



# BIAS BULLETIN

The Newsletter of Brent Irish Advisory Service

Community Development Agency  
- BIAS INFORMATION CENTRE -  
76 Salusbury Road, Kilburn  
London NW6 6NY  
Telephone 01-624 9991 anytime

July 1985

## IRISH ARE NOT GETTING THEIR FAIR SHARE

### Why the Irish need a special advisory service.

According to the 1981 census the Irish in Brent tend to live in the poorer parts of the borough, in the inner urban areas of worst housing conditions. For example, Kilburn ward, with the highest proportion of Irish people in Brent, also has, in the words of Brent Council's own analysis, "above average unemployment, one of the highest sharing amenities, above average overcrowding, very low owner-occupation, second highest private renting".

These are some of the reasons why Brent Irish Advisory Service was set up by concerned local Irish people in 1978. Since then we have found that because of increasing hardship and deprivation within the community, the demands placed upon our organisation have overstretched its resources.

We know from our close contact with the Irish community in Brent that there is desperate need for

specialist workers for the Irish homeless, unemployed, elderly, mentally ill, disabled, alcohol and drug dependants. The present allocation of resources is not meeting their needs.

The present work of BIAS includes information, advice and community work; housing work, especially with the single homeless and migrant workers; social work with the elderly, mentally ill and families; and employment/training work.

As rate-payers and taxpayers we are surely entitled to a fair share of the resources in housing, social and other services which we pay for.

Irish people do not get their fair share of these resources. For example, ~~NONE~~ of £4,500,000 in Brent's Urban Programme this year goes to what Brent Council itself calls a "large Irish population with their own particular needs".

## Social Services

The chairman of the Kilburn-based Brent Irish Advisory Service said that the organisation had been pressing for an Irish dimension in social services ever since its formation in 1978. Longford-born Colum Moloney, of Keslake Road, Queens Park, said:

"Our organisation, being the only council-funded Irish community group in Brent, has been dealing with the specific needs of the Irish community for the past eight years. We have been seeking grant-aid from social ser-

vices for the last three years to employ a social worker for the Irish community."

Valerie Howarth, the borough's director of social services,

says: "The need for certain culturally specific services to be developed is recognised, particularly for adolescents and for elderly members of the Irish community. The contribution of community groups within the Irish community in the development and planning of these services is welcomed."

## Let's kick racism out of BRENT



REPRESENTATIVES of the Kilburn-based Brent Irish Advisory Service and its offshoot, the Innisfree Housing Association, were in Dublin for talks with Irish government officials, statutory and voluntary bodies about the housing needs of migrant workers.

Increasing numbers of tenants of local councils and local housing association have approached BIAS in recent years to seek assistance in returning to live in Ireland. The majority of these people are pensioners or disabled people who originally came to Britain as migrant workers but who would now prefer to return.

Among the main points discussed were the housing policies of Irish local authorities, the need for easier mutual exchanges for tenants, extended mobility schemes, and reciprocal arrangements between councils in Ireland and Britain.

THE mayor and mayoress of Brent, Councillor Cyril Shaw and Mrs Shaw, photographed with some members of the management committee and staff of Brent Irish Advisory Service, Kilburn, at the organisation's recent benefit dance in the Galtymore Club, Cricklewood Broadway recently. A total of almost £1,000 was raised for the organisation's welfare fund.

Front row (from left): Donald Mac Craith (organiser), Mrs Shaw, Mr Shaw, Margaret Gallagher (secretary).

Middle row (from left): Jim Smith (housing worker), Marie Dalton, Tim Hartnett (vice-chairman).

Back row (from left): Colum Moloney (chairman) and Padraic Kenna.



# The work of Brent Irish Advisory Service

The Brent Resident

September/October 1984

Brent Irish Advisory Service is a voluntary organisation based in the Irish community. Its full-time employees are the Organiser and the Housing Worker. Although BIAS is primarily concerned with the Irish in Brent, anyone with a housing or welfare problem is welcome to seek our assistance, irrespective of nationality or race.

Homelessness is the most common social problem for Irish people in Brent. A high proportion of Brent's Irish are homeless or in housing stress. Many homeless or badly housed Irish people are unaware of their housing and other rights, are often not registered on the housing waiting list, are not availing themselves of the housing schemes, and are not receiving benefits to which they may be entitled.

The 1981 Census shows a higher proportion of Irish in privately rented accommodation to any other ethnic group. One role of BIAS is to ensure that people are made aware of their rights to a home and that they do apply. Several single homeless people entitled to housing because they suffer from a disability or handicap have only found their way to the Housing Provisions Unit through referral by BIAS.

While Irish households as a whole suffer greater overcrowding than average, the most acute need is that of single migrant workers. Some of the privately-rented accommodation used by Irish workers is substandard, over-crowded, and in contravention of housing, planning and environmental health legislation.

Often single people are forced to live in overcrowded and substandard accommodation in lodging houses, hostels and bed and breakfast guest houses, often with a lack of privacy, inadequate fire precautions, no security of tenure, loss of personal dignity and social stigma.

The position of the older single migrant worker, homeless or living in very poor housing conditions, and predominantly male, is particularly bad. Many of these people came over between 1945 and 1960 when unemployment in Ireland and shortage of labour in Britain brought many thousands of Irish to live and work in Brent. Over half of the

male residents at the DHSS Reception Centre in Pound Lane, Willesden are Irish.

While the single Irish with the most strikingly acute difficulties are chiefly male, we should remember that in Brent there are 800 more women who were born in the Republic of Ireland than men. Many of these women came to Brent in the 1950s to work in jobs with tied accommodation; in hospitals, hotels and pubs, or as living-in domestics with private families, circumstances which make those Irish women liable to be made homeless when such employment ceases to be available.

BIAS has referral rights for one-bedroomed and bed-sit accommodation to Brent Council and local housing associations, and is negotiating with Brent Peoples Housing Association for a Special Project to provide accommodation for migrant workers who have lived for many years in hostels and lodgings, with the support necessary to enable them to go on to independent accommodation.

BIAS is also concerned with the number of Irish-born people in Brent, especially pensioners, who wish to return to Ireland. Those who cannot afford to purchase a home in Ireland face difficulties as some Irish councils require that applicants for local authority housing should have lived in their area for a minimum period which may range from six months to four years.

While mutual exchanges are possible between council or housing association tenants in Brent and tenants in the Republic of Ireland, such tenants cannot transfer there directly. The National Mobility Scheme which enables tenants to move from one local authority to another within Britain has been extended to the North of Ireland but there is no similar scheme to cover the Republic of Ireland. Migrant workers would be greatly helped by an inter-European or even international mobility scheme, and this is a proposal we would encourage all concerned with tenants' rights to push for.

*Brent Irish Advisory Service have an office at 76, Salisbury Road, Queens Park, NW6. We can be telephoned on 624 9991 at any time (if there's no-one in the office, you can leave a message on the answerphone).*

# HIJACKED CENTRE?

Brent Irish  
Cultural and Community  
Centre.

Despite its original charter, who is running the project and for whom? How many Brent Irish community groups are now actively involved? Is it true that it is designed to meet the felt community needs of Irish ratepayers in Brent?

Time has taken its toll — circumstances and the political and economic climate have changed dramatically. The project was out of a commitment at the council elections (1982) to the Brent Irish community. It was largely the work of Councillor John Ryan, Donal MacCraith (Brent Irish Advisory Service BIAS), Irish-born trade unionists and community activists.

The project was promoted effectively by the Brent Irish Cultural and Welfare steering group. This group enlisted the support of more than 20 Irish organisations, a number of enthusiastic Labour councillors — and Brent borough-wide organisations such as the Brent Federation of Tenants, Brent Trades Council and Brent Community Relations Council (BCRC).

The early emphasis was laid upon Brent Irish community development and welfare activity, especially for our growing number of Irish elderly in the borough. Certainly, Irish culture in the broad sense of the term was a major element in that conception — *culture in the service of the people*, not the narrow or drawing room variety of the posh Irish.

In fact, when local residents raised the issue of providing a large car-parking area involving demolition of a quarter of the Salisbury Road building, it was pointed out that the local Irish working-class users would walk to the centre. Unlike the Irish Club professional class and "subbies," few of the Kilburn-Carlton Vale Irish would need a costly car park.

As time rolled by a limited liability company was formed — Brent Irish Cultural and Community Association Ltd (BICCA). The emphasis was laid upon culture.

Ensure that the Irish working class in Kilburn, and Willesden Green, Carlton Vale and Harlesden don't find themselves, at the end of the day, paying for yet another Tammany Hall and drinking club for Irish subbies in Salisbury Road.

There's a lucrative contract for demolition, building and refurbishing work. A score of subbies are buzzing around the jam-jar. Let's hope the local Irish unemployed and then neighbours, whatever their nationality, get their share of the public money (Brent Council and GLC) financing this project.

M. O'CALLANAIN



# BENEFIT DANCE

An elderly Irishman was homeless and living rough in the Kilburn area until found by a voluntary worker from Brent Irish Advisory Service (BIAS).

The 70-year-old pensioner was almost penniless and his physical and mental health was deteriorating due to malnutrition. Brent housing service found him temporary accommodation and BIAS helped him to obtain his full pension and free travel permit.

He moved into a warm, comfortable bedsitter, and although he has most of the essential items, he would like a few extras to make it a bit more homely. An unwanted radio or black and white television set would be especially welcome to help relieve some of his boredom and isolation.

The case cited above is often typical of the kind of welfare work undertaken by the staff and volunteers at BIAS, whose benefit

dance at the Galtymore Club in Cricklewood in aid of the Kilburn-based Brent Irish Advisory Service was a great success, and helped to raise much-needed welfare funds for the organisation.

Now in its eighth busy year, BIAS is an Irish community development and self-help organisation which provides information, advice, practical assistance and welfare support to those in need or at risk.

Longford born Colum Moloney, of Kestlake Road, Queen's Park, the chairman of BIAS, says: "Since our formation in 1978 our voluntary organisation has been able to assist thousands of people of all age and backgrounds, the majority of them in Kilburn, Cricklewood, Harlesden and Willesden.

"To all of them I say — we may have helped you, or a friend of yours, or a group you belong to; we need your support. All proceeds from tickets bought in advance will help to alleviate hardship

and misery in our community, especially among those who may be alone, isolated, homeless or sick."

Music for the occasion was provided by the versatile Blue Diamonds band with a musical programme to suit all tastes — ceili, old time, country and modern. Popular DJ "Cowboy Patsy" filled in the awkward gaps with the latest and greatest Irish hits.

Guest artistes included the Willesden-based Bantry Pipers and Dancers, led by their founder and trainer Mrs Eileen Wagstaff of Fleetwood Road, Dollis Hill, in a rousing selection of marches and dance tunes which helped to get the evening off to a fine start.

Then came an enjoyable display of Irish dance by the talented Kinsella Dancers — taught by Theresa Kinsella of Attewood Avenue, Neasden at weekly classes in Cricklewood — who gave a delightful presentation of jigs, reels and hornpipes to the musical

accompaniment of champion fiddler Seamus McKeon.

The Mayor and Mayoress of Brent, Councillor Cyril Shaw and his wife, came along for the evening and were introduced to members of the local Irish community. The Mayor greeted the audience in the Irish language and the Mayoress was presented with a bouquet of flowers.

Colum Moloney of Kestlake Road, Queen's Park, the Longford-born chairman of Brent Irish Advisory Service, thanked all those who helped to make the evening such a success. "We would like to thank all those who bought or sold tickets and who came on the night", he said.

"We also thank all our guest artistes, all who donated prizes for the raffle, the local press and media, the management and staff of the Galtymore, local publicans and clubs, and all who contributed in any way no matter how small."

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## migrant young

THE problems of young Irish migrant workers in north-west London were highlighted in a televised report on contemporary migration transmitted early in the new year by Radio Telefis Eireann, Ireland's national television service

A team from "Today Tonight", the station's daily evening news and current affairs magazine programme, came to London to talk to the young people themselves. The position of those who are homeless or jobless was compared with that of young graduates and professionals who come here to further their careers.

Interviews were held with homeless young men and women in the Kilburn area for whom "squatting" has become, not only necessity, but a way of life. The team also met several young people who are "sleeping rough", on park benches.

Among the welfare agencies contacted were Brent Irish Advisory Service.

With more than half of Ireland's population under 25, and with high unemployment among young people, the pressures to migrate are very great. It is hoped that the report will bring home the risk of homelessness and the lack of employment opportunities which today's young migrants may have to face on coming to London.

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## SUPPORT

CORK County Council at its March meeting adopted a notice of motion in the name of Cllr. Noel Collins (Ind.)

Making a strong case for financial support, Cllr. Collins said: "The emigration of a citizen should not signal the end of concern for him/her in their native country. There are many organisations in Great Britain attempting to provide services for emigrants but they will need our financial support, if they are to respond properly to the many calls for help."

Cllr. Collins went on: "I worked among our fellow Irish people in North London in the early 1960s and, therefore, I know their problems. I visit them annually. I feel that if practical concern could be shown on the home front, it would help to ease the situation. I can recall writing letters from London to parents here in Ireland, pleading with them to accept their children back home.

Official figures issued recently show that Irish people make up 23 per cent of the homeless in London's inner city. This climbs to nearer 30 per cent in Irish areas like Kilburn and Paddington. Most of the older generation of Irish emigrants came to Britain in search of work during the 1950s emigration boom.

Many continue to suffer from various social problems which stem from deprivation. I continue to receive letters from London seeking my help with emigrants in trouble. I had a letter, recently, from the Brent Irish Advisory Service, 76 Salisbury Road, Kilburn, requesting Cork County Council to repair an emigrant's house in North Cork to enable him to return home to end his days. He is 69 years of age. He has no savings other than his weekly pension. If he had savings there would be no need to write to me.

If the Council itself cannot do this work, perhaps, with the assistance of the Southern Health Board and through the generosity of the public in general, enough money could be put together to ease this man's plight. I have passed his file on to the North Cork Manager — Des Wixted, whom I trust can help him.

### SORTED OUT

I have many other letters but these I have sorted out with the help of friends. I would like to see Local Authorities taking an interest in the welfare of our emigrants. Maybe people could "adopt" some Irish Centre that cares for our people Brent Irish Advisory Service is doing great work for our emigrants.



# passports

THE new Irish passport, now being issued in a new European Community format, deep wine in colour, is smaller than the old green passport and has a flexible cover, making it more convenient to carry. The main text of the passport is in Irish, English and French

with a translation in the other Community languages

Existing Irish passports will remain valid until their normal expiry date. For further information and passport applications contact

**BIAS Information Centre** in Kilburn on 624 9991.

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# youth

AN AMBITIOUS new association, run entirely by the younger members of the local Irish community, and believed to be the first of its kind in Britain, has already attracted widespread interest and support.

The inaugural public meeting of the Development of Irish Youth Association at the Carlton Community Centre in Granville Road, Kilburn, last month was well attended, despite a lack of publicity, and its members hope that it will be first of many such events.

The founder members are Dennis O'Brien, Liam Donohoe and the Devereux brothers — all born, bred and schooled locally and of Irish parentage. They say that they have set up the association to encourage the "cultural awareness" of second-generation Irish youth in Brent.

## Promise to provide information on hazards of unprepared emigration

A delegation from the Brent Irish Advisory Service has been to Dublin for meetings with various prominent politicians, including the Minister of Labour, Ruairi Quinn. The purpose of the meetings was to impress upon politicians the need to dissuade Irish youngsters from coming to Britain without either job or accommodation prospects, writes PAUL GRIBBEN.

"Ruairi Quinn told us that certain people benefit from migration, but we pointed out that vast numbers are now arriving in Britain unable to find work or a place to stay. In Brent alone there are thousands of Irish people, many of them young school-leavers, living in squats", Donal Mac Craith of BIAS told *The Irish Post*. The other members of the delegation were Jim Smith, Colum McElaney and Tim Hartnett.

The Minister promised to disseminate information on the hazards of unpreparedly emigrating to Britain. The information will be distributed through the National Manpower Services offices throughout the country. Special efforts will be made to disseminate the information in rural areas where, the Minister feels, the harsh realities of present-day emigration are not appreciated by many people.

The BIAS group also met with Fianna Fail chief whip Bert Aherne, Independent TD Tony Gregory and Workers' Party leader Tomas Mac Giolla.

Tony Gregory told the delegation that in

his Dublin inner-city constituency entire families are now packing up and leaving Ireland.

The second purpose of the BIAS visit to Dublin was to discuss housing with the Department of the Environment. The delegation had a lengthy meeting with Fergus O'Brien, the Minister of State for the Environment. "We discussed the possibility of establishing a housing association in Ireland to cater for such as pensioners and disabled people who, having spent many years in Britain, now wish to return home", Donal Mac Craith said.

The regulations to qualify for a council tenancy in the Republic are particularly stringent and BIAS is seeking a flexibility to assist people wishing to return home. "In this area we are essentially concerned about people who were forced to leave Ireland in the post-War years and who now want to live out their remaining years back in Ireland. We feel that every effort must be made to accommodate them", Donal Mac Craith added.

The Minister of State put forward the idea that it might be possible to have reciprocal housing schemes, whereby a specific local council in Britain would agree to house a number of people from a specified local authority area in Ireland and vice versa.

BIAS now plans to seek the views of Brent Council. Meanwhile the organisation is pressing ahead with its own housing association.

# probe

AN INVESTIGATION into the way housing associations and other organisations allocate homes to clients has been ordered by Brent Council.

The investigation was moved by the council's Policy and Resources Committee when considering an application for funding by the Brent Irish Advisory Service.

BIAS has nomination rights to several housing associations.

Chairman Bob Lacey (Cons, Preston) led the call for an investigation into BIAS's housing nomination policy.

Labour leader Martin Coleman said the inquiry should be extended to include all housing associations in the area during the past four years.

The committee decided to go ahead with the funding for BIAS pending the outcome of the report.

In the past, BIAS has been run from money under the Urban Programme. Brent paid 25 per cent with the rest paid for by the Department of the Environment under the Urban Programme.

Funding under the programme finished in March and BIAS wanted Brent to continue funding



Brent Irish Advisory Service

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## INFORMATION CENTRE

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**76 Salusbury Road, Kilburn NW6 6NY**

PLEASE MAKE A NOTE OF OUR TELEPHONE NUMBER

**01-624 9991**

BIAS could always use your help and support