



# I.B.R.G.

## IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

### NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY

The Irish in Britain originate from different traditions and different geographical areas of the island. Our membership therefore already includes, and will always remain open to, all Irish people of every religious persuasion and none. In our proposed contribution to the achievement of a political consensus we shall continue to adopt a non-sectarian attitude.

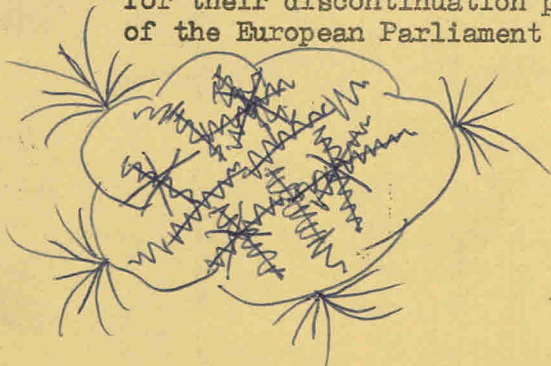
A corollary of this statement is that we are non party-political. We intend to monitor and, where necessary, criticise the statements and Parliamentary activities of all parties, when we believe that it would be in the best interests of the Irish people as a whole to do so. This latter phrase is, in fact, the keystone to our NI policy. We believe these interests will only be fully served when the British administration has been dismantled. Until this happens we foresee only violent resistance following a continual spiral of State repression.

We condemn violence by all combatants in NI. Its continued use has, during the last 10 years, further polarised the two communities, has increased injustices and caused great suffering. It has also increased the difficulty of achieving a political solution.

One of the injustices relating to the current conflict and which affects potentially every Irish person in Britain is the 1974 PTA which has been renewed annually since then. We maintain that the police already have adequate powers of arrest without this Act and that its indiscriminate use against the Irish community is not only a denial of our civil liberties but also stifles constructive debate about the NI issue. Our lobbying campaign for its repeal has already begun.

We are also opposed to the oppressive judicial legislation, notably Diplock Courts, at present used in NI. The denial of fair trials and fair sentencing to alleged criminals from both communities has been documented by reputable sources. We believe that a more just and humane system is a prerequisite for peace. The plight of Irish prisoners in England is also a cause for concern. We intend to highlight their situation.

Plastic bullets are now part of the riot control equipment of the Army, the RUC and various police forces in this country despite the Home Secretary's stated reservations. The authorities allege strict guidelines for their use. These have not been adhered to and their indiscriminate use has already led to 14 deaths and thousands of injuries. We are campaigning for their discontinuation particularly in the light of the recent decision of the European Parliament condemning their use in EEC countries.



## NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY (CONT)

Those of us with Northern backgrounds are aware that a major factor in our cultural separation occurred when we started school. In most areas we grew up apart which made it difficult to know and trust each other in the Unionist dominated state. One of the ways to achieve long-term reconciliation, we believe, is the introduction of integrated state education with time set aside for the provision of religious instruction.

The role of the Churches in Ireland has always been controversial. We maintain that every individual's religious beliefs are private and sacrosanct and that everyone is entitled to have the liberty to practise them without hindrance. We are, however, concerned at the influence of the Churches on the institutions of the State. This is particularly apparent in the political institutions in both parts of the island. Again we see as an objective towards long-term reconciliation the ending of this excessive influence in all State affairs as indeed has occurred in other Western European countries.

The advantages to the country of a unitary economic system freed from the costs of the present border security arrangements are obvious. These costs could be used instead to assist industry and welfare throughout the whole island so increasing the quality of life of all the inhabitants. We are well aware that the border is now not just a physical line but is a deep-rooted psychological barrier. We envisage the creation of a new identity to which all Irish people could subscribe and to which they could feel a loyalty. When this is achieved those of all traditions would have a framework in which to live together in peaceful co-existence with full civil liberties. They would thus be enabled to work together for the common good in a spirit of trust, tolerance and reconciliation.

This new Ireland, whilst maintaining its traditional neutrality, would seek to co-operate fully with Britain and our other EEC partners.

We do not seek to provide detailed plans for Ireland's future. Rather, we aim to provide a forum for all the Irish in Britain and any other groups or individuals here or in Ireland who have the ability to influence events in an openhanded, constructive manner. We feel the time has now come to explore new means towards new relationships and to seek to end the violent impasses.

NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY - SUMMARY

1. We believe that a non violent, non sectarian and non party political stance among the Irish in Britain is a prerequisite for effective political action about the NI issue.
2. We believe that an ending of the present British political and military involvement is in the best interests of all the people in the whole island. We also believe this to be a majority view among the Irish in Britain.
3. We are opposed to and are actively campaigning against legal injustices and the erosion of civil liberties, particularly the PTA, both in NI and in our community in Britain.
4. We support the condemnation by the European Parliament of the use of plastic bullets and will press for this decision to be upheld by the British government.
5. We support integrated education in NI schools as one of the means of achieving reconciliation.
6. While safeguarding individual religious liberties we seek the separation of Church and State throughout the whole island.
7. We believe that a unitary economic system would be in the whole country's best interests and would help foster a new unity of spirit leading to new institutions to which all could subscribe.
8. We aim to play a part in this reconstruction process by encouraging free and full dialogue among all involved parties.

