



# **I.B.R.G.** HARINGEY

**IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP**

**Survey into the promotion  
of Irish Culture  
within the  
Haringey School Curriculum.**





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## FOREWORD

The Irish community in London has only recently been recognised as a distinct ethnic minority. Due to this comparatively late recognition, it is only in the last few years that any research has been undertaken into the needs of the Irish community.

The field of education must be seen as one of the most important elements in the fight against anti-Irish racism and the negative portrayal of Irish people through racist stereotyping.

To help children in the Irish community to take pride in their cultural heritage, the school curriculum should in all instances include the positive promotion and portrayal of Irish cultural achievement in all subject areas, in order to make teachers aware of the anti-Irish racism prevalent in society and to encourage teachers to counter this racism by positive anti-racist teaching.

All schools in Haringey were contacted during this research and we would like to thank all of those who opened their doors to us and also those who took the time and trouble to reply to the questionnaire.

For all those schools who for various reasons chose not to contribute, we would hope that copies of this report could be made available to them and that they would contact us to discuss the issues raised.

We would also like to acknowledge our debt to the speakers and participants at the three annual conferences on 'Irish Dimensions in British Education' organised by Soar Valley College Leicester and I.B.R.G. We have drawn particularly on the work of Mary Hickman and Dr. Phillip Ullah.

Chris Protz and Teresa Stokes made valuable contributions as to the needs of travellers' children in discussing their work as peripatetic teachers for the community.

Finally Haringey I.B.R.G. would like to thank the late G.L.C. and more latterly, Haringey Council, whose funding and support made this research possible.

Haringey Irish in Britain Representation Group.

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Barney Irish in Britain Representation Group  
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## SECTION 1

This first section of the report provides a brief background explanation of the position of the Irish in Britain, and of the importance we give to the role of anti-racist teaching in allowing our children to maintain the positive Irish identification they learn at home.

### THE IRISH IN BRITAIN

Until the early eighties there had been a remarkable lack of information and research upon the Irish community in Britain. This lack of research was remarkable in that the Irish have been in Britain in large numbers for centuries and have played an essential role in the development of Britain's industry and its wealth. The Irish were used as seasonal agricultural labourers from the 18th Century. Irish labour built the infrastructure, the roads, canals, railways that made possible Britain's industrial revolution in the 19th Century, as well forming the most exploited section of its industrial workforce at that time. In more recent times the Irish played an essential role in the British economy in the period after "World " War II. They were recruited, as were other ex-colonial peoples, to do the menial and the manual work, to fill a gap in the labour market as Britain's industry and welfare services expanded. They were and are still to be found in the worst paid jobs and in the worst housing in inner city areas. After centuries of immigration, the Irish are still a disproportionately working class community.

With rising unemployment figures in Ireland, especially among the young, we are again entering a period of large scale emigration of Irish people. The Irish Welfare Bureau in Hammersmith has reported an increase of 151% in the number of new arrivals who asked for help in 1985. Of these 34% were in the 15-24 age group, figures which prompted the G.L.C. and other groups to organise conferences and produce booklets outlining the problems facing Irish youth arriving in London. All of this would seem to indicate that the Irish community in London is growing and that it will continue to make a crucial contribution to Britain's economic and industrial development. However, in spite of their number and their long established presence in Britain it is only recently that the Irish have gained recognition as a separate and distinct ethnic grouping. This is certainly true in Haringey, where our acceptance onto the council's E.M.J.C.C. came only in 1983. Even in the light of this recognition it is still very much an uphill struggle for the Irish community to effectively promote their particular needs and to have these needs accepted by a society whose very roots lie in an imperialist and colonial culture.



## COLONIAL BACKGROUND

Ireland is Britain's oldest colony- the colonial tradition goes as far back as the 12th century. As with all colonial relationships, England sought to wield its power and justify its presence in a foreign land by belittling or in some cases eradicating the culture and language of the indigenous population. By this process, the English, through economic exploitation, extracted the wealth of the dependent nation in all spheres of production, manufacture and intellect.

To achieve this, the overriding resolution of the English was based on the assumption that for the imposed system to flourish, it could never incorporate any of the conquered land's culture or traditions. Thus sprang to life the inevitable belief in the superiority of all things English and the urgent need to "civilize the natives". It is from this assumption- that the colonized people had no valid culture of their own- that the origins of racism came into existence and it is still prevalent in Britain today.

### ANTI IRISH RACISM

Not only have the Irish made an important contribution to Britain's wealth, they have played a vital and leading role in the development of working class organisations such as the Chartists and the Trade Union movement. Yet these contributions are not recognised and the Irish are to the British invisible as a community. The "acceptable" Irish person is one who has assimilated, adapted to British culture, one who has the "good humour" to be the butt of anti-Irish jokes. For it is only in anti-Irish racism that the Irish gain visibility to the British. In Victorian cartoons the Irishman was an ape-like figure, sometimes buffoonish peasant, sometimes murderous fiend. In popular British culture today a similarly unsavoury choice of stereotype is available to the cartoonist, the radio and television announcer and the comedian. On the one hand there is the so-called Irish joke; it seems we are an upside-down, inside-out nation characterised by ignorance. On the other, we see the identikit face of a psychopathic murderer staring at us from "wanted" posters. Both sides of this stereotyped view of the Irish are racist. And both arise, as we would argue do all racisms, from Britain's historical relation with a nation it oppresses.

The term "racism" is sometimes thought to refer to a specific type of prejudice and discrimination based on white people's reaction to black skins. We accept that there is a specific dimension of racism which is directed at black people on this basis and which has become institutionalized. But we would argue that the basis of racisms is the inferiorisation of colonial peoples. Therefore the characteristics attributed to Irish people



by the British ; those of ignorance, lack of civilization, inability to govern thir own country, childlikeness etc. are frequently similar to those attributed to other ex-colonial minorities. In the fight against anti-Irish racism we recognize these links with other ethnic minorities and the need to combat racism in all of its forms. The Irish community, experience similar problems to other ethnic minority groups in the areas of housing, welfare servives, health care and employment.

It is not a series of policy documents, resolutions or recommendations passed at committee level that will change the deeply engrained racist stereotyping or alleviate the problems facing the Irish community. It is only the persistent, practical and everyday implementation of these policies and an increase in specific educational resources that will enable Haringey council to make true "Progress with humanity"

#### ANTI-IRISH RACISM IN SCHOOLS

Irish children born in Britain find it extremely difficult to take pride in their cultural heritage if they do not see it reflected in their school environment which, after all, is the main area of social interaction for children. This problem is perpetuated by the anti-Irish racism that they encounter in everyday life.

What they are faced with therefore is an ongoing problem- a negative portayal of their cultural identity due to racism, which itself springs from the original denial of a culture for indigenous people in the colonial relationship. Thus Irish children in Britain, in fearing rejection, are forced to assimilate, outwardly denying their Irishness, while inwardly feeling alienated from the host culture. What often results is that the child renounces its Irishness in public, whilst maintaining an Irish identity within the family circle.

In a recent survey conducted by the University of Nottingham 800 British-born children aged 11-16 were asked to identify a range of characteristics within 7 ethnic minorities; English, Indian, West Indian, German, Jewish, Irish and Pakistani.

The children were divided into 4 groups; White British (which included the Irish!), West Indian, Pakistani and Indian. Asked to choose from a list of adjectives, the 'white British' were the only group to attribute any positive characteristics to the Irish but 52% of this group still regarded the Irish as violent. Of all other groups, in each case the majority considered the Irish to be violent and dull. Under such pressure it is easy to understand why Irish school children are tempted to lose their cultural identity and are forced into assimilation



COLONIAL  
within the host culture, with whom they share a common skin pigmentation.

Dr. Phillip Ullah of the University of Sheffield, in his research on the psychological aspects of identity amongst the second generation Irish in Britain, has found ample evidence that this group experience a low status definition from others. Like other ethnic minority groups, they engage in psychological strategies to avoid the negative feelings resulting from this. Some hide the fact of their Irish descent, others find it a spur to developing pride in their Irish identity. But for all of them there is the need to comply with the competing demands of two cultures and to cope with the contradictory messages from both.

#### CATHOLIC SCHOOLS

The majority of Irish children have traditionally attended Catholic schools. It might be expected therefore that the predominance of Irish pupils in such schools would have an effect on the pupils. However the policy of such schools has, from the 1860's onwards, been the production of "good British citizens" and later the reliance on the British state for funds reinforced this policy. The curriculum of Catholic schools has always conformed to that of other state schools. Catholic education has advocated the integration of Irish children into British society at the cost of sacrificing an Irish identity. An Irish ex-teacher who started teaching in Haringey schools in the 1950's recounts how she was told not to tell the children they were Irish but to prepare them for life in Britain, while a researcher in this field, Mary Hickman, has described how Catholic schools have historically served as "institutions of containment" of Irish children. Such schools, she says, stress Catholicism but deny Irishness and encourage moderate aspirations in the children. It is true that an Anglo-centric account of "The Irish Question" or an avoidance of teaching on Ireland is equally likely in Catholic schools in Haringey as in other schools, despite or because of, the predominance of Irish pupils within them.



## MULTI-CULTURALISM

There is no consensus on the meaning of multi-culturalism in education. The omission of teaching about Ireland, even in schools which have a multi-cultural policy, is indicative of the limitations of the concept. The debate in this area of education began in the 1960's when the greater number of black children in British schools began to be viewed by the government as an "immigrant problem". It was suggested that the number of "immigrant" children in any one school be limited and that assimilation should be the goal. This racist assimilationist phase was followed by one of integration- equality of opportunity was advocated, though within the terms of the British curriculum. The failure of the policy of equality of opportunity in practice led to the movement towards multi-culturalism by teachers. Teachers were to promote the "flowering of cultures" within the classroom, this was the period of "saris, samosas and steel bands". Some teachers and ethnic minority parents were not satisfied with this. They demanded respect, not tolerance, for their children. The black parents group in Haringey were in the vanguard in the seventies in the movement towards anti-racism in education. A multi-cultural perspective without an anti-racist understanding is insufficient to challenge the racism within the society in which our children grow up.

A fundamental criticism of the multi-cultural concept is that, while allowing for a liberal cultural pluralism within education, it presupposes that all cultures and therefore all peoples, are equal and that it is merely ignorance of other cultures that causes racism. It does not challenge the location of power in the dominant British culture and the existence of institutionalised racism. It therefore takes racism at "face value" and does not recognise the colonial relationship which has caused this imbalance of power. It discounts anti-Irish racism because the Irish are at the same time "too close to home" and yet too threatening in terms of Irish nationalism to be dealt with comfortably within the multi-cultural perspective.

## IRELAND WITHIN THE ANTI-RACIST CURRICULUM

We would like to place the teaching about Ireland within the context of an anti-racist policy. Minority groups do not "vie" with each other for a place on the curriculum. Irish history and cultural heritage have distinctive characteristics to contribute to children's awareness, as does every culture.

Aspects of the particular contribution that teaching about Ireland and the Irish offer include of course the rich store of Irish music, dance and literature but also include the history of centuries of resistance to racism



by the Irish in Britain, lessons to be learnt from the fact that Ireland is Britain's oldest colony and the inherent implications of Britain's continued colonisation of part of Ireland.

The anti-racist teaching perspective also stresses a shared history among ex-colonial minority groups. It explains why children of different cultures and nations find themselves in the same classroom in Haringey. A history of colonialism, the emigration it necessitated and the common conditions of work and life of ethnic minority groups in Britain, provide a means for children to analyse the shared experiences of ethnic minorities in Britain as well as recognizing the uniqueness of each others cultures.

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## METHODOLOGY

The aim of our research was to investigate the extent to which anti-Irish racism was recognised by head teachers and the extent to which Irish history and culture were promoted in Haringey schools.

Our first initiative took the form of a letter sent in December 1985 addressed to all schools, asking for information concerning the number of Irish children attending the schools, the existing provision for the promotion of Irish culture and how such provision could be introduced. There was a poor response to this letter, due partly to industrial action by teachers at the time and due also to the proximity of the Christmas holidays.

We realised that to obtain more detailed information we would require a more comprehensive approach, which led us to adopt a personal questionnaire method. Where possible we would visit schools with the questionnaire to enable us to obtain the fullest cooperation with teachers and establish links with schools. Visits also permitted us to gain an insight into the individual atmosphere of schools, which could not have been gauged simply by reading responses on questionnaires.

### The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was made up of 11 sections, containing 31 questions in all. The 11 sections were on the following topics:

1. General school background information
2. Anti-Irish racism
3. Travellers
4. History and Politics
5. Literature
6. Language
7. Art
8. Music
9. Sport\Games
10. Dance\Theatre
11. Other areas in which Irish culture was promoted by the schools

While a few questions required simple yes/no answers, the majority were open-ended to allow headteachers the opportunity to elaborate upon their own practice.

Due to limitations of time and staff it was not feasible to visit all Haringey schools although all schools received the questionnaire. A sample number of schools was selected on the basis of wards containing the highest percentage of Irish residents according to the 1981 census figures. This is not to imply that teaching about Ireland should be restricted to schools containing mainly



Irish children. The reason for our choice was rather that we expected that it would be in such schools that any existing provision would be found.

We visited 16 schools in all, this total comprising 1 Roman Catholic Senior school, 3 Roman Catholic Junior\Primary schools, 4 non-Catholic Senior schools and 8 non-Catholic Junior\Primary schools. A further 11 schools returned the questionnaires that we sent them giving information on the promotion of Irish culture in their schools and their views on anti-Irish racism.

We attempted where possible to interview head teachers as we felt that this would give us a better indication of the degree to which Irish culture was promoted in the schools and the way in which Haringey Council's policies were being implemented, given the responsibility and status of head teachers.

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## SECTION 2

### RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY

Generally we were well received by most of the schools contacted, although 3 did refuse to speak to us. The findings in the following section are based on replies from schools in the categories listed below.

Type of school contributing	% of Haringey schools
Junior schools	33%
Non-Catholic Secondary schools	50%
Catholic Secondary schools	40%

A distinction should be made between secondary and junior schools in the teaching of many subject areas; in the latter, education is not given on the basis of subjects but more often on the basis of 'themes' from which a diverse range of subject areas can be touched upon. Consequently many junior schools stated that the History/Politics questions were not really applicable to them, although some mentioned that Ireland was sometimes touched upon as part of a more general theme.



## ANTI-IRISH RACISM

To the question 'Are you aware of any anti-Irish racism in the school ( name calling, verbal jokes, graffitti etc.)?' a wide variety of responses were obtained.

### a) Non Recognition of Anti-Irish Racism

54% of the head teachers questioned did not believe that anti-Irish racism existed in their schools although this view was sometimes contradicted by other members of staff. Two teachers who did not believe that anti-Irish racism existed in society (thereby denying its existence in their schools) qualified their views in the following manner; "I wouldn't describe it as racism" or "I see it more as an ethical question of respect for fellow beings." However we feel that such comments, whilst undeniably ethical and humanist in content, reflect the 'soft option' and a basic unwillingness to change. Such views only serve to illustrate the key problem area facing the council's anti-racist policies and their incorporation into its educational institutions. This belief would appear to be representative of some head teachers who, in sheltering behind such views, remain impervious to the advancement of the progressive educational policies put forward by the council.

### b) Recognition of Anti-Irish Racism

72% of the teachers questioned agreed that anti-Irish racism existed in society. However of these only a few - five out of the twenty two researched - gave statements that could be interpreted as a positive anti-Irish racist stance; or detailed how anti-Irish racist policies were implemented within the school curriculum.

Eight of the schools interviewed used school assemblies as a means of dealing with anti-Irish racism. While this can be seen as a positive step it must be noted that the format of school assemblies neither allows for questions to be asked nor encourages discussion of the issues raised. Therefore we would suggest that if the maximum benefit is to be derived from such initiatives both teachers and the curriculum must allow for extensive discussion within the classroom.

Very positive responses were obtained from a minority of teachers who recognized the presence of anti-Irish racism in their schools. Largely they were agreed on the need to positively teach against racial stereotyping and the



need to foster a multi-cultural school based on "individual respect".

### c) Specific Work Undertaken in Schools

One school had undertaken 'topic work' on 'travelling peoples of the world', another had invited Travellers in Haringey to talk about their lifestyle to the 4th and 5th formers. A third school said that they had used the 3rd year Religion and Sociology curriculums (compulsory for all children) to combat stereotyping and that the issues were also openly discussed in tutorial sessions. This work was later reinforced in the 'O'level sociology option. One head teacher informed us that members of staff had collaborated with the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Group in preparing a multi-cultural and anti-racism course for teachers but that this work had been interrupted by the teachers' industrial action. It was noteworthy that in those schools reporting incidents of racism against the Irish, the situation had been remedied by the hurtful implications of the problem being pointed out in discussion and counter balanced by positive anti-racist teaching.

One teacher, while stressing the importance of the council's anti-racist policies, complained that they were not implemented strongly enough. "Teachers need to be made more aware of them." This last criticism would seem to indicate the necessity for some form of review in order to evaluate how much the council's anti-racist policies for education have affected both teaching and the curriculum in Haringey's schools.

### HISTORY AND POLITICS

The majority of teachers had some sympathy with the widely held belief that Irish history, particularly in its relations with Britain, is often presented in a biased way in established text books. However we found little evidence of Irish history existing as a separate or defined area of the school history syllabus.

If it did appear in the classroom it was presented as merely incidental to the course of English history-Ireland portrayed as the object of British conquest and the problems therein of maintaining British rule- or arose if the current political situation was at the forefront of the British media.

Five of the head teachers did state that the history may



"crop up from time to time" when topics such as immigration or "how we used to live" were dealt with. However the entire subject area was found to be largely ignored. One teacher admitted that this area of history had not been focussed on simply because they had "never seen it as separate". Another, in reply to the question "Does your curriculum allow for the presentation of both sides of view concerning the historical and political connections between Britain and Ireland?", asked "Should this be a topic?".

In the few instances where a more positive approach was taken, only one secondary school sought to explain the 1916-22 independent period of Irish history. A few others made some connection between the Irish famine period and today's events in Ethiopia. In these cases the presence of an Irish element in the teaching of history was mainly a result of individual teachers' particular interests.

The overwhelming problems encountered by most teachers were, firstly, the lack of suitably 'balanced' textbooks and secondly, where such materials might be obtained. To this can be added the general lack of knowledge and awareness on Irish issues amongst a sizeable proportion of teachers.

From the information collected it would appear that the teaching of Irish history and politics in British schools is a very 'sensitive' area because of the past and present relations between the two countries. For this reason many teachers have chosen to remain silent on such issues, stating that we are "not in the position of rocking the boat" and that there should be "no overt political history". This latter comment raises the question 'What is history if not political?' Whilst it cannot be denied that there are certain subject areas in which care needs to be taken, this should not be put forward as an excuse for continued silence.

## LITERATURE

Although most head teachers we spoke to agreed that Irish literary figures were often presented as 'English', denying their national identity, fifteen said that they did not consider it important or relevant to make a distinction between the two.

As with the case of Irish history it was found that Irish literature appeared in the classroom 'incidentally' - most schools possessing anthologies where the odd Irish poem or story might occur. Most junior schools did state that they used Irish fairy stories and legends, but again that largely appeared in general books. In the one case where we saw a separate book of Irish folk tales it appeared under a series entitled 'Stories of the British Isles'. Only in one secondary school was an Irish poet studied as part of the 'A' level syllabus. The poet was



Seamus Heagney and incidentally, he recently strongly objected to being included in a Penguin anthology of British verse.

While a few schools did possess a number of works by Irish writers, once again teachers complained about the lack of resources allocated for the provision of Irish literature.

The main problem in the field of literature is the question of distinguishing between English literature and Irish Literature. No other country with such a small population can claim three winners of the Nobel Prize for Literature, yet we still have the incessant stereotyping of the Irish as stupid, backward and uneducated. We believe this is a direct result of the imperialist tradition and belief that recognized talent from any corner of the old empire is a product of the English 'civilising' process. This assumption is false and education must play its part in eradicating it from the multi-ethnic society that we live in. Authorities on Irish literature are quick to point out that Irish writers express themselves on themes and experiences derived from a distinctly separate and individual culture. Thus although teachers do not consider it relevant to highlight the writers' origins- the emphasis being on good literature- the fact is that when Irish writers are placed under the title of 'English literature', it undermines and denies Irish achievement and once again fails to use the opportunity to combat racial stereotyping by portraying the Irish in a positive manner!

## LANGUAGE

The responses to this section were mainly negative or disinterested, in that it was felt that there was little demand for the Irish language to be taught, though some schools thought that after school provision might be appropriate. This disinterest was based on the assumption that the majority of Irish people in Britain and Ireland use English as their first language, but shows a lack of appreciation of the history behind the use of the English language by the Irish and the cultural and political significance of the renaissance of the Irish language at this time.

Amongst the Irish in Britain, as in Ireland, there is a growing realisation that a people's language is profoundly important to the uniqueness and richness of its culture and to a national identity.



In colonising Ireland Britain attempted to destroy the language by different means in different periods—sometimes by brute force, sometimes by cultural imperialism.

The Irish language, which has become again a living and developing feature of Irish culture in the North of Ireland, is a vital part of an Irish child's heritage, to which that child should have access. Provision for Irish language classes as an option in schools would complement adult evening classes so that the present growth of interest in the language could be shared by both adults and children alike.

The assumption that Irish is not spoken by children in Haringey, based on the fact that it is rarely heard, should also be challenged, as the force of anti-Irishness is such that where children have the language they will often be loathe to use it in public.

In 1981 a Schools Language Survey was carried out in Haringey and other L.E.A.s by the Institute of Education of the University of London. The survey investigated the languages other than English that the children spoke at home and was carried out by means of teachers filling in forms. It found that there were 55 Gaelic speaking pupils in Haringey. 34 of these pupils specified that they spoke Irish and one would expect that, since Scots Gaelic is spoken by fewer people than Irish, most or all of the "unspecified" were Irish speakers. It is difficult to know how accurate this survey was, taking into account the method of gaining information, the filling in of forms by teachers, given the general tendency not to take the Irish language and culture as distinct and important and the supposition.

In 1985 Xavier Couillard, Advisor for Languages for Haringey, investigated the number of Irish speakers in Haringey primary schools at the request of Haringey I.B.R.G. Three schools indicated a total of seven "Gaelic" speakers and one school reported that "Several children know the odd word. About twenty pupils claim that one or more parent can hold a conversation in Gaelic." Mr Couillard was convinced that there were more Gaelic speakers in Haringey primary schools but that schools did not know about it. This view is backed up by the experience of two people from an Irish speaking family, who recounted to us how they were so ridiculed for speaking Irish in their primary school in Haringey in the sixties that they refused to speak Irish even at home and "lost" their Irish as a result. We do not know how common incidents such as this are today.

Haringey Council's adopted policy on bilingualism states;



" All educational establishments must seek to ensure that no pupil/member of the community is placed at a disadvantage or denied access to services and opportunities through disregard of his /her language background and that all aspects of provision reflect the needs of a linguistically diverse population."

"The education service must play its part in assisting all members of the community to maintain and develop their knowledge of oral\written fluency in the languages of their home and community and wherever possible this should involve specialist teaching."

From the results of our research it is clear that no such provision has been made available to Irish children in Haringey, nor have there been any initiatives forthcoming to promote the teaching of the Irish language, even in those schools containing a large majority of Irish children.

#### ART

Ireland, with its Celtic traditions, has a rich artistic heritage that existed long before English colonization and was the mainstay of the spread of Christianity throughout Europe.

However there was little evidence of any Irish art forms being taught within the Haringey schools' curriculum. As with other subject areas its appearance was extremely incidental. Where it did occur it was mainly due to the initiatives of individual teachers.

Teachers identified this as one area where much work could be done to positively promote Irish culture, particularly if good quality artbooks dealing with Celtic designs and calligraphy could be made available.

#### MUSIC AND DANCE

Once again a similar pattern emerged concerning the access given to children to Irish music and dance. In those schools which had music teachers little evidence was found of the usage of Irish music or instruments, the curriculum lending itself more to the classical mode. Again it was left to individual teachers, who, even if they were interested, had to provide their own materials. In this way a small minority of schools had managed to provide some forms of Irish dance, music and drama. Particularly encouraging was a number of schools who had encouraged an awareness of Irish musical culture by holding 'International' evenings with the collaboration of children and parents.



As in other areas the main problem seemed to be one concerning the allocation of educational resources. A number of teachers particularly expressed an interest in percussive instruments and tin whistles and were responsive to suggestions concerning musical and theatrical demonstrations.

## SPORT

Whilst Irish culture possesses a rich and diverse range of sporting activities- Gaelic football, Camogie, Hurling, Handball etc., there was no evidence of any of these being played in Haringey schools.

To the question of whether head teachers thought there may be a demand for such sports, the majority believed this not to be the case, whereas some did mention that the question had never been raised but that they thought there could possibly be an interest if amenities were available and demonstrations/exhibitions arranged.

One school mentioned that they had a number of pupils who participated in the local Gaelic football teams but once again this was viewed as an out of school activity. Therefore the provision of Irish sports in Haringey is limited to a small minority within the Irish community, with the diversification of the sports curriculum and the participation of children from non-British cultures denied.



## TRAVELLERS

Haringey has a large number of Travelling people resident within its boundaries in comparison to other London boroughs, who have sought to be exempted from their responsibilities towards this grouping. The number of Travellers' children in Haringey fluctuates greatly—at the time of writing there were about twenty children spread across five schools. Most Travellers' children are in infant and junior schools. The low numbers in secondary schools may be due to the fact that within the Travelling community older children are encouraged to support the family unit. The children's length of stay in schools varies from one week to over two years, the children of families settled on the long term sites at the Civic Centre and at Ferry Lane staying the longest.

### Results from the Survey

The majority of teachers raised the difficulties of teaching Travellers' children due to the transient nature of their lives and the high level of absenteeism. In relations with teachers and other children it was generally felt that the Travellers fitted into the school environment even though they tended to "stick together". A few teachers mentioned incidents of name-calling but stated that this had been immediately dealt with by the teachers. One head explained that there was some difficulty in obtaining parental permission for school outings, which made the children more noticeable. Some schools made the conscious effort of incorporating the children by the purchasing of school uniforms.

### Racism Against Travellers

Those working with travellers, including the Travellers Support Group, suggest a greater degree of racism against Travellers' children than our survey would suggest. They suffer a double racism, as travellers and as Irish children. Indeed, the Irish community itself is sometimes not exempt from anti-Traveller racism. As with any other children new to schools, Travellers' children, on entry into a school, undergo the stress of being 'put in their place' by the children in their class. But for Traveller children these initiation rites are particularly stressful as Travellers encounter the prejudices which children have learnt from their parents. They are frequently called names— "gypsy", "smelly", "fleabag" and children refuse to sit next to them or play with them. Teachers see them as a problem academically and behaviourally. Non-teaching staff, have also sometimes expressed indignation, as have local anti-traveller campaigns, at the presence of travellers' children in the schools. No section of the school really looks upon them as "belonging" to the school. Integration of travellers' children into infant classes is easier than into junior schools, for although infant



children also express prejudice, the programme of these classes is more flexible and the children are accepted more easily.

### Travellers' Culture and Education

Travellers' children enter schools at a disadvantage in that they are expected to conform to, and be knowledgeable of, norms which are not prominent within their culture. They experience the educational disadvantages which result from their having moved from place to place and which necessitate particular attention and sometimes special work programmes. But beyond this they are also seen as being dirty, behaving badly, as always being late, as being difficult to fit into the usual school curriculum. The "virtues" of the Work Ethic - cleanliness, discipline, good time keeping and conformity, which it has taken years to inculcate into the British industrial working class and their children are not necessarily part of the Travellers' culture, neither are their conditions of life always conducive to them. The reaction of those who accept these norms to those who violate them are sometimes those of misunderstanding, indignation or rejection. The effect of virulently anti-Traveller campaigns in certain areas of Haringey should not be underestimated. Since schools do not exist in a social vacuum the effect of these campaigns are bound to filter through to them, even where certain teachers make positive efforts to combat their effects.

### Liaison Teachers

Although it did not emerge from the survey, teachers often privately wonder if travellers' children should be taught separately in special classes, due to the educational disadvantage the children experience, their cultural differences and the transient nature of their schooling. Rather than opting for this alternative, the borough now funds two liaison teachers for the Travelling community. One has worked for two and half years, the other since Easter 1986. The liaison teachers reject the notion of separate education for Traveller children and have as their aim the integration of the children into the mainstream of education, where they can make use of all the advantages available to other children. Their work is that of liaising between Traveller parents and schools, introducing children into classes and monitoring their progress. Many teachers in the survey praised their work and say they have been greatly helped by the service. The liaison teachers are in a good position to represent the viewpoint of the Travellers' children and their comments upon the work that they do gives us a useful insight into the problems of travellers in education. The liaison teachers point out that while teachers value their liaison work, this work is seen too much as their responsibility and schools



find it difficult to take on the role of accepting and making accepted Traveller children. This largely arises from the transient nature of Travellers' presence in schools and the newness of the issues that are now arising. Nevertheless, some schools have been very responsive and co-operative in their accomodation of Traveller children.

Some of the difficulties found in schools arise from communication problems and differences of culture and these can be overcome if more attempt is made to understand Traveller background and culture. Traveller children are, for example, sometimes thought to have poor speech development because they speak a particular, unique, Irish dialect and some of the initial behavioural "problems" encountered when they first arrive in school arise largely as a result of the childrens' different experiences, their need to explore and their lack of knowledge of school norms and values. They cannot be expected to be already familiar with these norms. Allowances need to be made for the fact that Traveller children have a different sense of time to those brought up in more conventional homes.

#### The Problem of Assimilation

The fundamental problem lies in the expectations of schools that the children must assimilate, that they must adapt to the dominant school culture rather than adding their own cultural input. This problem applies, of course, to all minority groups within the institution of education. Travellers' culture is difficult to introduce into the curriculum because general prejudice and ignorance about both Travelling communities and the Irish are unknowingly part of British common sense.

These views reinforce for us the criticism made earlier in this document of a multi-cultural policy without an anti-racist practice. For, as one of the liaison teachers commented "The Irish are O.K. so long as they are invisible" and the negative traits attributed to the Travellers are also those attributed to the "bad" Irish in general. Travellers would be more easily accepted if there were more awareness in schools of Irish history and Irish culture. Schools alone cannot end discrimination and racism towards Traveller children. The Irish community must work together with Traveller parents and schools to provide advice on resources and activities which would involve Travellers in education on a more equal basis.



### SECTION 3

#### CONCLUSION

There are approximately 25000 Irish people living in Haringey. The 1981 census shows 10359 people registered as Irish born (i.e. born in the South of Ireland) and we are giving an estimate for second generation and Northern born Irish. The Irish community is therefore amongst the three largest ethnic minorities in the borough. Despite the size of the community and the long established nature of their residency in the borough, it is only comparatively recently that the Irish have been recognised as a distinct and separate ethnic community, facing similar problems to other ex-colonial minorities in all areas of social provision.

Although the Irish community has council recognition as being a large and distinct ethnic minority, it became evident that this policy had not been fully accepted by all head teachers- many of those questioned are only just becoming conscious of the council's policies and in the main seemed unaware of both the implications of such policy decisions and of the part that they were expected to play in implementing these policies.

The teaching of Irish history and politics was a subject area where there appeared to be a certain reticence to rectify the glaring omission of Ireland from the history syllabus. As it was considered to be 'too sensitive', silence appeared to be the safest option.

However, leaving 'sensitive' issues out of the curriculum will serve only to reinforce ignorance and thereby breed racism. Only by learning about and discussing such topics as Early Celtic civilization, the economic reasons behind the mass migration from Ireland, the origins of the armed struggle and the movement for Independence can we hope to refute the myths promoted by anti-Irish racism of the "thick, violent Irish" or can we expect to understand the justification for armed resistance to British rule.

Thus it is only through the promotion of a balanced, anti-imperialist version of historical events that we can expect children to achieve an informed opinion on the current political situation. Nor should the emphasis be placed solely on the teaching of history and politics. In the fields of art, language and literature much needs to be done to broaden the scope to incorporate all cultures and to give credit to the national identity of artists and writers.



In the majority of cases any elements of teaching about Ireland appeared to be there incidentally-i.e. if the subject happened to 'crop up' in the course of a lesson. Where work on Ireland or Irish related topics has been undertaken it has been largely as a result of initiatives by individual teacher who are either Irish themselves or who have a particular interest in Irish culture. Whilst we welcome such initiatives we would suggest that the borough's anti-racist and multi-cultural educational policies cannot be satisfactorily implemented by such a piecemeal and individual approach.

In those instances where more positive attempts had been made to introduce Ireland into the classroom, it was stressed by the teachers themselves that there was a glaring lack of materials available or suitable for use in Irish related studies. Whilst some teachers considered this to be due to lack of financial resources and inflexibility within the curriculum others seemed to feel that this was an over used excuse for inaction. This problem seems to have been further compounded by the fact that there was little knowledge of where such materials could be obtained. Taking into consideration the teachers' existing workload and the limited time available to them to undertake new initiatives, it would appear necessary that for anti-racist policies to be implemented, use should be made of parents' experiences and the knowledge of community groups, thereby bringing together different elements of the community, so that no section can be seen as separate from the others.

It is interesting to note that the connection between Catholicism and Irishness has led to the widespread belief that children attending such schools receive a more Irish-based education. This was not necessarily the case. The emphasis in most such schools was on Catholicism rather than Irishness. The latter was presumed to be adequately covered as an out of school activity with the onus being put onto individual parents or the parish. In this way the responsibility for the promotion of Irish culture becomes once again unprovided for within the school curriculum.

For Irish culture to be incorporated into the educational curriculum and for this process to be successful, we must conclude that there are two main areas of concern that have emanated from our research study. Firstly, teachers need to be aware of the problems facing Irish people and particularly those facing children, who are perhaps the most vulnerable and easily influenced members of our society. Teachers need to become conscious of the history of the Irish community in Britain, why the Irish have settled here in such large numbers and they need to seriously re-appraise the old and biased traditionally held beliefs concerning Anglo-Irish history and politics. Secondly, to enable teachers to implement anti-racist policies, the current desperate lack of resources must be



challenged and more provision made available to schools and educational resource centres. The community must also be given a chance to help define those areas of the school curriculum that they see as important or missing in their children's education.

It is interesting to note that the Commission's report on Catholicism and Irishness has led to the withdrawal of children attending such schools to receive a more liberal education. This was not necessarily the case. The emphasis in most such schools was on Catholicism rather than Irishness. The latter was presumed to be adequately covered as an outgrowth of activity with the one being put into individual responsibility or the other. In this way the responsibility for the promotion of Irish culture becomes unacceptably transferred to within the school curriculum.

For Irish culture to be incorporated into the educational curriculum and for this process to be successful, it is essential that there are two main means of recourse. These have emanated from our research study. Firstly, teachers need to be aware of the problems facing Irish people and particularly those facing children who are coming from non-urban and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Secondly, the current disparate lack of resources must be



## RECOMMENDATIONS

As mentioned in the introduction to this report, previous policy reports on the needs of the Irish Community have produced a number of recommendations which the writers would like to see implemented at all levels of the Education system in London or Britain.

Several of these recommendations are mirrored in recommendations put forward by members of the Irish community in Haringey and accepted by the council's Ethnic Minority Joint Consultative Committee on 11th March 1985 and later referred to the Education Committee on 18th June 1985. These were;

- a) That action be taken to include courses and degrees in Irish Studies as part of in-service training for teachers.
- b) That links be established between Irish academic institutions and their counterparts in Ireland.
- c) That work be commissioned to develop teaching aids and other educational materials in this area.
- d) That teachers' centres be supplied with teaching packs and other information on Ireland and this provision be made available to resource officers and school advisors.
- e) That provision be made for the instruction of Gaelic games and Anghaeilge (the Irish language) as optional subjects in those schools with a significant number of Irish students.

In view of the results obtained from our survey it is apparent that none of these recommendations have been implemented on a local and practical level in Haringey's schools.

We therefore urge the council to take particular note of the ways in which anti-Irish racism teaching can be promoted in the borough's schools and how Ireland can be included in Haringey's multi-cultural education policy. In order to obtain these objectives we would strongly recommend that in conjunction with the measures previously quoted, the following recommendations be noted for implementation;

### 1) CURRICULUM AND COURSE DEVELOPMENT

- a) That an urgent re-evaluation of the school curriculum and teaching materials be undertaken with the twin aims of eradicating material currently used in school which has an anti-Irish bias and examining ways in which the Irish could be positively



portrayed in all subject areas.

- b) That steps be taken towards the creation of an Irish Studies option at both 'O' and 'A' level.
- c) That Haringey Education Department investigate ways in which provision could be made for adult Irish language \studies classes for those wishing to rediscover their cultural heritage.

## 2) IRISH LIAISON UNIT

a) That with the establishment of the Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre, funds be allocated to enable the centre to provide a cultural resource centre for schools, parents and children.

b) That the Irish Liaison Unit be closely linked with Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre, thereby ensuring greater accountability to the Irish Community in Haringey.

c) That the Irish Liaison officer in Education and the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Hroup be asked, together with other interested parties in Haringey, to convene a conference to discuss the way forward and the issues involved in promoting Irish culture within the school curriculum.

d) That the Irish Liaison officer in Education be instructed to form close links with the M..C.C.S.G., parents, teachers, school governors, children, community groups and all others expressing an interest in the promotion of Irish culture and Irish studies, with an view to providing a forum to express their views and allowing them a more direct avenue into the council's education committee.

e) That the Irish Liaison officer in education be instructed to investigate ways of involving the Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre in the provision of Irish culture and Irish Studies in Haringey schools. Such initiatives might include music, Theatre groups, exhibitions, slide shows, lectures, films and videos

## 3) SECONDMENT FOR TEACHERS

a) That teachers be granted secondment to such courses or to courses on anti-Irish racism or other relevant courses. This is necessary to obtain the maximum participation of the largest number of teachers possible.

b) That the existing provision of peripatetic teachers for Travellers' children be continued and possibly augmented and that every possible effort be made to help these children to be incorporated into and made welcome in Haringey schools.



#### 4) FUNDING FOR TEACHING MATERIALS

a) That Haringey Education Committee either reallocate or make new funds available for the following areas;

- The commissioning of teaching packs, videos and exhibitions that could be developed and used in schools to help combat anti-Irish racism.

- The promotion of existing resources and the distribution or availability to all teachers.

- Information packs on Ireland which would be made available to teachers of all subjects and which would outline the dangers of presenting only the "English" perspective especially in the teaching of English, Politics and Sociology.

- That teachers be supplied with information packs on anti-Irish racism (e.g. Lis Curtis' book "Nothing But The Same Old Story") to make them more aware of the issues involved.

b) That booklists and addresses of specialist Irish bookshops be collated and that this information be passed on to teachers and made available to parents and children.

#### 5) LINKS WITH IRELAND

That links be forged with academic institutions in Ireland and their counterparts in Haringey. At present not only are links between Britain and Ireland non-existent, but some qualifications gained in certain constituent colleges in Ireland are not even recognized in Britain.

One form that such cooperation might take could be through the town-twinning programme, allowing cultural exchange between an Irish University town and itself.

Another way forward could lie in the direction of school twinning which, with the support of head teachers, could lead to exchange visits and even exchanges in certain project work undertaken.



LONDON BOROUGH OF HARINGEYEDUCATION SERVICEEDUCATION COMMITTEE - 19 NOVEMBER 1985REPORT OF THE CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

## ITEM 9

EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE IRISH COMMUNITY1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 To consider a reference from Majority Group Policy Committee on the Needs of the Irish Community.

2 REPORT

- 2.1 The Committee received a report on 18 June 1985 (copy attached for information) in response to a reference from the Joint Consultative Committee (Ethnic Minorities) on a number of issues arising from a report on the Irish community which had been considered by that Committee.

- 2.2 The responses of all Committees were collated and presented to Majority Group Policy Committee on 10 October 1985, and within that report the following outstanding issues were identified for further consideration;-

a) Irish Studies

The request from the Haringey Irish Report was to set up a course of Irish studies; certainly at secondary and tertiary level a report from the Education Department is needed.

- b) That an urgent review of all curriculum material be undertaken to eradicate its anti-Irish bias.

- c) While welcoming the initiative being undertaken by the Multi-Cultural-Curriculum Support Group particularly in relation to in-service training and teaching packs, such initiatives can only benefit from formal links between Irish academic institutions and the Education Department in Haringey. Therefore the Department is requested to investigate the establishment of such links.

- d) It would be of interest to know why the Department was not pursuing instruction in Gaelic games and An Ghaeilge (Irish language) as a curriculum option in areas where there were high levels of Irish children first and second generation.

- e) The request for free access for Haringey residents to Irish culture including language, music, dance and literature and its history through the Adult Education Service is an important step to put to rest the racist stereotyping of the Irish in Haringey. At present there is no provision for any classes in the above subjects. A report would be appreciated outlining the implications and officers recommendations on this item.

- f) The Irish Liaison/Advisory Unit is subject to a separate report but the appointment of an education specialist within the Unit is considered essential to the achievement of the Council's educational policy towards the Irish community in Haringey.



- 2.3 Members will note from the attached report the general approach to Irish studies in the curriculum adopted by the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Group and initiatives in Irish studies which are already in hand. The request for a specific course in Irish studies is one which could be usefully pursued with the proposed educational specialist within the Irish Liaison/Advisory Unit. It is not felt to be appropriate to report in detail on such a course at this stage but that as a first step once the proposed unit has been established, it would be helpful to explore with the representatives of the Irish community, their perceptions of the framework for such a course and for detailed work to be undertaken in close collaboration with the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Group on the development of an appropriate structure which could be used by schools and colleges as a basis for establishing appropriate courses within their individual curricula.
- 2.4 There is within all educational establishments an on-going process of review of curriculum material to eradicate as far as possible any racist bias. Support for such reviews is provided to educational establishments by the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Group. In addition to assisting establishments in identifying material with a particular bias, the Support Group also pursues initiatives in the development of teaching packs and in-service training. The suggestion of pursuing links between the Education Service in Haringey and Irish academic institutions is a helpful one, and one which can hopefully be pursued between the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Group and the Educational Adviser within the proposed Liaison/Advisory Unit.
- 2.5 As was mentioned in the previous report the Irish language is not currently taught within Haringey schools. Within its policy on bilingualism, however, the Authority would wish to make appropriate Irish provision as part of or an extension of the school curriculum where there is an identified demand. Provision for Irish language courses has been made in the past through the Adult Education Service but support for such courses was not consistent. It is hoped that it will be possible in the future with close consultation between the Liaison/Advisory Unit and the Council's Adviser for Bilingualism and bilingual team to identify areas of significant demand and direct appropriate resources towards the provision of Irish Language courses.
- 2.6 There is at present, limited provision available for pursuing instruction in Gaelic games within Haringey schools. Some schools do make arrangements for pupils to be introduced to Gaelic games as an alternative to the standard curriculum options in schools although this is not normally undertaken on an extended basis. Extensive provision will, of course, be dependent upon the availability of suitable playing areas beyond the limited provision at present at New River and the necessary expertise within Haringey schools. Further research is needed into this area and this again could usefully be pursued with the Irish Liaison/Advisory Unit.
- 2.7 The question of free access to adult education in respect of community language teaching has been raised by the JCC previously and the Irish report extends this concept from language to include music, dance, literature and history. Classes in Spoken Gaelic, Irish History and Music/Dance have previously been promoted in Adult Education on the "Affiliated Class" basis by the Haringey Irish Association. Initial enrolments in those classes were satisfactory but attendance were not always sustained. Traditional Irish Music and Dance were however offered in Stroud Green Primary School in the current year. There are considerable finance and resource issues involved in designating community language/culture classes as being eligible for provision free of charge to students.



At present there is a subsidy from the Education Service of approximately £500 for each adult education class which is organised. It might be anticipated that there would be a relatively wide demand for such courses from a number of the minority communities represented within the Borough which would make considerable demands upon the already stretched Adult Education Service budget. It is proposed that a detailed report on these implications should be presented to a future meeting of the Further Education Sub-Committee.

- 2.8 The establishment of the Irish Liaison/Advisory Unit has now been agreed, including the provision of an educational specialist. It is suggested that whilst the specialist will be based within the units as part of the Chief Executive's group of services it might also be helpful if provision were made for accommodation to be available for this post within the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Group to ensure the closest possible co-operation between the unit and the Education Service.

### 3 RACE RELATIONS ETHNIC MINORITY GENDER AND DISABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 This report is concerned to examine ways in which the needs of the Irish community can be met within the Education Service.

### 4 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee is requested to
  - 4.1.1 Note the proposed areas for development and consultation with the Irish Liaison/Advisory Unit in the future, and
  - 4.1.2 Note that a further report on adult education provision will be presented to the Further Education Sub-Committee in due course.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 18 JUNE 1985

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER

ITEM 5 IRISH STUDIES WITHIN THE CURRICULUM

1. Summary

To establish the neglected issues of Irish history past and present as a part of the school curriculum and to build a positive awareness of Ireland and its people for teachers and pupils.

2. Report

2.1 At its meeting on 11 March 1985 Joint Consultative Committee (Ethnic Minorities) considered a report on the Irish Community and referred the following issues to the Education Committee for further consideration:

- (i) That action be taken to include courses and degrees in Irish studies in in-Service training for teachers (Paragraph 31);
- (ii) That links be established between Irish academic institutions and their counterparts in London (Paragraph 31);
- (iii) That work be commissioned to develop teaching aids and other educational materials in this area (Paragraph 31);
- (iv) That Teachers' Centres be supplied with teaching packs and other information on Ireland and this provision be made available to resource officers and school advisers (Paragraph 31);
- (v) That provision be made for the instruction of Gaelic games and Anghaeilge (the Irish language) as optional subjects in those schools with a significant number of Irish students (Paragraph 30).

2.2. The major areas of reference relate to the development of Irish Studies in the curriculum and the attached paper outlines the approach of the Multi-Cultural Curriculum Support Group to developments in this area.

2.3. No provision is currently made for Anghaeilge within Haringey Schools. The Authority's policy on Bilingualism recognises the need to support community languages and subject to an identified demand consideration would be given to establishing appropriate Irish Language provision as part of or an extension of the school curriculum. Irish Language courses based on the principle of family provision have been organised through the Adult Education Service although support has been patchy.

2.4. Race Relations, Ethnic Minority, Gender and Disability Implications

This report is concerned to highlight areas in which Irish history, language and culture have been neglected and appropriate curriculum approaches to build a positive awareness of Ireland and its people for teachers and pupils.



3. Recommendations

The Committee is requested to

- (1) note this report and existing initiatives in the development of Irish Studies in the curriculum;
- (2) refer this report to Joint Consultative Committee (Ethnic Minorities).

At its meeting on 11 March 1985 Joint Consultative Committee (Ethnic Minorities) considered a report on the Irish Community and released the following issued to the Education Committee for further consideration:

(i) That action be taken to include courses and subjects in Irish studies in in-service training for teachers (Paragraph 31);

(ii) That links be established between Irish academic institutions and their counterparts in London (Paragraph 31);

(iii) That work be commissioned to develop working aids and other educational materials in this area (Paragraph 31);

(iv) That Teachers' Centres be supplied with teaching packs and other information on Ireland and this provision be made available to resource officers and school advisers (Paragraph 31);

(v) That provision be made for the instruction of Gaelic games and Angleside (the Irish language) as optional subjects in those schools with a significant number of Irish students (Paragraph 30);

The major areas of reference relate to the development of Irish Studies in the curriculum and the attached paper outlines the approach of the Inter-Cultural Curriculum Support Group to developments in this area.

No provision is currently made for Angleside within language schools. The Authority's policy on Bilingualism recognises the need to support community languages and subject to an identified demand consideration would be given to establishing appropriate Irish language provision as part of or an extension of the school curriculum. Irish language courses based on the principle of family provision have been organised through the Adult Education Service although support has been patchy.

Race Relations, Ethnic Minority, Gender and Disability Implications

This report is concerned to highlight areas in which Irish history, language and culture have been neglected and appropriate curricular approaches to build a positive awareness of Ireland and its people for teachers and pupils.