am satisfied that the year was eventful in coping with the increased demands that were made on us. On reflection, my happiest thought was that at no time during the year did the lack of resources influence a decision. In these dark days of financial disasters no finer tribute can be paid to our back-up team.

So to our immediate helpers who spend so much time and energy making sure that our cash-flow stays in a healthy state. We had our usual round of fund-raising efforts and I am happy to report that they all proved a great success. In all, this devoted and loyal band of volunteers raised £16,000 the highlight being the Christmas Bazaar. My thanks to each one concerned in this excellent achievement.

Once again the Bureau had funding from the London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham (£3,720) and from the Committee for Emigrant Services of the Irish Government (£3,200). I would like to express my appreciation to both these sources for their continued and valuable support.

We were pleased to be of service to a number of Irish Organisations in Welfare matters and, as before, I extend an invitation to any such groups who wish to use the Bureau for such purposes. My sincere thanks to the County and Parish organisations who gave us support, and also to the Welfare fund of the Council of Irish Counties.

My final salute is to my fellow workers, Sr. Jane Frances, Sr. Rosario, Chris and Kay. We thank all of you for the resources you put at our disposal to bring hope and happiness to so many people.

Brian Lawlor OSA.



## SOCIAL WORKERS REPORT

I hoped that after the grim economic picture which I had to paint in last year's report, that there would be more encouraging news in 1981. However, the most hopeful statement on the economic situation at the end of 1981 was very qualified indeed. The Daily Telegraph for 8th December 1981 printed a report of a BBC Panorama interview given by the Chancellor of the Exchequer Sir Geoffrey Howe. He admitted that economic recovery was 'maddeningly slow' and that he understood the anxiety of many Conservative MP's about the Government's policies, 'but' he said, 'it would be very foolish to try to change in another direction now'. He said that there were encouraging economic indicators. He did not spell out what these indicators were but he did say that 'it could be years and years' before there was a substantial fall in the unemployment figures. The figures continue to rise.

The housing problem is still with us. I understand from a Radio discussion I listened to that some of the large hostels for men are closing down and that they will be replaced by smaller units of accommodation with higher standards of living conditions. This is good news indeed for those lucky enough to obtain accommodation in these establishments. This redevelopment will entail a loss in the number of beds available for single homeless men thus throwing more people into the already overcrowded private sector scene of bed and breakfast accommodation which grows increasingly more and more expensive.

The position re employment and accommodation obviously shows no improvement for the vast majority. The message for anyone considering coming to Britain to seek employment remains the same 'Please do not Come!' unless through some extraordinarily good fortune they are guaranteed a job and accommodation. The general prospect is a hard battle just to survive at a minimal standard of existence.

The number of persons newly arrived from Ireland who called to the Bureau was, thank God, only 57. It is gratifying to see that last years message appears to have been received. The economic situation is once again reflected in our statistics. The total number of applications for help and advice continued to increase to reach the highest number ever dealt with in any one year since the opening of the Bureau. This total figure was 1260.

The statistics provided at the back of the Report show the varied types of problems which our clients brought to us. The largest group we dealt with was that of the older age groups (over 25's) of single unattached men with no permanent homes of their own. Their main

concern was to get accommodation and also help with material and personal problems arising from the lack of employment. The majority of these men are not 'down and outs'. They coped quite well when employment on construction work or in the catering trade was more readily available. Many are mentally ill.

The accommodation needs of the under 25's were met through our Hostel for young work-orientated Irishmen 'Austin House' and through referring some to hostels for young Irishmen and girls run by the Irish Centre, Camden Town, Benburb Base and other agencies. We are very fortunate to have Sister Rosario Nolan to care for the residents in Austin House. Her dedication to this work is truly remarkable.

The older age groups were helped through accommodation provided at our expense in some of the large hostels and privately owned bed and breakfast establishments. A few nights help them to organise themselves with the Dept. of Health and Social Security while seeking employment or to reorganise if they have become disorganised. Some clients meet their accommodation problem by squatting in empty run-down properties. These are people who prefer to do this rather than live in crowded Hostel accommodation or the shared sleeping accommodation offered by most of the so called Bed and Breakfast Guest Houses or are people who have been banned from these establishments due to their drink problem or violent behaviour.

They are open to many risks especially fire, violence and theft of their clothing. Some of these clients have come to us badly burned from fire while others had been beaten up in the squats.

It has become obvious over the years that there is a growing need for good hostel accommodation for these older men. The need is now urgent due to the rising demand coupled with the possibility of the loss of a considerable number of beds in hostels closing down for redevelopment and improvement.

Childless couples are another group which finds great difficulty in getting suitable accommodation if their means are limited. We can only help by referring them to agencies which offer some service in this field. The only help we can offer unmarried childless couples is single accommodation in hostels which are usually some distance apart. This help is generally unacceptable to them. Accommodation-wise there is nothing we can do for families apart from referring them to the local Housing Dept., where they may or may not get help depending on the circumstances of every case.

A feature which may have arisen from the present economic situation is that of the increasing number of women who are homeless and have taken to a vagrant way of life. Most of these have an alcoholic problem as have many of our male clients.



The volume of the work at the Bureau continued to increase in 1981. Interviews reached the total of 4436. This is an approx. 33% increase on last year's figure. Clients who have reached retirement pension age call to ask us to obtain their Birth Certificates from Ireland. This is a simple enough task for us but as so many are not too literate or are threatened by having to write official letters to Government Departments they find it a very helpful service and have spread the news among their friends. Most of them are able and more than willing to pay the cost involved. We are also often asked to obtain Birth Certificates for people needing identification for Dept. of Health and Social Security purposes i.e. applying for a National Insurance Number or for Supplementary Benefit while seeking employment. The Birth Certificate is also invaluable in tracing next of kin in cases of serious illness or death. I cannot stress too often the great importance of having one's Birth Certificate within easy access.

The demand for clothing and footwear was very heavy and it took all our best efforts to meet the demand. Our thanks is due to those friends of the Bureau who answered our appeals for items of clothing, footwear and household goods. We also appreciate the help given by the WRVS when we were unable to supply some particular items.

Furniture, utensils, cutlery and household furnishings were supplied to some people who were fortunate enough to qualify for a Council or Housing Trust flat and to families who were re-housed from temporary accommodation. Over one thousand five hundred take away meals were provided by an arrangement with a nearby Cafe. Grocery parcels were supplied to families and people living in flats, who were in temporary financial difficulties.

We continued to visit families in need of support, isolated people living alone and elderly Irishmen and women in Homes for the Elderly. We visited clients who were ill in Hospitals and provided them with comforts usually provided by relatives and friends. Clients write to us when they are enjoying The Queen's hospitality in Her Majesty's Prisons and where possible arrangements were made to visit them and support them on their release. Other clients were supported through constant telephone interviews. We undertook the burial of two of our clients in 1981. There was quite a demand from statutory and voluntary Social Services Agencies for holiday grants and financial grants for Irish families and individuals with some needs which could not be met by Public funds. Where ever possible a contribution was made towards the amount needed.

There is growing demand for the most basic needs. Through our efforts to provide these necessities we work at building up a friendly

relationship with our clients from which they can gain the confidence to come to discuss deeper personal problems when they feel the need to do so. We counsel and advise them. We direct them to other agencies for specialised treatment if necessary and support them in coping with their treatment. Clients have expressed appreciation by telling us how helpful it is to have somewhere they know about, to which they can come and where they know they are accepted as friends by people who are genuinely concerned about them. They find this a great strength in their personal struggle for survival. I do not use the words survival and struggle for dramatic effect. They simply describe the stark reality of life for single unattached unemployed persons, who have no home of their own, in Britain.

Clients often come to the Bureau just to chat and 'sort themselves out'. It is a focal point in their rather disorganised existence. It is a 'place to come to' when they have been through some very traumatic experience or when they are deeply depressed and lonely. I feel that there is a great need for a Small Day-Centre in this area to which these people can come more often. The volume of work done at the Bureau which entailed 4436 interviews in 1981 indicates that it would be impossible to extend day centre facilities here and that a growing need can only be met on a very limited scale. Perhaps such a Day Centre could be considered for future development in conjunction with the local Churches.

Our involvement with the Community Care Committee of the Federation of Irish Societies continued. This Committee organised Press, Television and Radio publicity in Ireland in February and March 1981. This publicity campaign was aimed at discouraging emigration from Ireland to Britain by people seeking employment and accommodation. It furnished facts on the economic and accommodation situation and showed how these effected Irish people arriving in Britain.

A Conference was held in April to encourage member societies of FOIS to develop and expand community care for the less fortunate members of the Irish Community in their local areas. A resolution that all member societies ought to appoint a Community Care Officer was passed unanimously at the Annual Congress of FOIS. This was followed up by organising a further Conference in November to brief and offer support to those who had been appointed as Community Care Officers and others who would be prepared to undertake the task in the future.

We in Hammersmith Irish Welfare Bureau work as part of the team which makes up the Irish Chaplaincy Scheme in Britain. This is a great source of strength and support. We are ably led by our Chaplaincy

Director, Father 'Bobby' Gilmore. It is great to be part of a movement launched by the Church to bring Spiritual and material aid to the most vulnerable members of our Irish community in Britain. The vast amount of work done in Hammersmith Irish Welfare Bureau is only made possible by the great team spirit of our Bureau Director Father Brian Lawlor OSA., 'Kay and Chris' our Bureau staff, and all the voluntary helpers. I thank them most sincerely for their cheerful and dedicated co-operation. May God Bless them and all those involved in the Irish Chaplaincy Scheme.

Sister Jane Frances  
Social Worker.



## ANALYSIS OF REFERRALS

Total number of cases dealt with in 1981 = 1260\*

*This figure includes	)	A.	Cases carried forward	
	)		from previous years.	502
	)	B.	New cases referred in 1981	758
				<hr/> 1260 <hr/>

This case load entailed:

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>
Domiciliary visits	243	230	232
Hospital Visits	130	80	134
Prison Visits	20	11	25
Supportive appearances in Court	19	8	1
Telephone enquiries	2431	2460	2105
Escorts to Trains, planes etc.	25	15	12
Interviews in Bureau	2346	3338	4436
Ongoing supportive work	195	512	469
Number of persons repatriated	7	4	8
Burials	1	6	2

## New Referrals

### Age Groups

	15-17	18-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	
	13	36	82	92	209	162	128	68	
						1979	1980	1981	
Males						463	609	651	
Females						165	172	139	
Families						42	23	47	

### Types of Problems

New arrivals from Ireland	78	100	57
Financial	222	329	505
Accommodation	234	304	306
Employment	33	54	52
Information	33	40	24
Advice	28	42	46
Material aid (Clothing etc.)	145	243	237
Personal	17	16	25
Marital	26	27	14
General Welfare	25	17	21
Emotional & Mental	34	13	27
Ex-Offenders	14	20	15
Alcoholics, Drug addiction, gambling	32	37	45
Pregnant and unsupported mothers	6	6	15
Application for repatriation	11	16	11

### Sources of Referrals

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>
Alone - in - London	—	1	3
C.A.B.	1	1	2
Centre Point	6	11	15
Clergy	133	124	105
CRAC	—	—	1
Crusade of Rescue	—	1	1
CSS Prisoners	—	—	1
DHSS	2	1	1
DRO	9	8	2
Employers	—	1	2
Emp. Exchange	—	—	2
Friends/Clients	175	207	324
FSU	—	—	1
Hungerford Project	—	—	1
Irish Association	1	11	1
Irish Embassy	1	1	1
Job Centre	—	—	1
LBH Housing Aid Centre	—	—	1
Legion of Mary	2	1	1
Marylebone Day Centre	—	—	2
Medical Social Workers	—	—	2
Nazareth House	—	—	5
Personal Applications	142	100	235
Probation Service	—	—	5
Riverpoint	—	—	8
Saint FX Soc. Services Centre, Dublin	—	—	1
Simon Community	—	—	1
Single Homeless Project	—	—	2
Tara Employment Agency	—	—	1
Tara Hotel	—	—	1
Welcare	—	—	1



### Boroughs

Hammersmith	10	8	15
Islington	1	1	1
Kensington & Chelsea	2	4	3

### Social Services Ireland

Donegal	1	1	1
Kilkenny	—	—	1

### Accommodation Table 1981

Analysis of Total number of applications for accommodation:

Description	16—25	26—40	41—64	65—80+	Total
Single males	90	202	155	21	468
Single Females	23	7	7		37
Childless ) Males		3	2		5
Couples ) Females	1	2	2		5
Families )					
excluding ) Males		1	2		3
children ) Females	1	1	1		3
	115	216	169	21	521

**Places of Origin**  
**Counties of Ireland**

	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>
Antrim	6	26	29
Armagh	10	5	7
Carlow	2	4	3
Cavan	6	4	11
Clare	7	16	15
Cork	44	79	61
Derry	7	16	14
Donegal	19	25	24
Down	20	4	18
Dublin	40	76	86
Fermanagh	4	3	8
Galway	19	29	33
Kerry	25	28	28
Kildare	4	15	10
Kilkenny	7	5	7
Leitrim	6	3	2
Leix	—	3	3
Limerick	30	27	40
Longford	7	5	8
Louth	3	5	4
Mayo	14	19	31
Meath	4	6	6
Monaghan	5	7	5
Offaly	4	4	5
Roscommon	7	10	9
Sligo	8	9	16
Tipperary	21	30	46
Tyrone	2	15	9
Waterford	13	17	26
Westmeath	5	6	18
Wexford	7	13	16
Wicklow	7	5	5
County not known	11	19	6

**Places of Origin**  
**Other Nationalities**

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England	125	121	109
Scotland	43	42	38
Wales	10	14	12
Other Countries of Origin	20	20	22