

REPORT on 4 th.

National Conference

Saturday, 14 th February, 1987.

Soar Valley College Irish Studies Workshop



IRISH DIMENSIONS

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4th NATIONAL CONFERENCE - Sat. 14th February 1987

IRISH STUDIES, CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND "REVIONISM"

This Conference was aimed at teachers, parents, first and second generation Irish, Irish community organisation and all those interested in the relationship between culture and education. On behalf of Soar Valley College Irish Studies Workshop I would like to thank the guest <u>SPEAKERS</u> who were:

Dr. ROY FOSTER (History Dept., Birkbeck College, Univ. of London) who spoke on <u>ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS 1880's - 1980's</u>, looking at political and constitutional stretegems and attitudes to such ideas in both Ireland and Britain. This is of relevance to the ongoing debate about "revisionism" amongst the Irish in Britain.

Dr. ROGER AUSTIN (Educ. Faculty, Unic. of Ulster, Coleraine), who introduced the new EUROPEAN STUDIES/IRELAND AND GREAT BRITAIN PROJECT: this is a 5 year curriculum development initiative involving 18 schools, 6 each in England, the Republic and N. Ireland. Dr. Austin is Project Director, all 3 Departments of Education are involved; development is aimed at humanities in the lower secondary age group, with special reference to values education and information technology.

The Conference enjoyed its usual wide attendance, and the Workshop wishes to thank all participants for their enthusiastic response. "The Irish Post" assisted greatly in terms of coverage and publicity. We also wish to express our gratitude to the various Workshop Seminar Leaders:-

JONATHAN MOORE: Adult Educ. - The Next Step: improving the quantity and quality of Ir. Stds. Courses: assessing & overcoming the problem in this.

NOEL O'CONNELL: The Irish Language - 1886 and 1986; to contrast the present hopeful state & revival with its virtual disappearance in 1886.

Dr. ALAN CLINTON: The Work of the Polytechnic of North London's Irish Studies Centre and its future development.

MARIANNE ELLIOT: The work of the Conference of Irish Historians since 1976; its relevance to H.E. and wider developments in Irish historiography.

SEAN HUTTON: Recovering the Past - Explaining the Present: a description of Hist. Workshop & Irish History Workshop Project and reflections on Irish Historiography.

SIOBHAN UI NEILL: Teaching Irish Language; courses, resources, problems of organisation, new devlopments.

Dr. ROGER SWIFT: Primary sources for the study of the historical experience of the Irish in Britain.

HILDA McCAFFERTY: ILEA and its attempts to meet the needs of the Irish community in inner London - the local politics of the situation.

DAVID CAIRNS & SHAUN RICHARDS: Sean O'Casey and the A Level Syllabus; not only informative by entertaining!

RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS: Are Academics Elitist? How can they be helped to deliver what Irish Studies students need?

Again, we wish to express our thanks to our educational & commercial sponsors, especially the Soar Valley Association (the commuttee of the adult & community education section), the Community Vice-Principal, Eric Sylt and our Resources Dept. secretary, Mrs. Wendy Burke.

> NESSAN J. E. DANAHER, B.A., M.Ed. Irish Studies C-ordinator.

CONTENTS

MACINOTADOSAHRIBASIC Linked achools. Although	Page
Introduction	2
Contents Dooleet not only any booled and be booled and boole the boole of the boole	3
Information on BAIS	4
Report on European Studies: Ireland and Great Britain Project: Dr. Roger Austin	5
Paper on <u>Anglo-Irish Relation; the 1880's to the 1990</u> 's: Dr. Roy Foster	11
Report on <u>History Workshop and Irish History Workshop</u> <u>Projec</u> t: Sean Hutton	19
The Work of the Irish Studies Centre at North London	r Bonde Brok Film Brokel
Polytechnic: Dr. Alan Clinton	24
Recommended Reading - new titles	27
1987 Conference - List of Participants	28

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THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR IRISH STUDIES

AIMS

The Brillsh Association for Irish Studies (BAIS) is a cultural and educational body dedicated to expanding Irish studies in Britain and Northern Ireland at all levels and raising their professional status. Constitutionally and emphatically non-political and non-sectarian, the BAIS seeks membership from all those with a bong fide interest in

Irish studies The BAIS co-ordinates activities at all levels of education and across the many disciplines which make up trish studies, plans national policies and liaises with government and educational bodies.

BACKGROUND

For several years the demand for Irish studies has been growing

For several years the demand for lish studies has been growing fast in all arenas of education in Britain and Northern Ireland. Its growth is sustained by a number of factors: a continuing interest in their home culture on the part of the lish communities in Britain: an increasing realisation in a number of academic disciplines of the importance of lish studies; the popularity of lish music among the young: and, of course, the continuing conflict in Northern Ireland. But until now the growth has been fragmentary and the quality uneven.

ORIGINS

In 1984 a group of academics in the North Midlands of England began a compaign for the formation of a British Association for Irish Studies to be set up broadly along the lines of those operating effectively in Canada and the United States of America.

In September 1985, at the first-ever Irish studies conference in Britain. those present agreed enthusiastically to the formation of the BAIS. The Ministers of Education of both governments attended and spoke in support of the initiative. With the help of \$4,000 from The Ireland Fund, the interim committee was able to get the organisation off the ground.

The association was formally launched at its first Annual General Meeting in London on July 5 1986.

ACHIEVEMENTS

The BAIS has been greeted with enthusiasm and goodwill by all interested The basis has been greened with the massis and by commense of the parties, not least the governments of both ireland and Britain. Among its backers are Garrel-FitzGerald and Charles J. Haughey. It is consulted on all relevant matters by politicians, government servants, academics and members of the lish community.



community

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR IRISH STUDIES

In less than a year the association has: I so members: starl-up grants of IR£10,000 from the Irish government and \$2,000 from The Ireland Fund: three sub-committees dealing with compulsory, adult and further, and higher education, thereby encompassing all levels in Britain: 180 members: signed up obtained set up levels in Britain: through its higher education sub-committee a survey of linsh studies provision in the universities. At a one-day seminar in December representatives of 25 universities discussed its findings and unanimously agreed that eight named institutions be designated as key centres for the development of linsh studies. A report colling formore funding from the Department of Education and Science for our area of study (and specifically for those eight institutions) has now been endorsed by the University Grants Committee: a similar survey of polytechnics and collegaes in the public carried out a similar survey of polytechnics and colleges in the public sector and reported to the relevant government bodies; the first issue of its newsletter; In April 1987 an extremely successful multi-disciplinary completed published held academic conference at Oxford; lecturers for extra-mural groups; provided taken under its umbrella and partially subsidised the Soar Valley Workshop in Leicester; a close and mutually supportive relationship with the American Committee for Irish Studies: developed links with various Irish community and cultural organisations established In Britain FUTURE

Having achleved so much in higher education, the committee now Intends to launch a major initiative in the areas of school and adult education. In addition to formulating a national strategy we will be running day-schools for teachers and will consider producing and disseminating teaching materials.

An area which is in need of support is that of the Irish language; we have recently set up a sub-committee to plan for the expansion and improvement of Irish language teaching nationwide.

We are currently devising a series of regional public lecture programmes.

These and our many other projects will depend entirely on the success of the major long-term fund-raising programme on which we are now embarking. We are therefore seeking financial assistance from both public and private organisations and members of the Irish community in Britain and abroad.

6. The First Steps

a) Between September and December 1987, a total of just over 2,000 children in the 18 project schools followed the first module 'Myself and My School. This module has allowed children arriving in post primary school to get to know each other and their teachers, as well as providing a rich store of experience for children to draw upon in making contacts with their linked schools. Although this module covered content that was 'new' to many teachers and challenging because it wasn't as specific as a history or geography topic, it has now found a home in project schools. In some instances, the cross curricular nature of the module has meant that departmental barriers have been breached for the first timne. In general, co-operation between departments within schools has been welcomed.

For the pupils, the module has introduced them to two other schools and at this stage they see their contacts as being similar to pen pals. In a gentle and exploratory fashion, they have gained experience at saying something about who they are and the ways in which their linked classes are both similar and different to themselves.

b) Teaching Styles and Classroom Management

Since many of the targets of this introductory module were affective, traditional patterns of teaching and learning were not always appropriate. Most teachers seem to have responded well to the idea of organising children into groups, re-arranging classroom furniture to encourage discussion and allowing a higher volume of purposeful buzz than they might have hitherto. The role of Field Officers in working alongside teachers in the classroom has been crucial in sustaining new styles of teaching and learning. In some cases teachers have been so impressed by these new approaches that they have adapted them for other classes outside of the project. This example of professional development can be matched by the way teachers have responded to Information Technology.

c) The Role of Information Technology in the Module

Teachers are still inclined to see Information Technology in terms of computers, no doubt because this is the branch of I.T. that is least familiar and offers the most challenge. It is also true that computers have proved to be an innovative and exciting aspect of the project for many of the children. However, it is worth recording that some of the most valuable material exchanged between pupils used traditional technology such as pen and ink drawings and poems, photographs and audio tapes.

Schools have used computers in three principal ways : word processing, database construction and electronic mail. The degree of success in using computers in these ways has depended on a number of variables -

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Irish version: Aodán Mac Póilín, M.Phil

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Á chlóbhualadh agus á fhoilsiú ag Y Lolfa, Talybont, Dyfed, Cymru (Wales) SY24 5HE; guthán (097086) 304. support within the school from the computer specialist, the number of children needing access to hardware, help from Field Officers and varying degrees of individual motivation to using computers.

Although we do not have any objective measure of the usage of the wor processing or database packages in project schools, all of the 2,00 project children involved have had <u>some</u> experience of using computers In the case of electronic mail, we know from analysis of schools' us during the month of November, that, on average, schools logged on one or twice a week. Some logged on every day while others, due 4 technical difficulties or the late arrival of equipment were les frequent users of the system. Given that in-service training was onl provided in Septenber, nearly all the schools have made considerabl progress in a relatively short period of time. This achievement should be emphasised, bearing in mind the lack of computer literace that existed among project teachers a year ago, and the ver considerable technical difficulties that had to be overcome. I do not believe this amount of progress would have been made if the project had not insisted on using compatible hardware and if there hadn't been a member of the project team who had the experience to advise of suitable software and develop supporting materials for its use in the classroom.

d) Exchanging material between schools.

The principle of joint investigation of issues between schools involving the sharing of information, lies at the very heart of th project philosophy. In the total absence of any published or eve anecdotal accounts of how other schools had faced the practical issue of interdependence, we had to plan Module 1 with a mixture of pragmatism and faith.

I think it is possible to say that the decision to build a special relationship between groups of 3 schools has been vindicated. To have involved more than 3 schools in the exchange of material would have created severe logistical problems for both teachers and children. I may be that groups larger than 3 could be linked at some point in the future but we would need to balance the possible enrichment this might bring against a possible loss of intimacy.

The linkage of classes between the schools has not always bee completely successful but the problems encountered appear to have bee mainly resolved during the recent tri-regional conference. Potentia hazards still confront some schools where the number of classe involved is unequal. Either the school with small classes runs the risk of getting overwhelmed or the larger school has classes that a not adequately linked. We will need to maintain a close monitoring links between these schools during Modules 2 and 3.

Children are clearly motivated by the idea of writing for a distant audience and teachers seem unanimous that this has general motivation and enthusiasm among children of all abilities. LO-IRISH RELATIONS: THE 1880'S TO THE 1960 B.

general, however, we underestimated the amount of time children needed to prepare material to be sent and this put teachers and children under a lot of pressure. Where deadlines were missed because of illness, inadequate time or school constraints, the 'receiving school' felt disappointed and let down. Now that teachers have been round this particular course once, they were able at the conference discussions to revise plans for Modules 2 and 3.

In many cases children in linked classes are not all the same age or the same ability but this does not appear to have created any major problems in Module 1. One of the reasons for this is that teachers have been extremely sensitive and diplomatic in the way that they have handled in-coming material. However, given the differences that do exist, we will need to keep a watchful eye on progress during this year to ensure that classes are well matched.

e) Support Structures

In a project as innovative as ours, there needs to be a high level of support, at least in the early stages. The experience of Module 1 has made it possible to confirm that there are 6 critical elements in that support. They are, not necessarily in order of importance, :

- 1. Adequate resources (hardware, software, teaching materials, in-service cover, money for recurrent consumables).
- 2. Field Officers' support to meet a wide range of demands, for example in I.T., developing materials, supporting teachers in the classroom and liaising with senior management.
- 3. Senior management support in schools, for example, in giving teachers <u>time</u>, access to technical facilities and giving the project a high profile.
- 4. The project co-ordinator in each school, whose role is to act as a link between the school and the project team. The project co-ordinator is a key figure not only for administrative reasons but also for ensuring that things get done on time, and that colleagues involved in the project have someone to refer to.
- 5. The Project Director whose role is to provide schools with a clear sense of the overall direction of the project, to ensure that other support is operating effectively and whose visits to all the project schools enable him to have an overview of the project's development.
- 6. Institutional support from Departments of Education and local Education Authorities through the Steering Committees. This has given the project status as well as essential funding.

Overall, I believe that the different support agencies have combined well to help get the project off to an encouraging start.

Roger Austin Director



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ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: THE 1880'S TO THE 1980'S.

Dr. Roy Foster, Birkbeck College, University of London. Talk delivered at the 4th Annual National Conference on Irish Dimensions in British Education - Saturday 14th February 1987.

This lecture breaks the cardinal rule, in treating Irish history as if it is all about Anglo-Irish relations: whereas much the most interesting historical work deals with what people did or said or thought or expected in Cork, or Clare, or Meath, at times of superficial calmas weld as ostensible revolution. Over the last century, however, eventshave pushed the Anglo-Irish dimension of Irish history into inevitable prominence. An intractable colonial problem has been replaced by an intractable post-colonial problem, and historians like Oliver MacDonagh have written comparative studies of the 1970's and the 1790's, stressing repetitive and parallel patterns. Most recently, the Hillsborough agreement has appeared as a constitutional realignment which may resemble in its importance the 1921 treaty, or even the Act of Union.

This kind of approach reflects the Irish notion of <u>continuing</u> history. Debates about Home Rule in the 19th century rapidly turned into arguments about Cromwell, or the 'massacres' of 1641. After November 1985, dates like 1912, 1921 and 1949 were inevitably bandied around; but the most significant anniversary of all was a centenary, for it was in December 1885 that Gladstone announced his conversion to Irish Home Rule, and began the process of constitutional readjustment.

The subsequent bill of March 1886 was the first attempt to redraft the terms of the Union - giving Ireland its own parliament within the imperial framework. It was a modest measure, though constitutionally imaginative in the terms of the time. It failed, and there followed the second, abortive, Bill of 1893; the third, in 1912, which became law but was suspended in 1914; the Government of Ireland Act, by which the Northern Ireland state was set up, in 1920; the Ireland Act of 1949, creating the twenty-six county republic of Ireland; the measure suspending the Stormont parliament in 1972. In between there are the many failures, remembered wistfully by liberal historians but forgotten by nearly everyone else. (And this is only to survey the last century, leaving out the problems posed ever since the troubled connection began: put well by Grattan in a phrase much quoted by Gladstone. 'The channel forbids union, the ocean forbids separation'. On to this geographical or strategic relationship were imposed complex strata of conquest, religious antipathy, Anglophobia, cultural diversity and economic exploitation. Some impressions keep recurring. One is economic: the conditioning of the Irish agrarian economy by the proximity of British markets, and the absolute disinclination of anyone (except a few visionary minority groups) to do anything to alter this. But this lecture aims to emphasise another recurring syndrome: the limited resources of constitutional ingenuity regarding possible rearrangements of what Mr. Haughey called in 1981 'the totality of relationships within these islands'.

The syndrome was imposed by the strait jacket of the Union - that controversial piece of legislation which came into effect in January 1801 and gave polemical writers from that day to this a readymade metaphor for Anglo-Irish relations: the failed marriage, eventually reaching a stage of irretrievable breakdown. Gladstone decided the Union had 'no moral force', but its defenders saw it - like marriage - as a sacrament. The relationship that evolved was as odd as marriage: direct representation at Westminster, but also a Viceroy, a powerful Chief Secretary, and a large administrative framework unlike anything in Britain. Thus the relationship was unlike that with Scotland (why not is a nice question); but nor was it strictly 'colonial', though that has become a buzz-word to evade analysis. Certainly every travel-writer saw nineteenth-century Ireland as a foreign country - with the exception of Ulster, where they thankfully encountered a sense of familiarity. And yet for many Irish people during the years of Union, London was their capital and England their natural focus - middle-class careerists as well as necessitous emigrants.

The ambivalent relationship was expressed in the strong tradition of special legislation for Ireland; politicians, like Enoch Powell today, might reiterate that Ireland was technically no different from England, but the administrators knew better. And special legislation meant not only the suspension of Habeas Corpus and the proclamation of disturbed counties, but also the imposition of centralised, state-funded schemes for non-denominational education, fever hospitals, insane asylums, the purchase of tenants' holdings by state loans, and other innovations not possible in England. Whenever Orange and Green came together, in fact, it tended to be in response to the terms imposed by legislative union-campaigns against overtaxation, demands for local-government reform, and committed opposition to British schemes for non-sectarian education. And when British legislation was applied across the board to Ireland, it often had drastic and unforeseen results. (In a sense this is true also of Ireland's involvement in the First World War, which had a cataclysmic effect on Irish life and may have done more to create a broad base for Irish nationalism than 800 years of supposed oppression beneath 'England's cruel might'.)

The other recurring pattern of relationships within the Union was that any two Irishmen, even sworn enemies, seemed to understand each other better than even a well-intentioned Englishman. Shortly after becoming Prime Minister, Edward Heath arranged the first meeting of the three prime ministers of Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and Great Britain for 50 years. 'I was struck forcibly', he pathetically recalled, 'by the fact that the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and the Taoiseach of the republic spent a great deal of their time reminiscing about their times together, the university to which they went together, their education together, what they had done together, and how they were working out eveything together. I was the odd man out and nobody cares about the odd man out.....'. 19th century politicians said the same kind of thing continually: no-one understood the Irish imbroglio except the Irish: let them sort it out.

But any kind of joint action induces paranoia and brings to the surface the ancient confessional divide which lies like a faultline across Irish history. 'Ascendancy', signifying the vested interests of a dominant class, continued in an oblique way even after the commitment of British governments to a measure of devolution, and land redistribution; the English government was readier to dismantle the apparatus of Ascendancy than local opinion allowed them to be, and their dream of creating a loyal Catholic middle class in Ireland foundered. If Ascendancy eventually crumbled in the south, it remained entrenched, and concentrated, in the north.

Moreover, the terms of devolution remained very limited. Even under Home Rule as it became law, the reserved business was striking: affairs of the crown, peace and war, naval and military matters, treaties and foreign affairs, treason, navigation, merchant shipping, land purchase, trademarks, copyrights, patents, lighthouses, old age pensions, national insurance, post office savings banks - even taxation and police powers, though for a limited period. And these limitations were acceptable not only to Redmond, but to Parnell.

Events in Ireland from 1914 changed this; and by 1917 even the southern unionists were prepared to cede much more, though they clung to representation in Westminster. (the 1912 bill kept 42 Irish MP's at Westminster, which enabled Asquith to present it - when he chose simply as the first of a series of measures reorganising UK administration By the Treaty of 1921, what was on the table had devloped dramatically: customs, tariffs, economic policy, fiscal autonomy were handed over without a murmur (though the Irish economy would remain in practice linked very closely to English demands). Judiciary, police and army would become more or less independent. The British army would withdraw. Where difficulty arose was when ambiguity had to be defined: the oath of allegiance. A small variation of words was enough to fight a civil war over. Oddly, the argument never took the tack that a stricter definition of allegiance might reconcile Ulster. In the end, a majority in Ireland plumped for a constitutional relationship which was effectively Dominion Home Rule - which was the solution pressed by Lloyd George from Dublin Castle, and from his left wing in Britain, as early as 1920. It is an uncomfortable but brutal truth, put sharply by Patrick O'Farrell: those who opposed the treaty did so because they took the same view of it as the British government - i.e. that it had preserved the Empire. The Free State diplomats of the 1920s, and then Eamonn de Valera in the 1930s. set out to prove them wrong.

Nonetheless, the special relationship set up in 1921 did evolve, and survived the dismantling process which culminated in de Valera's constitution of 1937 and the declaration of an Irish Republic in 1949. Special commercial relationships remained, climaxing in an effective Free Trade area set up in 1965. Britain's special defence and strategic interests in the area were tacitly allowed. Irish residents in Britain had a special constitutional status (an arrangement only recently reciprocated in the Republic). But the Irish line on constitutional abstractions continued tough, and often determined. idealist. Uncomfortable facts - the majority vote for the Treaty, the actuality of partition - were not admitted, enabling the Republic to legislate platonically for the six north-eastern counties 'pending the reintegration of the national territory'. Yet in practical matters, the attitude even from de Valera and Fianna Fail could be extremely flexible. This is paralleled by the position given by Hillsborough to the Republics's role in Northern affairs: 'more than consultative, less than executive'. In the second second second

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Another historical strategy for evading constitutional reality is more practical: the setting up of alternative institutions, unoffical but legitimised by practice. This is a traditional tactic in Irish history, going back not only to the 'Hungarian' policy of Griffith's Sinn Fein, but to a long rural tradition of 'alternative' courts and structures of enforcement. (Both O'Connell and Parnell raised the spectre of an unofficial secessionist parliament, though neither followed it through.) 'Free Derry' and the Provisional IRA's policing of the Catholic ghettoes stem from the same tradition.

Ulster Catholics from 1920 created a counter-state - in matters of education, health care, sport, drinking, commerce (even, it's said, cooking), they lived by their own ways. This enabled the Protestant majority to eliminate their few safeguards. And ironically, they were increasingly identifying with a Gaelic, Catholic, austerely nationalist policy which bore less and less resemblance to the true state of affairs in the Republic.

Thus Ulster became 'the Irish Question', focusing on itself all the elements of the 19th century dispensation, within an area engineered to contain an invincible majority of two-thirds unionists. This was stage-managed by a committed clique of civil servants. Nonetheless, the other (ignored) provisions of the Government of Ireland Act, supposed to set up a government in the South, deserve at least speculative attention: if the Irish Nationalists had been consulted about the Government of Ireland Act, how closely would it have come to resemble Dominion Home Rule? And what would it have delivered that would have differed substantially from the 1921 Treaty? Certainly neither the Government of Ireland Act before the Anglo-Irish War, nor the Treaty after it, could have brought about any kind of united Ireland. Partition had been a strong, if not always admitted, probability since at least 1912; special arrangements for Ulster were tacitly accepted by Asquith and his allies as a necessary part of manoeuvres after the bill had technically passed. Only the extent of exclusion was under debate. By 1913 the Unionist strategy of claiming 6 counties had evolved, to ensure a majority, though the government preferred 9 counties with an even Protestant-Catholic balance (an idea unsuccessfully pressed by Lloyd George's cabinet committee on Ireland in 1920 as well). In the end, double-think once more produced an open- ended, so-called 'solution': exclusion for Ulster on a supposedly 'temporary' basis. The practical advantage given the Ulster Unionists was reinforced by Liberal pusillanimity;

then by the outbreak of war; and finally by the 1916 rising in Dublin.

Lloyd George's hasty post-Rising negotiations trying to pull Home Rule chestnuts out of the fire, involved commitments to Ulster Unionist leaders (later denied, but well established) that partition was now inviolable. The Ulster arrangement of 1920, created in a vacuum due to nationalist boycott, copper-fastened the deal; and the Boundary Commission, though warmly welcomed by northern nationalist opinion like the <u>Irish News</u>, proved to be yet another piece of fancy constitutional footwork that delivered nothing.

Much of this parallels what followed when the structure collapsed under pressure in the 1970s. The destruction of the Sunningdale power-sharing scheme, and the campaign against Hillsborough, repeat the confrontations of the early 20th century: bewildered and pusillanimous government rhetoric is faced by violent intransigence from mass Unionist opinion in the north, and pious fence-sitting from nationalist politicaians in the south. But the Hillsborough arrangement has an interesting pedigree, building not only on the failed powersharing experiement of 1974, but on independent investigations and examinations in the intervening decade, and capitalising on a majority Tory government with a strong political will (the combination which no constitutional initiative in the past century has been able to muster). On the one hand, an internal solution is being attempted, creating inbuilt protection for the position of the Catholic minority within Ulster, and setting up a stalking-horse for a devolutionary power-sharing solution which it was hoped would appeal to Unionists faute de mieux. (It has not.) On the other hand, these guarantees have been introduced by means of involving the Republic in running certain aspects of Ulster government, through a joint secretariat at Maryfield. Here lies the parallel to 1921: some nationalists see this as conferring, in Collin's phrase of that time, 'the freedom to achieve freedom': some Unionsts accordingly see it as the first steps in a sinister Anschluss. To them, constitutional guarantees carry little weight (and certainly, such guarantees on the part of a previous government did not prevent de Valera removing the Oath of allegiance to the Crown, abolishing appeals to the Privy Council, taking away British citizenship from Irish subjects, and deleting monarch and governor-general from the constitution - all within a few years during the 1930s). And Hillsborough, like Sunningdale, revives an 'all-Ireland' concept in terms of government and administration: cosmetically it may be, but symbolically no less important for that.

It also apparently emphasizes the abnormality of Ulster's position. An Irish constitutional lawyer has claimed:

Northern Ireland has now become subject to a status in international law which has no real parallels elsewhere. It never was, nor has it become, a separate entity in international law. It is not a condominium. It is a province of the United Kingdom which for the first time has become subject to the legal right of two sovereign governments to determine how all matters which go to the head of sovereignity in that area shall be determined.

Supposedly, the creation of an Anglo-Irish parliamentary council underlines the unique nature of the constitutional relationship. But it is <u>not</u> unique. The entire sovereignty argument in international law has evolved greatly since the 1920s. Areas of internal government which are shared with outside powers without infringing sovereignty have mushroomed; so have areas (even within Europe) called 'transfrontier regions' where external powers excercise powers on behalf of marooned minorities (e.g. Alsace, Lichtenstein, the Oresund Channel, even a department of the French Pyrenees). Within the EEC a regional development is apparent, asserting itself constitutionally against hegemony exercised by national governments; in a sense divisions of sovereignty are becoming the norm.)

Significantly, and inevitably, much Ulster opinion would see all this as irrelevant; and so, in all fairness, would much of the reliably insular opinion in the south. As usual, both sides prefer to look back to mutually exclusive versions of history, as commonly (if often inaccurately) perceived. As over the ratification of the 1921 Treaty, fears, perceptions and forms of words count for more than realities. Doublethink has often performed a useful function. 60 years of partition, and the removal of a million intractable Protestants, have allowed successive Irish governments the luxury of embracing policies of cultural Gaelicisation and the insertion of Catholic social teaching into secular law; partition also, arguably, enabled neutrality in 1939, given the presence of army and naval bases in Ulster. 26 almost entirely Catholic and agricultural counties made up a remarkably (and tractably) cohesive political and social unit; there has always been an element of crocodile tears about the sundered six counties, as seen from the south.

Hillsborough attempts, as so often over the last century, to reconcile idealised aspirations and irreducible political realities; it has attempted to do so with some subletly, and a greater degree of constitional innovation than on many previous occasions. This alone makes its shaky progress worth watching. But more is at stake than simply a speculative interest in constitution-mongering. The alternativesmake it clear that what must be embraced is an acceptance of necessary limitations, and that such an acceptance must be made openly. And the only way that this may be made palatable is possibly by looking at history, and confronting the chaos that opened up when that effort, and that acceptance, were deliberately repudiated.

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THE ABBEY READS

continued from page 22

work of Bew, Gibbon and Patterson at last took place.

I have tried here to outline the general thinking which underlies the work of History Workshop and Irish History Workshop and the way in which both have engaged with Irish History and the history of the Irish, creating many openings and opportunities and questioning the very practice of history itself, in ways which academic history has failed to do - certainly up to recent times.

Sean Hutton

REPORT ON WORKSHOP/SEMINAR: RECOVERING THE PAST AND EXPLAINING THE PRESENT - A DESCRIPTION OF THE HISTORY WORKSHOP AND THE IRISH HISTORY WORKSHOP PROJECT WITH REFLECTIONS ON IRISH HISTORIOGRAPHY.

SEAN HUTTON (14th FEBRUARY 1987).

HISTORY WORKSHOP AND IRISH HISTORY WORKSHOP PROJECT

History Workshop originated in 1966 at Ruskin College, Oxford.

It was an attempt to create....an alternative educational practice, to encourage Ruskin students – working men and women, drawn from the labour and trade union movement – to engage in research, and to construct their own history as a way of giving them a critical vantage point in their reading.

(Raphael Samuel, 'History Workshop, 1966-80', in People's History and Socialist Theory 1981)

A series of pamphlets written by Ruskin students, was published, such as Bernard Reaney's 'The Class Struggle in 19th Century Oxfordshire', Stan Shipley's 'Club Life and Socialism in Mid-Victorian London' or Dave Douglass's 'Pit Life in Co. Durham'. The movement which developed was very much imbued with the concept of Autigestion, which was in the air about that time, and the idea of 'people's history'. The annual History Workshop held at Ruskin College, Oxford became a focus for the movement. With time specialist or local history workshops were organised. Ad Hoc or more permanent collectives were set up as each particular task seemed to demand. In 1976 the first issue of 'History Workshop Journal' appeared. This, together with the now itinerant annual History Workshop, continues to give a focus to a loosely structured movement.

In the first issue of 'History Workshop Journal' the editorial collective set out its programme:

We are concerned at the narrowing of history in our society, and at its progressive withdrawal from the battle of ideas....'Serious history' has become a subject reserved for the specialist....In the journal we shall try to restore a wider context for the study of history, both as a counter to the scholastic fragmentation of the subject, and with the aim of making it relevant to ordinary people.

The journal is dedicated to making history a more democratic activity and a more urgent concern. We believe that history is a source of inspiration and understanding, furnishing not only the means of interpreting the past but also the best critical advantage point from which to view the present. So we believe that history should become common 'property!, capable of shaping peoples' understanding of themselves and the society in which they live.....

The journal was described as "a journal of social historians" (in 1982 this became a "journal of socialist and feminist historians") and the editorial collective wrote:

....Our socialism determines our concern with the common people in the past, their life and work and thought and individuality, as well as the content and shaping causes of their class experience.... Our socialism will also demand the discussion and development of theoretical issues in history. It will make us attack vigorously those types of historical and sociological enquiries which reinforce the structures of power and inequality in our society and will bring us into critical and constructive debate with bourgeois scholars....

The degree to which the component parts of History Workshop have realized the aims it set itself is open to debate. What is clear beyond doubt is that it has maintained a degree of openness and informality which has encouraged diversity and has enabled its component parts to operate at various degrees of intellectual complexity, and with varying emphases, in pursuit of these objectives.

Initially, workshops tended to be organised around a theme. The popularity of the annual History Workshop resulted eventually in a multi-strand format, which allowed more ground to be covered in any one workshop. HW 20, held in Leeds in 1986, had 14 strands. These included 'Women's History', 'Black Experience', Children's History', 'Anarchism', 'Policing and People' and 'Capitalism, Socialism and the Use of Technology'.

There has been consistant Irish input into History Workshop since the late 1970s. The first major input was the strand in Ireland in HW 13, held at Ruskin College, College, Oxford, in 1979. D. R. O'Connor Lysaght, Michael Farrell and myself presented papers on Connolly, Northern Ireland and on nationalism and socialism in Ireland, which could be described as being in the 'Connollist' tradition: which Belinda Probert (author of 'Beyond Orange and Green: the political economy of the Northern Ireland crisis) presented a revisionist view of the politics of Northern Ireland.

In 1981 Bernadette McAliskey took part in a comprehensive strand on 'Imperialism' in HW 15, which was held at Brighton.

In 1981, also, Bernard Canavan, an ex-Ruskin student played a leading part in organising a major history workshop in London on the theme 'The Irish in Britain'. This weekend workshop was probably one of the most comprehensive held, to date, on that subject in England. It represented an initiative from withinthe Irish community and drew largely on that community for its attendance.

A substantial Irish strand was included in HW 18, which met at Leicester in 1984. The strand included papers on the I.T.G.W.U., Connolly, Irish Feminism and the Belfast working-class. Two extremely interesting papers were Anne Lawrence's contribution on 'English attitudes to Ireland in the 17th Century', in which she analysed the basis for the racialist attitudes displayed by certain English observers, and John Newsinger's 'O'Casey as witness, 1908-16', in which he demonstrated that the debate between O'Casey and his critics in the pre-war period utilised the vocabulary of 'left' nationalism rather than of Marxism.

20

In 1985 when HW 19 took place at Leeds, Donall Mac Amhaigh contributed a paper on the attitudes and experiences of Irish immigrants in the immediate post-war period to the strand on Race and Immigration. The presentation of this paper in a strand which was concerned also with Jewish, West Indian and Asian immigrant experiences was a significant reminder that the Irish experience in Britain should not be regarded as unique or separate from that of other immigrant groups, though, of course, having features special to itself

hich we wished to laddress publications the land war i the

HW 20, held in 1986, also took place in Leeds. A substantial Irish strand was included in this workshop, under the umbrella title: 'The Irish in England/The British State in Ireland'. The title was chosen to indicate an essential element in the relationship; the presence of the Irish as individuals on the British Labour Market in contrast to the intervention of the British state in Ireland. Papers on the British in Ireland in the early nineteenth century and on the background to the formation of the Irish Free State were included as well as a number of papers on the Irish in Britain, which included papers on British undercover activity and the politics of the Belfast Protestant working-class, as well as critiques of the work of Bew, Gibbon and Patterson - who, in a number of books and articles, have presented a neo-Marxist critique of 'Connollyist' positions on Northern Ireland. Contributions in other strands included a paper by Margaret Ward on 'Feminism in Northern Ireland' and by Liz Curtis on 'Television Coverage of Northern Ireland'.

In 1978 a History Workshop was set up in Dublin. Members of the English History Workshop participated in this initiative in the early stages. Raphael Samuel spoke on 'People's History' at the first Dublin workshop, which was attended by a contingent from the English Workshop, including Ruth and Eddie Frow of the Working Class Library (Manchester), and Eve Hostetler spoke to the third Dublin workshop in November 1979 on 'The Political Economy of Women's Work'. Jack and Ita Gannon and myself, among the founders of the Dublin History Workshop had experience of the English Workshop.

The group which set up Irish History Workshop was a diverse one, in terms of politics. It ranged from 'two nationist', through republican (both with a small and a large 'r'), to Trotskeyite anti-imperialist. Some had an academic training in history, others had not. However, we were all concerned that historical reflection should not remain the preserve of academic institutions; and we wished to encourage non-academic reserachers, as well as sympathetic academics, to share their findings with a broad, non-specialist audience. We also had a policy of inviting those who had contributed to the making of history to share their memories and their reflections on the past with us. A session on the Republican Congress, for example, included contributions from George Gilmore and Sheila Humphries, who had been Congress members, as well as from Michael O'Riordan (General Secretary of the C.P.I. and author of Connolly Column; the story of the Irishmen who fought in the ranks of the International Brigades (1979) , who had himself fought in support of the Spanish Republic.

While we wished to encourage the history of communities as in the workshop on Dublin history held in 1981, we were also concerned with broader issues; with the general history of political Unionism, for example, or with the impact of capitalism on the Irish Countryside and the role of the rural trader. As 'leftists' and/or socialists in a 'Connollyist' tradition, and as individuals for whom the practice of history represent ed a critical process of recovery and reconstruction, there were particular moments and movements in recent Irish history to which we wished to address ourselves; the land war, the forgotten syndicalist and 'soviet' movements of the period 1917-23, the coalition of forces leading to the formation of the Irish Free State, the struggles of the unemployed in the 1950s, for example. A bi-lingual workshop on the career of P.H. Pearse held in 1979 represented an attempt on our part to reset a balance in the light of the excesses of some academic revisionism. Papers on labour history were also included in workshops though we recognised our role as being broader than that of the Irish Labour History Society of which many of us were members.

A workshop on political prisoners, a symposium on 'The relevance of Connolly', a bi-lingual workshop each year to coincide with 'Seachtain na Gaeilge' represented a commitment to various Irish traditions. However, recognising the differences in our own approaches to history and recognising the historical reflection was not a value-free process, we wished to encourage the widest possible debate. (This included debate between academics and non-academics and J. J. Lee (U.C.C.), Fergus D'Arcy, Donal McCartney and Sister Benvenuta (U.C.D.), Gearoid o Tuathaigh and Michael D. Higgins (U.C.G.) and Mary Cullen (Maynooth) are among the academics who have spoken at Dublin History Workshops.)

In a report on the first Dublin History Workshop (History Workshop, Issue 6, Autumn 1978) Raphael Samuel wrote as follows:

The discussions, passionate though tolerant, showed a widespread appreciation that the cause of republicanism and socialism in Ireland is best served not by a reassuring evocation of past heroism, but by subjecting history to an open and critical examination, seeking to unravel the historical roots of Ireland's situation today, as a way of bringing greater understanding to present struggles. The Workshop in fact brought together on the common platform of history, groups who would not normally be engaged in discussion with each other, and without disguising or blurring deep political differences, showed how historical inquiry could help to hold them in perpective.

A commitment which we conciously made, following justified criticisms of the first Dublin History Workshop, was that women's history was an element which should be included in any future major workshop. This commitment was marked in the second Dublin History Workshop in the greater number of women speakers and in a series of papers on Women's struggles with papers from Margaret Ward ('Women and the Irish nationalist movement'), Ann Speed ('The Irish Women's Movement'), and Mary Clifford, the then Chairperson of the Dublin Council of Trade Unions ('Women and the Irish Trades Union Movement').

Irish History Workshop was also responsible for the placing of a memorial tablet on St. Catherine's Church in Thomas Street, Dublin, to commemorate the artisans executed for their part in the Insurrection of 1803 and for the provision of a plaque to commemorate the Woman's Land League in the premises of the Allied Irish Bank, Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin.

Although hampered by financial and other constraints, History Workshop has published one issue of 'Irish History Workshop - Saotharlann Staire Aireann' containing a selection of papers given at early workshops, as well as a booklet 'An Ghaeilge i mBaile Atha Cliath', containing papers from a bilingual workshop on that subject. Plans are in hand at the moment to publish papers from the Irish strand in HW20 under the auspices of Irish History Workshop. This is appropriate, since it was there that our long projected discussion of this important but problematic





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THE WORK OF THE IRISH STUDIES CENTRE AT THE POLYTECHNIC OF NORTH LONDON

by ALAN CLINTON (14th February 1987)

Background

There can be no doubt of the growing demand for serious study of Ireland and of the Irish in Britain. This is shown in the longevity of the magazine 'Irish Studies in Britain', in the popularity of and interest in the Soar Valley conferences, in the documents published about the school curriculum from Haringey, Manchester, the National Federation of Irish Societies and elsewhere, and in the recent conferences in Deptford and Kilburn. There have been numerous adult education courses in history, language etc. The Irish in Britain History Centre in London has made its own particular contribution, and the British Association for Irish Studies has now begun to consider developments at all levels of education. There was even the famous letter from the University Grants Commission commending Irish Studies, albeit without any promises of resources.

* The demand for more than this has been expressed in many ways. There were the GLC conferences and the work now continued through the London Strategic Policy Unit. There are also the lobbying of the IBRG, the Federation of Irish Societies, the language movement, womens groups and numerous small local organisation.

* The difficulties facing the Irish community in this country have been seen, nearly for the first time, as meriting serious study. There has been a new openness in the discussion of the issues facing women, young people, pensioners, the single homeless. At the same time, efforts have been made to see the Irish Community not as a 'problem', but as worthy of understanding, and even celebration.

Initial Steps in Higher Education

From all this has come a realisation of the need for more knowledge about and understanding of Ireland itself, and of the migrant community. The British Association for Irish Studies has taken some initial steps, and there has been some discussion at Keele and elsewhere. But still there was no specific provision in any higher education institution in Britain to develop the degree-level work, and for the research and the other activities that are essential for the further development of Irish Studies at this level.

The Polytechnic of North London

PNL covers the London Boroughs of Islington, Camden and Hackey, all with large Irish populations. It has developed a range of programmes for access. The most successfulversion of this to date has been the evening degree scheme. Particular problems in the recent history of PNL have included attacks in the House of Lords and elsewhere as a centre for subversion and violence. The reality is that PNL is a rather sober place with a long history of trying to serve a very particular local community with a diverse range of provision. The possibility of including Irish Studies has been discussed a least since the early 80s. Caribbean, Mediterranean and other fields have developed at PNL in an effort to be relevant to this diverse community. Other innovations have included womens' studies, though this is not unique.

The Form of the Irish Studies Centre

Funding is only from the PNL's contingency fund for two part-time people, described as Research Fellow and Researcher - Alan Clinton and Mary Hickman. It began life in a tiny room on 6th October 1986 with the responsibility for setting up half a degree, evening classes, and research not to mention secretarial tasks, and everything else.

Much of the job is still public relations and administration rather than the research or teaching that needs to be done.

What is Irish Studies for us?

- 1. Special concentration on the issue of migration, its form and the community it creates.
- 2. Effort to link this to the needs and desires of the Irish Community.
- 3. The Management Board of the Centre includes representatives of the Poly, and of a number of local Irish organisations to embody community involvement.
- 4. The need to develop an understanding of Ireland itself is also an essential task.

The Teaching Side

Adult Education Course: Our first is on the history and sociology of migration.

Short Courses for teachers, social works etc., are being discussed, but only now at an initial stage.

The Degree has been more discussed: there are any number of ideas about the form it should take, but less clarity about how it can be taught and resourced.

Research

Serious study of the subject has only recently begun, most particularly about migration since the 1950s. This is why the Centre has set up the Irish in Britain Research Group to being to together and develop work with objectivity, scholarship and relevance. A seminar programme has been initiated, dealing with issues which already include housing, nursing and education. It is hoped to begin soon to discuss publications and funding.

Resource Centre

This is a facility for which there is clearly a demand, but it can only be built up with systematic work and proper resourcing. All that there is so far is one offer of a set of books from the Irish Department of External Affairs. There will need to be a good deal more for the Centre to be in a position to encourage serious study of some the the relevant issues.

What is special about the Irish Studies Centre

The most important thing is that it exists, but it is our sincerest hope that it should do more than that.

We need the resources to survive and to develop - please God and the Inner London Education Authority.

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