

Director: Fr. Brian Lawlor, O.S.A.

Social Worker: Sr. Alice, Irish Sisters of Charity

* IRISH * WELFARE BUREAU

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT

OCTOBER 1970 - 1971

*St. Augustine's Priory,
55 Fulham Palace Road,
Hammersmith, W6 8AU
Telephone: 01-741 0421*

INTRODUCTION

In setting out the Bureau's first Annual Report I feel some background notes are necessary in order to explain the reasons behind establishing the Irish Welfare Bureau at Hammersmith. X In 1967 the Augustinians were asked to officially appoint priests to the chaplaincy team to cater for the needs of the Irish in West London. X The first chaplains in the area were Fathers Leahy and Fogarty. Father Leahy returned to Ireland in 1967 and I joined Father Fogarty. X Our initial work was confined to the visitation of lodging houses, dance halls, pubs and building sites. From a very early stage this contact work showed us that eventually the chaplaincy would have to provide a service of some kind. However, with no resources behind us, either for transport for ourselves or material aid to help people whom we felt at the time needed much more than words of consolation, we decided to set up a fund that would enable us to plan for the future.

In retrospect the setting up of this fund has meant far more than just raising money, it gave the chaplaincy work certain prominence in the area as it brought about an awareness of the many existing problems of some of our Irish people. Our presence became better known and as a consequence the number of referrals from the local parishes and various local organisations increased. X

With money and problems on the increase the idea of some kind of local unit was conceived as part of the chaplaincy team. In discussion with experienced men like Bishop Casey and Father Paul Byrne not only did we get advice but a great amount of encouragement to establish such a unit.

My three years experience in the West London area convinced me of the need for a Social Worker. X Before any development could be planned it was necessary to secure the services of such a person. With the able assistance of Father Paul Byrne an approach was made early in 1970 to the Provincial of the Irish Sisters of Charity with the possibility that one of the Sisters might undertake this work. A most favourable reply was received from Mother Provincial stating that a Sister Alice who was completing her studies would be made available for the work in October.

X Sister Alice arrived in Mid-October '70 and after some discussion on the work of the chaplaincy it was decided to formulate aims along which

lines we hoped to work. The name Irish Welfare Bureau was decided upon because of the directive, informative nature of the aims we set ourselves. Our first task was to meet the Director of Operations for the Borough of Hammersmith to discuss our aims with him. We had hoped that the Borough might consider giving us office accommodation and possibly financial help, however, our optimism was short lived and a rather formal meeting ended with some words of encouragement from the Director.

Reading this report one might get the impression that we had put the cart before the horse; aims, social worker and ideals, but not office. Thanks to Father Curran P.P. at Hammersmith this problem was short lived. His permission was sought, and very kindly granted, to turn a disused room in the basement of the Priory into an office with facilities for interviewing in the front parlours.

Early in 1971 it was decided to investigate the possibilities of a separate building for the Bureau, a house in the area seemed the obvious target to work towards. However, on investigation we found the securing of such a property would be far beyond our financial resources. For health reasons alone it was imperative to get office accommodation as quickly as possible but to do so within the scope of our limited financial position. Once again we turned to the community at Hammersmith and sought permission to build a pre-cast building in the parish car park, this permission was very kindly granted.

Plans were drawn up and the necessary permissions sought from the Borough and G.L.C. After some difficulties about the location of the building these permissions were granted. Work commenced at the end of October '71 and it is expected to be completed by early January '72.

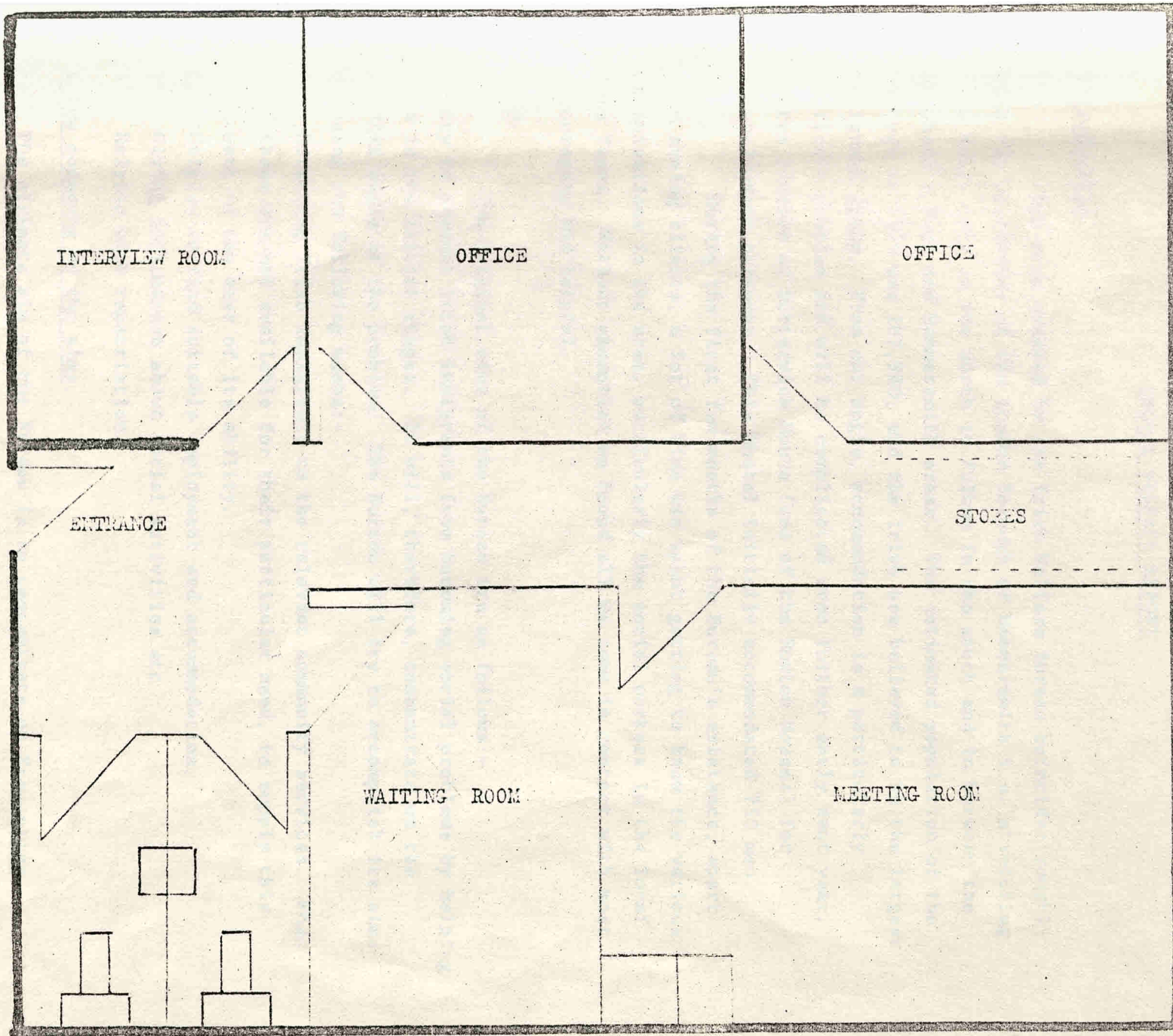
I mentioned early in my report the setting up of a fund with a view to further planning, I have endeavoured to keep this fund going with the help of many friends in London and Ireland. I am more than indebted to these people for the many long hours they have spent in organising functions to make the Bureau possible. In particular I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Augustinian Order, The Irish Sisters of Charity, my many friends in Dublin and West London, also the Monaghan Association in London.

In thanking all the people who have made the Bureau possible I feel our first annual report would not be complete without a special word of gratitude to Father Finbarr Fogarty. As the first area chaplain his pioneering work contributed in no small way to the establishing of the Bureau.

The Bureau owes a great debt to Sister Alice, no words of mine can adequately express my appreciation to her. Her untiring devotion to work has been a wonderful example to all of us who are associated with the Bureau.

Father Brian Lawlor O.S.A.

PLAN OF THE NEW BUREAU



28' 0"

32' 0"

SOCIAL WELFARE REPORT

Introduction

The area covered by the Irish Welfare Bureau coincides roughly with the boundaries of the London Borough of Hammersmith i.e. stretching from White City in the north to Fulham in the south and in between the Shepherd's Bush and Hammersmith areas. The estimated population of the Borough in 1970 was 187,980; and the Irish are believed to be the largest immigrant group. From our angle, accommodation is a particularly difficult problem and will be complicated even further early next year, by the closure of Butterwick House (one of the Rowton Houses) for redevelopment purposes. This Hostel initially accommodated 750 men.

During the first few months of the Bureau's existence, apart from seeing clients, a lot of time was spent getting to know the various organisations in the area, particularly the social workers in the local Area Teams. Without exception we found all we came in contact with most encouraging and helpful.

Aims.

The original aims of the Bureau are as follows:-

To try to prevent Irish immigrants from becoming social problems by helping them in the initial stages. It will, therefore, concentrate on the WELFARE angle of the problem. The Bureau will try to accomplish its aims by using the following means:-

- 1) Directing Irish immigrants to the relevant community services. When these are not available for their particular need, to supply this want to the best of its ability.
- 2) Helping to find suitable employment and accommodation.
- 3) Giving information about social activities etc.
- 4) Helping with repatriation.

A few comments on the aims.

- A) The ultimate aim of the Bureau is to concentrate on Preventive work: encouraging, as far as possible, a more thorough preparation for emigration; continuing help and support where needed on arrival

in England etc. One cannot, however, ignore the many problems already on the doorstep. These latter form the main bulk of the work done by the Bureau over the past 12 months.

- B) It is in no way the aim of the Bureau to overlap on Local Authority Services; rather it hopes to supplement these where the needs of the Irish are concerned. Neither does the Bureau, by setting itself up as a service for the Irish immigrant, wish to become a source of segregation rather than integration.
- C) Because accommodation is such a pressing need of the average Irish immigrant the Bureau tries to help in this direction. It meets with more or less the same frustrations as most other agencies which try to help in this way; i.e. some success with young, single people and almost complete failure where the elderly, physically handicapped and parents with children are concerned. This is one of the areas the Bureau hopes to develop more fully in the coming year.

The Set-Up

As has been mentioned earlier on in the general introduction the Bureau has been functioning from a basement office in St. Augustine's Priory, with the use of a couple of rooms upstairs for interviewing. Under the guise, and one might add the 'protection' of the Priory the Bureau has been able to complete its first year without being so pressurised with work as to make it impossible for it to get securely on its feet. At the same time, I feel that our being attached to the Priory must have to some extent, influenced the type of client we have had.

Running of Office

From the very beginning it was clear that time would have to be allocated to follow-up work and consequently that home visits would sometimes be necessary. The advantage of being able to do this is clear, say, in the case of a family who because of some crisis or other happens to be without food, because one can promise a visit later on that day. In the first place one can make sure the problem really exists and if it does one can assess the situation more accurately.

At this stage the problem of manning the office when neither Father Lawlor or myself could be there became an urgent one. Here we were helped greatly by our first voluntary worker Miss Nan McGill. A part-time teacher herself she devoted many hours to typing and answering the telephone. Because of a change of post Miss McGill had to leave us in July.

By this time we had been promised the services of Mrs. Christine Willison who was about to retire after 32 years in the Hammersmith Town Hall information office. This was mid July and Mrs. Willison could not start until November. Mrs. Kay Mazur who had already become involved with the Bureau, organising the clothing side of the service, now very kindly stepped in to fill the gap and did so very efficiently too. I must mention here Mrs. Mazur's daughter Kathy whose skill as a typist has seen us through many a pressurised moment.

Mrs. Christine Willison has now joined us on a part-time basis and we consider ourselves very fortunate to have such an experienced person with so much information at her finger-tips, working with us.

I would like, at this point to thank very sincerely these four voluntary workers, without whose services the Bureau certainly could not have been run efficiently. The Union of Catholic Mothers and all those who helped to run the two Jumble Sales we had during the year, also deserve a special word of thanks.

Students

The course for Augustinian students was run as usual, for the third year. The aim of the course is to broaden their outlook on Social-

Pastoral problems. This year along side our former contacts, we arranged for the students to meet some of the lecturers we had had at the course in the Holloway Institute.

Conclusion

Before ending this brief report I would like to thank all the priests, statutory and voluntary agencies and individual social workers in England and Ireland, particularly my own Religious Community, who have made the work of the past year possible.

I want to say a special word of thanks to all at St. Augustine's Priory, who have not only housed us for the past year, but also borne with great patience the inconvenience to themselves this has necessarily entailed.

Anyone who knows Father Lawlor is aware of his genuine interest in and deep concern for the needs of people. Not only have these qualities been the driving force behind the establishment of the Irish Welfare Bureau and the work he has undertaken for clients over the past few years, but they have also contributed greatly to the happy atmosphere and team spirit which exist at the Bureau. Thanks to Father Lawlor's foresight and hard work at fund raising during the past four years, not only have we been able to set up the Bureau and keep it running this year, but are also looking forward to moving into our new building in January.

On behalf of our voluntary workers and myself I would like to say a very sincere thank you to Father Lawlor for being such an amiable Director and colleague.

Sister Alice

11th November 1971.

Simple Analysis of Referrals

OCTOBER 1970 - 1971									
Age Groups	0-16	17-19	20-24	25-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60+	Not Known
	8	40	106	70	101	81	36	25	43
Overall Total:									511

Types of Problem	No.	Types of Problem	No.
Financial	255	General Welfare	71
Employment	64	Ex-Offender	60
Accommodation	303	Mental Disorder	29
Marital	50	Orphan	2
Material	32	Pregnancy	11
Advice	28	Repatriation	17
Emotional	9	Information	44
Personal	62		

Males 328

Females 183

Families 162

Other Nationalities 55

Total Number of Referrals:- 477.