

Arrangements
for the integration
of Irish immigrants
in England and Wales

by
A.E.C.W. Spencer

edited by
Mary E. Daly



IRISH MANUSCRIPTS COMMISSION

2012

Published by
Irish Manuscripts Commission
45 Merrion Square
Dublin 2
Ireland
www.irishmanuscripts.ie

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ISBN 978-1-906865-11-5

Typeset by December Publications in Adobe Garamond
Index prepared by Martin Hargreaves and Mary E. Daly

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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.

statistical sources necessary for that exercise.¹¹ Subsequent reports drew up estimates of current and future demand for catholic schools, and future demand for places in catholic teacher training colleges. The NDS carried out a detailed census of catholic clergy and religious in England and Wales when it became clear that the 1961 population census would not provide sufficiently wide-ranging data on their number, age and whereabouts.

The initial reports were produced by voluntary workers, but in 1958 the Survey began to employ salaried staff, with funding from the English hierarchy and offices in Westminster. A.E.C.W. Spencer, Honorary Secretary to the NDS from 1953–59, was appointed as Director of the Newman Survey in 1959. By the early 1960s the Survey had moved beyond statistical studies and was undertaking sociological analysis. In December 1963, the archbishop of Westminster, John Carmel Heenan, announced that the bishops were withdrawing funding and the NDS closed in February 1964. At that time it had a staff of twelve plus a team of voluntary workers throughout England and Wales. Between 1953 and 1964 up to 200 university graduates worked on NDS projects.¹² During its existence the reports of the NDS were not publicly available. However in 2005 the Standing Committee of the Catholic Bishops Conference of England and Wales de-classified all NDS reports and papers, and since that time many of their reports have been published by the former director, A.E.C.W. Spencer.¹³

'Arrangements for the integration of Irish immigrants in England and Wales' is not among those papers; the report remained (and remains) in an incomplete state. The report was commissioned by the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC), Geneva, after discussions with the International Federation of Catholic Institutes for Social and Socio-religious Research (FERES), also based in Geneva, of which the NDS was a member. The NDS was not a party to these discussions, but, according to Mr Spencer, the NDS was pleased to accept this commission from a greatly respected international catholic organisation. The report was to be presented and discussed at the ICMC congress in Ottawa, in August, 1960.¹⁴ 'Several research methods were used. Existing official documentation was collected and studied: census and other statistics, the two-volume Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population

11 A.E.C.W. Spencer, Foreword to Barbara Parkin (ed.), *Converts to catholicism: an analysis of age and sex of applications to the chancery office of the archdiocese of Westminster, 1917–1953, for a licence to reconcile a convert* (A Newman Demographic Survey Report, typescript 1955; facsimile 2005).

12 Email communication from A.E.C.W. Spencer, 25 April 2008.

13 A.E.C.W. Spencer (ed.), *Annotated bibliography of Newman demographic survey reports and papers, 1954–1964* (2006). In 1970 Mr Spencer was appointed as a lecturer in sociology in Queen's University Belfast.

14 Email communication from A.E.C.W. Spencer, 25 April 2008.

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 migration 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 than 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

husbandry and methods of farming, whether our industrial development has kept pace with population needs, whether our industrialists have been sufficiently enterprising and whether the nature and volume of our external trade is satisfactory. Other relevant matters are the distribution of population in relation to the fertility of the land, the sizes of agricultural holdings and the numbers of small-farm family units, the levels of saving and investment, as well as rising standards of living and economic and social conditions generally...

The other principal reason for emigration is the desire for improved material standards together with a dissatisfaction with life on the land, whether in its economic or its social aspects. Migration from rural to urban areas is a feature common to most countries, but it does not always bring about a progressive decline in the number remaining on the land as in this country. In the past many people were content to remain assisting on their home farms for virtually nothing more than their subsistence — some hoping to inherit the farm, others in expectation of dowries. This way of life was accepted as inevitable, and emigration from farms was confined to those who were obliged to go through sheer necessity. Nowadays, fewer people are satisfied with a subsistence standard of living and they find an easy alternative in emigration. Very small holdings of poor or marginal land are tending to become amalgamated. Modern technology can provide rising material standards of life more easily in urban than in rural areas and hence, the world over, life in agricultural districts is proving less attractive. In the eyes of many, particularly of those who do not own a farm, agricultural life has serious disadvantages; it does not appear to provide a sufficient income, it makes great demands on time, and it involves [8] much physical effort in return for a relatively small remuneration. Money is now much more important in rural life than it was in the past, and expenditure on such conventional necessities as cigarettes, cinemas and dances is now regarded as inevitable. Furthermore, the prevailing forms of agriculture in this country lead to a large measure of seasonal unemployment. In consequence, there is an incentive, now common to most countries, to leave agricultural employment (and sometimes even land ownership) for other forms of employment. In the circumstances of this country, where there is little local industry and virtually no non-farm employment in rural areas, other than intermittent or casual work provided by the local authorities, this desire for non-agricultural work — frequently encouraged by parents — leads inevitably to emigration. What might in other countries result in an altered ratio of town to rural population becomes for this country a decline in rural population, unaccompanied by an increase in the urban population except in Dublin city and its suburbs which absorb some of the rural migrants. Generally speaking, the only counties where rural population is increasing are those adjacent to Dublin. If the emigration of rural population is to be checked and if the advantage of modern science and technology are to be availed of, more industrialisation is necessary and more urbanisation. A point to be remembered, however, is that while the development of industry, particularly in rural areas, would undoubtedly benefit those who remain on the land, it may initially cause more people (especially relatives assisting on home farms) to leave to land.

The attraction which urban life exercises on a rural community also affects

those living in urban areas, inducing them to move to larger urban centres. Those who have steady and reasonably well-paid employment are much less likely to migrate than those whose employment is of a seasonal, intermittent, temporary or casual nature — of a kind, in short, which does not enable a man to plan reasonably for his future. Employment offering prospects of advancement greater security and continuity, higher wages and better conditions of employment will inevitably be an attraction to the worker whose pay is low or whose job is insecure. In particular, the average unskilled worker from this country has in recent times been able to secure in Great Britain a greater material return for his labour.

To the extent that this attracting force operates, it is a serious aspect of the emigration problem. It means that if we are to retain our nationals we must become reasonably competitive with Great Britain in matters relating to employment. There is evidence, however, that somewhat lower wage rates and less attractive material conditions would retain many potential emigrants, particularly men, provided they could rely on steady employment, although it does not follow that, once they have left the country, the mere certainty of employment would be a sufficient inducement to bring them back.

While the fundamental causes of emigration are economic, social amenities are also an important factor. There are differences between rural and urban areas in the standards and availability of housing as well as in services such as electricity, water supplies and transport. In providing social amenities of this nature cities and urban centres [9] have an advantage because of their very size, and in social services generally — e.g., in matters of health and welfare — there are usually higher standards there. Again, modern urban life has developed high standards of organised entertainment and a wide range of recreational facilities. By contrast, and particularly to the young mind, rural areas appear dull, drab, monotonous, backward and lonely — a view, however, which many would regard as superficial. Undoubtedly, in many rural areas social amenities are meagre. In some districts this is inevitable because the population is scattered, but in others it is due to a lack of suitable centres for social activities. Too often, also, there is an absence of local initiative. For one reason or another many villages and small towns are not the centres of active social life which they should be.

There is a greater realisation nowadays among people living in the more remote rural areas that they have to contend with many hardships and that modern services and amenities are to a large extent not available to them. There is a growing and natural desire to secure an improved economic and social status, which urges such people to seek the apparent attractions of a changed environment.

The different causes of emigration involve, therefore, forces which have been rather unsatisfactorily termed 'pull' and 'push'; by 'pull' is commonly meant the force of attraction, whether economic or social, which other countries exert while 'push' describes the forces arising from the failure of conditions at home to provide an adequate basis for livelihood. The existence of the 'push' factor can scarcely be denied: it is equally certain that there is always a 'pull' influence, because people are not likely to emigrate to places where conditions are worse

than at home — a point confirmed by the fact that they tend to move not to unknown conditions but to places where they have good reasons to believe that their future well-being is reasonably well assured. Both forces operate together even in the case of an individual, and taking the country as a whole it is extremely difficult to decide which of them has been the more potent. It is probable that 'push' has been the stronger force in the congested areas of the western seaboard and that it has influenced men to a greater extent than women. Again, it is clear that the predominant force was at some periods a 'push' and at others a 'pull'; for instance, it was undoubtedly a 'push' during and after the Famine and following poor harvests, whereas there was a strong element of 'pull' during the periods of full employment in Great Britain.

Traditions and example have also been very powerful influences. Emigration of some members of the family has become almost part of the established custom of the people in certain areas — a part of the generally accepted pattern of life. For very many emigrants there was a traditional path 'from the known to the known', that is to say, from areas where they lived to places where their friends and relations awaited them. This path they followed almost as a matter of course and without even looking for suitable employment in this [10] country. Such a custom is kept alive by the connection which former emigrants retain with the home country and there is little doubt that these family connections will continue to exercise an influence, even if substantial improvements are effected in economic conditions and social amenities at home. Recent emigration to Great Britain is building up centres of attraction in that country and because of the facility of movement between the two countries, there is a danger that these may become magnets as powerful as the Irish centres in the United States in the 19th and the early 20th centuries.

Apart from tradition and example, there is a widespread awareness of the existence of opportunities abroad and a realisation of differences between conditions at home and in other countries. This is confirmed and encouraged by the reports of emigrants who return well dressed and with an air of prosperity, by glowing accounts in letters of high incomes and easy conditions and by practical demonstration in the remittances which are sent home. These accounts, which rarely paint any other side of the picture — and there is another side to it — are frequently exaggerated, and make a strong impression on the minds of young people. The publicity given to the success of Irish emigrants, often in highly coloured and romantic terms, tends to cause dissatisfaction with what may seem to be the more prosaic conditions at home, especially in remote rural areas. With regard to such amenities as the cinema, the press, books and periodicals, the radio, library and educational facilities, while they all make people aware of opportunities abroad, they also add to the happiness of life and since they are now available in many rural areas they remove some of the causes of discontent with rural life. The attraction, however, of better employment opportunities abroad still remains.

Although female emigration, like male, is the result of a variety of causes, the purely economic cause is not always so dominant. For the female emigrant improvement in personal status is of no less importance than the higher wages and better conditions of employment abroad and some of the evidence

submitted to us would suggest that the prospect of better marriage opportunities is also an influence of some significance. Large numbers of girls emigrate to domestic service in Great Britain because they consider that the wages, conditions of work and also the status of domestic service in this country are unsatisfactory. Many others emigrate because the opportunities of obtaining factory or office work are better than here, and in the nursing profession numbers leave the country because the remuneration, facilities for training, pension schemes and hours of work in this country are considered to be unattractive.

The great majority of emigrants are unskilled. It is true that skilled workers have emigrated, particularly during the war years, but the volume of this type of emigration is small. This is not so, however, for some professional groups; in particular, in the medical profession the majority of those who qualify find it necessary to seek a livelihood abroad. A further point [11] is whether restrictive trade practices and the lack of industrial training prevent unskilled workers from acquiring a skill which might enable them to secure a livelihood at home. This raises the controversial and complex question of the relation between our educational system and emigration...

While some emigrants have deliberately weighed the financial pros and cons, and have come to the conclusion that on balance they will be better off elsewhere, others emigrate for different reasons. A natural desire for adventure or change, an eagerness to travel, to see the world and share the enjoyment of modern city life, to secure financial independence by having pocket money and by being free to spend it in one's own way, to obtain freedom from parental control and a privacy not obtainable in one's own home environment, to be free to choose one's own way of life – such matters affect a proportion of young people everywhere and they appeal strongly in a country where there has been, for so many years, an established tradition of emigration.¹

The extensive literature on emigration in Irish periodicals suggests that the above exposition of the causes of emigration is incomplete in one respect which is of great importance when considering the role of catholic organisations in England and Wales. Ireland is not only losing by emigration to Britain her most valuable sons and daughters, her university graduates and professional men, and the enterprising, go-ahead men who find no scope for them at home. She is also exporting her social failures; just as Britain exported her ne'er-do-wells and men-on-the-run, her shiftless and her black sheep, to her colonies in the nineteenth century; so Ireland sends hers to Britain in the 20th. She also sends her moral failures — unmarried pregnant girls seeking anonymity in a British hospital, and husbands deserting their families. It is these social and moral failures who do so much harm to Ireland and to catholicism in Britain and constitute an almost impossible task for the church there.

1 [Commission on Emigration and other population problems, 1948–54, P. 25411, paragraphs 29–305, pp 134–38.]