

MINUTES OF THE EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

OF THE COUNCIL FOR THE IRISH CENTRE

HELD ON 26TH FEBRUARY 1973

The Rt. Hon. Lord Longford K.G., President of the Council for The Irish Centre presided and opened the meeting by apologising for there being no heating owing to the gas strike, and welcomed everyone. Mr. John Nee, Hon. Secretary, read the Notice convening the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Vice-Presidents Mr. Maurice Foley M.P., Mr. J.P. Gleeson and Mr. L.A. Arnold, also Mrs. Foley.

Fr. T. McNamara proposed the Minutes having been circulated, ^{be} taken as read and adopted. This was seconded by Mr. Moroney.

In his opening address, The Chairman, Mr. Charles Gallagher commenced by saying the year had been one of progress. The Girls' Hostel was completely renovated and placed under new management; and although the mens' hostel had not yet got under way, much negotiating and planning was in operation.

The financial report was eminently satisfactory and there was welcome evidence of a pruning of expenses and careful handling of all monies. We could look forward to the future with hope and confidence. He spoke of wider representation of the Council for The Irish Centre, which was being dealt with, and said how desirable it was for more unity and co-operation between all the various Irish organizations in England. Mr. Gallagher welcomed the new Manager, Mr. Michael Lahiffe, and Mrs. Lahiffe, who having worked for the Centre in a voluntary capacity for years, were no strangers. He concluded with a tribute to Fr. Mee who had put in a great deal of hard work during the year, to the Chaplains, Club Committee, Staff and Voluntary Helpers of the Centre, and also to his colleagues on the Administrative Committee. Lord Longford then asked Fr. Mee to give the Annual Report.

Fr. Mee pointed out that the accounts showed an increase in income over expenditure during the year amounting to £4,008 against a deficit in the previous year of £3,415 expenditure over income which was a great improvement. He also pointed out that our liabilities have decreased by £9,391 to £62,550, while our fixed assets have increased by £4,029 to £143,185. Fixed assets represented Capital Expenditure to date less depreciation, but bore no relation to the aggregate current market value of our properties.

In concluding his report and making his acknowledgements, Fr. Mee asked if he might be allowed to say a special word of thanks to Fr. Sheridan and Fr. McCabe for the support they have given him in their own particular activities.

Lord Longford joined his thanks to that of Fr. Mee, and then welcomed The Mayor of Camden, Councillor Brian Duggan, who was attending the meeting, and invited him to join the Committee at the top table.

Councillor Duggan put forward a question concerning Camden Borough. He said they were considering an exchange of sites, but they had turned it down due to the costs involved with the tunnel. He said he had had several talks with the Council, and they had not heard from the Centre as to what exactly they wanted.

Fr. Mee replied that, if Camden Borough would say they were prepared to give us a grant of £^x, we could then make a proposal, but without this we could not commit ourselves.

Councillor Duggan: The Council do not work this way. They have to be asked for a specific sum. £300,000 was mentioned, but it is not down on paper.

The Chairman said he would like it clearly understood that there was no criticism of the Borough, and it was well-known that The Mayor bends over backwards to help us to achieve our goal. We understand that they cannot see their way to giving us a site, and The Mayor is obviously right that there is nothing in writing and, until such time when we can be specific, there is no point in discussing it further.

Lord Longford asked for further questions.

Fr. Sheridan said that British Rail should come into this discussion also, as they had not answered a letter for nine months.

Lord Longford replied that he had been invited to go to British Rail and he was prepared to do whatever he could.

The Chairman accepted Lord Longford's offer and suggested there was no purpose in continuing the discussion.

Lord Longford asked for the Report and the Accounts to be adopted.

Proposed by Mr. H. Lyons

Seconded by Mr. M. Mononey

The President then asked Mr. Tadgh Feehan to speak. Mr. Feehan explained he was very happy and honoured to be present and to convey the appreciation and congratulations of the Ambassador, Dr. Donal O'Sullivan, for all the Centre was doing. He said Fr. Mee had put an excellent Report before the Meeting. There had been a big decrease in emigration in the past ten years, but, nevertheless, there was no doubt that this Centre was most necessary.

Lord Longford asked Mr. Feehan to convey the Meeting's thanks to His Excellency, the Ambassador, for his great interest in The Irish Centre, and his thanks also to Mr. Feehan.

APPOINTMENTS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION:

The Chairman proceeded to announce the following appointments:

- (a) Cardinal Heenan had appointed Father Patrick Mee OMI, as Chaplain for the coming year, and Rev. Fr. P. Cassidy as Westminster Diocesan Representative on the Administrative Committee.
- (b) Archbishop Cowderoy had appointed Father Ambrose Woods to continue as Southwark Diocesan Representative on the Administrative Committee
- (c) Bishop Patrick Casey had appointed Father John Gordan as Brentwood Diocesan Representative on the Administrative Committee.

Under Rule 6 (ii) of the Constitution the following were appointed to serve on the Administrative Committee:

Mr. C. Gallagher; Mr. J. Nee; Mr. W. Darmon; Mr. M. Moroney

Under Rule 6 (i) of the Constitution five outgoing officers of the Administrative Committee were re-elected as follows:

Mr. Thomas Dunne; Mr. John Bradley; Mr. T. Gorman; Mrs. M. Hopkins and Miss M. Kenny.

and a further three new members were elected:

Councillor B. Duggan; Mr. M. Brunton; Mr. Luke Kennedy.

APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS:

Messrs. C.F. Burton & Company were appointed Auditors for the coming year and Mr. P.J. Keegan was appointed Honorary Auditor.

Proposed: Rev. Fr. P. Mee OMI

Seconded: Rev. Fr. A. Woods.

Lord Longford then invited Mr. John Branagan (Vice-President) to speak. Mr. Branagan said he felt we should mention the departure of Maurice and Kitty Foley from the London scene as Maurice had taken up an appointment in the development of the new European Community. He will be a great loss to Anglo-Irish affairs said Mr. Branagan. I have worked alongside him and I can tell you he has given a service, especially in regard to Northern Ireland, both inside and outside the House of Commons. To both Maurice Foley, as a Vice-President for the Council of The Irish Centre, and his wife Kitty who has served on our Administrative Committee we owe a debt of gratitude. Mrs. Foley is unable to be present tonight, but we should place on record the work done by Maurice Foley and his wife for the Centre and for the Irish, both in this country and in Ireland.

This was seconded by Fr. T. McNamara who spoke of his great work with the YCW, and Lord Longford also associated himself with the vote of thanks.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Fr. P. Hackett, OMI, then rose to speak and said how pleased he was to be at the meeting, and explained that he was associated with the Commission dealing with the National Collection. It would interest the meeting to know that only a very little money had been given away so far from the Collection and what had been given was only the interest. Now a project should be put forward for the Commission's consideration, but until some concrete project is put forward - like Camden Borough - the Commission cannot consider it. For example, the Girls' Hostel has caused no problem; the work has been carried out and the money is already earmarked for this. Fr. Hackett continued: that he would like to remind the meeting that the Hierarchy have further worries since the entry into the Common Market - as now Irish boys and girls can go farther afield. All manner of employment is being advertised in the Irish Press in Denmark and now the field will extend to these other countries. The Irish Centre in London, Benburb Base and The Irish Centre in Birmingham sold the idea to the National Collection and the Irish people responded by raising the sum of £260,000. You may rest assured that some of this sum will be given to The Irish Centre.

Councillor Duggan welcomed Fr. Hackett's remarks and hoped we could go forward and achieve something.

Mr. Branagan congratulated and praised the work of the chaplains and the sisters. He pointed out that, although their work was pastoral, they were doing very practical work in the Centre and, not only because their service did not cost the Centre a salary, they had achieved a splendid financial success. He also praised the work of Camden Borough, and we can pride ourselves that The Irish Centre is an important part of a Borough which is right in the forefront of local government and they share in the prestige that radiates from this Centre.

Fr. Mee in conclusion said last year there was a question from the floor concerning representation. During the year certain Irish associations were approached with the result that the Irish Emigrant Chaplains and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí have indicated their willingness to be represented on the Council.

EXTENSION TO CONSTITUTION

Fr. Mee therefore proposed, Fr. Sheridan seconded and the meeting unanimously agreed that the following resolution be passed:

"That the Rules and Constitution be amended by adding to the Schedule of Representation the names of the following Bodies and number of representatives:

Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann - Representatives 2

Irish Emigrant Chaplains - Representative 1."

(concluded o/l)

Lord Longford then invited Mr. John Horgan (Vice-President) to speak. Mr. Martin Moroney (Vice-Chairman) proposed a vote of thanks to Lord Longford for his attendance and interest in the Centre and for the jovial way he presided.

Lord Longford acknowledged this and said it was an honour for him to be President and he would hope to attend as many events as he could at the Centre which gives such a great service to so many.

The Meeting concluded at 10:10 p.m.

This was seconded by Mr. T. Horgan who spoke of his great work with the YCW, and Lord Longford also associated himself with the vote of thanks.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. T. Horgan, O.M., then rose to speak and said how pleased he was to be at the meeting, and explained that he was associated with the Commission dealing with the National Collection. It would interest the meeting to know that only a very little money had been given away so far from the Collection and what had been given was only the interest. Now a project should be put forward for the Commission's consideration, but until some concrete project is put forward - like Camden Borough - the Commission cannot consider it. For example, the Girls' Hostel has caused no problem; the work has been carried out and the money is already earmarked for this. Mr. Horgan continued: that he would like to remind the meeting that the history have furthered since the entry into the Common Market - as new Irish boys and girls can go further afield. All manner of employment is being advertised in the Irish Press in Denmark and now the field will extend to these other countries. The Irish Centre in London, Denmark House and The Irish Centre in Birmingham sold the idea to the National Collection and the Irish people responded by raising the sum of £250,000. You may rest assured that some of this sum will be given to The Irish Centre.

Councillor Duggan welcomed Mr. Horgan's remarks and hoped we could go forward and achieve something.

Mr. Horgan congratulated and praised the work of the organisers and the sisters. He pointed out that, although their work was pastoral, they were doing very practical work in the Centre and, not only because their service did not cost the Centre a salary, they had achieved a splendid financial success. He also praised the work of Camden Borough, and we can pride ourselves that The Irish Centre is an important part of a borough which is right in the forefront of local government and they share in the prestige that radiates from this Centre.

Mr. Horgan concluded last year there was a question from the floor concerning representation. During the year certain Irish associations were approached with the result that the Irish Baptist Chaplain and Committee Coalford have indicated their willingness to be represented on the Council.

EXTENSION TO CONSTITUTION

Mr. Horgan therefore proposed, Mr. Sheridan seconded and the meeting unanimously agreed that the following resolution be passed:

"That the Rules and Constitution be amended by adding to the Schedule of Representation the names of the following bodies and number of representatives:

- Committee Coalford Bazaar - representatives 2
- Irish Baptist Chaplain - representative 1."

(continued on 1)