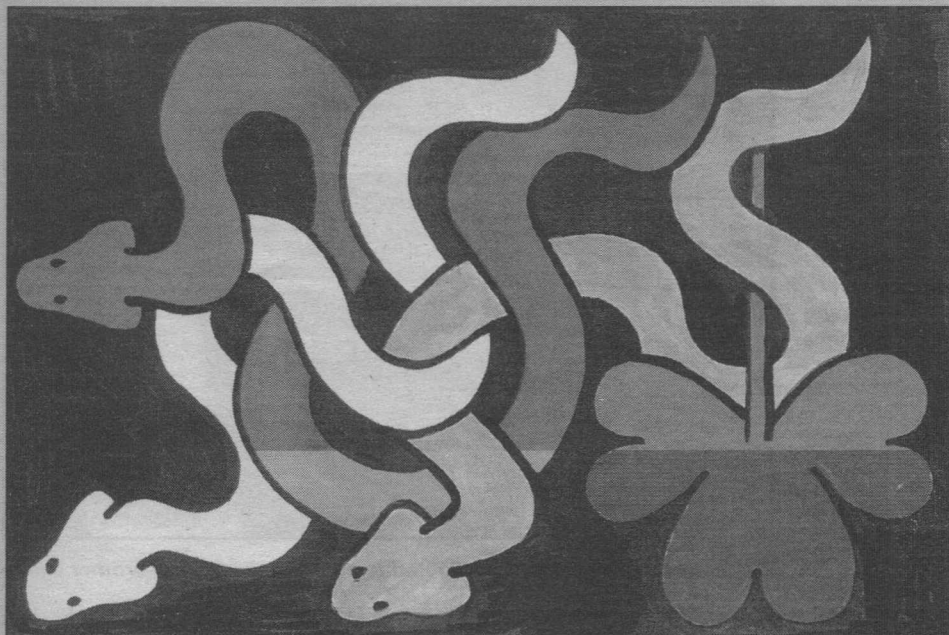


* AE# " @ ! () ? *

Letters

A flag for the diaspora



Brian Whelan's proposed flag for the Irish Diaspora.

THE symbolism, meaning and appropriateness of the tricolour, the shamrock, the harp, the leprechaun and even St. Patrick himself have been debated and argued in *The Irish Post*.

Even the colours in the tricolour are in dispute. We agree on green and white, but is the third colour gold, orange or yellow? How much more difficult for second- and third-generation Irish to decide how appropriate the tricolour is for them.

All these issues of identity are sharpening up for one reason: modern Ireland's enthusiasm to embrace the 21st century. She is looking to the future with deserved optimism. This shift in the perspective of the people of Ireland is an important issue because the Irish diaspora sees its departure linked to Ireland's tragic past.

Ireland is a country and the diaspora is a people, and the confusion over symbols, meaning and appropriateness is due to the blurring of these issues.

Some clarity is needed, so I propose a flag. Not a flag of state, nor of political unity, nor of geographical location, but one to remind us of those first migrants who continue to be a source of inspiration, pride and strength for all the generations all over the world.

I suggest there should be three elements on this flag. St. Patrick drove the serpents out of Ireland. It must have been part of God's plan. I can't think of a better symbol for the diaspora than the serpent.

A gold serpent for those who left to escape poverty — like those in the 1940s and '50s to work in the factories in England and sent back money to sustain families at home.

A white serpent for those who left to escape hunger during the famine, of which there are many in America.

A red snake for those who left because of conflict or left to join causes in other parts of the world, and, less acknowledged, the Irish who fought Hitler.

The second element must be Ireland herself. Not the harp as it is a symbol of the Irish state, but the shamrock, worn with pride all over the world. We are linked once again with St. Patrick.

The third and last element is a black background for the grieving of those who left Ireland and of those they left behind.

Does the diaspora need a flag and is this the one?

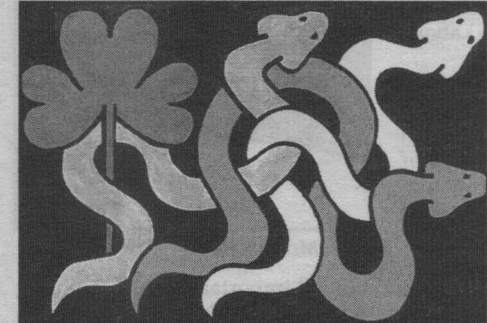
BRIAN WHELAN
Dickleburgh,
Norfolk.

Jim Hand dies at 64

THE renowned manager of famous Irish bands The Dubliners and The Fury Brothers has died aged 64.

Jim Hand passed away after a long illness. His close friend and fellow promoter Oliver Barry said: "He was a legend in the music business."

Flagging up an error



In the May 5 issue of the Irish Post we inadvertently placed Brian Whelan's flag for the diaspora upside down. We are happy to correct this error.