

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO THE EXECUTIVE

There have been four meetings of the Officers since the last meeting of the Executive.

The Officers have asked me to prepare two papers, on BAIS Strategy and on the N-W Advisory Fundraising Committee, which are included with these papers.

With regard to BAIS activity in 1991, a third series of 6th form conferences on aspects of the history syllabus will take place on 20-22 March. These conferences will be organised in conjunction with The Young Historian Scheme in Northern Ireland, and that body will meet the cost of lecturers' fees and subsistence, plus part of the administrative costs. An application has been made to DENI to cover the remaining costs which will fall to BAIS.

The Conference Secretaries will report on preparations for the Biennial Irish Studies Conference, which takes place at St Mary's, Strawberry Hill, on 3-5 April.

As members of the Executive will be aware, £25,000 of the AIB Bank sponsorship of £50,000 per annum has been designated each year to support the post of the AIB Director of the Joint Education Programme. I enclose the most recent report from Patrick Buckland on the progress of the JEP.

No decision has been yet taken on the BAIS Lecture series. An early decision is necessary if the lectures are to take place this autumn. BAIS (via George Watson) has always had a major input in re the panel of speakers, and has helped with costs. The other factor which has contributed to the success of the other series has been a capable organiser at the local level. A pool of local speakers at Manchester, and the use of suitable premises free of charge at both Liverpool and Manchester, helped to reduce the costs of the series in both those places. There is room for a further cutting of costs by avoiding more expensive forms of publicity; and by using, mainly, local speakers and chairs from among local BAIS membership.

At the Executive meeting of 8 September 1990, the Newsletter editor proposed that the lectures be continued with the proviso that sponsorship be sought or the lectures "scaled down" to a less costly format. No decision was taken on that proposal.

The first series took place in London, and the Biennial Conference will take place in London this year. The second and third series took place in the North-West. This would suggest that, if there is to be a fourth series, it should take place outside those areas.

The Executive should either make a decision on this matter at today's meeting, or remit it to the Officers for a decision at their next meeting.

There was a problem regarding the delivery of the ILS arising from the semi-nomadic status of BAIS between August and November. This has been rectified and the ILS is now available for distribution, which will take place shortly. I have expressed to the Officers and to the respective editors my concern about the fact that neither Irish Studies in Britain or the Association's own Newsletter have appeared for some time - since we advertise both of these as benefits of membership. Double issues of both are promised - Irish Studies in Britain for April.

The Newsletter Editor does need guidance from the membership to assist him in the formulation of proposals re the future role and format of the Newsletter. A questionnaire in the next issue would be useful; and it would be helpful (in supplementing the brief discussion which took place at a previous Executive) if members of the Executive could let the Newsletter Editor have their views directly. This is a matter on which firm proposals should be placed before the next Executive meeting, following discussions between the Newsletter Editor and the Officers.

The Association should undertake an arrangement whereby the keying in of the Newsletter material does not have to be undertaken by the Editor personally; leaving the Editor to deal with editorial and layout tasks only, and with the arrangement for the printing of each issue. This would require liaison re compatibility of software, etc., and guidance from the Editor on "house style".

I reported to the Officers in January that, of the 288 members of BAIS, only 140 had renewed their subscriptions for 1990/1. Polly Melotte, who helps in the office one half-day per week, is looking at ways of improving the membership procedure to ensure more prompt renewals. A first reminder has been sent to those members who still have to renew their subscriptions. This would normally have been sent out earlier. The imminence of both the Biennial Conference and the distribution of the ILS seemed to offer the right psychological moment for the issuing of a reminder.

The finances of the Association are referred to in other reports and papers. BAIS is now in rented accommodation; the previous office was rent free. There are other increases in running costs as well: for instance, the charge for reprographics at Poland Street was 3½ p per page; here it is 5 p. These are only two of the factors which make the funding situation quite pressing.

This year will be a vital one for the Association and will determine the form in which the Association will continue to function. A number of further issues bearing on this matter are raised elsewhere in papers being circulated to the Executive.

Seán Hutton 17/2/91