

Report of the First Year's Activities

T.C. Hurley

The Irish Mathematical Society has been in existence now for just over a year. The membership is approximately 100 but there is potentially much scope for enlargement. For our first year we have had to rely for our financing on membership fees only (£2 and 50p for students) and this has obviously placed a great obstacle on what we can accomplish. However, we have had a very hard-working Committee and even with the limited resources and the problems of becoming established, we can report some success in our first year.

Our main speakers for the year have been Professor Jean A. Dieudonne, Professor Michael F. Atiyah and Dr. J.D. Murray. Professor Dieudonne's 9-day visit to Ireland was a tremendous success and all of us were very impressed by the great man's still youthful enthusiasm for the subject. His visit was arranged by the Society but most of the financing was obtained through the National Science Council - CNRS (Paris) agreement. Professor Atiyah was invited to Ireland by the D.I.A.S. and very kindly agreed to talk to the Society. Part of his message is that quite a number of branches of mathematics seem, at last, to be converging - I would like to see more evidence! Dr. Murray spoke in Galway on Mathematical Biology. This appears to be an area that deserves more attention from Mathematicians (after all, most of our younger doctors have A in Leaving Certificate Honours Maths!).

6

This last year has also seen the first steps towards the formation of a European Federation of Mathematical Societies and our President, Dr. Holland, represented us very ably in Strasbourg during the initial stages. The Federation is to be formally created at the International Congress in Helsinki in August.

Also concerning Helsinki, there are still a few places available on the tour being arranged by the Society to coincide with the Congress. The saving is approximately £95 on the excursion air fare. Details have been sent out but further information may be obtained from the Secretary.

To encourage promising young mathematicians, most countries now have Mathematical Olympiads for students in Secondary Schools and we have been endeavouring to organise one here in Ireland. Sample problems have been drawn up, information on other Olympiads have been compiled and the teachers have also been contacted - without the enthusiastic support of the teachers such a scheme would quickly fall apart. However, our approach for sponsorship has so far been unsuccessful. If anybody has any ideas please let us have them.

Much concern has been expressed to us on the lack of numeracy and manipulative skill amongst students leaving Secondary Schools. Not much factual information for Ireland is available so far but with the cooperation of the National Council for Education Awards a test is being compiled. We have also contacted the N.C.E.A. regarding organising meetings for Regional Colleges Mathematics Teachers. We hope to have further information on

7

these two matters in our next Newsletter and again we would like your views and suggestions.

The Irish Mechanics Group have pioneered the idea of weekend meetings and we have adopted this idea for our initial Conferences. The first Conference was held in Galway 12-13 May, and further details are given below. Volunteers are required to organise such Conferences at their institutions and suggest they be of an instructional nature.

Other Mathematical Societies have been contacted with a view to reciprocal arrangements and the Canadian, French, Italian, Australian and London Mathematical Societies have agreed to send us copies of their Newsletters and Seminar and Conference announcements. The American Mathematical Society are also sending a copy of their Notices by airmail. Information of a general nature obtained this way is being dispersed to the members but samples etc. may be obtained from the Secretary.

The aims of the Society are to promote the teaching and research of Mathematics, particularly in Ireland. Being a relatively small Society we need the active support of a good percentage of our members, especially in the initial formative stage. So let us hear from you!