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1. The work of the Prisoners Sub-committee.

- The Prisoners Sub-committee was set up over a year ago
- (a). To watch over the interests of Irish political prisoners in Britain and Ireland.
  - (b). To press for the implementation of the European Parliament <sup>recommendation</sup> that, if a prisoner so desires, he or she should be moved to the prison nearest his or her home.
  - (c). To press for the retrial of those prisoners found guilty on suspect or discredited evidence, specifically the Birmingham 6 and the Guildford 8.
  - (d). To inform the public about, and campaign against the assassination of justice by the use of supergrass informers and trial without jury.

To further these aims the committee, which is made up of members of many I.B.R.G. branches, has in recent months mounted a campaign to alert the general public to the facts about the Birmingham 6 and the Guildford 8. These facts raise the gravest doubts as to the involvement of those found guilty in the events for which they were brought to trial. To this end the committee is working with the Birmingham 6 Committee at the request of the latter. Letters have been written to several M.P.s including Neil Kinnock and Peter Archer, shadow spokesman on Northern Ireland. I quote from Peter Archer's reply:

"I read the information you sent concerning the men convicted of the Birmingham pub bombings and I am in contact with the National Council of Civil Liberties about this.

We accept that the Prevention of Terrorism Act discriminates against the Irish Community in Britain. As you may know, we have opposed the introduction of a new Prevention of Terrorism Bill." (i.e. The Labour Party).

David Steele was approached also and acknowledged receipt of the letter.

If you can help in any way or want more information please contact the Chairman of the committee Gerry Gallagher (at address given below.) Manchester Branch recently donated £25 and Bolton Branch gave £30.

The Committee is also concerned about the plight of Shane Paul O'Doherty. He has had all privileges removed. Not only is he moved from prison to prison every few weeks, making it impossible for his mother to visit him, but he is now refused permission to hear Mass. He has expressed a desire to become a Capuchin monk. For further details contact Gerry Gallagher, 46, Old Lansdowne Road, West Didsbury, Manchester 20.

I am sure that all I.B.R.G. members will wish to join me in offering congratulations to our national Education Officer, Nessian Danaher, on the outstanding success of the I.B.R.G. Education Conference at Soar Valley. It was not only about an 'Irish Dimension in British Education'. It has, infact, injected an Irish dimension into British Education.

If you have not read the report in the Irish Post of February 25th, p. 15, I urge you to do so. You will be proud to be a member of an organisation which in under three years of existence can mount such an important conference. Thank you, Nessian. I know that the the conference will be an inspiration to other branches to be active in this field. Nessian is preparing a pamphlet which will be very useful to members concerned in mounting an education conference in their own area. It will detail the organisational processes which are necessary before any such ambitious scheme can be realised, and list useful names and addresses. Accompanying the pamphlet will be a paper summarizing the speeches of the main contributors to the conference at Soar Valley. A conference report will be sent to all branches. It would be useful if branches could look at their local situation, and find out from their L.E.A.s whether or not the curricula have any multi-cultural content. Results to Nessian Danaher, please. It would be interesting to have a national picture emerging.

### 3. Combating Racism.

Branches continue to report incidents which give offence. On the positive side, I.B.R.G. has been instrumental in raising public consciousness of the racial content of the 'Irish Joke', to a level where such jokes are rejected by many English people. The problem of the commercial exploitation of sometimes subconscious racial prejudices continues unabated, and needs constant combating, by the most effective methods we can command. The attention of the Irish Ambassador was drawn to the strong feelings held by many of the Irish community in Britain about racism in humour. He expressed the view that too much attention from the Embassy would be used as publicity by offending publications, and he quoted the case of the Australian Irish Joke Book. Marylebone Branch reported that after I.B.R.G. representations anti-Irish material had been withdrawn from the local market. Brent Branch joined with Barnett in approaching London establishments selling tea-towels featuring a supposed Irish G.C.E. test paper. Pat Delaney has received apologies from the stockists, but the manufacturer continues to produce the offending article. A campaign against them continues. If you wish to add your voice contact P. Delaney, 6, Avonhurst House, Coverdale Road, London NW2. The secretary of the Lambeth Branch has received a letter from the managing director of a Brixton shop 'Import Cargo' apologising for selling anti-Irish material and agreeing not to sell such items in future.

The Lambeth Branch has available copies of a procedure they have developed for use against anti-Irish sales. Many branches might find this useful. It is available from Gearoid MacGearailt, 12, Cresset Street, Clapham, London SW4 6BP, Tel. 01-622-7498. Jokes and jokesy material are an obvious form of racism, and in many ways the easiest to combat. The more subtle approach of the deliberately racist press is much harder to deal with, and there are few successes to report here. We must make sure that all offending material is reported to the appropriate authority, Press Council, Council for Racial Equality, Race Relations Board. Discrimination is rife in local government departments, D.H.S.S., employment, housing, education. Here we need the help of the experts in each field. Any branch should feel free to ask for help from other branches while taking its own local action in such cases. Perhaps one branch has an expert in D.H.S.S. matters as a member while another has a solicitor well versed in the Race Relations Act. Surely these members would make their expertise available in an advisory capacity. Do we need a national list of experts ready to help? Perhaps we might have our own 'This is Your Right' pamphlets?

#### 4. Reports from Branches.

Many branches are not sending minutes so I cannot pass on news of their successes, but the minutes I do get make encouraging reading.

Three themes occur constantly, racism (see Item 3), language classes and welfare. The numbers attending language classes are increasing all the time and this makes me believe that the appeal in Item 5 will elicit a good response.

An interesting development is the proposed Irish-speaking play group which Lambeth Branch in partnership with other Irish language groups is hoping to set up in April.

Harrow too is working hard to encourage the Irish in the area to learn their native language. They have joined with a group called Mother Tongue.

Cardiff reports an increase in numbers and in the competence of its studentz of Irish.

I wonder if an I.B.R.G. organised week in a Gaeltacht is a possibility in 1985 if not this year?

Lambeth Branch is very active in the welfare field. It is starting a welfare surgery this month.

Many London branches such as Shepherd's Bush are helping Irish people who are experiencing housing problems.

Manchester and Bolton are just two of the northern branches which are extending their interests by setting up welfare committees.

In Bolton we are particularly interested in those single old Irish men and women who during their working lives have had 'living in jobs, and earned too little to buy a house for their retirement. They are often in rented rooms and when ill have no one to help them or visit them in hospital.

The harassment of Irish itinerants in this country is also a matter of concern. If any branch has worked out a successful structure for dealing with these welfare problems we should be interested in having the details.

Lambeth has produced the undermentioned fact sheets;

1. The case of the Birmingham Six.
2. Archaeology and Architecture. Irish Influence on London and the South East.
3. Bunscoil Ghaeilge - Bheal Feirste. (Facts about a school in Belfast which teaches through the use of the Irish language - See Appeal).
4. Trade Unions and 'Northern Ireland'.
5. The Guildford and Woolwich pub bombings.
6. The Irish Joke.

These fact sheets are available from Geroid MacGearailt, 12, Cresset Street, Clapham, London SW4 6BP. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Although Lambeth doesn't ask for it, I am sure that a contribution to the cost of production would be welcomed.

In the closing months of 1983 Manchester Branch achieved air-time on Radio Manchester. Irish Line is a half hour programme broadcast monthly. Co-presenters are ~~Frank~~ O'Neil (Manchester) and Eileen Murphy (Bolton). This a notable and significant success. Perhaps other local radio stations can be persuaded to follow suit. Manchester has had success in the educational field too. This month it is running a series of lectures under the title 'Irish Studies', in conjunction with the College of Education. Anyone interested should contact the College (Tel. 061-273-5335) for further details

Finally, welcome to the new branches in Glasgow, Newcastle, Middlesborough and Blackburn.