

MINUTES OF THE TWENTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGOF THE COUNCIL FOR THE IRISH CENTREHELD 24th APRIL 1975.

The Chairman of the Administrative Committee, Mr. Martin Moroney, presided at the meeting in the absence of the President of the Council, the Rt. Hon. Lord Longford KG, who sent his apologies owing to his absence from the country. The Chairman declared the meeting open and asked the Hon. Secretary, Mr. John Nee, to read the Notice Convening the Meeting.

The Minutes, having been circulated, were taken as read and proposed for adoption by the Rev. Fr. T. McNamara and seconded by Mr. T. Dunne.

The Chairman welcomed everyone in his opening remarks and said he was gratified by such a large gathering. He pointed out that the year had seen some very major changes in the Centre and that sadly it had lost Fr. Mee a very fine Director, Fr. Sheridan - who had almost become synonymous with the Centre - and the Administrative Secretary, Miss Therese Healy, who however, was continuing in a voluntary capacity and was minuting the meeting.

The Chairman continued, it was his pleasure to welcome in Fr. Mee's place, the new Director of the Irish Centre, Rev. Fr. Cagney (applause), and his new assistant Fr. Ryan (applause), who have already shown their interest in the Centre.

We are at the 20th AGM the Chairman continued, and we have had some difficult problems but much has been achieved, and Fr. Cagney was not a man to let the grass grow. Congratulations were due to all connected with the Welfare Department of the Centre, under the Chairman, Dr. L. Morton, the Sisters; Fr. Carolan - who was in charge of Hope House, Quex Rd, and looking after 100 men there continuously, and we had to thank Fr. Carolan for the great work he was doing (applause). At the same time, Sr. Thecla at the Girl's Hostel was also doing splendid work, and for the first time it was showing a profit, and thanks were due to her also.

Tribute should be paid to the Social Club Committee under their Chairman Mr. Pat Hegarty, for all the work they were doing, and also to the Manager, Mr. Michael Lahiffe and Mrs. Norah Lahiffe who should be credited with their contribution. Newcomers to the Centre always received a welcome from them, and they coped excellently with all the problems, particularly the unexpected. To the Administrative Committee, the Chairman paid a personal note of appreciation saying how well they worked together with great co-operation, and were most faithful in attending the meetings.

Fr. Cagney then rose to give the Annual Report. He pointed out that it was not his own Report but that Fr. Mee had prepared it prior to his assignment.

The Report was adopted on a proposal by Cllr. P. O'Connor, and seconded by Mr. J. Branagan. In seconding the adoption, Mr. Branagan asked that it be put on record that the Report gave an account of the most successful year in the history of the Centre, and that Fr. Mee was to be congratulated.

The Accounts were then adopted on a proposal by Cllr. P. O'Connor and seconded by Fr. T. McNamara. Fr. T. McNamara added that the Auditors Representative, Mr. T. Brennan, assisted by the Hon. Accountant, Mr. P. Keegan had dealt with the Centre's accounts since it started, and he expressed appreciation of this and asked it be recorded.

A question was raised by Mrs. Smyth on the Accounts, concerning the Deeds of Cove - nant, she asked if all the Deeds were included in the accounts. Miss Healy explained that not all of them were able to be included as there were some queries on several.

The Chairman announced the following appointments:

- (a) Cardinal Heenan had appointed Rev. Fr. William Cagney OMI as Chaplain for the coming year, and Rev. Fr. P. Cassidy as Westminster Diocesan Representative on the Administrative Committee.
- (b) Archbishop Cowderoy had appointed Rev. Fr. Ambrose Woods to continue as Southwark Diocesan Representative on the Administrative Committee.
- (c) Bishop Patrick Casey had appointed Rev. Fr. John Gordon as Brentwood Diocesan Representative on the Administrative Committee.

Under Rule 6 (II) of the Constitution the following were appointed to serve on the Administrative Committee:

Mr. Martin Moroney, Mr. John Nee, Mr. P.J. Keegan, Mr. T. Dunne.

Under Rule 6 (I) of the Constitution the eight outgoing officers of the Administrative Committee, having indicated their willingness to stand for re-election and no other proposals being offered, were unanimously re-elected on a proposal by Mr. T. O'Reilly, seconded by Cllr. O'Connor.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS: Messrs. C.F. Burton & Company were appointed Auditors for the coming year:

Proposed by : Cllr. P. O'Connor. Seconded by : Mr. P.J. Keegan.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS: The Chairman told the meeting that Fr. Ambrose Woods was unable to be present as he was sick in hospital, and the good wishes for his speedy recovery from the meeting would be conveyed to him.

Mr. John Liddy proposed that a letter from the AGM be sent to Fr. Mee thanking him for all he had done for the Centre, and that it be recorded. This was seconded by Cllr. P. O'Connor. Cllr. O'Connor also welcomed the Rev. Fr. Cagney as the new Director, and the Chairman then asked Fr. Cagney to speak.

Fr. Cagney said he was pleased to have the opportunity to say a few words, and to explain that Fr. Mee had continued to work against great odds as he was a sick man, but now was happily recovering and had been assigned to Dublin. Fr. Cagney went on to give a short account of having come from Australia, and been asked to come to the Centre. He was greatly impressed with the work being carried out and the support of the people using the Irish Centre in London. It was his firm intention to work closely with the Administrative Committee and all the other people who work for the Centre. He continued, Fr. Mee would be anxious for him to say a few words about the plans for the coming year. The purchase of Hope House and the adjoining property had been accomplished, and the development of the adjoining property would be the priority in the coming year. How it would be developed would be in accordance with the needs of the people using the Centre such as family people - a creche; youth; adolescents; and adults. We must provide for the cultural needs, the physical needs, and the spiritual needs. The Faith is always of first importance to Irish people. But over all, the Irish Centre existed for welfare and we hoped to provide a building which could deal with the needs of welfare with dignity and privacy and this would be treated as first and top priority. This should be a separate building with a separate entrance with accommodation for social workers for a 24-hour service.

Fr. Cagney said he believed this plan could be implemented by the Centre for the Irish people in London. He had already found great co-operation with the Camden Borough Council, and with the help and support of everyone concerned we should have the finest Irish Centre in England.

The next speaker was Vice-President Mr. John Branagan who is proposing a vote of thanks to Fr. Cagney, said he was obviously a powerful driver and inspired success. Mr. Branagan mentioned the problems of adult education, and explained that it was quite simple for the Centre to be allied to ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) which he and Councillor O'Connor represented, and they would be delighted to assist.

Councillor P. O'Connor was the next speaker, and he explained that Camden Borough had donated £2,500 in a Grant, but he would have thought on present day economics it should be more. He hoped the funds would increase - subscriptions might be increased - as with the accomplishment of Hope House, of which we should be justly proud, and all the other amenities provided we have already one of the finest Centres in this Country, but it has got to expand.

Cont.

The Chairman in acknowledging the speakers, remarked on Cllr. O'Connor's great help in the past and was pleased we could continue to rely on him.

Mr. Tadgh Feehan then rose to convey a message from his Excellency the Irish Ambassador of thanks and good wishes to the Irish Centre. Mr. Feehan said having been concerned with the Centre for the past twenty years, he would like to be associated with all the tributes paid.

The Chairman in concluding, said a tribute must be paid to the Priests who work in the Irish Centre present and past. They give of their veryutmost, and it was appropriate to welcome to the meeting a Vice-President who was the first Chaplain of the Irish Centre, Fr. Tom McNamara. In seeing what had been achieved, it should be remembered how much we owe to Fr. McNamara, and he must be gratified to see the results himself.

Mr. John Liddy then proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Moroney the Chairman, and to Fr. Ryan for his fine work with the Youth Club, which he had inaugurated.

The meeting closed at 9.30 p.m.


