

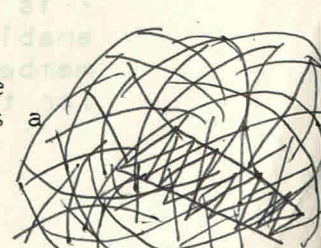
ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - 1989-90

My work during the year has included: (1) the administration of the Association and the running of the office: involving, among other matters, communications with the membership and the general public, arrangements for Officers' and Executive meetings and meetings of the Fundraising review Group, and for the distribution of the ILS, the BAIS Newsletter, etc.; (2) advising the Officers and the Executive Committee on various matters, and liaising with the Association's advisory subcommittees; (3) liaison with a wide range of organisations, from government agencies to community groups, and representation of BAIS at various functions; (4) the organisation and supervision of the second series of sixth form history revision conferences in Northern Ireland. In this work, I have had the assistance of Kate Thompson, who has provided draft minutes of Officers' and Executive meetings; and of Mrs Polly Melotte, who has provided one half-day's secretarial assistance per week.

Due to a change in policy on the part of the Rowntree Reform Trust, the Association, in common with all other organisations housed in the building, had to vacate its office at 9 Poland Street in August of this year. Since then, I have conducted the business of the Association from home. However, a new office which is suitable to our needs has been located at Westminster Bridge Road, and we should be in occupation there by the time this report is presented.

Unlike our previous accommodation, which was provided free, BAIS will have to pay rent for these premises. This extra commitment comes at a time when the finances of the Association would, in any event, have been under strain. The Association needs to raise a minimum of £16,000, in addition to the £25,000 which will become available to BAIS, if it is to maintain its activities at present levels and initiate some modest, and necessary, new developments in 1991. As the AIB grant will no longer be available in 1992, the whole issue of the funding of BAIS is now of vital importance to the Association. In this latter context, BAIS is very fortunate to have the very active assistance of two of the Association's patrons with a background in business as key members of a Fundraising Review Group. In addition to these, the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Executive Director - plus various other persons with a business background or other useful skills - who attend meetings by invitation - constitute this group.

Since the last AGM, the Officers have met on five occasions, including one special two-day meeting to discuss the overall strategy of the Association. The Executive has met on four occasions, one of which was a



special Executive to discuss relations with the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University, and other institutions with which BAIS may be associated in the future, as well as overall strategy. During this period, also, the following documents have been presented by the Officers for agreement by the Executive: joint documents with the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University on the reconstitution of the Steering Group of the Joint Education Programme and on the setting up of a North-West Fundraising Advisory Committee. The special Executive on 8 September approved a general statement concerning "Relations between BAIS and Institutions of higher education on behalf of which/in co-operation with which it may engage in fundraising". In short, in these and a number of other areas, the Officers and Executive have sought to formalise and define more closely the structures of the Association.

Services to members have been maintained during the year, in terms of the distribution of materials. While there has only been one printed Newsletter and one distribution of Irish Studies in Britain, double issues of both are promised by their respective editors and we should be able to distribute these in the new year. A number of supplementary duplicated newsletters have been published from the office in order to keep members informed of developments within the Association, and to pass on information regarding publications, day-schools, conferences, etc., received in the office.

Among the events organised directly by BAIS have been the second series of history revision conferences for sixth formers in Northern Ireland. The Higher Education Subcommittee organised a conference for members in third level education to discuss strategies for the promotion of Irish Studies at that level and the use of the ERASMUS programme. The Irish Language Subcommittee has organised two day-schools for Irish language teachers in adult education, and has published an occasional newsletter directed to those teachers. Both the third level conference and the Irish language conferences have been self-financing. The Adult & Further Education Subcommittee is at present conducting a survey of Irish Studies provision in adult education with the object of defining a strategy in that area.

The subcommittee system of BAIS is functioning well in a number of areas. Executive member Bob Purdie has made recommendations on the working of subcommittees to the Executive which should help to overcome some of the difficulties experienced in this area. A vital issue - to be addressed in the context of overall BAIS funding - is the proper financing of subcommittees, in order to enable the Association to avail of the expertise of the membership in developing and implementing strategies for the various levels of education.

BAIS has also been associated with other bodies in its work. The assistance given to the Soar Valley Irish Dimensions in British Education Conference marks one of the most long-standing and successful examples of BAIS's co-operation with other bodies. Nesson Danaher, in his capacity as Irish Studies Co-ordinator at Soar Valley College, Leicester, has built up a valuable resource, which has been generously placed at the disposal of the Irish Studies movement at the compulsory and adult education levels.

The partnership with the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University in the form of the Joint Education Programme has continued. Having developed two A/S levels and an A level in Irish Studies, the JEP is now being directed, via working parties, towards developing support materials intended to secure the position of Irish Studies within the National Curriculum. As in other areas of Irish Studies, the work is being undertaken on the tightest of budgets and with much ingenuity and voluntary assistance. Changes during the year have meant that Roger Swift is now AIB Bank Honorary Director and Dr Christine Kinealy has joined the JEP as Deputy Director of the Programme.

The Association had the valuable co-operation of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester in organising its third series of BAIS lectures in February/March of this year. Member Janet Wallwork, secretary of the Manchester Irish Education Group and Irish Studies librarian at the Library, played a key role as local organiser. The lectures drew good audiences, largely from the university and Irish communities.

Gael-Linn provided three scholarships for adult learners of Irish for a second year in 1990. These were administered by the Association and the winners attended courses provided by Oideas Gael in Donegal. Gael-Linn and Oideas Gael are among a number of Irish-language organisations which have assisted the Association in various ways during the year.

The Association also co-operated with Bord Fáilte Éireann/The Irish Tourist Board in promoting its Images of Ireland undergraduate essay competition for a second year, the prize for which is a place at the UCD Irish Studies Summer School. Unfortunately, the number of entries has been disappointing, and not sufficient to warrant Bord Fáilte continuing to run the competition. We would welcome the views of members at third level on this outcome and on the merits of such initiatives, since there is little point in this type of collaboration if it is not seen to serve a useful purpose from the point of view of both parties.

This year the Association had a high profile within the CEDPATH 90 conference, hosted this year by the history inspectorate of the DES. A number of members of the Association were present because of their role within the education system. In addition, the Vice-Chair provided the closing address of the conference and the Executive Director conducted a series of seminars on "National History: the design of a curriculum".

The uptake for Irish Studies courses is pleasing evidence of the demand which exists at third level and within adult education. Among the developments at third level is the new degree course being offered at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, which has been heavily subscribed. St Mary's now joins the Polytechnic of North London and the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool in providing a half degree in Irish Studies. This year also, the degree course at PNL, which was the first in the field, becomes a full-time course. There have also been welcome developments in adult education. In addition to existing courses at Soar Valley College and in Manchester (Manchester Irish Education Group), an excellent 12-week course in Irish Studies has been initiated at Newark and Sherwood College, Newark, this autumn; and the Bradford Irish Education Group has been successful in having the Irish A/S levels adopted by Ilkley College and is building contacts with Bradford University.

The funding of the Association is now a matter of the utmost importance, involving the presentation of the various aspects of BAIS activity in a way which will attract financial support from government agencies, charities, trusts or commercial sponsors. An effective subcommittee system is vital to the success of BAIS's efforts as the national co-ordinating body in the field of Irish Studies, and it will be increasingly difficult for me, as Executive Director, to fulfil my role without increased secretarial support. Both of these elements, plus the rent and running costs of the new premises need to form part of the Association's costings in the coming year. Much has been done during the past two years to strengthen the image and structure of BAIS, and that work will need to be continued in the coming year.

One cannot work in the field of Irish Studies without becoming aware of the vast amount of goodwill and voluntary effort on which Irish Studies subsists at all levels. That is equally true of this Association, and I am personally grateful for all the support and goodwill which has facilitated my work during the past year.

Seán Hutton