

# IBRG

## IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

### ISLINGTON BRANCH

Report of Branch Activities; October 1982-March 1983

#### Introduction

The Islington Branch of the IBRG was established in Oct 1983 to represent the interests of the borough's Irish community which is the third largest in London. In its relatively short period of existence the Islington IBRG Branch has acquired a well merited reputation of being one of the most active Irish organizations in London in defending the rights of Irish people and promoting their general welfare. Some of the Branch's campaigns, notably persuading Islington Council to call for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland, recognize the right of the Irish people to self-determination and to condemn media stereotypification (anti-Irish jokes etc) together with successful bids to have offensive anti-Irish material removed from local shops have resulted in considerable national publicity. These campaigns and the Branch's overall record of defending Irish rights and in promoting the welfare of the Irish community were an important factor in the GLC's decision to provide funding for the Irish in Islington Project founded as a result of an Islington IBRG initiative to develop an action research organization to secure a more equitable share of resources for the Irish community. The majority of the Branch's activities can be classified under the following categories.

#### Political Lobbying and Campaigning

The ongoing conflict in the North East of Ireland has been a major cause of concern for the Branch membership and this has been reflected in the amount of time and effort devoted to campaigning on this issue undertaken both to highlight the issue and to ameliorate the plight of the nationally minded people living under British repression.

In particular the Branch has undertaken the following activities:

- 1). The Branch were largely instrumental in drafting the Troops Out and Self Determination for Ireland resolution which Islington Council passed in Dec 1983; the first council in Britain to do so.
- 2). In a follow up programme of activity the Branch has sent speakers to four Islington Labour Party wards, provided a speaker for the Middlesex Polytechnic Irish Week and in addition organized a successful



public meeting addressed by the local MP, Jeremy Corbyn and Councillors Alan Clinton and Steve Bundred.

3). During the recent General Election the Branch produced a leaflet calling on Irish electors to support the successful effort of Jeremy Corbyn to become MP for Islington North. Jeremy Corbyn, a member of this IBRG Branch not only was the only successful Labour candidate to prominently include a commitment to support the Troops Out /Self Determination programme in his manifesto but largely as a result of his efforts a group of Labour MPs, the Labour Committee on Ireland, has been formed.

4). The Branch was also involved during this election campaign in a picket on the Labour Party Press Conference called to protest against their refusal to support the Brent East's members' wishes to nominate Ken Livingstone as their chosen candidate.

5). The Branch has participated in IBRG delegations which have met Peter Barry, Ken Livingstone and Gerry Adams and the Branch has played an important part in shaping the present IBRG policy on the North East of Ireland.

5). In its most recent venture in this field the Branch met members of the Anti-Perjurers Joint Delegation who had come to London in a bid to end the scandal of the 'no jury' court system and in a follow up activity the Branch produced a leaflet on this issue for the St Patrick's Day Parade in London with the intention of persuading other Irish organizations to take up this important issue.

It is likely that activity on the North East of Ireland issue will again play an important part in the Branch's campaigning during the next year.

#### Anti-Racist Work

A determination to counteract widespread anti-Irish racism particularly in the media and entertainment sectors was one of the main factors in the formation of this Branch and work in this field has occupied a significant amount of the Branch's energies.

1). Media work; the Branch has monitored the media for instances, alas all too frequent of anti-Irish bias and stereotyped treatment of Irish people and issues. Complaints have been registered with the Press Council following particularly blatant misrepresentations of Irish issues and approaches have been made to local NUJ journalists to stop this type of reporting. On two occasions the Branch found it necessary to picket the Sun and subsequently got a published apology. Branch members have had a considerable number of letters on Irish issues published in the local press and the Branch has been actively involved in combatting media attacks on the Irish in Islington Project.



2).The Branch picket on the Woolworths store in Holloway resulted in the removal of all offensive anti-Irish products from ~~these~~ stores throughout Britain.

3).The Branch has actively participated in the various anti-racist events organized by the GLC and ILEA.

#### Cultural, Welfare and Social Activities.

The active promotion of the socio-economic welfare of the Irish community and the provision of adequate cultural facilities has been a very important part of the Branch's work.

1).Lobbying local government departments;the Branch has met with a number of Islington senior officers to discuss the borough's provisions for the Irish community and has expressed its opposition to the Prevention of Terrorism Act before the borough's Police Committee.As a result of Branch pressure the Council has started to use the Irish Post as an advertizing vehicle for recruitment.

2).The Branch was instrumental in the establishment of the Irish in Islington Project which with the aid of a GLC grant has been able to employ staff who are engaged in an action research programme of work designed to document specific Irish communities needs and to formulate ways of meeting these.The Project has at present funding for one full time Coordinator ,two partime Outreach Workers and office space in Caxton House.It has applied for the funding of additional workers and for the purchas<sup>e</sup> of an Irish Centre for the Islington community which would serve as an advice centre and meeting place for the borough's Irish organizations.

3).Travel;concern at the high costs of travel to Ireland and the poor standard of facilities provided has resulted in the Branch organizing and taking part in delegations to Bord na Failte and Aer Lingus and the Branch has recently won the support of Lord Bethnell's Free Skies Campaign for its activities in this field.

4).Two successfulsocial evenings have been held and the Branch is actively involved in the organization of a planned Irish in Islington Summer Festival.

#### Education.

Campaigning for a recognition of an 'Irish dimension' in the British education system has been an integral<sup>part</sup> of the Branch's overall anti-racist work. Specific activities in our campaign to secure a more equitable share of resources in the education sector have involved:

1).A meeting with Frances Morrell the ILEA Leader and participation

in its local consultative and advisory committees.

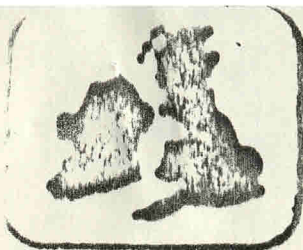
2). As a result of the Branch's efforts the local Adult Education Institute is now, in association with the Irish in Islington Project, running classes in Irish language and the history of the Irish in Britain. More classes, music and in oral history will be organized in the next session.

But except for this limited adult education provision ILEA has regrettably failed to recognize an Irish dimension in the classroom particularly in its total exclusion of any positive reference to Irish issues in its multi cultural and anti-racist policies.

### Conclusion

In expressing its appreciation of the assistance given by the GLC to the Irish in Islington Project the Branch also feels it necessary to record that to date Islington which so far has not spent a single penny on any Irish activity or organization in the borough has refused without providing any satisfactory explanation to fund community workers and premises that the Branch sought on behalf of the Irish in Islington Project. Islington's total failure to practically respond to the documented needs of the Irish community throws into question its stated commitment to obtaining an equitable share of resources for the borough's ethnic minorities of whom the Irish are by far the largest and longest established ethnic community. The Branch will during the forthcoming year redouble its efforts to make Islington Council recognize its responsibilities and obligations to this very large proportion of its rate payers.





# I.B.R.G.

## IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

ISLINGTON Branch

AGM, Tuesday 3/4/84 at 7.30 pm in Caxton House, 129 St John's Way,  
London N19.

### Agenda

- 1). Officers Reports
- 2). Elections
- 3). Resolutions
- 4). Any Other Business

Members are reminded that subscriptions for membership renewal are now due.

For further information etc contact 272-1772 during office hours.