Arrangements for the integration of Irish immigrants in England and Wales

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INTRODUCTION

'Arrangements for the integration of Irish immigrants in England and Wales' was commissioned by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) for presentation to the ICMC's congress in Ottawa in August 1960. Established in 1951 by Pope Pius XII to coordinate services for emigrants,[1] the Commission was particularly keen to create links between emigrant countries and receiving countries. Although Irish emigration of the nineteenth and twentieth century is often seen as a unique experience, it formed part of a wider movement within Europe and between Europe and the Americas and Australasia. The decades immediately following the end of World War II were marked by a new wave of mass migration from predominantly rural and less economically-developed countries in Europe to more prosperous and industrialised nations in Europe and further afield in Australia, Canada and the USA. The more than half a million Irishwomen and men, who emigrated to Britain between 1946 and 1961 — the majority in their teens and twenties — formed part of a wider global emigration.[2]

Within Europe, migrants tended to move from south to north, and often from predominantly catholic countries to countries where protestantism was the dominant religion. The catholic church believed that emigration presented opportunities as well as challenges; catholic emigrants could expand the number of catholics and the profile of catholicism in countries where that religion was less firmly established. Irish emigration to Britain was viewed in some quarters as a major opportunity to increase the number of catholics in that country. In 1954

1 International Catholic Migration Commission: Migration, Informative Series, No. 4, Catholic Migration Activities, Dublin Diocesan Archives (DDA), AB8/XIX/23g.

2 There was unrestricted movement between Britain and Ireland except during the war years, so there are no accurate statistics on Irish emigration to Britain. However based on the difference between the natural increase in the population (births minus deaths), and the actual increase recorded in successive population censuses, net emigration from the Republic of Ireland between 1946 and 1961 amounted to 525,000. The number of actual emigrants would have been higher, if we allow for returned emigrants. The overwhelming majority of Irish emigrants in those years went to Britain.

H. J. Gray, secretary of the Catholic Social Welfare Bureau, informed the ICMC conference at Breda that Irish emigration to Britain could be 'a considerable asset to the Church in that country, just as Irish emigration has been a help in the past both in Great Britain and the U.S.A'.[3]

The Catholic Social Welfare Bureau (CSWB) had been concerned with emigrant welfare since its establishment in 1942 by John Charles McQuaid, the newly-appointed archbishop of Dublin.[4] Although the mandate of the CSWB emigrants' section was the 'service of the emigrants in the widest interpretation of the phrase' it was primarily concerned with religious and moral welfare. Representatives of the CSWB (commonly members of the Legion of Mary) met trains from the west of Ireland and found cheap and safe accommodation for intending emigrants who might be staying overnight in Dublin (trains were frequently delayed during the war years); they forwarded names and addresses of emigrants to their English parish; they travelled on the boat train to Dun Laoghaire and arranged for young emigrants, particularly young women, to be met at Euston Station in London. The CSWB lobbied for controls on young women emigrating to Britain; and they persuaded Irish newspapers to insert notices warning intending emigrants to confirm if facilities for attending church were available before they accepted job offers in England.[5]

Although H. J. Gray, in his 1954 paper, called for closer liaison between the English and Irish hierarchies to meet the needs of Irish emigrants in England, he was sanguine that Irish emigrants would continue to practice their religion. 'Most emigrants leave home under pressure of individual economic circumstances and can be relied on to maintain the high standards of catholicity to which they were accustomed at home (although there is, of course, a minority who emigrate in search of less stringent codes of conduct)'. Gray claimed that current evidence suggested that 'there is very little leakage from the Church amongst Irish emigrants'.[6] In 1958 however, Cardinal Marcello Mimmi, secretary of the sacred congregation of the consistory, and the member of the Roman Curia with responsibility for emigration, wrote to Cardinal D'Alton, archbishop of Armagh

3 Catholic Social Welfare Bureau (CSWB), Emigrants' Section. H.J. Gray, 'The extent and general nature of emigration from Ireland', minutes of the 104th meeting of CSWB, 28 May 1953, paper prepared for Breda Conference, DDA, AB8/B/XIX/22g.

4 The CSWB was established to coordinate and improve the range of Catholic welfare services in the Dublin area. The first section to be established was the Emigrants' Section; another section was the Mother and Child Section. See Lindsey Earner-Byrne, Mother and Child. *Maternity and child welfare in Dublin, 1922–60* (Manchester, 2007), 93–4.

5 Mary E. Daly, *The slow failure: population decline and independent Ireland, 1920–1973* (Madison, Wisconsin, 2006), 277–9; 295–6. Details of CSWB work with emigrants are given in 'Arrangements for the integration of Irish emigrants in England and Wales', pp 60–63 [pp 56–59, this edition].

6 H.J. Gray, 'The extent and general nature of emigration from Ireland'.

and Primate of All Ireland, to suggest that the British and Irish hierarchies should agree a detailed plan to address the pastoral needs of Irish emigrants. In the letter he stated that 'the difficult problem of Irish emigration to England appears to be one of particular urgency at the present time'. He wished to see the British and Irish hierarchies agree 'a detailed plan that would address the pastoral needs of Irish emigrants in Britain, which would be based on a detailed statistical study of Irish emigrants, including their occupations, destinations and methods of expatriation.'[7] In September 1959 Cardinal Mimmi, in his closing address at the Fourth National Congress of Diocesan Delegates for Emigration in Spain, suggested that 'Had all the Irish people, who have emigrated to England throughout the centuries, kept their faith, perhaps the number of catholics in the latter country would be twelve millions instead of the three million they now number'.[8] Responding to this remark, Dr McQuaid informed Cardinal D'Alton that on two occasions he had informed the papal nuncio 'in very clear terms, exactly what is being done for our emigrants, what is being said about us in Rome for years and what are our feelings about the failure to appreciate the true position'.[9] The commissioning of the ICMC Report on the 'Arrangements for the integration of Irish immigrants in England and Wales', and the response of Dr McQuaid and the CSWB to the report must be seen in the context of the differing views of the Irish hierarchy and the Roman Curia on the issue of pastoral care for the Irish in Britain.

The Newman Demographic Survey (NDS) was established in October 1953 as an agency within the Newman Association of Great Britain,[10] to draw on catholic expertise in the applied social sciences with a view to promoting the mission of the Catholic Church in Britain. The first chair was the distinguished Australian economist Colin Clark; he was succeeded by Michael Fogarty, Professor of Industrial Relations at University College Cardiff, who was subsequently director of the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin. The survey recruited a voluntary team of catholic professionals: sociologists, statisticians, demographers, economists and geographers, who applied their professional expertise to providing the catholic church in England and Wales with statistical data and analysis that would enable the church to make informed decisions on how best to plan for future needs. The NDS's first concern was to develop a methodology for estimating the size and structure of the catholic population in England and Wales, and the

7 DDA Mimmi to Cardinal D'Alton, 27 November 1958, DDA, AB8/B/XIX/15g.

8 DDA, AB8/B/XIX/15g, Newman Demographic Survey. The file contains a copy of Cardinal Mimmi's speech in Spanish, with an English translation.

9 Dr McQuaid to Cardinal D'Alton, 1 February 1960, DDA, AB8/B/XIX/15g, Newman Demographic Survey.

10 The Newman Association was founded in 1942 as an association of British catholic university graduates.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE INTEGRATION OF IRISH IMMIGRANTS IN ENGLAND AND WALES

The first draft of an unfinished, unedited report prepared by the Newman Demographic Survey for the 1960 Congress of the International Catholic Migration Commission.

by
Anthony E.C.W. Spencer

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CHAPTER ONE
THE BACKGROUND

1) The course of immigration from Ireland†

Statistical information about migration between Ireland and Great Britain is scanty and patchy, as the Overseas Migration Board has more than once complained.[i]

The Irish censuses reveal net inter-censal emigration to all parts of the world. British censuses reveal net changes (*after* mortality) in the number of Irish born persons enumerated. In addition to these periodical sources of information statistical data is available regarding (a) numbers of persons in the Irish Republic receiving new travel permits, identity cards and passports to go to employment (period 1940–1951 only); (b) net civilian passenger movement by sea and air between Irish Republic and United Kingdom (1924–1959); (c) first entrants and re-entrants in the UK national insurance scheme (1950–1959); none of these sources of information gives the clear picture needed but together they do throw some light on the course and character of Irish migration to Britain.

The censuses of England and Wales reveal the following number of Irish-born persons enumerated at ten-yearly intervals from 1841 to 1951.

Table 1: Irish-born population of England and Wales, 1841–1951

	26 counties (thousand)	6 counties (thousand)	Total (thousand)	% of total population
1841			289	1.8
1851			520	2.9
1861			602	3.0
1871			567	2.5
1881			562	2.2
1891			458	1.6
1901			427	1.3
1911	283	69	375*	1.0
1921			365*	1.0
1931	304	70	381*	1.0
1951	472	135	627*	1.4

Source: Decennial censuses of England and Wales.
**(including those born in Ireland — part not stated.)*

† A system of endnotes in lower case Roman has been used to indicate the changes sought by the Catholic Social Welfare Bureau (see pp 110–8).

[2] Irish workers were attracted to Great Britain by the canal-digging in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth, and the railway-building in the 1830s and 1840s. In the 1840s and 1850s this pull was accentuated by the push to escape famine and destitution in Ireland. Towards the end of the century the movement to Britain declined as the Irish emigrant moved increasingly to the United States of America and the British Empire. The passage of restrictive immigration laws in the early 1920s and the advent of acute unemployment in the USA in the late 1920s and 1930s inhibited emigration to the USA while the settlement of 1922 removed most of the political bitterness from Anglo-Irish relations. The settlement of 1922 gave the Irishmen in Britain the same rights and duties as citizens of the Crown, and thus placed no bar on migration to Britain. The British Board of Trade statistics show an average inwards balance of 14 thousand a year 1924–1929, 6–9 thousand a year 1930–1933, years of high unemployment in Britain, and then recovery to a peak of 31 thousand in 1937.

Table 2: Balance of civilian passenger movement from Éire into the United Kingdom, 1924–1958 (thousands)

1924	13	1939–1945	Not available
1925	10	1946	4
1926	16	1947	16
1927	21	1948	21
1928	12	1949	17
1929	12	1950	11
1930	9	1951	16
1931	6	1952	31
1932	8	1953	29
1933	7	1954	34
1934	12	1955	44
1935	17	1956	42
1936	29	1957	51
1937	51	1958	32
1938	18	1959	30

(Source: Board of Trade. Movement across land frontier between Northern Ireland and Éire is not included.)

[3] Table 3 below sets out the number of persons receiving new travel permits, identity cards and passports 1943–1951, for the purpose of employment in Great Britain. These figures must be used with caution in assessing wartime immigration into Britain as they exclude dependents while one person might receive at different times a travel permit, and identity card and a passport, and so be counted more than once.

Table 3: Number of persons, classified by sex, receiving new travel permits, identity cards and passports to go to employment in Great Britain, 1943–1951 (thousands)

	Males	Females	Total
1943	28.8	18.4	47.2
1944	7.5	5.7	13.2
1945	13.1	10.5	23.6
1946	10.5	18.9	29.4
1947	10.6	17.6	28.2
1948	15.8	14.5	30.3
1949	8.5	9.7	18.2
1950	6.3	6.4	12.7
1951	9.0	7.2	16.2

(Source: Report of Commission on Emigration, Statistical Appendix, Table 30.)

Only for the years 1949–1951 do the above figures roughly correspond to the British Board of Trade statistics of passenger movement. It should be noted moreover that the latter differ significantly from the Irish passenger statistics. They are however probably the best available indication of *net* immigration from the *Irish Republic* to *Great Britain*. They *do not* include immigration from N. Ireland, but they *do* include immigration into Scotland: the latter is however known to have been relatively unimportant in recent years.

The *Report of the Commission on Emigration and other Population Problems* also gives information about the ages, last occupations and provenance of those who applied for travel permits etc. during and after the second world war, of whom the great majority came to Britain. 68 per cent of both males and females came from rural districts and about 13 per cent from Dublin county and county borough. In 1950 and 1951 one fifth of the female and two fifths of the male recipients of travel permits etc. were 16–19 years of age, and well over a third of the males and almost exactly a third of the [4] females were age 20–24. Thus altogether almost three-fifths of the males and three-quarters of the females were *under 25 years of age.*

In the same relatively 'normal' years, 1950 and 1951, 37 per cent of males had

previously been engaged in agriculture, 10 per cent in industry (including building), 22 per cent were clerks and other skilled workers, and the balance of 32 per cent were unskilled. Thus almost 70 per cent were previously doing agricultural or unskilled work, without counting builders' labourers. Among the females in 1950 and 1951 fully 57 per cent entered domestic service as their last occupation.

Some light on gross and net immigration for employment is afforded by Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance statistics of first entrants and re-entrants into the national insurance scheme from the Irish Republic. These exclude non-working wives and children. It is well known however, that there is a certain amount of duplication due to the use of false names by immigrants trying to evade income tax liability and national service.

Table 4: Persons from the Irish Republic first entering or re-entering the National Insurance Scheme

	First entrants	Re-entrants	Total
17/7/50–31/12/50	16,044	Not available	Not available
Calendar yr 1951	33,953	Not available	Not available
Calendar yr 1952*	37,134	Not available	Not available
Calendar yr 1953	47,328	Not available	Not available
Calendar yr 1954	54,481	Not available	Not available
Calendar yr 1955	63,952	Not available	Not available
Calendar yr 1956	57,304	2,752	60,056
Calendar yr 1957	58,672	9,830	68,502
Calendar yr 1958	47,869	10,447	58,316
Calendar yr 1959	51,139	13,355	64,594

(Source: Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance)

*Excluding 5 weeks in June

The only year for which statistics for all three last mentioned sources are available was 1951. We have seen that the British Board of Trade figures of net balance of passenger traffic in 1951 correspond roughly to the number of persons receiving travel permits etc., at about sixteen thousand. In that year entrants in the national scheme (self employed and non-employed as well as employees) numbered almost thirty-four thousand. Ignoring duplication due to false names this suggests a substantial two-way movement.

[5] Interpretation of these figures is rendered all the more difficult because of a noticeable revival of immigration of families as distinct from unmarried men and women, and breadwinners separated from their families. Some part of the net inwards passenger balance of 113 thousand in the three years 1957–1959 therefore represents children and non-working wives and elderly parents who will not figure

in the Ministry of Pensions and National Insurance statistics. If we allow the odd thirteen thousand for these we have a net immigration of 100 thousand workers against a gross inwards movement of 191 thousand, implying that getting on for half the immigrants return to Ireland after spending some time here. The rising proportion of re-entrants into the national health scheme — over a fifth of the total in 1959 — confirms the common observation that many Irish drift back and forth between the two countries for a considerable time before settling here.

At the time of the 1951 census of England and Wales the baptised catholic population of England and Wales is estimated by the Newman Demographic Survey at about 4.67 million, i.e., about 10.7 per cent of the population. The Survey have further estimated that at 30th June 1959 the baptised catholic population had risen to about 5.25 million, or 11.6 per cent of the estimated 45,386,000 actually in England and Wales at that time. We have seen that at the 1951 Census there were 627 thousand Irish in England and Wales, of these the Survey estimate that 535 thousand were catholic. The survey have estimated the number of Irish born in England and Wales at 30th June 1959 at about 900 thousand, of whom about 750 thousand would have been catholic. These estimates can be summarised by saying that in April 1951 the Irish born accounted for about 11.5 per cent of all baptised catholics in England and Wales, and in June 1959 for about 15 per cent.

2) The causes of Irish immigration

The Irish *Commission on Emigration and other Population Problems*, which sat from 1948–1954 gave in its majority report an analysis of the cause of emigration which deserves to be quoted *in toto*.[ii]

> [6] While the fundamental cause of emigration is economic, in most cases the decision to emigrate cannot be ascribed to any single motive but to the interplay of a number of motives. As between one person and another, these motives undoubtedly differ in importance and intensity, depending on outlook, temperament, family background, education, age, sex and conjugal condition, as well as on economic, social, domestic and other circumstances. It is not possible, therefore, to attribute emigration to a single cause which would account satisfactorily for the decision to emigrate in all cases. The causes put before us in evidence were very many — principally economic, but also social, political, cultural and psychological…
>
> The decline in population brought about by emigration in the second half of the last century and in the early years of the present century occurred in the rural population and was widespread throughout the country. During the past quarter of a century the total population of the country has not declined to any extent, but emigration has persisted at a high rate and the decline in rural population has continued. While emigration is not confined to particular areas, it tends to be somewhat greater from counties where the rural population is high both in numbers and in density, where the land is poor, where the degree

of urbanisation is low and where small holdings are predominant. Emigration, however, is also to be found where these conditions are not present, e.g., where the land is good. Other countries have had a similar experience. It appears that in European countries generally there is emigration from rich lands as well as from poor, from thinly populated countries as well as from over-populated countries where the proportion of the population dependent on agriculture is low as well as from countries where it is high.

For a period of over one hundred years a wide variety of circumstances have influenced the volume and rate of emigration from Ireland — the famine conditions of the years immediately after 1846, the opening up of new continents (America and Australasia), the intensification of industrial activity in Great Britain, the effects of two world wars and the rising standards of living. In attempting to reach broad conclusions as to the causes of emigration, it is helpful to consider the demographic statistics of a county of heavy emigration, such as Mayo. During the twenty-five year period 1926–51, while the natural increase (excess of births over death) in county Mayo was 21,400, there was a decline in population of 30,800 — from 172,700 to 141,900 — and hence a net emigration of 52,200. Therefore, not only did emigration carry away the natural increase of 21,400 between 1926 and 1951, but it brought about, in addition, a reduction of 30,800 in the numbers living in county Mayo, the whole of the reduction, incidentally, being in the rural areas. These statistics bring to light two matters of vital significance; first, that conditions in county Mayo failed to provide that economic expansion which would absorb the natural increase of the county, and secondly, that quite apart from the need to create more employment opportunities, in 1951 apparently fewer people were prepared to accept the standard of living attainable in county Mayo compared with the numbers prepared to do so in 1926… we are satisfied that, while the [7] causes of emigration have been many and have varied at different times, emigration has been due to two fundamental causes — the absence of opportunities for making an adequate livelihood, and a growing desire for higher standards of living on the part of the community, particularly the rural community.

At the same time, there has been a great demand for labour in the United States of America and more recently in Great Britain, countries which, in general, presented the Irish emigrant with no difficulties of language or barriers due to race, thus causing him a minimum of personal and social adjustment in his new environment. The existence of employment opportunities more attractive that those at home became increasingly well known — in the case of America from the family connections which have continued since the original heavy post-Famine emigration to that continent, and in the case of Great Britain because of its proximity and easy accessibility…

Generally, throughout the country there is a lack of opportunities for employment to absorb the natural increase of the population. Why this should be so is an extremely difficult and controversial topic, involving consideration of the extent to which our natural resources are developed, judged by the standards of employment and productivity. It also involves such questions as whether there is too rigid an adherence to certain patterns of agricultural