



IBRG

IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

Minutes of the IBRG Conference to discuss the 'Northern Ireland' situation held in Brent Town Hall, Wembley, on Saturday 2 July 1983

Branches represented: Brent, Fleet Street, Westminster, Haringey, Islington, Paddington, Waltham Forest, Lambeth, Harrow, Manchester, Bolton, Cardiff, Leicester, Merseyside, Birmingham (1), Birmingham (2)

Apologies were received from Nottingham and Bradford.

Chairman: Jim King

President: John Martin

Minute Secretary: Judy Peddle

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

It was confirmed that the three papers to be used as a basis for discussion were the Manchester document, the London Regional Council document, and the general document. It was then agreed to use only the last two documents.

It was established who was a delegate and who an observer, and agreed that observers could participate in the proposed workshops, but not in the conference, and of course they could not vote.

Chairman's Address

The Chairman stated that it was the resolution of the conference to contribute towards solving the problem in the Six Counties. He hoped the conference would take the view that the ending of British involvement was essential. He stated that the conflict was not religious and was consistently distorted by the press.

President's Address

The President outlined the birth of the IBRG, since it was formed when the Irish in Britain were without a voice during the 1981 hunger strikes. He also said that at the same time we should not alienate those members who were only involved culturally, and that it was important that we do more than make statements.

The two documents were then read out to the conference.

Workshops

Those attending were then divided into five workshops of 10 each, which would discuss the documents and produce a report by 1.30, when we would break for lunch. This was agreed. Those chairing the groups were:

- Group A, Bríd ni Ceanáin (Haringey);
- Group B, Des MacLernan (Lambeth);
- Group C, Cas Breen (Paddington);
- Group D, Seamus Carey (Islington);
- Group E, Judy Peddle (Cardiff).

Afternoon Discussion

At 2.30 it was agreed that the chairperson of each group would read out the group's report, while Juliette O'Shea (Brent) and Kate Binder (Haringey) would take notes of what was said. This took place, and then the five chairpeople withdrew with the minute takers to collate the information and report back to the conference.

After this was done, a discussion took place and a preliminary statement was agreed. (Concern was expressed at how to refer to the Six County state; it was agreed to either say 'Northern Ireland' - in quotes - or 'the Six Counties'). The following motions were then carried:

- the British government should effect an immediate withdrawal;
- the British government should end all repressive measures;
- plastic bullets should be banned;
- Irish prisoners wrongly convicted should be released immediately;
- Irish prisoners should be repatriated or transferred nearer their homes as appropriate, and an amnesty should be granted them on British withdrawal;
- censorship and distortion were condemned;
- the veto given to the Loyalist minority in Ireland by the British government should be repealed;
- Irish neutrality should be upheld;
- all political parties, trade unions and similar bodies should support the document;
- more informed debate would be encouraged by the IBRG.

(The full wording of these motions is in the document which has been circulated to NEC members and branches.)

A motion calling for the disarming of the RUC and UDR was not carried; a motion calling for the disarming of the paramilitary organisations was not debated. The power of the church in the 26 Counties and the possibility of compensation by the British government were briefly discussed.

The preliminary statement and the carried motions were read to the conference several times to ensure the wording was agreed.

It was agreed that the NEC would ensure that the document would be well drawn up and circulated.

The debate was then closed.

Brid ní Ceanáin (Haringey) noted that there was not a very clear idea of our relationship with the government in the 26 Counties, and she should have made a statement before the debate was closed.

There being no other business, the meeting then ended.

JP/IBRG
July/July 1983