The suppression of a research report.
Another long slow failure. Reflections on a very secret disaster.

Were it not for Mary Daly's book, *The slow failure. Population decline and independent Ireland, 1920 -1973*, the suppression of the incomplete report of the Newman Demographic Survey (NDS) in 1960, *Arrangements for the integration of Irish immigrants in England and Wales,* would have remained a secret as well as a disaster. In her last chapter, entitled "A Ticket to London is a Ticket to Hell", she made great use of the first draft of the NDS report that she had found in the archives of the Archdiocese of Dublin.

The report had been 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 was pleased to accept this commission from a greatly respected international Catholic organisation. The report was to be the main study for the ICMC's next congress, in Ottawa, August, 1960.

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 problems*, and the congress reports and other literature of the ICMC itself. Periodical literature was searched out and studied. Face-to-face unstructured and semi-structured interviews were carried out. Finally, additional documentation was sought and studied. Despite the very small budget the face-to-face interviews were numerous, with half a dozen in Dublin and a score or so in England.

The draft report was circulated in instalments to many of those who had provided information, with an invitation to discuss it at a meeting at the headquarters of the Newman Association in London. When drafting it I had appreciated that I was walking on egg-shells. I had picked up hints of conflict between the English and Irish hierarchies about jurisdiction over the current programmes of care for Irish immigrants in what I later came to understand was seen in Dublin as part of the Irish ecclesiastical empire. The sensitivities of our Irish cousins are referred to in the last line of the notes for the unfinished Chapter 7.

But I was also fearful of treading on English Episcopal toes. The record of the English bishops in relation to Irish immigration had been – in my view – quite deplorable. They had sent no delegations to attend the congresses of the ICMC, and at no time was I made aware of any participation or interest in the ICMC before 1959. As so often happened in other contexts, it was Bishop Beck, speaking frankly at Maynooth in June, 1950, who drew attention to the urgent need for action. Diplomatic concern for relations with the Irish Hierarchy prevented me from getting a copy of his address.

In October, 1952, the English bishops – almost two decades after the resumption of heavy immigration from Ireland – at last appointed a committee to consider the situation, with Archbishop Masterson as chairman. On his death next year Cardinal Griffin, with the consent of the Hierarchy, took over personally the functions of the Hierarchy committee. One might wonder how a busy cardinal could do all the work in his

spare time, but it is clear that Cardinal Griffin did manage to get things started in the next year or two.

Nor was lack of English interest in Irish immigrants confined to the bishops. There were plenty of articles about them in Irish Catholic periodicals, but a search of the *Clergy Review* from 1928 to 1959 did not reveal a single article on the subject.

The NDS was represented at the discussion of the draft report - the final chapter on "Conclusions relating to organisation in Ireland" still no more than a list of notes and topics – by Professor Michael Fogarty, John Hickey (then writing another report, for the Eucharistic Congress in Munich, on T*he Irish rural immigrant and British urban society)* and myself, all of recent Irish origins. Within a couple of decades Fogarty was head of the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin, and Hickey and I were both teaching sociology in Irish universities.

We expected a friendly discussion with a similar number of 'real' Irish counterparts, but the large room was soon full of angry men, many just off the flight from Dublin. Mgr Barrett's opening words were: "This is dynamite!" The report was torn to bits. Hickey – who had no hand in it – described that day as the worst in his life.

Very quickly I was summoned to Archbishop's House, Westminster, having been delated twice in as many days by Archbishop McQuaid. There followed a lengthy series of meetings with Mgr Worlock, the Cardinal's Private Secretary, trying to negotiate changes to the text that would satisfy the Archbishop. It soon became clear that what most concerned him (or Barrett) were the many quotations from articles, comments and reports made by Irish priests. These could not be attacked as untrue or misleading; instead their deletion was required as being outside the terms of reference allegedly agreed between the ICMC and the Irish representative on its board.

The meetings with Worlock dragged on until it became clear that there was no hope of publishing an acceptable report before the ICMC congress in August. I escaped extradition to Dublin, and a hanging on a gibbet outside the cathedral. The incomplete first draft, and the still incomplete revised draft, were sent to the ICMC in Geneva, to be locked in a safe and 'never to be published or publicised'. Within a couple of years the NDS was paid the agreed fee for the report.

In the course of the conversations with Worlock I was told repeatedly that if the support of the English bishops was withdrawn the NDS would be closed down. That happened three and a half years later when I defied a Catholic Education Council veto on reading a paper at a Newman Association conference in October, 1963. But was the suppression of the report in 1960 really a 'disaster'? To explain requires a longer perspective.

Demographically, the Reformation and the Penal Laws that followed came near to extinguishing Catholicism in England. They did not do so in Ireland. Poverty and a desire for a better life later drove many Catholic Irish to emigrate. In the 1840s the trickle became a flood, going to the USA, the Empire and to Great Britain. Later in the century migration to Great Britain again became a trickle, and it was not until the 1930s that Irish migration to Great Britain rose rapidly once more. In the later 1940s and 1950s it rose faster still, at a time when the Catholic community was coping with the integration of Poles from General Anders army, the Italians making bricks for re-housing, and the Ukrainian refugees. It was also trying to cope with the huge pressures on Catholic schools. In 1943-4 the Butler Education Bill had been handled very badly by the English

bishops. The Catholic community was left with crippling capital costs for the re-building, re-organisation and extension of the Catholic school system. A NDS planning study late in 1958 had revealed that the *whole* growth of *total* school enrolment, projected by the Government Actuary, was attributable to the growth in the Catholic child population. When the provisional pastoral statistics for 1959 were prepared, at the end of 1960, it dawned on us in the NDS that the baptised Catholic population resident in England & Wales – no matter what parish priests told their bishops – was rising rapidly from the natural increase associated with heavy immigration as well as from the immigration itself.

Yet the only national organisation dealing with migration was a cardinal, in whatever time he could spare. This underlines the importance of the report's key recommendation, at the start of Chapter 6, that there should be a single national Catholic organisation concerned with the problems associated with Irish immigrants, refugees and displaced persons, other immigrants and emigrants. With the report suppressed, nothing was done to create such an organisation. Over the seven decades, 1939-2008, the *Catholic Directory of England & Wales* listed sixteen different national organisations dealing with one aspect or another of Catholic migration, coming and going and changing their names, and at no time has there been the single national organisation recommended in 1960. The 2008 edition devotes c.300 column centimetres to the national organisation of the Catholic Bishops' Conference. It devotes 2.5 column centimetres to the Travellers' Issues Working Group, and 4 column cm to the Office for Refugee Policy, with its one full-time Policy Adviser. And just as there were it seems covert jurisdictional disputes with the Irish Hierarchy in 1960 there are now very public and very difficult jurisdictional disputes with the Polish bishops.

Since 1960 total Catholic immigration into England & Wales must have run to several millions. The Church as an institution has had an extraordinary opportunity to help them to integrate into English society. But it hasn't even managed to integrate most of them into the Catholic community, partly because the active Catholic community has declined so rapidly and partly because of the organisational failure described above. Independent estimates of the numbers of baptised Catholics having even a minimal participation in the life of the Church – using the rites of the Church to marry, to baptise their children, and bury their dead – suggest that their number fell by c.1.14 million (22.6%) between 1 Jan., 1959 and 31 Dec., 2004, i.e. from 5.04 million to 3.9 million. In the eight years 1997 to 2004 they fell by 530,000, despite unprecedented Catholic migration from Eastern Europe. In some parishes the number of immigrants at Mass on Sundays is several times the number of natives. For generations the Church as an institution has boasted of what it has done for immigrants. Perhaps we should now begin to focus on what has not been done, and ask why.

AECWS 25.04.08