

## CHAIRPEOPLE'S REPORT

Since the last year, our priorities have been on fundraising, defining and clarifying strategy and raising the profile of the organisation in business, educational and political circles. The Executive Director's comprehensive report reveals the ever widening scope of our activities, and illustrates the very healthy growth of the Irish Studies movement in this country, in which the Association is playing the key role. The numerous requests for advice and help which we receive, put considerable onus on the Association and its officers in particular and part of our policy making has involved determining priorities, and making difficult decisions.

A major concern has been the long term future of the Association which is dependent upon securing adequate finance for both the new premises and administrative and running costs. We gratefully acknowledge the crucial financial support received from A.I.B. the Ireland fund of Great Britain and the Rowntree Trust. We are also hopeful of some other sums which are in the pipeline. A lot of our time has been devoted to this fundraising exercise, and we are most grateful for the help given in this area by two hardworking patrons, Niall Crowley and Detta O'Cahain, whose advice and encouragement has been invaluable.

The success of the association does depend on the moral and practical support of interested organisations and officials in both islands; in particular, we acknowledge gratefully the continuing support of the Department of Education and Science, the Department of Education in Northern Ireland, and the Irish Embassy. The cost of moving premises and equipping our new office has been borne by another of our friends, Mr. Billy Murray of the Universal Group of Companies, and once again we owe him our thanks.

Another priority, as Sean Hutton indicates in his support, has been the clarification of our relations with institutions in the Irish Studies movement. The difficulties of defining roles which are inevitably associated with a fast growing organisation have been faced squarely, and, we think, satisfactorily resolved.

We are grateful to colleagues for the time and effort so many of them have put into making the B.A.I.S. a success. On this occasion we must single out David Cairns and Shaun Richards who have played key roles in setting up the organisation and who have been respectively Secretary and Treasurer since its inception. They are giving up office this year, but we are very happy that they are remaining on the Committee. Mary Fitzgerald's departure on from the Committee, due to her recent move to Ireland, should be noted. It was her energy and vision that brought the Association into being. Finally, there is Sean Hutton who not only put in the hours of the salaried Executive Director of the B.A.I.S., but who gives much of his spare time and energy as well. Sean runs us efficiently and usually patiently, and his erudition, and distinction as a writer, add lustre to our organisation.

It was good this year to see a better contested election, but there is a great need for new faces and more ideas to come from the membership. We are open to constructive criticism and fresh initiatives, and, in particular, seek members who are willing to give up the time to serve on our sub-committees. The future successful development of the Association depends upon the strength of commitment of its members.

RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS

JIM O'HARA