

LETTERS

To all readers of the Irish Mathematical Society Bulletin

Dear Colleague,

The Twenty-ninth International Mathematical Olympiad (IMO) will be held in Australia in 1988, the Bi-centenary of the European settlement of Australia. Mr Peter O'Halloran, Chairman of the 1988 IMO Executive Board belongs to the 25% of Australians of Irish extraction and is most anxious to see a team from Ireland competing in the 1988 IMO.

It was always in the back of the minds of those of us who founded the INMC that some day we would enter an Irish team in the IMO; and having received an invitation to compete in 1988, we have an opportunity to fulfil our ambition! Now seems as good a time as any to begin. Over the next two years we plan to identify mathematically gifted young people, train them and by a series of eliminating tests pick a team to represent Ireland at the Olympiad in two years time.

Because of the timing of the Olympiad - it is held in the first week of July every year - it would seem that we have to exclude from our consideration students who will be doing the Leaving Certificate, University Matriculation and Advanced Level examinations in 1988. This would seem to confine our selection of potential team-members to those who are currently in their pre-Intermediate and/or pre-Ordinary level years. We have asked teachers to identify the very good junior mathematicians in their schools and to forward their names and addresses to us. To prepare these we need to set up a network of mathematicians throughout the country who would correspond with them and hold workshops at regular intervals and generally guide them over the next two years.

We want to hear from people who would be willing to assist us in this project. We want mathematicians from RTCs, NIHEs and University Colleges to volunteer to prepare problem sets, to distribute them to students, to correspond with students and possibly to hold workshops at selected venues once a month, say. As well, we want help in raising the necessary finance to send a team to Australia.

Without your much needed support the venture may fail. Many of you have expressed concern about the adverse effects the so-called new mathematics has had on third-level students. Here is a practical way for you to become involved in correcting these deficiencies, albeit to a small gifted group.

Even if you cannot see your way to play a full part in the project, you may have ideas and suggestions that would help us see it through to a conclusion. If you have, we would love to hear from you. Please communicate your views to one of the undersigned.

Yours sincerely,

Finbarr Holland, UCC

Tom Laffay, UCD

To the Editor

Dear Sir,

Since I am interested in group theory I was very amused recently to discover that a pair of bedroom slippers I had bought bore the brand name "COSET". However there is one disturbing implication - since I now have a left coset which is not a right coset, does this imply that I am not normal?

Yours faithfully,

DESMOND MacHALE