

Minutes of the second National Conference of the Irish in Britain Representation Group held at the County Hall, Trent Bridge, Nottingham, on Saturday 26 March 1983

Members of branches present:

Brent, Oxford, Birmingham (1), Birmingham (2), Islington, Keighley, Waltham Forest, Southwark, Harrow, Manchester, Leicester, Cardiff, Merseyside, Burton-on-Trent, Nottingham, Lambeth, Westminster, Bradford, Northampton and Bolton

In the Chair: Jim King (Manchester)

The Chairman welcomed all present.

1) Opening of Conference by Michael Gallagher, Euro-MP for Notts

Michael Gallagher opened the Conference, and pointed to the fast growth of the IBRG since its foundation in late 1981, and how it had opened up the possibilities for the Irish in Britain to unite on a wide range of issues. As a Euro-MP, he drew attention to how the European parliament had helped to highlight the situation in Northern Ireland, and welcomed their decision to hold an enquiry.

He wished the Conference every success.

2) Presidential Address by John Martin, President

The President outlined the founding of the IBRG and its development, and his hopes for the future. He emphasised that the IBRG must be progressive enough to accommodate a wide variety of views, and hoped that eventually it might have up to 100 branches. He paid special tribute to the assistance received from the Irish Post.

3) Presentation of Standing Orders and Request for Amendments: Ratification Thereof

It was agreed to postpone this until later in the morning and to move straight on to item 4 on the agenda.

4) Minutes of first National Conference and Ratification thereof

(It was pointed out that the structure of IBRG was different at that time and that some new branches would not have received these.)

It was agreed that membership would run from January to the following January.

The minutes were taken as read.

5) Chairman's Report

The Chairman outlined the growth of the Group, and listed some of its achievements already, stressing that this was only a beginning. These included getting anti-Irish material removed from several stores, including all branches of Woolworths; protests to some British newspapers at their Irish coverage (including persuading the GLC to withdraw its advertising from the Standard following a particularly racist cartoon); helping to get a grant for a large Irish centre in North London; mobilising much support for the election of Denis Lynch in a North London by-election. He drew attention to the need to enlist the help of sympathetic councillors.

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It is insulting for the Irish to be stereotyped, and the attitudes engendered in this country hinder any understanding of the problems in the Six Counties. Obviously, the Northern Ireland issue was our greatest difficulty, but we must not be afraid to speak out on it. The Chairman also expressed regret that the PTA had not alone been renewed this year, but strengthened.

These attitudes also made it very difficult for us to pass on our values and traditions to our children. It was essential to attract the second generation.

5a) Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Pat Browne (Manchester) had produced a paper outlining the procedure for branch secretaries when returning subscriptions; copies of this were circulated.

He then gave the names of all registered branches and stressed that registration was essential. Every branch should also have a copy of the Standing Orders.

All branches should tell the Treasurer and Peter Fallon, Internal Co-ordinating Officer (Nottingham) their membership and officers. All minutes of local branch meetings should also be sent to them, so that they know of all activities - it was hoped to produce a newsletter in due course. It was agreed that memberships should go first to the branch secretary and then to the Treasurer.

The problem of those living in areas where there was no branch was raised. It was agreed that they should be given the facility of attending their nearest branch, and that the National Executive Committee should keep in contact with them through the Internal Co-ordinating Officer.

5b) Education Officer's Report

The Education Officer, Nessian Danaher (Leicester) stressed the importance of education, since we cannot assume that we will automatically attract the second-generation Irish. He had himself worked very hard in this area and believed that what he had learned was largely relevant to all branches. Everyone could check the policy of their local authority, ask to see the school syllabus, and the books in the libraries. It was also possible to liaise with R C schools and contact other Irish and cultural organisations. Courses for, for example, the Irish language and Irish history could be provided (through night classes if necessary). The NEC and the Education Officer can always be approached for advice.

3) Presentation of Standing Orders and request for Amendments: Ratification Thereof (see p 1)

The Internal Co-Ordinating Officer said that every member would have the right to vote on every resolution.

Standing Orders p 1 (1): After some discussion, annual elections of the NEC were agreed.

p1 (3) (b): was amended to read "All conference business will be conducted in accordance with normal rules of debate".

p2 (6) (a) was deleted.

p2 (4) (b): was amended to read "The definition of Regions will be that as laid down by the NEC".

p2 (8) (i): would await NEC's definition of a Region.

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- p 1 (2) 1 3: "six months" was changed to "three months".  
 p 1 (3) Anybody standing for the NEC would have to bear this in mind.  
 Others could also be co-opted under (1) (a) (xi).

The Standing Orders were then agreed.

(Lunch break).

#### 6) Election of Officers to the National Executive Committee

The following officers were elected to the NEC:-

- i) Chairman: Jim King (Manchester)
  - ii) Vice Chairman: Steve Brennan (London)
  - iii) President: John Martin (Burton on Trent)
- It was agreed to elect three Vice Presidents, who were Donall MacAmhlaigh (Northampton); Michael Gallagher (Notts); Jim Curran (London).
- iv) National Secretary: Judy Peddle (Cardiff)
  - v) National Treasurer: Pat Browne (Manchester)
  - vi) Internal Co-ordinator: Peter Fallon (Nottingham)
  - vii) National Membership Secretary: Pat Browne
  - viii) Public Relations Officer: Pat Delaney (London)
  - ix) National Legal Officer: (London) Denis Lynch  
(Regional) Lloyd Tucker
  - x) National Education Officer: Nesson Danaher (Leicester)
  - xi) Members without portfolio: Gerry Gallagher (Manchester)  
Des MacCurdy (Leicester)  
Bill Walshe (Merseyside)  
Mary Cahill (London)  
Joe Mullarkey (Bolton)  
Rita Lewis (London)  
Mary Dockett (London)  
Mike Evans (Keighley)  
Moira O'Shea (Birmingham)

It was agreed that Mike Forde (Manchester) be elected Youth Officer.

- xii) It was agreed that elections would take place annually (see p 2).
- xiii) The Election of Auditors was remitted to the NEC.

#### 7) Motions

It was agreed that the policy document on Northern Ireland - produced by the Manchester branch - would be circulated to all branches very soon, and that a special conference on Northern Ireland would need to be called within the next three months. It was provisionally agreed to hold this conference on 2 July 1983; a venue would be announced and the date confirmed as soon as possible. For this reason, several motions submitted on the situation in the North were remitted to this forthcoming conference.

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A motion suggesting that the IBRG stand candidates in local elections was not carried.

A motion instructing the IBRG to form a trade union section was remitted to the NEC.

It was agreed that the NEC should launch a national campaign against the Prevention of Terrorism Act (while every branch should do what it could at local level).

It was agreed that the NEC formulate and publish a clearly stated policy showing concern for the humanitarian aspects of Irish prisoners.

It was agreed that the NEC organise a national debate about plastic bullets and conduct an educative campaign on this issue, with a view to the total banning of the weapon.

(These last three motions would also be discussed more fully at the special conference on Northern Ireland).

It was agreed that the NEC identify with and sponsor the Bobby Sands commemoration march in London on 7 May 1983.

It was unanimously agreed to condemn rigorously the recent doubling of the price of Irish passports - to £27. (Pat Delaney said that he and a delegate would shortly be seeing the former Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, to protest about this.)

It was unanimously agreed that the Irish Embassy did not do enough to help the Irish community in Britain.

It was unanimously agreed to petition Channel 4 to screen the All-Ireland hurling and Gaelic football finals live this September.

It was agreed unanimously to send a telemessage of thanks to Ken Livingstone for all the help he has given to the Irish.

A motion suggesting that Irish citizens be allowed to vote in elections in the 26 Counties as well as in the UK was not carried.

It was agreed to put more pressure on local authorities to provide facilities for the teaching of Gaelic games.

It was agreed to contact the relevant Department of the Irish Government with a view to the provision of cheap air charters between Britain and Ireland, and cheaper and improved ferry services.

Should the IBRG devote its primary efforts in education to the fight against racism? The Education Officer said anti-racism was already covered; he thought that the wording should read "should be to encourage and foster a sense of identity and an understanding of Irish cultural inheritance among people of Irish origin and their descendants and also to combat all forms of racism within the fields of education". He also pointed out that 1984 was anti-racism year. The Education Officer's wording was agreed.

It was agreed to call on the European Parliament to take its full responsibility with regard to the Six Counties (although attention was drawn to the limitations of the Parliament's powers).

It was agreed that for future IBRG correspondence etc only one logo should be used, that depicting Ireland and Britain. Stationery would be reprinted as soon as possible.

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It was agreed that the next NEC meeting would take place in London on Sunday 10 April 1983. \*

- 8) The Chairman thanked everyone present for attending and the meeting closed at 5.30 pm.

Judy Peddle  
March/April 1983

\* Footnote: The date of the next NEC meeting has since been altered to Saturday 9 April (please see attached agenda).



The next meeting of the National Executive Committee of the Irish in Britain Representation Group will take place at 12 noon on Saturday 9 April 1983, at Brent Town Hall, Council Chamber, Forty Lane, Wembley, London. (The nearest Underground station is Wembley Park).

A G E N D A

- 1) Apologies for Absence
- 2) Minutes of last NEC meeting
- 3) Minutes of second National Conference, including
  - a) arrangements for Northern Ireland conference;
  - b) action on motions remitted to NEC
- 4) Any Other Business

Judy Peddle  
April 1983