

INTRODUCTION

My Lord President, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Again, it is my privilege as Director, to present to you, the Council of the Irish Centre, the 26th. Annual report of the Irish Centre. This report concerns itself with the year 1980.

The assembly gathered here this evening is the Council of the Irish Centre whose purpose is to maintain our Irish Centre, to carry out eight objectives as set out in the Constitution. Fortunately for me and perhaps also for you the Administrative Committee has suggested that my report should be brief, at least in comparison to previous ones, thus providing more time for discussion of those matters of importance in the report and for the continued betterment of the Centre.

1 Services rendered in accordance with objectives -;

a Conway House

The actual bed occupancy was about 32,000, representing 539 people

b Marion House

The bed occupancy was 11,022, representing 196 girls

c Through the Irish Centre Welfare Service

1412 gained accommodation

757 gained employment

1865 received counselling, advice, information

58 were repatriated

Visits to hospitals, hostels, homes, prisons, courtrooms were in excess of 1025

d Social Functions

McNamara Hall - 93 functions

J.F.Kennedy Hall - 67 functions

D.H.Lounge - 170 functions

e Cultural Activities

193 functions

f Spiritual

4 per Sunday and 1 per day

g Telephone service - outgoing costings for phone service £3,400 and an average one way estimate, a similar volume of reception of incoming messages.

The above is a cold statistical method of quantifying the services rendered by the Centre over the year. However it cannot in any way interpret the man-hours of work, the dedication, and energy expended of so many full and part-time employees of the Centre plus the tremendous effort by so many voluntary workers. A detailed Welfare Report you will already have seen.

Other aspects worthy of note in our Annual Report I will now mention :-

ST. LOUISE'S GIRLS HOSTEL

In 1975, the Administrative Committee made a decision to replace the girls hostel at Hornsey Lane with a bigger, more modern and one nearer to work and more central to the city. 1980 saw the happy culmination of this project. The new hostel, named St. Louise was ready for occupation and is now occupied. Sr. Anthony of the Daughters of Charity of England and Srs. Catherine and Edna of the Sisters of Mercy, Tuam are in charge. Two tributes are in order - to the Housing Corporation which made finances in excess of one million available for purchase and rehabilitation and to the sub-committee who monitored the progress of development to a most successful conclusion. During the month of May a team from the Housing Corporation carried out an inspection of the books, property and running of our Hostels. Their visit was a very constructive one; a subsequent report on the visit expressed satisfaction and made proposals for the strengthening of the Hostels Association.

SOCIAL CLUB

The Social Club Committee had a very strenuous year. The curtailment of space and hindrances innate to tradesmen on the premises made their work quite difficult. The growing pains associated with the breaking-in of the McNamara in its first year of operation was an added challenge to the all too few working members of the Committee. The cold statistic of over five hundred engagements speaks well for the demand and use of the Centre.

The Irish Centre together with the County Associations produced a very successful Festival for the Irish Community in London. In return the Irish Community responded, as one would have wished, in a dignified way reflecting honour to itself and portraying its own culture, humour and family values.

CULTURAL

Culturally the Centre continues to promote many aspects of our Irish Heritage. While hoping that much more could be done in this field, one admires the tireless efforts of Tommy Maguire, Joe Farrell, Paddy Crean and the members of Comhaltas Ceoiltoiri Eireann.

DEVELOPMENT

1980 was the year to reflect on the development programme of the Centre. The completion of the new build phase and its operation on the one hand and study of the 2nd phase which comprises the rehabilitation of the old building on the other hand.

As regards the latter, plans are now at a very advanced stage and work on site should begin within weeks. This phase known as the Camden Sq. frontage will provide new premises for welfare activities, necessary accommodation, meeting rooms and entrance to the McNamara Hall.

This phase could not be contemplated in our present financial situation and only through the generous offer from the Irish Government of nearly £250,000 which I acknowledged in my previous report can this phase be commenced.

I must refer here to the critical financial position at this point of time of the Centre. I am conscious that I address myself to the Council of the Centre as the body whose responsibility it is to maintain an Irish Centre in London. The detailed report will be presented to you later when you can reflect on the seriousness of the figures.

As I see it there is a two fold challenge facing you and its the facts that are challenging - On the one hand there is the full and profitable use of the premises which while satisfying the objectives of the Centre, can also generate finance to service the debt and on the other hand your co-ordinated effort to raise funds from outside to reduce the debt.

As regards the former, we are most appreciative of the many organizations who have used the facilities of the Centre, but could more be done, could you interest more organizations to avail of the Centre's facilities ?.

Raising funds outside of the Centre is the second challenge. With the best good will, the Committee employed a professional agency last year to raise funds, Unfortunately it has been a total failure and now we are left to our own devices. Gratefully we acknowledge the fund raising efforts of many organizations as you will see in the financial report. But again I ask you members of the Council could there not be more co-ordinated efforts made by the societies and organizations that you represent to break the back of the debt and so reduce at least the huge interest bill. Examples come to mind like, covenants, interest free loans, football pools, 300 clubs etc..

ADMINISTRATION

In a few moments you will be forming the new Administrative Committee for the next year. The outgoing Committee has worked extremely hard. Its working has been so structured as to the formation of sub-committee's who specialize in various aspects of the Administration e.g. Planning, Management, Welfare etc.. Perhaps this is the reason of many more people becoming involved in the operation of the Centre, contributing their experience, expertise, and influence to the efficient running of the Centre and serving the many needs so important to the healthy life of our people. Opportunities that are more obvious appear to me to be the Youth, Irish Culture, Fund-Raising, P.R.O., Liason officers with other organizations, Adult Education, etc..

FINANCE

The accounts show that our liabilities have increased by £114,153 to £960,318.

Current assets have increased by £231,050 to £316,972 due in the main to the receipt of the Irish Government grant for the development of the next phase.

Fixed assets have increased by £186,552 to £1,360,915 such increase representing principally the cost of further work on the development programme including the loan interest related thereto. It should be emphasised that the fixed assets are included in the accounts at their cost to date and such cost bears no relation to their current market value.

Apart from the Irish Government grant the funds of the Centre have been augmented by amounts contributed from covenants, charity walks, donations, and management charges less the deficit shown in the Income and Expenditure account.

COVENANTS INCOME (£10,693)

Bank of Ireland	5103.	
Allied Irish Bank	5102	
M. Moroney	206	
M. Brunton	149	
McCann & Looney	104	
Mrs. W. Smythe	<u>29</u>	<u>£10,693</u>

DONATIONS INCOME (£40,419)

Camden Boro' Council grant	14,000	
London Irish Festival	7,000	
Leitrim Association -Pools	7,280	
Cork Association	2,000	
Sisters of Charity	1,400	
Sea -Link	1,000	
Irish Centre Golf Society	1,000	
V. James	1,000	
Clare Association	1,300	
Carlow Association	.500	
Galway Association	.500	
Waterford Association	.500	
Comhaltas C. Eireann	200	
Monaghan Association	100	
Mr. & Mrs. Stapleton	100	
Anon. S/O (17th. March). under £100	<u>2,539</u>	£40,419

I wholeheartedly endorse the expression of gratitude to the staff and voluntary workers and various committee's for a wonderful year's work. Their dedication and perseverance has been exemplary and personally I feel a very deep sense of gratitude to all. Two people I feel I must mention specifically - His Excellency Dr. Eamonn Kennedy our Ambassador who is magnanimous in his interest and practical co-operation and understanding of the Centre and its objectives, and to Fr. Butler whose priestly welfare and support for every aspect of the Centre has been enormous.

Thank you.
