

COUNCIL FOR THE IRISH CENTRE

THE MINUTES OF THE 32ND AGM HELD AT THE IRISH CENTRE ON THURSDAY 30TH APRIL 1987

The Chairman, Mr T Dunne welcomed all to the meeting and in particular Mr Frank Caulfield, Trustee, and Rev W McGonagle, Provincial of the Oblate Order, who came over specially from Ireland. He apologised for the absence of Lord Longford, who was unable to attend because of illness.

Mr G O'Flynn read the notice convening the meeting. Mr T Mangan proposed that the minutes of the last AGM be taken as read and adopted and this was seconded by Mr C O'Connell.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman introduced the Director's report and made the following points.

At the last AGM he had hoped there would be a change in the financial position and he was pleased to announce that this has been achieved. He welcomed the new Director and thanked him for taking up such a difficult job with such enthusiasm.

He thanked Mr P Keegan, and the staff of the Community Services Department who had worked under a certain amount of stress during the past year. He noted that there is every indication that clients will continue to come in ever increasing number. He thanked Rev F Ryan and Sr Anthony. Both were working under extreme pressure as there was no 'let-up' in demand for accommodation. There was need for a lot more accommodation but it was impossible for the Irish Centre to satisfy the needs of all its clients. However we will do our best. Mr Dunne stated that the Executive Committee met regularly as did the Administrative Committee except for one month because of bad weather. He ended his introduction by paying tribute to the Oblate Order, for its tremendous commitment to the Irish Centre and to young people in general.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The new Director, Rev T Scully commented on the Report which had been distributed to all present. He noted that 1986 had been a demanding year with the loss of the Director as well as changes in the Administrative Committee. There had been enormous pressure on Community Services staff with over two and a half thousand new arrivals, most of whom were under 25 years of age. More families were also arriving. One of the biggest problems is that of finding accommodation. Here the Hostels are doing a great job and are full all the time. Eithne O'Flynn the Social Worker at Conway House is a great

help and mainstay.

Mr Erian Duggan performs a very valuable service tracing missing persons. The AGIY now have their own premises. The language, literacy, and computing classes continue to be held at the Irish Centre. While the former provides an opportunity for those wishing to explore and learn the Irish language the latter classes help young people to improve their keyboard skills which in turn helps them to gain employment.

As regards care for the elderly there is hope of reaching a situation where something can be done towards the end of May.

In the area of music and dance there is a lot of enthusiasm and commitment from the parents. In trying to provide youth facilities there has been some difficulty about premises. There was an appeal to parents for more supervision. Unfortunately the discos had to cease but we hope to have suitable premises available soon.

SOCIAL CLUB

There is continued success in this area with various activities including card drives and bingo, thanks to the many ever faithful voluntary workers without whom we could not succeed.

CICA

This organization has existed for 34 years and are very active in organizing the St Patrick's Day Parade and the London Irish Festival. Thanks to all for contributing to the Irish Centre.

ADMINISTRATION

Sincere thanks to Paddy Keegan, Tommy Dunne and the Executive of the Committee. My first appointment was as Chaplain then that of Director and Treasurer. I still have a lot to learn and depend a lot on Paddy and Tommy for help. Bridie Rooney left to take up her new job. we wish her success in her new appointment.

FINANCE

At the end of December 1982 we were almost £1m in debt. The current loans amount to £300,000. These figures speak for themselves. Successful negotiations were carried through with the Bank of Ireland and Commercial Credit Services which resulted in a reduction of our debt. A sincere thanks to all - our fund raisers who worked extremely hard, to all who gave donations and to our auditors Messrs Beatty & Co.

The year 1987 will incur an outlay of approximately £50,000 attributable to Loan Interest and Repayments. This is (approximately) £1000 per week - a not inconsiderable burden on the financial running of the Centre.

In conclusion I would like to state that we must keep up the pressure and not relax.

Mr Tom Mangan said that the Report was a credit to Fr Scully. Mr Bill Aulsberry proposed and Jim Myers seconded the Report which was adopted unanimously.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT AND BALANCE SHEET

Mr Patrick Keegan presented the accounts and gave detailed analysis of all major items of Income and Expenditure. The net profit at the end of the 2000 Members's Car Draw will be approximately £20,000. The Breweries continue to be repaid. There was a small increase in bar and catering sales. Grants from the London Borough of Camden amounted to £37,122 and the Irish Government £42,812. Covenant Tax accounted for £3,572. The Covenants in relation to Allied Irish Banks and the Bank of Ireland are now finished. The Car Raffle at the Festival was down £3,000 on the previous year. It was unfortunate that it encroached on the major Car Draw.

On the expenditure side wages and salaries are high but for the first year in the history of the Centre it was reduced by £1,000. This was indeed a step in the right direction. The major portion of salaries went to the Welfare Department. There was a 6% reduction in catering wages against 1985. Repairs and maintenance was £26,000 against £28,000 the previous year. Maintenance is a difficult proposition in the context of the Irish Centre, for example, a lot was spent on the McNamara Hall. The replacement of present air conditioning in the Douglas Hyde and JFK Halls would be about £30,000 which air conditioning at the moment is malfunctioning. Lighting and heating is a considerable burden. There is quite a wastage.

Advertising has gone up. As this is a necessary venture of any organization there is little saving that can be done here.

The floor was then thrown open for questions. Commenting on the report it was suggested that perhaps wages and salaries should be split. At present the salary and wages figures are :

Welfare 39%
Bar and Catering 52%
Administration 8%.

It is hoped that there will be an improvement on this in the

following year. Martin Moroney suggested that a set of accounts in relation to the Departments should be published so people know what is happening. This might avoid unnecessary criticism of the Centre. Denis Kane noted a difference of £5,000 in rates between 1885 and 1986 figures and wished to know the reason. This was due to the 100% rate relief given by the London Borough of Camden. Donie Egan commented that it was good to hear that the debt situation was improving. Sales and turnover figures had increased by 4%. The best form of fund raising is that from within. Bill Aulsberry questioned the bank loan decrease of £100,000 and wondered if the new arrangement was in the best interest of the Irish Centre seeing that we were now involved with a mortgage company. It seemed much nicer to be tied to the Bank of Ireland.

The adoption of the report was proposed by Bridie Shaw and seconded by Denis Kane and approved.

APPOINTMENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION

His Eminence, Cardinal Basil Hume confirmed the re-appointment of Fr Scully as chaplain of the Irish Centre, and Fr Fullam as Diocesan Representative. Fr Gordon and Fr Donoghue were appointed Diocesan representatives of Brentwood and Southwark respectively. In accordance with Rule 6 (ii) the following were appointed to serve on the Administrative Committee. In a written statement from the President, the Earl of Longford the following appointments were confirmed:

M Allen
T Dunne
F Swan
M Mahoney

Frank Caulfield proposed that nominations from the floor be accepted with Fr McGonagle and Donie Egan to act as tellers. The following were proposed and seconded:

Tom Mangan
Mary Kenny
Jim Myers
Gerry O'Flynn
Chris O'Connell
Stephen Savage

The nominations closed and it was left to the Administrative Committee to select further members to fulfil the remaining vacancies.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

Messrs Beatty and Company were appointed auditors for the

coming year. Proposed by Gerry O'Flynn and seconded by Jim Myers.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

Fr. Scully stated that the parish is now responsible for masses here. He went on to outline the development of phase 1 covering the ground floor. It was hoped that work would start in May. There were plans to develop a Day Care Centre for the elderly and facilities for youth. The remainder of the plans must be put on ice as we have not got the finances. We cannot allow the Centre to go further into debt.

Community Services are supplying the labour and preparing rooms for accommodation for AnCO team. It has been arranged that AnCO supply labour. Next week the scaffolding is going up so that the outside of the building may be painted. No. 12 will also be painted. It will all cost money but at least the labour will be free. It is hoped that in the next 6-8 weeks the place will look much more attractive. Stage 1 included the small bar, the estimate being £25,000. We hope to get the back stairs, snug and small bar renovated for that price. At present the overheads are very high. Our aim is to make the place look better and more homely without incurring large costs. We hope the plan will work and we will end up by having a more attractive place for people to bring friends and visitors.

LUNCHEON CLUB

In this area we have been let down by Camden Council due to departmental confusion. There is a chance that something might get off the ground in June. We lost an advocate in the late Tom Devine R.I.P. He will be sadly missed. Other councillors say they will do their best.

We hope fund raising will be a success. It is important that we all work together for the good of the Irish. Later on there might be a possibility of getting involved in the GAA and perhaps get teams together.

Fr Ryan was next called upon to say a few words. He said that emigration could be compared to famine times. With the increase in the young population there are instances where there is not enough food. There is not enough accommodation or work here. We now have to cope with the scandal of forged passports. We need the support of the people living in London otherwise the young people coming over will get into real difficulties. People are being attacked because they are Irish - one ended up with brain damage. We have asked the police for help. We should begin to push for rights for Irish people. We need to help them to make this their home. Fr Ryan appealed on behalf of the Centre and the

Hostels for people to work together. It will be very disappointing if after all the years of effort people sit down now and argue about trivialities. We need to become conscious of young people's needs.

The guest of honour at the AGM was Fr McGonagle of the Oblate Order, who came over from Dublin. He was asked to say a few words. He thanked people for the honour of doing so. The kind words said about the Oblate congregation will be passed on to the people in Ireland, UK and Brazil. He was impressed by various accounts of a people who are faithful to their culture and to other things as well. He was frightened a little by the debt but perhaps it is indicative of the struggle which always confronts the Irish Centre. The suffering endured by young people leaving home is always sad. He was glad to see among the plans attempts to improve the Irish Centre. If youth is given a chance they will come to the Centre. He did not agree that youth owes nothing to the past. This is not true. Enormous sacrifices are made by parents. Without awareness of the past, the present has little meaning and the future none. The harder we work the better. He expressed great admiration of the work done. He praised in particular the voluntary workers at the Centre as without them no charitable organization and in this instance the Irish Centre could not succeed. His Eminence, the Cardinal has approved of Fr Scully as Chaplain. We owe him a debt of gratitude, faced with the unexpected task of replacing Fr Claude Malone. It needs courage, strength and faith to accept a difficult post. He did not know the extent of the task he was taking on. He would like to say to Fr Tom how grateful he is for accepting the post. Fr Ryan carries a heavy load willingly. We are Community based so there is a lot of sympathy for men reared in a Community to have to 'go' it alone. Fr McGonagle concluded by saying that he looked forward to the day when Fr Scully will be Chaplain of the Centre and nothing else and thereby animate people spiritually.

Paul Gribben from the Irish Post was welcomed to the AGM and the meeting was closed. The Chairman expressed gratitude to all who had attended and expressed particular thanks to Mrs D'Arcy, Jimmy McCluskey and all the staff who help to make our social activities a success.
