

A chara

Enclosed are the minutes of the last Prisoners' Sub Committee <sup>meeting</sup> (and of the meeting before, where relevant).

I'm also circulating information from the Lambeth branch, including a proposal for our new Constitution, we can take the whole matter up at the next NEC (again!) but I've sent a copy to Denis Lynch as he's an NEC member.

Slán leat

Suey

Suey Peddle

National Secretary - IBRC

9 Mí Eanáir

1984



# IBRG

## IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

Report on a meeting of the Prisoners' sub-Committee of the Irish in Britain Representation Group, held in Digbeth Civic Hall on Saturday 12 November 1983

Present: Gerry Gallagher (in the chair); Judy Peddle (acting secretary); Moira O'Shea; Hugh Eggleton; Peter Lynch (observer)

Peter Lynch asked if it was possible for him to be co-opted onto the Prisoners' Sub-Committee, or to attend its meetings as an observer. The other members were favourable, and agreed to put the suggestion to the next National Executive Committee meeting.

Peter Lynch then told the meeting of the treatment of Irish people in Birmingham following the 1974 bombings, and the ordeal endured by the relatives of the six men imprisoned for the bombings. He gave a brief outline of the Birmingham Six Support Committee, which was formed to highlight the plight of the Birmingham Six. It approached the IBRG, and following this approach the wife of one of the six prisoners - Sandra Hunter - was co-opted on to the IBRG Prisoners' Sub-Committee. The Support Committee was working on a pamphlet, and after this was produced the Support Committee would pass the whole matter on to the IBRG. Members were favourable to this idea; it was stressed that the pamphlet must be extremely readable, and draw the reader's immediate attention to the men's innocence.

Moira O'Shea pointed out that the IRA had never claimed responsibility for the Birmingham bombings, and appeared to be still enquiring into it. She wondered whether we should highlight the unanswered questions surrounding the event as well as the plight of the six men; the meeting felt that drawing attention to the manner of the six prisoners' conviction would bring the whole matter under public scrutiny again, and the question of responsibility would automatically be raised.

The aims of the Birmingham Six Support Committee were covered under point 4 of the IBRG's 'Northern Ireland' document; we would need to ask the NEC to endorse the Support Committee's initial document, and later the pamphlet; and a call later for a public campaign.

MPs (such as Claire Short, Robin Corbett, and John Farr, a Conservative MP who has said that he wants the case reopened) and MEPs (eg Richard Balfe, Michael Gallagher, Neil Blaney) could be approached. Also Judy Peddle could write to Fathers Faul and Murray in Armagh; they had produced the BIRMINGHAM FRAMEWORK booklet. Other contacts were Ian Gold who had defended the prisoners and Dr Black who had queried the evidence, if these could be traced.

The research for the pamphlet was being done in Birmingham where the library had a lot of information.

It was agreed that the sub-committee should become autonomous as far as possible, and that it should hold monthly meetings. It was also agreed that an interim report on its progress be given to the Annual Conference of the IBRG in March. Ideally, the sub-committee should have at least eight people working on it, and branches could be circulated to that effect, and asked if they wanted to nominate anyone.

It was agreed that while everything possible should be done to help all Irish prisoners, the Birmingham 6 campaign would be the spearhead of the sub-committee's campaign. This was for the following reasons:

- 1) the manner in which the six were sentenced would draw attention to the similar procedures used to convict other Irish prisoners;
- 2) the bombings were, and had always been, a stumbling block to any discussion on Ireland; it was endlessly 'thrown' at people who wanted to discuss the war in the Six Counties.

Gerry Gallagher then told the meeting of the correspondence he had had with the prisoner Shane Paul O'Doherty, and how his mother had been harrassed on her recent visit. He said that Cas Breen was in contact with Hugh Deutsch of the Commission for Racial Equality about taking up the case.

It was also felt that the IBRG should be able to offer help to the families of Irish prisoners who often had to make long and tiring journeys to English prisons. It was hoped that the organisation could arrange a system whereby the relatives could have contacts in major cities, and places where they could stay a night or two. It was agreed to pursue this, and recognised that we would have to ensure that we didn't cross with any similar Sinn Féin arrangements.

The next meeting would take place in Leicester on Saturday 10 December; Judy Peddle would contact Nessian Danaher about arranging a venue.

JP/IBRG/PsC  
November/Mí na Samhna 1983



# IBRG

## IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the IBRG Prisoners' Sub-Committee, held at Digbeth Town Hall, Birmingham, on Saturday 10 December 1983

Present: Gerry Gallagher (Chairman); Judy Peddle (Secretary); Mary Crofton; Peter Lynch; Moira O'Shea; Sandra Hunter; Pat Delaney; Kevin Colfer; Hugh Eggleton.  
Eddie and Oonagh Caughey (observers)

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

It was agreed that Eddie and Oonagh Caughey be allowed to attend the meeting as observers.

### Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The Secretary read the minutes of the previous meeting, also in Birmingham, and told the meeting that these had been taken to the last NEC. The NEC had agreed that Peter Lynch and Kevin Colfer be co-opted onto the sub-committee.

### Outline of Campaign

It was agreed that it was necessary to spread the campaign; ideally the committee should be national, and branches should take up cases in their areas, as the Birmingham branch had done.

There would be two separate campaigns:

- i) the issue of innocent prisoners;
- ii) the issue of prisoners who had fought.

It was agreed that those who are innocent are political prisoners because they were picked up because of the political situation in Ireland.

Sandra Hunter, whose husband is one of the Birmingham Six, said that she would call innocent Irish prisoners political. (For instance, the Birmingham Six are all from the Six Counties.) She said that it was best that the Birmingham branch worked for the Birmingham prisoners, but other cases should be taken up as well, including the other innocent prisoners; their cases would automatically become highlighted when the case of the Six was being examined.

We would have to have a strong committee, with people of strong views and determination; she stated that in the past some people who had earlier offered support had left when things became difficult. The case would have to be well presented. She suggested that we contact Peter Lynch with any queries, who would then get in touch with her.

(It was confirmed that Labour MPs had received copies of THE BIRMINGHAM FRAMEWORK, and that Sister Sarah Clarke had been given a grant by the GLC to take up prisoners' cases.)

When other branches had established which prisoners were in their areas, they could take up cases as the Birmingham branch has done, and the results put together.

Eddie Caughey congratulated the IBRG on having formed a prisoners' sub-committee, and told the meeting that Sinn Féin is launching a campaign for the following five demands: repatriation; release of innocent prisoners; release of Patrick Hackett; the repeal of the PTA and the end of special units for Irish prisoners.

The sub-committee felt they agreed in principle with these demands, and it was agreed to take them to the NEC for endorsement in January. Eddie Caughey also told the meeting of a press conference for prisoners on 8 February, which the sub-committee also agreed to support (subject to NEC approval). After the NEC we would confirm who from the IBRG would be attending - ideally we should have two people, at least one from the sub-committee.

The Birmingham branch circulated further documentation on the case of the Birmingham Six to members; it was agreed that members should take this back to their branches to add support and weight at branch level.

#### Cards for Prisoners (Christmas)

Moirá O'Shea told the meeting that she had circulated the list of Irish prisoners to branches, so that they could send Christmas cards. At the last NEC the Treasurer had told her that the NEC did not have enough money to pay for this; therefore it would be better for local branches to give. As well as prisoners in British jails, the prisoners in Portlaois would have to be remembered also.

#### Chairman's Report

The Chairman said that, concerning the case of the prisoner Shane Paul O'Doherty, he had not heard from either Cas Breen and Hugh Deutsch. He had contacted Jim Curran, one of the IBRG Vice-Presidents, about him. Pat Delaney said he would ring Mr Deutsch.

He had also written to Neil Kinnock about Irish prisoners generally; Neil Kinnock had passed this to Peter Archer and as yet Peter Archer had not replied. It was agreed that if the Chairman did not hear within the next few days, the Secretary should write to Neil Kinnock with copies of the correspondence for the Irish Post.

#### Any Other Business

Mary Crofton told the meeting she wanted to send a general report to the Labour Committee on Ireland; Pat Delaney said that if she sent it to him, he would get the OK from the NEC and have it sent out.

For members' expenses, it was agreed to use the pooled fare system; perhaps the Secretary could suggest to the NEC that they do the same.

It was agreed that the sub-committee needed a treasurer, and one would be elected at the next meeting.

Members were informed that next month's march in commemoration of Bloody Sunday would take place in Sheffield on Sunday 29 January 1984.

End of meeting.

Next meetings: London 4 February 1984; Manchester 3 March 1984.

JP/IBRG/PsC  
January/Mí Eanáir 1984