

Soar Valley College

in association with

Irish Studies Workshop



and the IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

GLENEAGLES AVENUE
LEICESTER LE4 7GY
Telephone (0533) 669625

Irish Studies Co-ordinator:
N. Danaher, B.A., M.Ed.



REPORT ON 1st. National Conference

on

IRISH DIMENSIONS IN BRITISH EDUCATION

Sat. 11. Feb. 1984

SOAR VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Gleneagles Avenue
Leicester, LE4 7GY.
(Tel: 0533 669625)

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INTRODUCTION

The Conference was aimed at parents, teachers, first and second generation Irish people, all Irish community organisations and all those interested in - multicultural issues and developments, - curriculum development in junior and secondary schools, - adult and community education.

It was hoped that the Conference would outline current issues, discuss developments and indicate avenues for progress. I think it would be a fair judgement on the day to say that attendance far exceeded our expectations, that our guest speakers were outstanding in their contributions and that at least some developments are being set in motion. It is intended to put forward motions at our 1984 National Conference proposing the formation of standing junior and secondary curriculum development groups.

On behalf of the IBRG I would like to thank our four Speakers:

Tom Arkell

Senior Lecturer in Arts Education, Warwick University and the EEC Irish Studies Project.

Ivan Gibbons

Ed. of 'Irish Studies in Britain' and Community Education worker at Hammersmith and North Kensington Institute of Adult Education.

Tim Ottevanger

Multi-Cultural Adviser for Leics. L.E.A.

Barry Dufour

Lecturer in Education and Course Director in Multi-Cultural Education at the School of Education, Leicester University

I would also like to thank the Community College Head, Eric Sylt, and the Community Tutor, Derek Watkins, for their positive role in helping to get the Conference off the ground. Our gratitude, too, to the volunteer secretaries who compiled the minutes and final reports from the Discussion Groups: Brid Keenan & Eliska Stransky - Irish in the multicultural context

Ruby Khan - Irish studies in the Junior Curriculum,

Maire O'Hagan - Irish Studies in the secondary curriculum, and

Ita O'Donovan & Brid Keenan - Adult & Community education.

Finally, the IBRG would like to thank all the groups and individuals who supported the Conference. Plans for a second conference in 1985 are already in motion.

Nessan Danaher, Conference Chairperson and
Education Officer, NEC/IBRG.

Head of History, Soar Valley Community College.

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BLUE pages: Introduction and list of participants.

GREEN pages: the Irish in the multicultural context.

WHITE pages: Irish studies in the Primary curriculum.

PINK pages: " " " " Secondary " "

YELLOW pages: " " " " Adult, community and continuing education

Group

Nos

Names of Conference Participants

1-2	Tom ARKELL, Warwick University; EEG Irish Studies Project
1-3	Sarah BERRY, Leicester, Moat Community College, Open University
1-3	Steve BRENNAN, London, G.L.C., Irish Liaison & Outreach Officer
1-4	K. BRUDER, London, Harringey IBRG, Tottenham College of Technology
1-4	Maurice CAHILL, Harrow IBRG
1-4	Ma iread ni CHOIGHAIN, Harrow IBRG
1-3	Liz CLARKE, Leicester, Gateway 6th Form College
1-4	Jim COLLINS, London, Celtic League
1-4	Mrs. Madeleine COOKE, Leics. Libraries & Information Service
1-2	Maureen DANAHER, Leicester, St. Joseph's J.S., IBRG
1-3	Nessan DANAHER, Leicester, Soar Valley C.C., IBRG Education Officer
2-4	Maire Bean ni DHOMHNALLAIN, London, Conradh na Gaeilge
1	Mrs. M.E. Donnelly, Birmingham, Sparkbrook
1-4	Kathleen DONNELLY, Birmingham IBRG
1-3	Mrs. Cathleen DOYLE, Leicester Irish Society (Secretary)
1-4	Mary DUCKETT, Harrow IBRG
1	Barry DUFOR, Leicester University, Multicultural Education Director
1-2	Mike DUGGAN, Coventry, Corpus Christi J.S., Irish Studies Project
1-3	Mike FEELEY, Coventry L.E.A. Adviser
1-3	Josephine M. Fooney, Sheffield, St. Bernard's School, Rotherham
1-4	Ivan GIBBONS, London, Editor of 'Irish Studies in Britain'
1	Justin HARMAN, Irish Embassy, First Secretary
1-3	Ms. Padma HERAT, Manchester LEA Multicultural Development Service
1-3	Mary HICKMAN, London, PhD Researcher on the Irish in Britain
1-4	Sean HONE, Coventry
1-3	Bob HOWELL, Leicester, Gateway 6th Form College
1-3	Sean HUTTON, Bridlington, North Numberside
1	Bridie JOHNSON, Coventry Irish Theatre Group (Tel 0203-29943)
1	Vincent JOHNSON, Coventry Irish Theatre Group
1-3	Hilda McCARTHERY, Irish Books Service and secondary curriculum
1-4	Luke KEARNS, Bradford IBRG
1-4	Brid KEENAN, IBRG, Tottenham C. of Technology, Community Service Unit
1-2	Ms. Ruby KHAN, Manchester LEA Multicultural Development Service
1-3	Jim KING, Manchester, National Chairperson IBRG
1-2	Nora LEAHY, Birmingham, St. Wilfrid's R.C.S.
1-4	Kevin LINT, Leicester, Gateway 6th Form College
1-4	Mrs. P. Lucy, Manchester
1-4	Mr. P. LUCY, Manchester
1-3	C.J. LUKY, Manchester LEA Multicultural Development Service
1-4	Ken LYMAN, Irish Video Project (Channel 4) (Tel.01-740-8223)
1-3	Mrs. Bridie LYONS, Leicester Irish Society
2-3	Don MAGEE, Irish Video Project (Channel 4) (Tel.01-740-8223)
1	Mrs. Anna McCABE, Coventry
2-4	Des McCURDY, Leicester, Comhaltas Ceoltairi Eireann, Midlands PRO
1-2	Mary McCREESH, Coventry, Corpus Christi JS, Irish Studies Project
1-2	Fr. Daniel McHUGH, Birmingham, Diocesan Service for R.E.
1	Cormac McKEEVER, Edware, St. James' S., Burnt Oak
1-3	Fr. Frank McLAUGHLIN, Leicester, P.P. Mother of God
1-3	Mrs. E. MERRIMAN, Leicester Irish Society
1-4	Maurice MOORE, Coventry Irish Theatre Group (Tel.0203-448785)
1-4	Seoirse O'BROIN, Baling, Cuideachta, The Irish Club
1-4	Padraig O'CONGHUIR, London, Conradh na Gaeilge
2-4	Michael O'DOMHNALLAIN, Conradh na Gaeilge, London
1-2	Mrs. Nora O'DONOGHUE, Coventry, Tara Exam. Board of Irish Music
1	Mrs. Ita O'DONOVAN, Birmingham University, Psychology Dept.
3-4	Maire O'HAGAN, Coventry, Coundon Court Comps.S.

cont'd.

Group
Nos

1 Tim OTTEVANGER, Leics. LEA Multicultural Adviser
 1-4 Liz PITT, West Yorks, Kelchley
 1-4 Ms. Valerie ROBINSON, Beds. Co. Libraries, Luton Central
 1-3 Michael SHEEHAN, Manchester IBRG
 1-2 Kevin SMYTH, Birmingham, Head, St. Wilfrid's (R.C.) J.I
 1-2 Gerard SMYTH, Birmingham, Head, St. Cuthbert's (R.C.) J.I
 1-2 E.A. STRANSKY, Coventry
 1 Fr. J.A. TAAFFE, Birmingham, Irish Welfare & Information
 Centre, (Plunkett House)
 1-3 Roger WORTH, London, The Langham School
 1 Ms. Wendy WYNOL, Coalville, Leics.
 1 Peter MULLIGAN, Northampton, Connolly Association
 1 Joe WISONER, Northampton, Connolly Association
 1-3 Dr. John WATTS, Birmingham, Head, Bishop Challoner School
 1 Mary O'NEILL, Leicester, Gaelic Athletic Association, Secretary
 1 Anne DUNPHY, Leicester, Gaelic Athletic Association, Treasurer
 1 Toots ABBASI, Leicester University, Education Student
 1 Sid SHERIFF, Chairman Mo at C.C. Educ. Council
 1 Joan INGLIS, Liverpool
 1-2 Miss J. RAFFERTY, Willenhall Wood Junior School, Coventry,
 E.E.G. Project
 2-4 Gearoid Mac an Mhaicir, Conradh na Gaeilge, West Midlands
 2-4 Philomena ni Dhuhblain, Oldbury, Teacher
 2-4 Seamus Conway, Conradh na Gaeilge, West Midlands
 2-4 Roy Blackman, Ethnic Studies Unit, Manchester
 2-4 Philomena Conway, Conradh na Gaeilge, West Midlands
 1 Mike O'Regan, Harrow IBRG
 1 Leo HARRIS, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann
 Declan O'NEILL, Manchester IBRG.
 Tony FARRELL, Manchester IBRG.
 Mrs. Maureen BRODERICK, Braunstone Frith Infant S., Leicester.
 Ms. Cass BREEN, Paddington IBRG.
 Mr. M. BURKE.
 Mr. BHRAMH, Sikh community representative, Moat C. College.
 Dr. Maire O'SHEA, Birmingham IBRG.
 Gearoid MAC GEARAILT, Lambeth IBRG.
 Deasiun MAC GEARAILT, " "
 Frank WALSH, " "
 Gerry McLAUGHLIN, Outreach Officer, Irish in Islington Project.

Total nos. registered = 104; total attendance = 93.

If you are interested in this field,
then you will also be interested in

'IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN'

designed and published by
ADDISON PRESS,
83 Frithville Gardens,
London, W 12.

in association with Irish Cultural Activities (London).
Annual Subscription U.K. £1.25 for 2 issues.
Editor: IVAN GIBBONS.

'MULTI-CULTURAL EDUCATION: THEORIES AND PERSPECTIVES'

- 1) There is no consensus on the meaning of multi-cultural education.
- 2) The phrase has its origins in immigrant education in the 1960's, when immigrants were seen as a problem - they had to be assimilated, as soon as possible. It followed from this that they should not be too numerous in any one area.

White agitation began to make itself felt e.g. in Southall. In November 1963, Sir Edward Boyle declared:

"I must regretfully tell the House that one (Southall) School must be regarded now as irretrievably an immigrant school. The important thing is to present this happening elsewhere".

30% was seen as a desirable limit.

The Circular 7/65 from the D.E.S. stated:

"As the proportion of immigrant children in a school or class increases, the problem will become more difficult to solve and the chances of assimilation more remote".

A proportion of up to 1/5th was seen as acceptable;

A proportion of over 1/3rd in a class or the school as a whole might mean that "serious strains" will arise". (DES Circular 7/65).

There then followed plans for bussing children from one area to another. English was the only language taught; the children's mother tongues were ignored. The pupils were regarded as "clean sheets" with no existing language capital.

- 3) The assimilationist phase was followed by an integrationist phase. In 1966, Roy Jenkins attempted to define the situation as:

"Not a flattening process of assimilation but equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance".

This approach dropped the overtly racist assimilationist idea. An attitude of cultural superiority was replaced by one of cultural tolerance, based on liberal, humanitarian ideals. Jenkins realised that equality of opportunity did not exist and that racist views and practices presented the development of equal opportunity.

There followed a period of more intensive effort in ESL work (teaching English as a second language). In terms of scope and materials, mother tongues were still ignored; there was no bi-lingual approach. English was still seen as the key to success. In the summer of 1977, A. James, writing in 'Multicultural Education', wrote in an article entitled 'Why Language Matters'

"That a dose of sytematic language teaching, preferably carried out in the Monastic Security of a special class or centre would act as a lubricant; the children could be fed into the educational machine on completion of this treatment without causing it to seize up".

The early pioneers of TESL should not be scoffed at as they were among the first to recognise the racism which children and families faced. The Association for the Education of Pupils from overseas (ATEPO) developed into the National Association for Multiracial Education (NAME).

In the late '60's', numerous courses began to appear, concerned with immigrant cultures; the NCCL and the CRC published informative pamphlets; LEAS began to advertise organisers/advisers posts for 'immigrant' education.

From the early '70's, the policy and practice of bussing fell into disfavour. A high level of concern developed about ESN schools (see Bernard Coard's booklet: How the West Indian Child is made Educationally Sub-normal in the British School System (1971)).

The integrationist approach still offered equality of opportunity, but on white terms. Thus the nature of the game had not really changed, the rules were still set by whites, though black players could wear what they wanted and even talk to each other in their own language.

The 1967 Race Relations Act was designed to ensure that the rules were "fair" to the individual. Jenkins' philosophy did not, however, have much impact on educational 'thinking'. Schools' work reflected a flowering of cultures - the period of "saris, samosas and steel bands" - all taking place within the existing "rules".

The home liaison developments were designed to get parents to conform, not to involve them, for example, on governing bodies. The only allowance in this area was the natural process; let's wait and see.

The ethnic minorities, and some teachers, were not satisfied with this tokenism. For various reasons, what they wanted was not tolerance and permitted diversity, but positively encouraged and fostered cultural diversity e.g. in areas of debate such as mother tongue work, R.E., history, single sex schools.

Pupils wanted respect, not tolerance. Thus developed 2 new strands:

- i) cultural pluralism
- ii) anti-racism.

The cultural pluralist approach recognises permanent diversity (accepting an evolutionary process). This is a more advanced and liberal version of the integrationist approach.

It is criticised as still having one underlying weakness; it does not change the location of power. (What of ideas concerning black T.V's, black political parties, black schools, black economic blocs).

The racial equality approach involves anti-racist action. ILEA now has black representation on governing bodies and committees. Leics. LEA has a black consultation group, as does Haringey. This development is a recognition of the feebleness of the evolutionary approach.

Multicultural Education must have an anti-racist ingredient. Cultural permissiveness alone is not satisfactory; inherent institutional racism must be tackled.

The Irish and other white ethnic groups must be embraced within multicultural and anti-racist education. The issue is not just about equality of opportunity, but about the reality of equality. It involves self-respect and respect for others, especially in terms of the attitudes of the majority. There should be no distinct made between black and white minority groups while it should be accepted that blacks are visibly different and therefore face that extra and powerful dimension in racism.

THE IRISH IN THE MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT - Part I.

DAYSCHOOL ON CULTURAL STUDIES

The workshop discussed the following questions:

1. The meaning of multiculturalism
- 2 Content of Irish Studies
- 3 Relationship with other ethnic groups
- 4 Class Composition of the Irish Community
- 5 Racism

Multiculturalism

Tom Arkell began by introducing a definition of multicultural studies which saw those of the ethnic minorities as needing to fit in with the host community. The English were seen as a tolerant nation which had been erroneously characterized as the enemy for the Irish schoolchild. The job of education was to remove this notion and to facilitate the integration of the ethnic community into the host community.

Specifically on the Irish Mr. Arkell argued that there was a problem about identification as the Irish did not have a stereotype. However, with the Irish inclusion within the ethnic community, the term multiculturalism was substantially altered. The notion, if it included the Irish, then also included the people of Yorkshire or Lancashire.

This definition of the position of the Irish was challenged by many in the group. It was stated that Britain's colonial relationship to Ireland produced cheap labour for Britain and contributed to the stunting of the Irish economy. The British people were not the same as the British government. It was in this context that the relationship between Britain and Ireland had to be seen, that is one of inequality. Multiculturalism as expressed in the introduction upheld this view whilst at the same time disguising it. Ethnic minority cultures were not valued as much as the host culture it was argued, and this could be seen from the idea of the host culture making room for the others.

It was argued that the term multiculturalism was challenged by the inclusion of the Irish but in the sense that race or colour was the defining characteristic. Instead the question of dominance by Britain was the central issue. This was further taken up by arguing that when multiculturalism ended and we knew all about each other there would still be racism. This we could learn from the Black groups who had long since left multiculturalism behind as something which masked racism.

The Irish In Britain.

It was stated that the Irish in Britain however, did not related to the British only but to other ethnic minorities. It was suggested that they were less than convinced of the Irish commitment to multiculturalism. How the Irish relate to other groups was discussed at some length in

terms of obtaining financial support from monies made available to the ethnic communities. Some argued that we had to learn from the others how to organize and compete for scarce resources. This was quite strongly disagreed with because it served the government to have us fighting amongst ourselves. Rather we should be finding ways to co-operate with each other as this would have a more beneficial long term effect. It was argued that education could either highlight this co-operation or increase competition and in effect serve to contain the anger of the ethnic community.

The Composition of the Irish Community.

The question of the Irish in Britain was further discussed through the notion of diversity. The Irish, it was argued, already came from a multicultural community, Ireland itself. It was stated that it was wrong to see the Irish as Catholic and Gaelic.

The Irish, it was argued also had internal class differences and therefore had different class interests. Class origin either helped or hindered integration into British society.

Education

Education was seen as crucial to how Irish children saw themselves in Britain and how they related to Ireland. It was argued that teaching about Ireland was necessary for all children in all schools not just the schools where Irish children were concentrated. It was argued that Irish studies tended to be marginalised and it was necessary to locate it centrally within the curriculum.

Terminology

Certain words/ concepts were considered problematic and were not uniformly used nor had they agreed definitions. These were:

1. Culture
2. Racism
3. British/Britain
4. England
5. Multiculturalism
6. Ethnic Minority
7. Colonial minority
8. Class
9. Cultural studies

THE IRISH IN THE MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT - Part II.

Mike Feeley, Coventry L.E.A. adviser was in the chair. The discussion was between teachers, community workers and interested parents and church workers from various parts of the country, and followed two talks on the nature of multi-cultural education and the introduction of Irish studies in some junior schools in Coventry.

The discussion started with the question "What is the essence of being Irish in Britain?" Was it from the origin of the teacher? Certainly the teacher could help by breaking down the stereotypes the students already have from the media. They could also promote a more positive view of the cultural heritage, using such resources as the Book of Kells, literature, and music (ballads and songs having a multi-national appeal).

How could one get Irish Studies on to the School Curriculum? Various strategies were suggested: working through local organisations, working with the local education authorities, in State Primary schools by approaching the Head, but in State Secondary Schools by the acceptance of Irish Studies as an examination subject. Whatever the approach, however, it must not be done in isolation but as a combined cultural element.. It was suggested that in Luton Irish studies were ignored, possibly because of possible political implications. It was pointed out that there was a lack of suitable published resources, a "chicken and egg" situation - publishers would not publish, believing there to be no demand, and teachers unable to buy what was not there. There was a need for a more effective distribution of what resources there were and for groups of teachers to get together and work on material, updating it and making it more relevant and suitable for classroom use. Certain ethnic minorities already produced suitable material with a multicultural handle, and Education authorities with a multi-cultural policy encouraged such initiatives in their schools, and also encouraged schools working with the ethnic communities (Manchester was quoted as an example). Perhaps the Irish community could develop similar links and strategies.

This raised more questions: who would pay for it? and what were they paying for? who was it for? was it for the Irish and those of Irish descent, or was it for everybody? Was the idea of multi-cultural education easier to introduce into State schools rather

than Church Schools? There was a lack of Irish studies in non-Catholic schools - would a multi-cultural experience make it easier to introduce? The dangers of racism showed up the need for an historical context. Obviously the first stage for acceptance was by talking over the ideas with a group of teachers, to interest them in the need for such studies. Even if they were interested, how could the Irish Language be taught in such a context? And in Voluntary Schools, how would the Governors react to such a subject? A spirited discussion now ensued, raising the following points and questions:

There was a very limited amount of teaching of Irish studies by Irish teachers; why didn't Irish teachers teach Irish studies? Did politics make it a sensitive subject? Indeed, should Irish-Catholics be doing Irish studies? Should they broaden their approach to only teaching Irish studies for multi-ethnic reasons? Why should Irish studies be taught? Were the English being educated for now or were the Irish being educated to understand their past? Was it a source of anti-Irish feeling the attitudes of the English Catholics who were worried and resentful of the effect of the Irish Catholics? Had parents preferred assimilation because of the prejudice they had met? Perhaps they could learn from other communities (such as the Asian Communities) to take a pride in their origins and encourage Irish children to find out about their roots. Were middle class attitudes to blame for the assimilation? The group agreed that there was a strong sense of community but this was usually very local. They felt that there was a lack of national organisation and wonder if Irish studies were an educational or political problem. This brought them back to the question as to how to introduce Irish studies in an English school. How could it be shown to work at the chalk face? The answer seemed to be that it should be shown to work so that a Local Authority could accept the idea without being troubled with it. There was a need for communication on all levels and part of the problem of the Catholic Schools lay with their necessarily limited intake.

IRISH STUDIES IN THE JUNIOR CURRICULUM

The following information is reprinted from reports issued by TOM ARKELL of the Dept. of Arts Education at the University of Warwick. The points and developments covered here formed the basis of Mr. Arkell's talk to the Conference.

LOT PROJECT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRISH CULTURAL STUDIES FOR THE CHILDREN OF IRISH MIGRANT WORKERS IN A COVENTRY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Project

The University of Warwick has been given a grant of £8,200 by the Research, Science and Education Division of the EEC to carry out a pilot project in co-operation with the Coventry LEA. The project director is Mr Tom Arkell, Senior Lecturer in Arts Education, University of Warwick.

During 1981 the project will concentrate on developing Irish cultural studies suitable for children in primary schools. It will be based in St Osburg's primary school, Coventry, where the great majority of children are of Irish origin. The project teacher, Mrs Anna McCabe, has been appointed half-time for the year from January to December, 1981. She will be responsible for selecting, preparing and developing materials on agreed topics both for her own use and for that of other teachers. Mrs Nora O'Donoghue will also be employed for half a day a week to teach Irish music in the same school.

The children will be taught in normal class groups and there will be no separation of children by ethnic or national identity. The Irish cultural themes will be presented to them within the context of a school's normal curriculum and not specifically as 'Irish Studies'. The themes to be studied will be drawn from Irish geography and way of life, Irish crafts and stories, Irish music and song and Irish history, including the history of the children's own family and migration to

Coventry. They will make use of contacts to be established with children, schools and other institutions in Ireland.

Because all the children of Irish migrants in Britain speak English fluently the project will be able to concentrate on helping children of Irish origin develop a deeper understanding of their own identity and cultural roots without having to cope simultaneously with language problems. At the same time the other children will be encouraged to appreciate an important strand in the fabric of our multi-cultural society.

The Background

Like many other British cities, Coventry is a multi-cultural community in which the biggest ethnic minority group is Irish. Although substantial efforts have been made nationally to reflect the cultures of Asian and Caribbean children within programmes of multi-cultural education, very little has been developed from the Irish cultural aspect. To start thinking along these lines, two short in-service courses were held in Coventry early in 1978 organised by Tom Arkell.

Subsequently, in April, 1978 Mr. Brendan Caulfield, who is now Principal of the Sligo Regional Technical College, formed in Coventry the Irish Studies Circle for teachers interested in the Irish dimension. Its meetings have been held at the Coventry Teachers' Centre where a small collection of books and materials relating to Irish themes has been established for use by teachers. One of the main problems which the Irish Studies Circle has begun to tackle is the widely-held prejudice among teachers that Irish cultural studies are not suitable for serious study within schools in England. These

exploratory initiatives have had the full support of the Coventry LEA through its Adviser for Multi-Cultural Education, Mr M. Fee.

Following an initiative taken by Brendan Caulfield in June 1978, he, Tom Arkell and two Coventry teachers visited Brussels in October to discuss with officers of the EEC an outline proposal for a pilot study on the education of the children of Irish migrant workers in Coventry. This visit led eventually to the University of Warwick submitting in April 1979 a formal proposal for the project, fully supported by the Coventry LEA. During subsequent discussions, representatives of the DES have expressed their approval for the project on the understanding that it will not be confined to an isolated group of Irish children or teachers within the schools concerned, but be presented more widely within the context of inter-cultural education. At the same time contacts have been made with the Departments of Foreign Affairs and Education in Dublin, Trinity College, Dublin and individuals in other educational institutions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The Director-General for Research, Science and Education of the Commission of the European Communities finally approved the project in November 1980. In December the Coventry LEA and the University of Warwick appointed Mrs Anna McCabe as the project teacher to work half-time on the project which will be based in St Osburg's School, with the enthusiastic support of the headmaster, Mr J G Keegan.

Evaluation

At the end of the project the director will prepare an evaluation report for the Reference Group which will be presented to the Director-General for Research, Science and Education of the EEC during December 1981. It will also be submitted to the DES, the Irish Department of Education and other interested bodies. This report will comment on the ideas and materials which have been tried out during the year and include suggestions for the further development of pupils' materials and guidance for teachers.

Possible Future Developments

The success of this pilot project will be measured in part by the willingness with which teachers develop Irish cultural studies in subsequent years and by the readiness with which schools recognise the potentiality of Irish studies to contribute to the curriculum of multi-cultural education.

If the project is successful its ideas and work will be disseminated to other schools both in and outside Coventry through individual contacts, short in-service courses and the preparation and publication of pupils' materials and teachers' guides. Obviously these will be achieved best if other projects follow this exploratory one.

Tom Arkell.

Note: for further and fuller information about the Coventry work, please write to Tom Arkell, Dept. of Arts Education, University of Warwick, CV4 7AL.

Report to the Commission of the European Communities on the pilot project in 1981 on the development of Irish Cultural Studies for the children of Irish migrant workers in Britain.

The organisation of the project

This project was planned and carried out at all stages with the full co-operation of the Coventry LEA. It was also greatly assisted by the interest and support given by both the DES and the Irish Department of Education. In particular the project has benefited enormously from the experience, understanding and active help of Coventry's adviser for multi-cultural education, Mr M Feeley, the two HMIs, Mr A J Rose and Mr J Singh, and the two Irish District Inspectors of Primary Schools, Mr J Dennehy and Mr P Kitterick.

The project's main aim has been to explore ways in which themes or topics with a whole or partly Irish content can be integrated effectively into the normal curriculum of English primary schools. It has also made an examination of the available material in England and Ireland to assess how much is suitable for use with such classes and how great is the need for adapting it or devising new materials.

The project has concentrated on the 9 - 11 age range and during 1981 worked exclusively in three Coventry primary schools where a majority of the pupils had at least one Irish-born parent. Because it was not finally confirmed until the end of November 1980, the project's work was planned to cover the calendar year 1981 and not just the academic year 1980-81. In the event, the virtual closure of the schools in Coventry for four weeks in November and December through industrial action by NUPE has meant that the work planned for the later stages of the project will now occur in January and February 1982.

The need for Irish Studies

Since all Irish children speak, read and write in English as fluently as English children, it is clear that the English language presents no barriers for the children of Irish migrant workers in Britain. And for those who return later to Ireland, the only language problems are likely to involve Irish. In the learning of most other subjects, many Irish children are unlikely to be substantially more disadvantaged by moving to an English school than most British children who move to a new school with a different curriculum and different syllabuses from their old one.

However, since aspects of Irish studies feature very rarely in most English schools at the moment and many schools, especially in the towns, contain significant numbers of pupils of Irish-born parents, there is clearly a strong case for suggesting that they should at least consider teaching more about the Irish. Furthermore, in recent years Britain has developed programmes of multi-cultural education so that the children of different minority groups should not feel alienated by the education system of their adopted country, but should acquire from it a clearer sense of their own identity and a better understanding of their own cultural roots. Therefore, it makes little sense not to apply this policy to the children of the largest single migrant group - the Irish. And for English children learning about the pluralistic nature of their multi-cultural society, the Irish dimension has at least as great a claim for inclusion as other ethnic minorities.

At the moment it appears that in only a small minority of schools are the children made aware of the scope and nature of Irish migration to Britain and of the Irish cultural heritage or given any understanding of the situation in Ireland today.

Approaches to Irish Studies

The project's approach to Irish studies has been to explore ways in which Irish topics can be developed within a school's ordinary curriculum and not to advocate any form of self-contained course on Irish studies. The project also believes that these topics should be presented in such a way that they are suitable for non-Irish children as well as those of Irish parentage. The topics should therefore not normally be presented to pupils in the form of information to be learned, but should contain some content or appear in a format that will elicit an instinctive emotional response.

Teaching materials

During the year the project has built up a basic stock of teaching materials for the themes described above. These include books published in Ireland and Britain for both children and adults, filmstrips, pictures, maps, records, tapes and so on. The teachers involved in the project have also developed some of their own teaching materials. Together they form the nucleus of a collection which could prove very useful in due course. But teachers who in any of the recommended themes will soon find that the task of selecting the books is too detailed and substantial tasks of further selection and preparation remain to be done.

In the course of one short year the pilot project has concentrated on exploring those Irish themes which seem best suited for inclusion in a school's normal curriculum. In this context selection and preparation of teaching material has been a task of great interest which, to be done properly, requires a further year. It would be the major objective of those involved.

Initial success of the Project

This pilot project has demonstrated quite unequivocally the value of cultural studies as a strong and serious claim for inclusion in the curriculum of the English primary school, especially where a significant number of the pupils are of Irish parentage. The children of the project schools have responded to the work with interest and the teachers have recognised immediately its educational value. But, if this rich cultural seam which has been opened up is to be fully developed, it will require at least one further year of concentration on the development of readily accessible teaching material. Then will it be possible to build on the initial success of the project and to present to interested teachers elsewhere a coherent strategy backed up by adequate materials which will enable them to introduce Irish studies to their school.

Future Developments

All concerned in the pilot project have been very grateful to the European Commission for the support which they have received in making possible this exploration of Irish cultural studies. To follow it up, the director will be submitting in due course to the European Commission a proposal for a successor in 1982-83 which would concentrate on the selection and production of appropriate teaching materials for those themes which have been recommended as being most suitable in this report. Only by such means does it seem possible to ensure the consolidation of the project's achievements.

Tom Arkel

Detailed information on curriculum development in a wide variety of areas can be had by writing to the Institute of Education at Warwick University and purchasing the journal 'Compass', Vol. 3, No. 1.

EEC IRISH STUDIES PROJECT

Report to the Commission of the European Communities on the pilot project in 1982-3 on the development of experimental materials on Irish cultural studies for the children (aged 9-11) of Irish migrant workers in Britain.

Background to the project.

This project is the second phase of an initiative on curriculum development on Irish cultural themes for English primary schools which was begun in 1981. The report on the first project concluded that it had "demonstrated quite unequivocally that Irish cultural studies has a strong and serious claim for inclusion in the curriculum of the English primary school, especially where a significant number of the pupils are of Irish parentage". Furthermore, it argued that since the Irish are our largest single migrant group, it made little sense not to apply to their children the policy of multi-cultural education which had been developed in British schools in recent years and aimed at preventing alienation among the children of different minority groups by encouraging a clearer sense of their own identity and a better understanding of their own cultural roots. In addition, "for English children learning about the pluralistic nature of their multi-cultural society, the Irish dimension has at least as great a claim for inclusion as other ethnic minorities".

The first project's approach to Irish studies had therefore been to explore ways in which Irish topics could be developed within a school's ordinary curriculum. It argued strongly against the development of any form of self-contained course on Irish studies and for the need to present these topics in such a way that they were equally suitable for non-Irish children as well as those of Irish parentage. And so their presentation should not normally be in the form of information to be learned but should elicit an instinctive emotional response.

Before this could happen the report concluded that it would require at least one further year to develop adequate readily accessible teaching materials together with a coherent strategy to enable interested teachers to introduce Irish studies into their schools. This was therefore the brief of the second project in 1982-3.

over/...

Organisation of the project

At all stages the work of the project has been planned and carried out with the full co-operation of the Coventry LEA, in particular through its adviser for multi-cultural education, Mr. M. Feeley. It has also preserved very close links with the Department of Education in Dublin and received much valuable support and help from Mr. J. Dennehy, district inspector of primary schools.

During the last year the work of the project has involved two rather different tasks. Its principal concern has been the development of sample materials for use with children together with a series of guides for teachers on approaches to Irish studies. To help achieve this a number of teachers have been identified and encouraged to work on particular aspects of particular themes in consultation with the project director and each other. Inevitably, differing perceptions of the role being undertaken and the pressures of other commitments have meant that these contributions have not all been of equal value, but they have formed the basis of the materials developed by this project.

In addition, to help refine thinking on some aspects of the strategy two Coventry schools, Corpus Christi and Willenhall Wood, were encouraged to work on particular aspects of Irish studies combined with links and exchange visits with two schools in Dublin. During the first project it became clear that contacts with other children in Irish schools provided a very powerful positive stimulus, but there were so many different ways in which these can be organised, providing a range of differing problems and opportunities, that further experimentation was necessary. In the event three main initiatives were undertaken.

In the spring term two teachers exchanged classes for a fortnight. This proved to be an extremely valuable experience for both of them, but because of the amount of time required for preparation and settling down with a new class it has been agreed that if such an initiative were to be repeated it should occur over a much longer period of time, with a minimum of at least half a term.

In the summer term, the same two schools, Corpus Christi and Our Help of Christians Girls' National School, Navan Road, were involved in an exchange of pupils and teachers which also included the Navan Road Boys' School. Initially some eighteen Irish children, accompanied by four teachers, spent four days in two different classes in Corpus Christi, taking part in the same lessons as the English children. In the evenings they each stayed in the homes of an English child to whom they then acted as a host in Dublin on a reciprocal basis later in the term. This exchange was preceded by an exchange of work between the classes on agreed topics including a profile of themselves, their school, homes and areas. This helped spread some of the benefits of the contacts to all the children in the classes concerned and added an important dimension of comparative environmental studies to the exchange but it still did not prevent the benefits from being spread very unevenly. The taking of painful decisions on which children should be excluded from the exchange. It also involved very time-consuming exchanges of lists between the three schools and the very careful matching of children according to interests, age, ability, home backgrounds, etc.

The final exchange was much simpler with an even stronger academic basis. It involved two teachers from Willenhall Wood Junior School, Coventry

and St. Raphael's School, Ballyfermot, Dublin spending two to three days in each other's class with both teachers present and staying in each other's homes. Their classes have been engaged in very carefully planned comparative studies of each other, their schools, catchment areas and cities. The exchange visits of the two teachers were planned for strategic moments that would ensure that the integration of their plans would be satisfactorily carried out, that there was an important element of personal involvement and that no individual child should have cause to feel excluded. In Willenhall Wood this work has been planned as an integral part of their multi-cultural education programme for the year. Because of its simplicity and very strong academic content, it is hoped that the pattern of this exchange is one that will be repeated most frequently in future years in other schools.

Material developed by the project

One year has not been sufficient to complete the process of determining precisely which topics need what material developed and in what format, finding sufficient individuals willing and capable of doing it, rethinking and revising the original proposals in the light of their and their colleagues' experience and problems and then producing all this material in a finished format ready for distribution to other teachers, having obtained clearance on all copyright questions. In the event most of the final phase remains to be completed and it will take several further months to achieve this.

This report therefore can only describe the materials which are currently being produced and whose eventual appearance will effectively form the project's final report. This description of the materials is therefore accompanied by a short annex containing photocopies of sample typescripts and art work for the material which gives a flavour of its type and quality, but not of its full range.

The material has been chosen with the threefold aim of reflecting the richness and width of the Irish cultural heritage, introducing children to aspects of Ireland today and providing them with insights into the extent of Irish migration and the experience of the Irish in Britain.

The format is sufficiently flexible so that teachers can either study aspects of Irish studies on their own, or, by taking carefully chosen themes, compare them with people from other countries.

The final package will consist of a maximum of 48 slides and about a hundred printed pages of A4 size which will comprise several little pamphlets for the pupils and teacher, worksheets, maps, pictures, music, etc. In some instances twenty copies of material for the pupils will be included and in others just one from which it will be assumed that the teacher will make as many copies as are needed. The original intention of including a tape is not being carried out because of a combination of cost, technical problems and the time involved. This, of course, will make some more money available for printing additional copies of the final pack. The exact cost and number cannot be settled until all decisions on the contents are taken. However the minimum number will be at least one hundred copies which will be distributed to selected schools, teachers' centres and educational institutions throughout the country.

Notes of the Primary meeting in the afternoon.

"Mr. T. Arkell began with an introduction of the Irish Studies Project.

The first question was about Irish Language. Mr. Arkell was asked how he viewed the Irish Language being left out of the project and possibly the curriculum.

"Mr. T. Arkell replied that part of the project's funding was the E.E.C. award money. Language was a necessity for other groups and not directly the Irish. It was a Policy then, not to teach language. Irish language awareness was one of the aims though. The ways in which these aims were manifested were through :

- a. Irish music
- b. Irish dancing
- c. Irish names and stories

There was a feeling in the group that language was very important to people of Irish origin and background.

There then followed a discussion about voluntary language teaching, the questions that were raised were :

- a. How many children attended Saturday school - It varied from family to family.
- b. The Irish studies subject needed to be made well established - perhaps a marketing effort was needed. The group thought that many Irish parents didn't think that Irish studies/language was relevant.

The team made the comment that some workers required help in pronunciation of Irish words and names.

The question was asked, would the team support voluntary Irish Language?

Their reply was that Irish language classes could be run as other minority languages were already running. For example 'O' and 'A' level Irish language could be run on the same lines as other language examinations.

Many in the group felt that Irish as it was taught to them was tedious and therefore were not motivated to learn.

Many people pointed out there were a few flourishing branches of the Gaelic League - the initiative for language teaching could happen.

2. Follow-up to the Irish Studies Project.

The group enquired what follow-up activity had taken place.

There had been Exchange visits. One of the team named had an exchange visit to Dublin. The comment was made that the children were still talking about the project 18 months after doing it!

The question was asked if there had been the same enthusiasm from the teacher

There had been the same enthusiasm, but it did depend on the teacher.

3. The next topic to be discussed was :

How did Irish Studies fit in on the Literary/Artistic side.

Migration as a theme was difficult to represent and teach but it had been done. The story of an Irish boy was used - Michael Davitt. The story had been tried out in a primary class in which 80% of the pupils were of Asian origin. The topic and story was well received and the children were able to discuss their own family background and experience, yet in a neutral tone.

Experiences of Irish migration could be presented through songs eg. "Mountains of Mourne."

Other songs and stories were suggested.

Age-ranges

The topic had been aimed at 9 year olds - what potential was there starting with 7 year olds? The answer was it could be done. one way to

do it was through children's fiction and stories. The "Story-teller" magazine has Irish stories in it now. The absence of Irish stories is not as great as it was.

When Mr. Arkell was in Dublin he asked for and purchased many children. The problem was with simplification, could Irish stories be simplified successfully?

The feeling was they could be. There were many other sources, the Irish language and Irish plays were two.

Coventry

One speaker wished to make the observation that Coventry had done very well with the Irish dimension, this was an experience of the speaker.

One teacher commented that the project had been enjoyable and had a link with the people too.

One further topic that could have been on the curriculum "family and self-awareness". One headmistress commented that one of the successes the project was perhaps it had raised the self-image of the people concerned.

The point was then made generally that many schools need to sort out their topic work and order it.

The point was made that some teachers wouldn't dream of doing Mathematics without objectives - so Irish studies had been done with good objectives in mind.

The session and discussion ended with Mr. Arkell asking for names and addresses of people who would like to order or have the material.

Irish Studies in the Secondary School

(A summary of some of the main points in a lecture delivered at the Leicester I.R.R.G. conference on 11th February 1984)

An Irish perspective in the secondary school curriculum can be justified on two clear and compelling grounds.

- 1) Irish people constitute the largest minority group in England. It follows from this that the history, geography, politics, cultures and family ties of the people of the Republic of Ireland and of Northern Ireland retain a significance for the Irish in Britain but also for the rest of the population. The fact of colonialism has created an affinity in all manner of ways, even if that proximity and bond has not always been welcomed. Irish and non-Irish children need to know about these things.
- 2) The problem of Northern Ireland is part of our consciousness and daily assails us from our TV screens and from the headlines of our newspapers. We search for understanding yet how can this be achieved when the issues are so complex especially for non-Irish people who are without the family and historical ties which provide some acquaintance with the background. In the main we rely on prejudice and emotion often fuelled and directed by the media. The attempt at understanding of Irish issues and the Northern Ireland problem must begin in and be supported by our secondary schools. Greater comprehension can be achieved by political, historical, geographical, cultural, religious, economic and media studies related to the Northern Ireland context. This is not to imply that secondary school pupils will then react less emotionally to bomb outrages or sectarian murders in Northern Ireland but it will help them to appreciate that these atrocities represent a strategy advocated by only a minority of people and that Irish people in general are not accountable for these outrages. In order to make sense of this, young people need to be made aware of the overall picture by study of Ireland and Northern Ireland. How can this be done?

I suggest below a model for approaching Irish Studies. It is a rationale, a guideline and a cognitive map which needs to be studied by teacher educators, teachers and secondary school pupils. It suggests that no comprehensive or respectable study of the issues can be achieved without consideration of the themes outlined. There is no intention here of proposing teaching methods, sequence, depth or length of study - that must be decided by teachers and curriculum developers in the contexts in which they are working; only the teachers can be aware of the constraints or opportunities they may encounter.

Essential Themes, Perspectives or Approaches for Irish Studies.

Terminology

Irish and Northern Ireland affairs are replete with acronyms - pupils would at least need to know the meanings of I.R.A., U.D.A., R.U.C. along with the precise meanings of Ulster, Northern Ireland, Ireland, Unionists, Republicans, Perry and Londonderry and so forth.

Geography

Maps of Northern Ireland and the Republic would need to be perused along with a map of Belfast showing the major areas of settlement (Shankill Road, Falls Road etc).

History

The experience and history of migration would be a starting point for an understanding of any minority group in mainland Britain, especially those groups that have encountered colonialism. The facts of migration and the position of the Irish in Britain can only be comprehended by reference to the powerful historical roots and relationships between the countries. How far back to go may be a decision to be made but certainly any history should include the Scots and Celts, Cromwell, the Battle of the Boyne, Plantation Ulster, the Act of Union, the Home Rule movement, the Easter Rising, Partition, the split from the Commonwealth, and the Troubles. The colonial relationship might be an overriding theme.

Key Events

All politically and culturally conscious fractions of minority groups in the U.K. are strongly aware of certain key events in their histories. An Irish Studies course would need to consider some of the historical episodes/periods mentioned above but certain other key events could also be singled out for a closer focus, such as Bloody Sunday.

Study of Each Country

It may be interesting to make a general study of Northern Ireland and Ireland, looking at each country separately and focusing on social change and general contemporary developments in the countries.

Language Issues

The role of the Gaelic language is of importance - it may be possible for a small acquaintance to be made with the Gaelic language.

Religion

No course on Irish Studies would get very far without a closer look at the Protestant and Catholic faiths. Problems of balance and fairness would be encountered here but it should be pointed out that the assumption I am making is that Irish Studies would be for everyone not just those with Irish roots.

Famous People

All cultures and nationalities have their folk heroes or distinguished people, people who form part of the history and consciousness of a nation, people whose very name instantly creates a resonance or summons up an idea or an emotion. It may be Ian Paisley, Daniel O'Connell or James Connolly; whatever the case, a study of the biographies and roles of some of these people could form part of a few mini-projects.

Discrimination and Disadvantage

This would encompass the position of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland and the socio-economic position of Irish people in England still over-represented in certain occupational groups and still the butt of Irish jokes. Part of this investigation would include a stress on the positive contribution of Irish people to the British economy and an exploration of the methods of advancement in terms of rights, equality of opportunity and the enhancement of cultural identity.

Other serious headings under this general theme would include a study of the Prevention of Terrorism Act and its operation and implications for the Irish community.

Community Politics, Cultural Activities and Self-Help.

1. English academics, researchers and teachers can only appreciate Irish affairs in an incomplete way because of their distance from the community and the speed of change. Even Irish commentators might suffer similar handicaps. The good student, whether teacher or researcher, should make a conscious effort to seek out the grassroots of the community in clubs, community centres or other institutions; in this way, they can achieve a more sensitive familiarity with the customs and interests of Irish people.
2. All minority groups in any country seek ways of defending and advancing their heritage and their rights. In the U.K., many such groups, including the Irish in Britain Representation Group (I.B.R.G.) are active. The good teacher (Irish or non-Irish) would need to have recourse to such groups in order to discover a source of information and fund of experience on all aspects of Irish issues.

Community Media

To combat bias or minimal representation in the media and to provide a forum for current community issues and news, most minority groups in Britain have created their own media, especially in the form of newspapers. There is also the related function of sustaining and advancing community identity. If teachers or students require a closer acquaintance with contemporary Irish affairs, and concerns, they can do no better than read The Irish Post. Extracts can be used as classroom resources.

The Arts

An exploration and appreciation of Irish culture and artistic achievements should be one of the most pleasurable aspects of an Irish Studies course or an Irish component in a general course. It should be possible to select examples from a wide range of arts - music, poetry, novels, plays and so forth. Much of this can be collected from local libraries.

Education

While it may be necessary to study education in Northern Ireland, for example, as one of the topics for pupils, with an emphasis on the issue of segregated versus integrated education, this area is of more relevance to the teacher or teacher trainer who is attempting to identify the best materials and texts or projects that may be available as the basis for an Irish Studies course or component. The bi-annual journal, 'Irish Studies in Britain', provides articles, book reviews and adverts from educational suppliers which should form the basis of a resource collection. There are dozens of background books for the teacher on Irish history and politics but, as yet, no general curriculum project for pupils in secondary schools in England (perhaps this should be a task for the I.B.R.G.) although in Northern Ireland there is a project for 11-16 year olds created especially for the Northern Ireland context. It was directed by Dr. Alan Robinson of the New University of Ulster in Coleraine. It was piloted over several years in Catholic and Protestant schools. The project is called the Schools Cultural Studies Project and is particularly concerned with the question of Ulster, especially the study units for the older pupils. However, there are several books published in England that are useful as school texts. These include: The Irish Question (part of the Schools Council History Project 13-16), Talking About Northern Ireland by James Hewitt (published by Wayland), and Ireland for Beginners by Phil Evans and Eileen Pollock (published by Writers and Readers, 1983).

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The practising teachers present indicated who they were and the chairperson suggested that people describe what they are already doing in terms of Irish studies in their schools.

- a) A geography teacher from London, with 76% Irish pupils includes Ireland as a border dispute in C.E.E. geography. She also attempts to introduce Irish literature when teaching English. In her school Irish history is included in the A level syllabus. She commented that she had to obtain a lot of material direct from Ireland.
- b) An English teacher from the north of England tries to use books by Irish authors e.g. Casey, Frank O'Connor, Walter Macken and also books concerning the Irish in Britain eg books by Bill Norton.
- c) A teacher from Coventry is attempting to introduce materials and ideas in Humanities courses in her school.
- d) An Adviser from Coventry talked about other initiatives in the city.

An ex-teacher commented that she had difficulties obtaining materials and this led on to a general discussion of this issue and also the need to reform the exam system to include Irish topics to stimulate a demand for materials.

There was a discussion about whether Irish studies should exist as a separate subject or should exist within other subject areas. The case of Black Studies in the 1970's was raised. The benefits of pupils using ideas and materials to which they can relate must be weighed against the idea of "ghettoising" the subject.

The question of why Irish Studies and why Irish materials was brought up. The answers given were varied. To counteract stereotyping, to give Irish pupils a sense of identity, to keep them aware of cultural roots, to give them materials to which they could relate. One person mentioned the difficulties raised by the fact that most non Irish teachers themselves had little knowledge on which to develop Irish studies but it was pointed out that this is common to all multi-cultural education.

The problems of trying to introduce Irish studies were discussed as one topic. They were summed up as 1) lack of preparation time, 2) lack of material, 3) problems of changing curriculum (especially in relation to exam classes and syllabie), 4) lack of relevant teacher training, 5) lack of interest among teachers (perhaps a product in part of lack of time?).

The following recommendations were made.

- 1) Pressure should be put on exam-boards when considering alterations.
- 2) Time and money should be allocated for development of resources and schemes of work.
- 3) Teacher training.
- 4) Irish studies should not be seen as a separate subject but as part of relevant subject disciplines eg History, R.E., English, Social Studies, Geography.
- 5) Irish studies should be seen within the context of multi-cultural education as a whole and not as some separate topic.

IRISH STUDIES IN ADULT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Part I - I. Gibbons: Irish Studies in Adult and Community Education.

- 1: Irish Studies classes in London started in 1977 as a result of
 - a) lack of knowledge of Ireland in Britain
 - b) Irish are largest ethnic minority group
 - c) lack of provision for second generation in schools system.
- 2: A wide variety of classes have taken place over the past 6 years including
 - Irish history
 - Irish politics and current affairs
 - Irish literature
 - Irish language
 - Irish dancing
 - Irish music
 - Northern Ireland
 - Irish in Britain
- 3: Composition of classes i) 60% middle-aged Irish born (mainly women)
ii) 30% second generation younger students iii) 10% non-Irish.
- 4: Despite the Irish being the largest ethnic minority in the country, all education authorities (including the most progressive, the ILEA) are ambivalent about Irish Studies. Most development has taken place through the efforts of dedicated individuals rather than through any official policy decisions.
- 5: Part of the reason for this must be the perception of many education authorities that many Irish themselves do not see themselves as part of our multi-ethnic society.
- 6: Also the Irish in Britain have either through lack of confidence, lack of commitment to multi ethnicity or simply lack of interest in cultural and educational activities not pushed hard enough for an Irish component to be introduced into multi-ethnic education.
- 7: The Irish are in a twilight world culturally, and educationally are victims of anti-Irish racism, but are unable or unwilling to make common cause with other ethnic minorities suffering similar racism.

Conclusion:

The Irish in Britain must demonstrate solidarity with other ethnic minority communities if ever Irish Studies is to be introduced on any appreciable scale in the British education curriculum. The study of Irish culture in this country should be to promote harmony and understanding and an appreciation of cultural diversity and to contribute to combating racism.

other Celtic and ethnic groups.

It was acknowledged that language presented particular problems. A fear was expressed about Irish Studies being taught by English people but many thought that this was not a problem if the curriculum as such directed the study.

Standardization

The question of the curriculum was discussed and it was suggested that we needed a central curriculum development group organized through the IBRG and by so doing we could standardize and educate ourselves at the same time.

Centralization and dissemination of information

It was felt that the experience and knowledge about teaching and organizing which people had needed to be centralized. We had to know what was already available as well as what was needed. This kind of information should be available to all, not just the IBRG.

At the end of the meeting a rider was added to state that education was not just that which took place in the classroom but public meetings or discussions with video should be considered to be part of the idea of education in general.

"THE IRISH IN ENGLAND"

A SERIES OF VIDEO TAPES

Two video tapes, about the Irish experience in England, are now available for hire/sale from the address below.

The tapes are based extensively on interviews with Irish-born women and men and second-generation Irish, living in London.

TAPE 1: deals with post-War emigration from the Republic to England, contrasting the economic depression in Ireland with the opportunities created by Britain's rebuilding programme, and the resulting contribution of Irish people to that programme. It also looks at how Irish people looked to their culture and traditions both as a means of offsetting the hostility they encountered and as a way of maintaining their links with home.

TAPE 2: looks at the consequences of being here to stay — setting up associations and societies to maintain the culture and to pass it on to successive generations, whilst at the same time keeping a very low profile within British society. It deals with the effects of the war in Northern Ireland on Irish people here — in particular the anti-Irish racism (the jokes, the stereotypes) and the Prevention of Terrorism Act — and how that has had a major impact on our lives in this country.

The tapes, approx. 45 minutes long, are available on either VHS or U-matic format.

Details from:

The Irish Video Project,
c/o West London Media Workshop,
St. Thomas Church Hall,
East Row,
W10.

Tel.: 969-1020
740-8223
459-1036

The discussion was opened by setting the group the task of thinking, how should Irish Studies be developed.

The initial part of the discussion concerned the problem of the response to such traditional approaches as organising Irish language classes, or putting on Irish Dram. Those participants who had experience of these activities reported that the attendance rates were rather disheartening given the number of Irish people in the community. The view was expressed that in some way it appeared that Irish people or at least a proportion, did not want to be identified with these overt Irish activities.

This raised several questions could it be that some Irish people were ashamed of being Irish; or perhaps prejudiced against the Irish language for historical reasons, or most importantly was there a need to re-evaluate the traditional approach among the Irish Cultural Groups and Societies. It was pointed out for example that in Ireland the Gaeltacht areas were not expanding, nor was the use of the Irish language in the general population on the increase. Therefore should the Irish in Britain be surprised when such traditional activities failed to attract large numbers.

It was suggested that a broadier emphasis should be incorporated into Irish Studies so that a multi-cultural dimension would be included. By this was meant that Irish Study Programmes should have a broader base of appeal in order that all cultural groups that exist with British society would find the subject matter of interest. The aim of the programme should not be to teach Irish people about Ireland in isolation but have an appeal to the cultural diversity that now exists in Britain.

Here the group addressed itself to an earlier question, why is it that Irish people might be ashamed of being Irish. It was proposed that as far as this principle applied to children, it is often the case that minority children of all races become aware of the lack of equality in educational environment and the society at large and hence come to believe that in some way the host culture is superior. Evidence for this point comes from studies where West-Indian children when asked what language they speak indicate English, never Patois or Creole. ,

This point led to the comparison of the initial expectations of the two ethnic groups before they came to Britain; namely the West-Indians and the Irish. It was asked that West-Indians believe that in coming to Britain they are arriving in their Mother Country, initial expectations are high, hence their disappointment is great when the reality of their situation is pressed upon them. In contrast the Irish initially believe that they are coming to the home of their traditional enemy. They are not expecting a high degree of acceptance, they are more psychologically prepared for rejection. In reality of course the West-Indian experiences a higher degree of rejection because of his visible difference, than does the Irish person. These initial differential experiences may explain why the Irish have maintained a low profile in Britain; for example the 1981 census for Gt. Britain shows that first generation Irish are widely distributed across the occupational structure from Class 1 to Class V.

In contrast the Black Group have been vociferous in their demands, and quick to point out the inadequacy of the educational provision with regard to own ethnic group. The Black Group believe that they have been responsible for other ethnic groups becoming aware of the need to demand consideration within the educational sphere. Given that funds for educational programmes will not be unlimited it is essential that the minority ethnic groups adopt a common policy, it would be detrimental to argue among themselves as to who should have the "Lions share" financially.

The aim of Cultural Studies should be education for the whole community, education to combat racism & prejudice between the minority groups and the society at large.

Adopting an ethnocentric approach would be self-defeating. There should be a common approach across ethnic groups to foster appreciation of each group's cultural heritage.

What then can Adult Education do? An obvious area for improvement would be the inclusion of teachers from ethnic groups to work in co-operation with Local Educational Authorities and teachers in planning Cultural Study Programmes. The need to bring views to the wider community was also realized - not everyone is interested in evening classes.

Here was an opportunity for active community involvement, perhaps in regard to Irish Studies one should be slightly optimistic. The Irish community is not static, changes with new arrivals and 2nd generation of Irish born in Britain. The challenge for them would be to try to change behavioural attitudes and bring new ideas about consciousness to all Irish people in Britain.

Finally the group agreed that it should like the conference to be aware of the need for all ethnic groups to work together in a common fight against Racism, so that Britain might be a multi-cultural society.