

THIRTIETH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE LONDON IRISH CENTRE

INTRODUCTION

It is once again my great privilege to welcome you, my Lord President, Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, to this 30th Annual General Meeting of the London Irish Centre. This report is for the calendar year 1984 which has indeed been an historic year for our Centre. In the opening remarks of last year's Annual Report I referred to the previous year as the "the year of our financial salvation". This referred to the tremendous fund raising activities of that year and to the restructuring of the Centre's loans by very skilful and professional negotiations. We have been walking in the light of that success during the year 1984 and we have taken great heart in being able to follow it.

The story of our finances and fund raising has to be a top priority. However, we must always remember that at the end of the day our main aims and objectives are all about serving people, especially the needy.

REPORT

The following headings will help to give an accurate report of the activities of the Centre for the year.

WELFARE

A separate welfare account is available for the Community Services Department and this also incorporates a report from our hostels. It is only right that the Welfare Report should be the first heading as this is indeed our primary work. The most startling thing about the 1984 report is that it marks a turning point in emigration from Ireland to London in this decade. Our statistics show that almost 80% of those coming to Britain are between the ages of 18 to 25 and that 75% were unemployed in Ireland. The extra work load has put enormous pressure on our Welfare staff. I pay tribute to a dedicated and generous personnel for their dependability and dedication. In the foreward of the Welfare Report tribute is paid to Sister Joan Moriarty who had spent almost ten years of her life working here at our Welfare Department. I would like to endorse that tribute in this report and renew our thanks to Sister for ten years of serving the poor and underprivileged in her capacity as a Welfare worker at our Centre.

HOSTELS

Irish Centre Hostels Limited incorporating Conway House, 20 Quex Road and St. Louises Hostel, 33 Medway Street, produces a separate report on its work. The redevelopment at Conway House was completed in March 1984 and for the remainder of 1984 was working to capacity (99 beds). St. Louise Girls Hostel which accommodates 130 girls continues to maintain a high standard of service and a maximum occupancy with an average 60% Irish guests.

To the staff at our hostels - especially to Fr. Frank Ryan, O.M.I. and Bro. Charles Gallagher, O.M.I. (Conway House), to Sr. Anthony and Sr. Una of the

Continuation Sheet 2.

Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul (St. Louise) I extend a special word of gratitude. The work at the hostels present many of the current problems facing young people in our society today, unemployment, drugs, youth placements, health etc etc which require specialised care and attention. At all times the staff have met the demands such problems made upon them throughout the year.

DEVELOPMENT

We are pleased to report that Irish Centre Hostels Limited has been successful in purchasing an adjacent site to Conway House with a view to developing specialist accommodation for single elderly people. We are optimistic that funding for the development of the project will be forthcoming from the Department of the Environment through the Housing Corporation. The costs will be in the area of half a million pounds and in this regards we publicly acknowledge, with thanks, the co-operation and support of these bodies.

EXISTING SERVICES (CAMDEN SQUARE)

The 1984 Annual Welfare Report gives a comprehensive analysis of the work which takes place at 50 Camden Square - the home of our **COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT**. The list of services provided is as follows:-

1. Services to the newly arrived.
2. Services to the domiciled Irish.
3. Educational Services.
4. Information Service.
5. Marriage Counselling Service.
6. Group work with women.
7. Missing Persons Service.

A.G.I.Y. (ACTION GROUP FOR IRISH YOUTH)

This group has been formed among the caring agencies in London, the Irish Centre being to the fore. Great progress has been made and currently a professional survey is being carried out among the Irish youth in London today. This report, when published, should give a very comprehensive and useful picture of a major part of the work of the Irish Centre and other agencies and provide many insights into how we can be of greater assistance.

This is a most important group and deserves every encouragement and thanks from all who are concerned with the care of Irish youth in London. It is worthy of note that the bulk of funding for this important work originates from Ireland through the Youth Employment Agency (Y.E.A.) and we express our gratitude accordingly.

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

We had hoped that this area of service would have developed to incorporate worthwhile computer training during 1984. Applications had been made to the appropriate department of the GLC (Greater London Council) for funding for computer equipment. In fact the application was approved **but** the money was never handed over to the Irish Centre. We are led to believe that this had a direct relation to the cut backs. A grant application was also made for an

Outreach Worker in relation to employment for the newly arrived and this was also unsuccessful. However, whilst our disappointment is very real we are ever hopeful that the GLC may yet come to our aid.

CARE OF THE ELDERLY/PROVISION FOR YOUTH CLUB PREMISES

We had very high hopes of obtaining an Urban Aid Grant for the development of the basements of 51/52 Camden Square as a **DAY CARE CENTRE FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE**. There is a great need for this service in our immediate area. The grant application was approved by Camden Council but did not get the approval of the Department of the Environment. The premises would also have doubled-up for youth club facilities for the increasing number of second generation Irish in this North London area. Although that source of funding was not available to us, to have identified these 'priority needs' has been of great importance. Alternative sources of funding are currently being explored.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

1. Irish Language Classes

It is pleasing once again to report on a very successful year in relation to the teaching of our native Irish language. Classes for children and for adults have taken place each week at our premises at 50 Camden Square. To the teacher Mrs. Siobhain O'Neill, to the parents and volunteers who are the back-up team, we express our sincere thanks. We are extremely fortunate in having such talented and dedicated people who are committed to the passing on of the Irish language.

2. Music and Dance

The name of the **TOMMY MAGUIRE SCHOOL OF MUSIC** has become synonymous with the Irish Centre. The on-going success of this school of music is one of our greatest boasts. In addition to having twice weekly music classes at the Centre, Mr. Tommy Maguire and his wife May, continue to be responsible for the up-keep and decor of the Douglas Hyde Lounge. This is very much appreciated.

3. Crean School of Irish Dancing

For 20 years Paddy Crean has provided a professional service in teaching our young Irish children the beauty and skill of Irish dancing. We look forward to the continuing success of this school of dancing.

4. "Uilleann Pipers"

Weekly sessions are held on Thursday evenings and we are proud to be the home of such a fine cultural activity.

5. Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann

The North London Branch of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann continue to meet on a regular basis at their home here at our Centre. The wealth of talent in music, song and dance brings immeasurable happiness and joy each week to many an Irish heart. - May they continue growing from strength to strength.

6. Ceili Dancing

The Sunday Evening Ceili has become well known as one of the best in London. This has happened only because there are a group of dedicated teachers and leaders who keep it alive and continually invite others to share in the beauty of Irish Ceili dancing.

7. Karate

Each week we have Karate classes available to the young and not so young.

OUR YOUTH

While all of the above activities provide specialised facilities for our youth, we are still aware of the need to provide a special premises for a youth club. As already mentioned the **URBAN AID GRANT** which had been applied for for this purpose was turned down. Nonetheless, every effort will be made to advance that work. The **IRISH CENTRE YOUTH** have been in existence for a number of years. The development of this youth group has been hampered by lack of its own premises. To our youth leader and the members of the committee who persevere in keeping together and organising activities outside of the Centre, we extend our congratulations and encouragement. We shall continue our efforts to support and develop the facilities for our youth.

SOCIAL CLUB

For all of 1984 the activities of the Social Club have been arranged and organised solely by our Social Club Committee. This is a most important dimension of our Irish Centre work and the social evenings that are arranged week in, week out, are for many people, their only outing of the week.

The thrice weekly Bingo sessions, organised by the Committee, are a highlight in the social lives of the elderly people of the area. At these sessions we hear of those who have gone to hospital, those who are not so well, those who cannot leave the house and those who are in need of a helping hand for one reason or another. From this and other social events is organised a series of visits which extend the social activities of the Centre into the area of caring for the housebound and sick.

To our regular club members who rightly see the Centre as their second home, we say a sincere word of thanks. In the meantime that they give to the newcomer and in the concern that they show for the on-going success of the Centre, our future is ensured.

VOLUNTARY WORKERS

The list is always too long to include everyone. To all of you I say a word of very sincere gratitude. I am sure that you will understand when I single out for special mention Miss Mary Kenny and Mr. & Mrs. Jock & Rose Rutherford. The hours that these good people spend in helping the Centre are a great source of encouragement.

DEVELOPMENT

Because of the great demands on our finances no major development has been undertaken here at Camden Square in the last year. As mentioned the programme for the development of Irish Centre Hostels Limited is underway. The Day Care for the Elderly Centre and the Youth Club Premises await funding by way of special grants. The two top floors of 51/52 Camden Square remain idle and undeveloped. The renewal of the Air Conditioning Plant on the Douglas Hyde Lounge and Kennedy Hall has yet to be undertaken.

ADMINISTRATION/MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

The administration of the Irish Centre falls on the shoulders of the Administrative Committee, eight of whom are elected by this meeting. There are another eight people who are appointed by the President and Patrons. Over the last three years a plan has been in operation to release the chaplains at the Centre from the secular administration of the 'commercial operations' and to place it in the hands of professional people. This plan is still in operation and I believe we are making great progress in that direction. This in no small way is due to the great job that has been done by our out-going Chairman Mr. Tommy Dunne. With the co-operation of the Administrative Committee plans were made in the later part of the year to employ a senior Accountant/Administrator to handle the finances of the Irish Centre and Irish Centre Hostels Limited and to gradually become more involved in the administration of the Centre. Mr. P. J. Keegan, who had been the Honourary Accountant at the Centre for over 20 years, was appointed to the position with a view of commencing employment in February 1985.

The very successful^{ful} management of the Bars and Catering are a fitting tribute to our Manager Mrs. Florrie D'Arcy. To Florrie, Noel and a very dedicated and conscientious staff we express a word of thanks. To Jimmy our Chef and his staff in the kitchen a word of congratulations for sterling work and every success.

To our regular staff who see to the day to day running and cleanliness of the Centre our thanks should not go unrecorded.

To our Welfare Staff - Sr. Breda, Seamus Taylor, Nicky Murray, Bridie Rooney, also to Miss Anne Feighan who has been at our Welfare Department for one year work experience, yet another word of sincere gratitude. Last and by no means least to Miss Linda Enright our Receptionist/Secretary who is responsible for good communications and good relations, I say Well Done!

FINANCES

What follows is a formal extract from the audited accounts. It should be remembered that the success story presented below is as a result of unstinted efforts and at much cost to individual persons. Our fund-raising has been worthy of every praise. To Mr. Tony Beatty, the Chairman of the fund raising Committee and through him to the Waterford Golfing Society every credit for such a magnificent contribution.

Continuation Sheet 6.

We express our sincere thanks to all our funding bodies and to those who made donations and raised funds for the support and work of the Centre. Special mention must be made of the London Borough of Camden, the Department of Labour, Dublin, the Bank of Ireland, the London Irish Festival organisers and supporters and to all those listed.

The Income and Expenditure Account for the year under review shows a surplus of £61,514.00 (£106,739.00 surplus in 1983/cycle ride £81,778.00). This surplus was achieved as a result of increased fund raising activities viz. Waterford Golf Society, London Irish Festival, Charity Walk and others. This surplus made it possible for the Centre to honour its obligations to the Centre's bankers (Bank of Ireland) - full details of which are contained in Note 4 to the Accounts.

The Balance Sheet reflects the Bank of Ireland loan agreements and repayment under the heading Long Term Loan. This also contains the Brewers Loans which, with interest, amount to £158,547.00. Terms of repayments of Brewers loans are currently being negotiated.

Sales at the Centre for the year 1984 amounted to £328,090.00 being an increase of almost 14% on 1983. The sales potential of the Centre is far from being realised and every effort is being made to publicise and market the facilities available. It is hoped that these efforts will produce results.

The following is a breakdown of Income received from various sources:-

		£
<u>GRANTS</u>	Camden Borough Council	34,200
	Irish Government	16,286
		<hr/> 50,486
<u>DONATIONS</u>	Waterford Golf Society	24,326
	London Irish Festival	14,000
	Susan McCann Night	3,050
	Daughters of Charity (St. Vincent de Paul)	2,400
	Abbeyfeale	698
	Proceeds ½p Collections	677
	Rev. Fr. Funge	647
	Waterford Association	600
	Cavan Association	500
	Irish Centre Golf Society	317
	Clonfert Association	300
	Roscommon Association	350
	B.S.M.	250

Continuation Sheet 7.

<u>DONATIONS</u>		£
Ballyorgan Association		200
Kilkenny Comhaltas		103
Rev. A Stritch		100
Mr. Gallagher		100
Mr. & Mrs. McGourty		100
Irish Chaplains		100
Irish American International Club		100
Sundry Bankers Orders		157
Anon and Under £100.00		1,524
Per. T. Mangan:		
Spade Oak Construction Co. Ltd		850
Mr. Houlihan		400
Durkan Bros.		250
Fairview Estates Housing Ltd		250
Mr. Hill Boulder		150
		<hr/>
		52,499
<u>COVENANT INCOME</u>		
Bank of Ireland		5,103
Allied Irish Banks		5,102
McCann and Looney		100
P. Smythe		20
		<hr/>
		10,325

CONCLUSION

In October, 1984, Fr. Oliver Barry, O.M.I. joined the staff of the Irish Centre. He is a good priest with a great love of the poor and underprivileged. We are blessed in having him as an Irish Chaplain and member of our Welfare Team. We extend a real "CEAD MILE FAILTE".

On a personal level I wish to say a special word of thanks to all our Committees and Sub-Committees for the many ways that they have supported me in my work here at the Centre.

As the years go by the Lord takes to himself those whom he chooses. To their loved ones we extend our sympathy and prayers. May those who have been called continue to be with us by inspiring us to consider ourselves privileged to

Continuation Sheet 8.

to have been called to help our fellow men and women through the work done at our Irish Centre.

May God be with us.

FR. CLAUDE MALONE, O.M.I.
Director