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# THE PREPARATORY COLLEGES 1926 – 1961 AN EXPERIMENT IN IRISH EDUCATION

Thesis

presented to the

University of Dublin

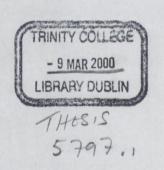
in accordance with the regulations for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Valerie A. Jones

School of Education Trinity College Dublin



This thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or at any other university.

Noterie A. Jours

Valerie A. Jones

September 1999

#### **SUMMARY**

This dissertation examines recruitment to primary teaching through the preparatory system during the period: 1926 – 1961.

The system consisted of seven residential second-level schools, mainly situated in the Gaeltacht, three for boys, three for girls, and one co-educational school for Protestant students. The language of classroom work, extra-curricular activities and all other personal intercourse was Irish; in effect each college was a 'mini-Gaeltacht.'

The thesis examines the context in which the preparatory system was established. The restoration of the Irish language was one of the primary aims of the newly-independent Irish Free State and the education system was seen as having a major role to play in achieving this aim. The thesis analyses efforts to revive the language in the nineteenth century and discusses how it came to assume such importance in the struggle for independence. The work of the Ministry for Irish and the two documents it produced: The Report of the Ministry for Irish to the First Dail, in June 1920, and The Report of the Ministry of the National Language, in August 1921, are studied as are papers from the Departments of the Taoiseach and Finance, and Cabinet documents in the National Archives.

The educational context in which the preparatory system was established is also discussed. In the early days of the Irish Free State there was a shortage of candidates for primary teaching due to the failure of existing recruitment methods: the monitorial system and the pupil-teacher scheme. The proposed introduction of a School Attendance Act was a further consideration.

Throughout the thesis the effects of major educational change on recruitment to primary education are explored. The Reports of the First and Second National Programme Conferences, Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, the Council for Education, the INTO's Inquiry into the use of Irish and its Plan for Education are examined.

The establishment of the preparatory system was opposed by a number of bodies, including the Department of Finance, the Irish National Teachers' Organisation and the inspectorate of the Department of Education. The thesis discusses the roles of each of these bodies during the thirty-five years of the system's existence. Of major importance was the confidential *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Preparatory Colleges* in 1938, which highlighted many of the system's weaknesses.

The Roman Catholic Church had considerable influence on the system; five of the seven colleges were run by Religious Orders while the sixth was run by diocesan priests. The thesis examines papers relating to each of the Orders involved and material relating to the colleges located in diocesan archives, including Dublin, Galway, and Kerry Diocesan Archives. The thesis concludes that fear of offending the Roman Catholic Hierarchy was one of the reasons for the preparatory system being allowed to continue so long. It also

concludes that a major factor in the decision to end the system was a scandal at C. Einne in 1956, which brought the weaknesses of the system to the bishops' attention. The papers of Bishop Browne of Galway are of particular relevance in this area.

The thesis assesses the involvement of major political figures of the period, such as Ernest Blythe, Eoin MacNeill, Eamon de Valera, Thomas Derrig and Richard Mulcahy, in the establishment and continuation of the colleges. The relevant papers of Blythe, Mulcahy and MacNeill in UCD Archives are examined. The conclusion is reached that Blythe was responsible for a number of ill-advised decisions, which increased opposition to the system and which eventually were factors in its demise.

Other efforts by various Governments to restore the language through the civil service are assessed. The conclusion is reached, however, that they were unsuccessful as indeed was the gaelicisation policy generally because it lacked public support, was over-ambitious and ill-thought out and there was a failure to provide resources. Furthermore it is concluded that the divisions created by the Civil War had a detrimental effect on the gaelicisation policy and made it into a 'sacred cow' where politicians were afraid to reassess it.

It is concluded that the preparatory system was successful in achieving the aims of those who established it. It produced well-educated students for the training colleges, who were able to complete the course successfully, were fluent in Irish and not only able to teach the language in the primary schools but to teach through Irish. Moreover, it was due to their influence that the language is alive at the end of the twentieth century. The thesis acknowledges, however, that the system had a number of inherent weaknesses, including entry at too early an age, segregation of student-teachers from other students and high costs. In addition it took six years to produce a teacher and so it was difficult to match teacher requirements and recruitment numbers, matters which were of particular importance during the thirties when there was considerable over-recruitment, and during the fifties when there was a shortage of trained teachers.

The research included a survey of approximately one hundred past students and former teachers. Each of the colleges was visited and in this way contacts with former students were made. Care was taken to ensure that students from each decade in each college were represented. Seventy questionnaires were returned and of these twenty-five were followed by personal interviews or telephone conversations. Their views, which confirm the main findings of the thesis, are included in Chapter VIII. The registers of four of the colleges were also traced and an examination of their contents was made.

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#### **ABSTRACT**

'The Preparatory Colleges 1926 – 1961: an experiment in Irish Education,' by Valerie Alison Jones.

This dissertation examines recruitment to primary teaching through the preparatory system from its establishment in 1926 until its ending in 1961.

Section 1, Towards a new Ireland, examines how the Irish language came to assume such importance in the struggle for independence and discusses plans to gaelicise the new State through the education system. Chapter 1 is divided into two parts. Part (i) explores efforts to revive the language in the nineteenth century. It assesses the influence of the Ministry for Irish on the gaelicisation policy and analyses the effects of the First National Programme Conference on the education system. Part (ii) examines teacher-training in the early twenties and the need for a new method of recruitment brought about by the failure of the existing systems as well as by the gaelicisation policy. It discusses earlier attempts to set up preparatory colleges and the views of leading politicians as to how the system should be established. It includes an assessment of opposition to the system from the Department of Finance, the inspectorate and the INTO. Chapter 11 explores the educational context in which the colleges were set up. It considers life in the Gaeltacht, particularly the dearth of educational facilities, which was highlighted by Coimisiun na Gaeltachta. It evaluates the work of the Second National Programme Conference

In Section 11, Laying the Foundations, an examination of the early years of the preparatory system is made. Chapter 111 deals with the establishment of the colleges and discusses their main characteristics while Chapter 1V is devoted to a case study of the Munster boys' college.

Section 111, Fianna Fail in Charge, considers the development of the colleges during the period, 1932 – 1948, when de Valera was in power. Chapter V assesses the effects of over-recruitment in the thirties on the colleges. It also discusses the need to reform the system in the light of the findings of a confidential departmental inquiry into its operation in 1938. Chapter V1 outlines the impact of the Emergency on the colleges when both C. Moibhí and C. Éinne were taken over by the Department of Defence as military hospitals. It also examines increasing dissension between the Departments of Finance and Education over the costs of the system and the strained relationships between the INTO and the Government due to the gaelicisation policy.

Section 1V, *Decline*, deliberates on why the system was allowed to continue into the fifties Chapter VII is divided into two parts. Part (i) examines the effects of expanding enrolments on recruitment during the period, 1948 to 1957. Part (ii) analyses changes in Irish society in the late fifties which made it possible for the Government to end the system. Chapter VIII discusses the system in the light of the experiences of past students involved in the research and concludes that it was a success though it was not without faults. In Chapter IX the condition of the Irish language today and its place in the education system at the end of the twentieth century is reviewed.

#### PREFACE

In the early eighties I became interested in studying the contribution of members of the Church of Ireland to the development and preservation of the Irish language. From this interest grew a desire to examine the ways in which members of the religious minority adapted to changes brought about by the establishment of the Irish Free State. One of the main changes was the gaelicisation policy, which some members of the minority found very difficult to accept. Amongst those, who had a profound influence in helping Protestants to come to terms with the new regime, and to accept the new emphasis on cultural nationalism, were the primary teachers. In this respect the role of C. Moibhí, the Protestant preparatory college, in providing the Church of Ireland Training College with well-educated students, fluent in Irish, was invaluable, for it ensured the survival of primary schools under Protestant management in the new Ireland.

Moreover, little research had been done on C. Moibhi at that time. As I am a past pupil of the college I was able to go to many sources for information and eventually the research developed into a thesis, 'Recruitment and Formation of Students into the Church of Ireland Training College 1922 – 1961,' for which I was awarded an M. Litt. degree by the University of Dublin in 1990. By that time, however, I had become interested in the development of the other six preparatory colleges and once started, the research gained a momentum and life of its own which has finally issued in this thesis.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

'A' school A school where the teaching is through Irish

ASTI Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland

CEC Central Executive Committee

CEO Chief Executive Officer

Department Department of Education

DF Papers Department of Finance Papers

DT Papers Department of the Taoiseach Papers

Education Department of Education

Finance Department of Finance

GAA Gaelic Athletic Association

INTO Irish National Teachers' Organisation

IRA Irish Republican Army

IRB Irish Republican Brotherhood

IQ Intelligence Quota

IDTA Irish Dance Teachers' Association

JAMS Junior Assistant Mistresses

No. Number

PE Physical Education

RTE Raidio Teilifis Eireann

TB Tuberculosis

TCD Trinity College Dublin

UCC University College Cork

UCD University College Dublin

UCG University College Galway

VEC Vocational Education Committee

#### GLOSSARY OF IRISH TERMS

Aireacht na Gaeilge The Ministry for Irish

Aireacht Oideachais The Ministry for Education

Ard Teastas Certificate awarded for ability to speak Irish

Beag Thuairisc A brief report by an inspector of a visit to a school

Breac-Ghaeltacht Area where approximately three-quarters of the people

speak Irish

Bun rang Lowest class

Bunreacht Constitution

C. Colaiste (college)

C. Einne Colaiste Einne (also called C. Einde)

Ceili An evening of Irish dancing

Curfa Chorus

Coimisiún na Gaeltachta The Gaeltacht Commission

Dail The Irish Parliament

Fainne/fainní A ring/rings

Feiseanna Irish dancing or singing competitions

Fior-Ghaeltacht An area where everyone speaks Irish

Gaeltacht An area where people speak Irish

Gaelscoileanna Schools where only Irish is spoken

Gaeilgeoirí Irish speakers

Galltacht An English-speaking area

Garda Siochana The Irish police force

Gum The publishing section of the Department of Education

Mor Thuairisc A detailed report by an inspector of a visit to a school

Naionraí A pre-school conducted through Irish

Roinn na Gaeltachta The Department of the Gaeltacht

Saorstat Éireann The Irish Free State

Seanchai Storyteller

Údarás na Gaeltachta The Gaeltacht Authority

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From C. Mhuire: Sinéad Bradley, Frances Hayes, Phil Hurley, Ann Lawlor, Mrs Bonar, and Brid McHugh

From C. Bhride: Sr. Teresita Shiel, Sr. Marie Anthony, Nora Ni Chairbe, Sr. Camilla Roche, Sr. Annunciata White, Maire O'Donnell, Mary McGowan, Nancy Duffy, Mother Philomena Griffith, Anna Deeney, Bella Mhic Ruairi, Brid McCool, Mrs McGinley, Maire O Donnell and Maureen Bonar, who was also in C. Mhuire.

There was also a number of people who preferred to remain anonymous.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to my family, particularly my sister, Hilary, who read the text and my daughter, Heather, for her helpful comments on the early chapters. The assistance of Mary Pat O'Sullivan in the final stages was invaluable.

#### INTRODUCTION

The preparatory system was established in the mid-twenties to ensure a supply of Irish-speaking recruits to primary teaching. It consisted of seven residential colleges, three for boys, three for girls, and one for Protestant boys and girls, in which students who were intended for the primary teaching profession received a secondary education through Irish. This thesis examines its contribution to teacher education during the first four decades of the State's existence. Before the establishment of the Irish Free State, the leaders of the movement for Irish independence were greatly influenced by the ideology of cultural nationalism, and there was considerable public support for the idea that the new Ireland should not only be free, but Gaelic as well. It was envisaged that the education system would play a major role in effecting the gaelicisation of the new State, and the teaching of the Irish language in primary schools was crucial to this plan.

The majority of primary teachers, however, knew very little Irish. It was estimated that, out of approximately 12,000 teachers in 1922, the number who had certificates to teach Irish was as low as 1,107.<sup>4</sup> To enable all serving teachers to become fluent in the language, the Government introduced a short-term series of summer courses.<sup>5</sup> Its long-term strategy was to gaelicise the existing training colleges so that all future teachers would be fluent in Irish and capable of teaching through Irish. To assist in the gaelicisation of the training colleges the preparatory system was set up. It was envisaged that the system would provide student-teachers with access to second-level education at a

time, when it was becoming increasingly apparent that only students who had passed the Leaving Certificate Examination, would be able to complete the training college course successfully. This was particularly important as existing recruitment sources, the monitorial system and the old pupil-teacher scheme, were failing to do so. It was also envisaged that the preparatory system would provide a supply of Irish-speaking students from the Gaeltacht.

This thesis will explore the background to the establishment of the system, how it functioned, its strengths and weaknesses, why it was allowed to continue without fundamental changes for so long, and why the system ended in 1961. In addition it will attempt to assess the contribution of students from the colleges to the gaelicisation policy and to Irish education.

From the middle of the nineteenth century the use of the Irish language had been declining and the size of the Gaeltacht had been contracting. The founding of the Gaelic League in 1893, and the growth in support for cultural nationalism, led to hopes that the use of the language could be revived and detailed plans for its preservation were drawn up by the League. This thesis discusses the reasons for the decline and examines the efforts of the Gaelic League to revive the language. In addition it considers why the decline continued, despite the best efforts of the League. It will argue that the influence of the League diminished once independence was attained, and that the Civil War, which followed independence, effected a considerable change in the attitude of both the leaders of the new State and of the general public to the gaelicisation policy. Furthermore it

claims that efforts to gaelicise the new State failed, because the policy was overambitious, ill-thought out, and over-dependent on the schools, and the civil service. Moreover, the poor state of the country's finances resulting from the Civil War, made Governments unwilling to allocate scarce resources to the language.

The thesis examines the educational context in which the preparatory system was established and analyses opposition to its establishment. It discusses why two important professional groups, the inspectors and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, were against the system. It explores the role of the INTO in the implementation of the gaelicisation policy, particularly its part in the First National Programme Conference with its disastrous recommendation that infants should be taught through Irish only, and its role in the Second National Programme Conference, where the programme was modified. It assesses the INTO's *Inquiry into the Use of Irish* in 1942, and its *Plan for Education*, with its radical proposals for recruitment, published in 1947. It concludes that the Government's dismissive attitude to the findings of the *Inquiry into the Use of Irish* was a major factor in the teachers' strike in 1946.

The role of the preparatory system as a method of recruitment to primary teaching is discussed, and its success in providing well-educated students for the training colleges at a time when the failure of existing recruitment systems was becoming increasingly apparent. The thesis contends that the preparatory system was successful in providing the training colleges with well-educated students, fluent in Irish, and capable of completing

the third-level course successfully, during a difficult transition period for recruitment, but that after ten years the system should have been considerably modified.

In examining the educational context, the thesis investigates the workings of the Department of Education and argues that many of the problems concerning the preparatory system arose from incompetent planning by its officials. This incompetence was clearly demonstrated by the failure to estimate accurately the number of trained teachers required in the thirties, which had disastrous consequences for recruitment. Furthermore it was again obvious in the fifties, when the acute shortage of trained teachers showed the inadequacies of the preparatory system as a means of recruitment.

A key factor which bedevilled the preparatory system from the very beginning was the continuous dissension between the Departments of Education and Finance. The thesis deliberates on the relationships between the two departments and maintains that the failure of the new State to reform the civil service, in 1922, was a primary cause of the conflict. As the majority of civil servants stayed *in situ* after independence, there were many, including most of those in Finance, who had little sympathy for the gaelicisation policy, and this explains the sceptical view which Finance had of the preparatory system from the very beginning. This attitude contrasted strongly with that of Education, where ardent Gaeilgeoiri, fervent exponents of the gaelicisation policy, were promoted to the highest posts as soon as the Free State Government took over responsibility for education. In addition the failure to reform the civil service meant that Finance had control over the expenditure of other Departments. The thesis asserts that, due to

incompetent planning by the Department and a lack of experience in education of those in senior posts, excessive amounts of money were spent on the preparatory colleges and that these factors contributed to a deterioration in relationships between the two departments, which was further compounded by poor personal relationships between ministers in Fianna Fail Cabinets. The thesis will argue that the poor relationships between Finance and Education were of major importance in allowing the system to continue unchanged for so long, as Education feared that even the smallest change would be perceived as a victory for Finance.

Throughout the history of the preparatory system the role of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, the most powerful body in Irish society at that time, was of crucial importance. Moreover, the history of the period clearly demonstrates the Department's submissive attitude to the Church. The least hint of the Hierarchy's disapproval was sufficient for the Department to timidly abandon any proposed educational reform. The thesis contends that the bishops had a not inconsiderable role in the management of the preparatory colleges and that fear of upsetting the Hierarchy was an important factor in successive Governments allowing the system to continue for as long as it did, as certain aspects of the system more than fulfilled the bishops' requirements for student-teachers. These included the emphasis on the religious formation of students, with daily Mass, evening prayers, weekly Confession and an annual three-day retreat. Furthermore each Roman Catholic college, with the exception of C. Einne which was run by diocesan priests, was run by a Religious Order, chosen by the bishop in whose diocese the college was located, and the staff included a full-time chaplain. In addition the bishop was

manager of the college, and all major decisions, including teaching appointments, were subject to his approval. As the colleges were totally financed by the State, the Church had control of six well-run, well-maintained colleges and it was more than happy to maintain the *status quo*. In support of this view, the thesis will maintain that it was not until the scandal at C. Einne in 1956, which showed the weaknesses of the system, that the Hierarchy turned against it, and this was a significant factor in the decision to end the system in 1959.

This thesis will contend that the preparatory system was a successful educational experiment for it achieved the primary aim of those who founded it: the provision of the training colleges with well-educated students, fluent in Irish, and able to teach through Irish. The colleges also inculcated in the students other cherished objectives of the founders, such as a gra for Irish, a love of their country, and a respect for their Church. It will be maintained that the system's success was due to its reliance on the 'total immersion method' of learning a language. Each college was a 'mini-Gaeltacht' with all activities conducted through Irish. This thesis acknowledges, however, that the system had certain fundamental flaws. The founders' view that a large proportion of native speakers was necessary for success was a mistake, as was the belief that the colleges had to be in the Gaeltacht. It concludes that the insistence that Gaeltacht students be given preferential treatment, and that places be allocated to students from each Irish-speaking area, were disastrous mistakes.

The thesis will examine how the students were selected, where they came from, and why they entered the colleges. It concludes that the system had a number of weaknesses: the age of entry, segregation of students from those intended for other careers, the fee system, and the fee repayment agreement. It discusses why efforts were not made to eliminate these faults, particularly after the confidential Report of the Inspectors' Inquiry into the Preparatory Colleges in 1938. It also probes the workings of the colleges and investigates criticisms of the curriculum: that it was too narrow, that Latin was neglected, and a modern language was not included. It considers other criticisms of the system: that it encouraged unsuitable people to enter the teaching profession, that many students entered the system simply as a means of acquiring secondary education, and that discipline in the colleges was too rigid. It concludes that there was some truth in these criticisms but that over-all, the vast majority of students from preparatory colleges were successful teachers who spent their whole careers in primary teaching. Furthermore the thesis reaches the conclusion that the colleges must have provided a good education as so many of their former students have been successful in all walks of life, but particularly in the area of education, where many are still involved today.

The thesis queries whether the system could have survived in a different form and points to the way in which C. Moibhi continued from 1969 – 1995, though it recognises that it was not without drawbacks. It concludes, however, that the gaelicisation policy failed because it had no support outside the school environment, while the failure of politicians to set an example by speaking the language led to the policy becoming the subject of ridicule. Moreover, due to reforms in recruitment, introduced in the late fifties, the

preparatory system became unnecessary, while the wide-ranging changes in Irish society in the sixties, plus the introduction of free second-level education for all, meant that the Irish language was no longer the dominant focus of the education system.

Very little research has been done in this area, apart from a thesis completed by Sr. Deborah Lynch, 'The Preparatory Colleges, 1926 – 1960,' for an M.Ed. degree at University College Galway in 1994, which relies mainly on published material; primary source material being confined to a certain amount in respect of C. Ide. Some useful material is also to be found in a thesis, 'The Irish language as a curricular element in Irish Primary Education in the period, 1831 – 1935,' completed by Katherine Doyle for an M.Ed. degree at the University of Dublin in 1982. Two other works about the system are 'An Ghaeilge sa choras bunoideachais,' by Breandan O Croinín, in *Oideas* 33, 1988, and 'The Preparatory Training Colleges,' by Sean O hEilí in *Oideas* 28, 1987, while *Colaiste Einde 1928-78*, (Clodoirí Lurgan, Indreabhan, Co na Gaillimhe: 1978) a collection of poetry, essays and recollections, published by a group of past pupils to mark the college's golden jubilee, gives insights into the life and history of the Connacht boys' college.

Papers from the Departments of the Taoiseach, Finance, and Education, as well as Roinn na Gaeltachta, containing much useful information and located in the National Archives, are the major source of manuscript material used in this thesis. In addition the papers of leading national figures from the period, such as Ernest Blythe<sup>11</sup> and Richard Mulcahy,<sup>12</sup> in UCD Archives, were helpful as were materials available at the Dublin Diocesan Archives, relating to leading Church dignitaries, such as Archbishops Byrne<sup>13</sup> and

McQuaid.<sup>14</sup> Other useful sources of material included papers at Galway Diocesan Archives, and the records of the Religious Orders which ran the colleges: the Christian Brothers' Archives, York Road, Dun Laoghaire; the De La Salle Brothers' Archives, at The Provincialate, Howth Road, and the Mercy Order's Archives at Tuam. Additional primary source material was located in the colleges. The Annals of C. Ide and an address book of all the students were located at the college in Ventry, Co. Kerry, while Ballyconnell House, Falcarragh, Co. Donegal, former home of C. Bhride, is developing an archive on that college. In addition each of the colleges was visited and subsequently, access was gained to the old registers of C. na Mumhan, C. Iosagain, C. Moibhí, C. Mhuire and C. Bhride.

Much information regarding the colleges was received from former students through the use of questionnaires. By writing to the heads of those colleges, still in existence as educational establishments in the early 1990s, the names and addresses of former students and teachers were discovered. Questionnaires were sent to them and in some cases, these were followed up with personal interviews or telephone conversations. Seventy questionnaires were returned and, subsequently, approximately twenty-five former students and teachers gave more detailed accounts of their experiences at the colleges.

#### FOOTNOTES TO INTRODUCTION

<sup>2</sup> C. Bhride, C. Mhuire, and C. Ide were for girls

<sup>10</sup> INTO, A Plan for Education, (Dublin: INTO, 1947)

<sup>11</sup> See p. 60, n. 50

<sup>12</sup> See p. 107

 p. 93
 Dr. John Charles McQuaid succeeded Dr. Byrne in 1940 and held the post until 1972. See pp. 372 - 374

<sup>1</sup> C. Chaoimhin, C. Éinne, and C. na Mumhan were for boys

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> C. Moibhi was for Protestant boys and girls

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Report of Department of Education, 1924 - 25 - 26, p. 31
<sup>5</sup> These lasted from 1922 to 1925.
<sup>6</sup> Between 1911 and 1925 the number of native speakers declined by 59,198

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The First National Programme Conference was held in 1921 to devise a new curriculum for the primary school.

<sup>8</sup> The Second National Programme Conference was held in 1925.
9 INTO, Inquiry into the Use of Irish as a Teaching Medium to Children whose Home is Language is English, (Dublin: INTO, 1942)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Dr. Edward Byrne was Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin from 1921 – 1940. See

## SECTION 1

TOWARDS A NEW IRELAND

#### **TOWARDS A NEW IRELAND**

### Overview

In this section an attempt is made to establish the context in which the preparatory system was established. It will be argued that in the early years of the struggle for independence the Irish language became the symbol of cultural nationalism and that there was considerable public support for efforts to preserve the language. But much of this support evaporated following the Civil War, which greatly weakened the country's economy and threatened the stability of the new State.

In Chapter 1, Part (i): The Origins of the Gaelicisation Policy, an examination is made of the condition of the Irish language in the nineteenth century, and of attempts to revive it. The contribution of the Gaelic League<sup>1</sup> and its role in nurturing the desire for separatism, is analysed. It will be argued that the influence of the League was at its greatest in the years immediately before independence, when its educational policies were incorporated into the work of the Ministry for Irish,<sup>2</sup> established by the First Dail, in 1919.

The role of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation in establishing the First National Programme Conference<sup>3</sup> is discussed and its acceptance of the First National Programme,<sup>4</sup> which gave the Irish language a dominant place in the primary school curriculum.

In Chapter 1, Part (ii): The Educational Background to the Establishment of the Preparatory Colleges 1922 – 1926, the educational context in which the preparatory system was established is examined: a denominational system of education, dominated by the Roman Catholic Church, where the majority of people received only primary education. Difficulties regarding recruitment to primary teaching are considered. It will be established that the preparatory system was set up to solve three problems: firstly, to assist the gaelicisation of the training colleges by ensuring that a large number of students were fluent in Irish. Secondly, to produce candidates, who were sufficiently well-educated to be able to complete the training course satisfactorily, as the failure of existing recruitment schemes: the monitorial system, and the old pupil-teacher scheme, was becoming increasingly apparent. Thirdly, it was envisaged that increased numbers of teachers would be required following the introduction of a School Attendance Act. A further factor was the need to provide second-level schools in the Gaeltacht. In addition an examination will be made of the role of Ernest Blythe, 5 who as Minister for Finance from 1922 to 1932, played a major role in establishing the preparatory system, .

This chapter will also consider opposition to the system, particularly that of the inspectorate, the INTO, and Finance. It will demonstrate that the opposition of the inspectorate soon changed, as the personnel were replaced by enthusiastic Gaeilgeoiri, but that opposition from the INTO and Finance increased.

In Chapter 11, The Background to the Establishment of the Preparatory Colleges: 1926 – 1932, an examination will be made of life in the Gaeltacht in the light of the

findings of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta,<sup>6</sup> and its endorsement of plans for the preparatory colleges. It will be argued that the Government's failure to respond positively to the Commission's recommendations, particularly to its proposals regarding the provision of second-level education in the Gaeltacht, showed that the gaelicisation policy was no longer a priority, and that, subsequently, efforts by the Government to revive the language were confined to two areas: the education system and the civil service.

This chapter includes an analysis of the relationship between teachers and the Department and it will be demonstrated that the over-zealousness of inspectors in enforcing the First National Programme increased teachers' grievances about the gaelicisation policy and led to the INTO organising the Second National Programme Conference, in 1925. The thesis reviews the evidence given to the conference by a number of senior inspectors, and analyses the condition of primary education, depicted by them. It will suggest that while the modifications to the programme, introduced by the conference, helped to ease tensions for a while, the inspectors' lack of sympathy for the difficulties of the teachers in learning the language, added to their grievances over salaries, made relationships problematic.

# **FOOTNOTES**

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> See p. 20 <sup>2</sup> See pp. 26 - 36 <sup>3</sup> See pp. 42 - 50 <sup>4</sup> See pp. 44 - 45 <sup>5</sup> See p. 60, n. 50 <sup>6</sup> See pp. 104 - 125 <sup>7</sup> See pp. 137 - 156

### **CHAPTER 1**

## THE BACKGROUND

# Part (i): THE ORIGINS OF THE GAELICISATION POLICY

The struggle for Irish freedom had two fundamental aims: to win independence from England, through armed rebellion, and to develop a new State with its own separate Irish identity. Everything English was to be discarded as alien and replaced by a form of cultural nationalism, which emphasised the language, history, and distinctive Irish culture of the new State. The vision of a new Ireland, symbolised by the Irish language, inspired the struggle for independence and the phrases: 'Ireland free' and 'Ireland Gaelic' became synonymous. The first piece of legislation passed by the new parliament, an Act to establish a Constitution, embodied this dream; Article 4<sup>2</sup> declared the national language of the Irish Free State, (Saorstat Eireann), to be the Irish language. Indeed the determination that the Irish language should have a prominent place in the new State had grown during the struggle for independence, and during the early years of the twentieth century the language had come to symbolise Irish nationalism to such an extent, that in the final years of British rule, the language and the struggle for independence were intertwined. However, by the time independence was finally achieved in 1922, the language was in terminal decline. Nevertheless, the dream of restoring the language was to become a major aim of Government policy for several decades. Moreover, there was a naïve belief that once independence was obtained, the Irish public would support efforts to gaelicise the new State, and little account was taken of factors such as the costs involved, the poor economic condition of the country, the difficulties in learning the language, or that the use of the language, as a living tongue, was declining. The fact that

the policy began at a time, when the nation was suffering from the trauma of a post-colonial mentality, meant that it could never be rationally, or, dispassionately, examined. Those who criticised the policy risked being branded enemies of the State by the defenders of the language, who became more and more fanatical in their zeal to revive it. Furthermore growing disenchantment among the public, with the politicians following the Civil War, led to increased public dissatisfaction with the language policy.

The major thrust of the gaelicisation policy soon devolved on the schools and the civil service. The primary school system became the main thrust of the Government's education policy, and primary teachers the immediate focus for action, once the Free State was established. To ensure a supply of Irish-speaking students to the training colleges seven preparatory colleges were founded. This chapter will examine how the language issue came to assume such significance: firstly, in the struggle for independence; secondly, in the life of the new State, and thirdly, in the education system.

In the early twenties, there was widespread public support for the aspirations expressed in the new Constitution with all political parties in agreement, and for three decades successive Governments saw the education system as the key to successfully reviving the language. Indeed so keen were politicians that the new State should be Gaelic-speaking that the meeting of the First Dail, in January 1919, was conducted largely in Irish, and a Minister for the Irish Language was appointed before a Minister for Education.<sup>3</sup> By June 1920, the Ministry for Irish had reported on the position of the language and produced a scheme for its preservation.<sup>4</sup> In the early twenties enthusiasm for the language was widespread. Many county councils levied a penny rate for language promotions,<sup>5</sup> and the public flocked to language classes.<sup>6</sup> The influence of the Gaelic League,<sup>7</sup> an organisation founded in 1893, to restore the language as a living tongue, was at its strongest and there were few dissenting voices from the new education policy, summarised as:

The strengthening of the national fibre by giving the language, history, music, and tradition of Ireland their natural place in the life of the school<sup>8</sup>

The Irish language, however, had declined steadily in the nineteenth century. In the fifty years, from 1861 – 1911, the number of native speakers decreased from about a quarter of the population, approximately one million people, to 500,000.9 This decline has been attributed to the establishment of the national school system in 1831, and its failure to include Irish in the curriculum. Irish had been ignored until 1879, when it was added to the list of Extra Subjects, such as Latin and French, which might be taught outside ordinary school hours. It was not until 1901 that the subject was adopted to any great extent in national schools. Even then, as the school programme was very full, permission to teach Irish during ordinary school hours was not availed of to any considerable extent. Furthermore, such teaching was ineffective as little effort was made to present Irish as a living tongue, and the teachers were ill-equipped, both in the language and in teaching methods. 10

There were other significant factors which contributed to the language's decline. By the beginning of the nineteenth century the use of English was widespread and Irish was spoken, mainly, in the poorer and more inaccessible parts of the country. <sup>11</sup> The desire to acquire English was given further impetus by famine and emigration, which characterised the first half of the century. In addition English was perceived as necessary for advancement at home, and as the language of necessity for life abroad, while Irish was regarded as the badge of social inferiority at home, and of economic disadvantage abroad.

The low esteem in which native speakers held the language was constantly referred to by the new State's leaders. Typical of such references were remarks by W.T. Cosgrave, <sup>12</sup> President of the Executive Council, who declared that Irish had become 'a badge of poverty and backwardness.' Similar sentiments were expressed in a report to the Ministry for Irish:

Those in Irish-speaking areas have long felt that poverty and destitution follow the use of Irish. This feeling must be dispelled and no better means of dispelling it could be adopted than the giving preference to speakers of Irish when appointments are being made provided they are suitable. <sup>14</sup>

A further significant factor was the role of one of the most influential bodies in the country, the Roman Catholic Church, which was not conspicuous in its efforts to halt the language's decline; indeed the contribution of English-speaking emigrants and missionaries from Ireland to that Church's development as a world faith was not inconsiderable. There were however, some bishops, such as the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. W.J. Walsh, 15 who were supporters of the League.

Throughout the early years of the twentieth century the language continued to decline:

Table 1.1: Decline of the Irish Language 1911 – 1925

No. of Native Speakers

Gaeltacht Breac-Ghaeltacht 1911 149,677 165,827 1925 146,821 110, 585

Decline 3.856 = 0.4% 55.342 = 30% Total decline 59.198

Source: Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 4

One of the greatest difficulties faced in the early 1920s by those who set about restoring Irish was the structure of the language. There was no standardised spelling, vocabulary, or grammar. Irish was spoken in a number of areas, each with its own dialect: Connemara, Cork, Kerry, Donegal, Waterford, Clare, and Mayo, being the most prominent among them. When the Irish Free State was set up, an effort at standardisation was made with the introduction of Roman script for use in official documents. However, for school books the Gaelic script was retained, which greatly added to the complexities of teaching Irish, particularly when the Department of Education misguidedly placed the emphasis on writing, instead of on speaking the language.

The lack of literature in Irish, classical, fictional, or functional, was a further difficulty. When the Gaelic League was founded, in 1893, there were only six books in print in Irish in the whole country. <sup>18</sup> At the beginning of the 19th century, an awareness of the literary value of the language had developed, in certain strands of society, and the need to preserve the language led to the founding of a number of academic societies: The Gaelic Society of Dublin in 1806; The Iberno-Celtic Society in 1818; The Ulster Gaelic Society in 1830; The Irish Archaeological Society in 1840; The Celtic Society in 1845, and The Ossianic Society in 1853. They paid little attention to speaking the language but concentrated on publishing old manuscripts, which were of little interest to the public. An exception was the Ulster Gaelic Society which made efforts to provide Irish teachers in areas where the language was still spoken. In 1876, the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language was founded, and from it developed the Gaelic Union in 1882, which produced an official paper, *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge*, the first time in which modern Irish

was used as a means of communication.

The establishment of the Gaelic League was of major significance because it played an important role in providing an intellectual rationale for a separate Irish identity, and its vision for the language permeated the struggle for independence. Unlike the earlier societies, it concentrated on the spoken language, and focused on the formal educational system as a means of extending the use of Irish. Founded by Fr. Eugene O'Growney, 19 Eoin MacNeill,<sup>20</sup> and Douglas Hyde,<sup>21</sup> its objectives were: firstly, the preservation of Irish as the national language of Ireland, and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue; secondly, the study and publication of existing Gaelic literature and thirdly, the cultivation of a modern literature in Irish. The League played an important role in providing a cultural platform for the development of a separate Irish identity and succeeded in altering the public's attitude to the language. The League's vision for the language was of major significance because it came to permeate the whole national movement, and the crusade to restore Irish went hand in hand with the struggle for political independence. Moreover, many of those involved in the 1916 Rising, and the War of Independence were members of the League. In the early years of the twentieth century the League's membership grew considerably. 22 It also had branches overseas in Glasgow, London, Paris, Louvain, Chicago, Boston, New York, Rome, and Buenos Aires. 23 Other organisations which contributed to the movement for an Irish-Ireland were the Gaelic Athletic Association,<sup>24</sup> founded in 1884, and Sinn Féin, started by Arthur Griffith<sup>25</sup> in 1905.

The League's educational policy was significant because it focussed, not just on achieving a place for Irish in the curriculum, but also on teaching methods and teacher training, and by degrees its objectives were achieved. From 1898, a pupil could choose Irish as an optional subject in the entrance examination to training college, and, in 1900, Irish became one of fourteen optional subjects from which a student had to take only one. That same year the teaching of Irish as an optional subject during ordinary school hours was sanctioned. Competent teachers were paid a fee of ten shillings, per pupil, per school year, for satisfactory instruction given systematically for at least one hour weekly outside school hours.

In 1904, the League achieved a major gain when the first Bilingual Programme of Instruction was sanctioned by the Commissioners of National Education for use in schools in Irish-speaking and partly-Irish-speaking districts.<sup>27</sup> The League's pressure resulted in the Bilingual Programme being used in 239 schools in the Gaeltacht<sup>28</sup> in the school-year 1921/22, as well as Irish being taught as a subject in about 1,900 schools out of a total of 8,000 schools throughout the country.<sup>29</sup> Further successes gained by the League were the inclusion of Irish in the curriculum of the National University, and the appointment of Hyde,<sup>30</sup> and MacNeill,<sup>31</sup> as professors of the university in 1908. The League also made efforts to train teachers of Irish to teach classes run by their branches, and to assist this work, Irish colleges were founded. The first such college, Colaiste na Mumhan, was established in Ballingeary in 1904. Eventually there were thirty colleges running courses for teachers, who wanted to teach Irish as an extra subject, or to teach the Bilingual Programme.<sup>32</sup> These colleges were successful and, between 1904 and 1922,

over four thousand teachers: 3187 females and 1072 males, obtained bilingual certificates through attending their courses while almost four thousand: 2,398 females and 1311 males, obtained certificates at examinations conducted by the Commissioners of National Education.<sup>33</sup>

Many of these changes were effected by the skilful use of propaganda, chiefly devised by Padraig Pearse. A man of many talents, a distinguished writer, poet, and educationist, the fanatical zeal with which he pursued his beliefs led to his execution for taking part in the 1916 Rising. He had a profound influence on the Gaelic League and on the gaelicisation policy of the new State. Born in 1879, the son of an English father and Irish mother, he was educated at the Christian Brothers' School, Westland Row, and UCD. Subsequently, he qualified as a barrister at the King's Inn but practised briefly. At the early age of sixteen, he set up the New Ireland Literary Society, where his dedicated service included frequent contributions of poems and articles to its journal, and the reading of papers at its meetings, a pattern he was to repeat the following year when he joined the Gaelic League. From that time, 1897, until he co-founded the Irish Volunteers in 1913, Pearse served the League with a passionate devotion, immersing himself in its activities and becoming a member of its executive committee in 1898. That same year, his first visit to the Aran Islands had a considerable effect on him; he developed a lifelong devotion to the Gaeltacht, which from then on he visited three or four times a year. However, his view of the Gaeltacht was somewhat romanticised. He idealised the people and had a sentimental view of their life, failing to recognise their abject poverty.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Pearse became a force to be reckoned with in the League. In 1903, he became editor of the League's paper, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, a task he approached with missionary zeal. Ceaselessly in its editorials, he exhorted his readers to dedicate themselves to the language:

To preserve and spread the language, that is the single idea of the Gaelic League.... We have a task before us that requires self-sacrifice and exertion as heroic as any nation ever put forth.... Woe to the unfortunate Irishman who by his lethargy, his pride, his obstinacy, or his selfish prejudice, allows the moments to pass, or impedes this national work until it is too late. 34

During this period Pearse's skills as a writer and public speaker developed and his interest in education increased. As a teacher he had considerable experience, having taught classes run by the League and later in Alexandra College and Westland Row CBS. He was also an examiner in Irish History for Clongowes Wood College, and ran classes in Irish Language and Literature at UCD. A renowned critic of the education system and its examination orientation, (which he condemned in the pamphlet, *The Murder Machine*<sup>35</sup>) his greatest wish was to have his own school in which to put his educational theories into practice.

Pearse was one of the few revivalists to study education systems in other countries. In 1899, he represented the League at the Eisteddford in Wales. While there he visited schools and interviewed the secretary of the Cardiff School Board, gathering information on bilingualism, which was to become the prime focus of his educational policy. He was also a strong advocate of the Direct Method<sup>37</sup> of teaching languages as well as of the use of modern teaching aids. In June 1905, he spent a month in Belgium studying the

educational system there. He visited schools in Brussels, Malines, Antwerp, Ghent, and Bruges, and subsequently, formulated a set of proposals which were to be the basis of his own educational experiments:

- 1. Every child has a right to be taught his mother tongue
- 2. Every child ought to be taught at least one other language as soon as he is capable of learning it
- 3. Such second language should be gradually introduced as a medium of instruction in other languages
- 4. All language teaching should be as far as possible on the Direct Method. 38

Pearse's ideas were an advance on the League's educational programme. Hithertofore it had advocated bilingualism in Gaeltacht schools only, but Pearse believed that bilingualism should be in operation in schools throughout the country. In September 1908, Pearse opened his first all-Irish school, Scoil Eanna, at Cullenswood House, Ranelagh. Encouraged by this effort at establishing an Irish-Ireland school he moved two years later to The Hermitage, Rathfarnham, where the larger premises and spacious grounds allowed him to indulge his penchant for outdoor pageants and plays. As a young boy, he had been greatly influenced by tales of mythical heroes, such as Cuchulann, the Red Branch, and the Fianna, and they inspired many of his dramas for the pupils. However, his inability to finance the school eventually forced its closure, after only two years.

Pearse had many talents but his execution for his part in the 1916 Rising and the myth which developed about him and his persona obscured his ability as a propagandist, writer, poet, playwright, and educationist, and overshadowed the reality of his contribution to the

development of the League and the language revival. He successfully popularised Gaelic League meetings, making them into social occasions with music, drama, and dancing, which filled a vacuum in the social life of Irish towns and villages. For much of his life Pearse had little interest in politics, but under the influence of revolutionaries, such as Sean McDermott and Tom Clarke, his leadership of the League began to take a political stance. In 1913, he co-founded the Irish Volunteers and, subsequently, joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood. The infiltration of the League by members of the IRB resulted in the involvement of many Gaelic Leaguers in the 1916 Rising.

Pearse's influence lived on long after his death. Indeed much of the inspiration for the new State's language policy came from Pearse and because of the heroic status conferred on him following his execution, it was accepted without question. An example of this was the introduction to *Notes for Teachers*, <sup>42</sup> a handbook for teachers on how to teach the Irish course as laid down in the new programme in 1926, which in the Introduction cites his method of teaching Irish:

Pearse's method of making Irish the official language of the school was the simple expedient of speaking it until the sheer force of hearing it made the new language familiar. "Céard é?" he would ask in bewilderment the pupil who addressed him in English. 43

Later the same booklet<sup>44</sup> stressed 'the supreme importance of conversation in the scheme of the Direct Method,' (much favoured by Pearse) which it claimed was 'made manifest in the programme where it occupies first place.'<sup>45</sup> The 1916 Rising and its aftermath gave a considerable impetus to the development of cultural nationalism and injected a new enthusiasm into the campaign for the incorporation of the language and aspects of Irish culture, such as history, literature and music, into the school curriculum:

Inspired by the ideology of cultural nationalism it was held that the schools ought to be the prime cultural agents in the revival of the Irish language and native tradition which it was held were the hallmarks of nationhood and the basis for independent statehood<sup>46</sup>

In keeping with this ideology, one of the earliest actions of the First Dail in October 1919 was the establishment of a Ministry for Irish, (Aireacht na Gaeilge). It was not until August 1921 that the first Minister for Education in the Provisional Government was appointed. The influence of the Gaelic League was probably at its strongest during this period and the appointment of Sean O Ceallaigh, <sup>47</sup> J. J. O'Kelly, known as 'Sceilg', President of the League, as Minister for Irish, and, subsequently, as Minister for Education, reinforced the League's influence as did the incorporation of the League's educational programme into the work of the Ministry. In addition the establishment of a Ministry for Irish was a clear indication that the Provisional Government was in earnest in its endeavours to gaelicise the new State, and the high priority it attached to the language was further indicated by the fact that the Ministry for Irish was one of only five ministries in the first Cabinet, which did not include a Ministry for Education. In the financial estimates for the first half of 1921, the Dail voted the sum of £5,000 to the Ministry for Irish, a budget considerably more than that allowed for agriculture or labour.

Central to 'Sceilg's' policy was the primacy of the Irish language in both the primary and secondary school curricula. He prepared plans for a system of organisers to oversee language development in the Gaeltacht, and gave consideration to the publication of reading material in Irish. Aware of the low esteem of Gaeltacht people for the language, he initiated a public relations campaign to raise its standing and developed a system of incentives, medals, cups, and scholarships, to foster interest in Irish. An assessment of the cost of his programme was included in the *Report of the Ministry for Irish* in June

1920.<sup>48</sup> A notable feature of 'Sceilg's' plan was his determination that the revival movement should be as inclusive as possible, and in establishing a committee to investigate the condition of the language and to produce plans for its revival, he was careful to ensure that it included representatives of the Governing Body of the Gaelic League and Irish-speaking representatives of national organisations. Moreover, Cathal Brugha, <sup>49</sup> Minister for Defence, and Ernest Blythe <sup>50</sup> Minister for Trade, both known for their enthusiasm for the language, were members as were Piaras Béaslaoi <sup>51</sup> and Pádraig Ó Caoimh. <sup>52</sup> Indeed the holding of weekly meetings, at such a critical time, showed the importance the fledgling State attached to the language. This committee drew up the *Report of the Ministry for Irish* <sup>53</sup> which was presented to the First Dail in 1920, and it laid the foundations of much of what was to be the gaelicisation policy of the Irish Free State.

The committee envisaged involving as many areas of the country's life as possible in the gaelicisation process such as parish committees, co-operative societies, public boards, and national institutions. <sup>54</sup> It also laid down a programme for schools, especially in the Gaeltacht, where the committee adopted, with slight modifications, the Gaelic League Educational Programme. This prescribed teaching for three kinds of districts: Purely Gaelic, Semi-Gaelic, and Purely English-Speaking. In Purely Gaelic districts, Irish was to be the medium of instruction for all subjects, with Irish History, music and dancing featuring prominently. In Semi-Gaelic districts, a bilingual programme was to be followed, where possible, with Irish as the official school language for roll-call and orders. In Purely English-Speaking districts, Irish was to be the official school language, as in the semi-Gaelic districts, and to be taught for vernacular use to each child, for at least one hour per day in every school, which had a competent Irish teacher. In schools where teachers were unable to teach Irish, travelling teachers were to be provided, and a scheme to increase the number of travelling teachers by offering scholarships was devised. Eight scholarships to the total cost of £100 to the Irish College in Dublin for the

month of August were offered annually by the Gaelic League, and the Ministry recommended that the Dail should sponsor a similar scheme. In addition it recommended that a further eight scholarships to the value of fifty pounds each, to a preparatory training college be awarded to eight Gaeltacht residents, 'as an encouragement to young Irish speakers and as a practical step towards the Irishising of Primary Education.' Moreover, the Ministry envisaged that arrangements could be made with a teaching Order to provide instruction through Irish. <sup>55</sup>

Many of these ideas were to form the basis for an experimental system of preparatory colleges, set up by the Ministry for Irish, in the early twenties. Indeed so strong was the influence of the League at this time that serious consideration was given to its being formally recognised as a Department of the Dail but 'on full consideration' it was decided that 'the time was not quite ripe for such a step.' The report went on:

Pending the establishment by the Dail of a Ministry of Education, the Gaelic League as now constituted can legitimately engage in agitation for the better treatment of Irish by the existing Educational Boards, a Department of the Dail could not. 56

A further consideration was finance where large sums of money were provided for the teaching of Irish by the administration. In the final years of the old colonial regime the country was administered by a number of Government Departments. Responsibility for education lay with the National Board and policies for the primary school were developed by the Commissioners of National Education. Following the general election of 1918 when Sinn Fein candidates had an overwhelming victory a Provisional Government was

set up in Dublin and the First Dail met in 1919. It appointed a number of ministries including the Ministry for Irish.

As the Irish Free State had not yet been established it was not until 1922 that the Irish Government was in control of the country's finances. This was why it was decided not to establish the Gaelic League as a Department of the Dail because it would have meant that the not inconsiderable sums of money paid by Government Departments would have had to be foregone. This was of considerable importance as the National Board paid more than £14,000 in fees alone for the teaching of Irish during 1917 – 1918.

The Board also paid the salaries of organisers and inspectors, awarded prizes to King's Scholars and made payments of five pounds to the Colleges of Irish for every teacher, who obtained a certificate of competency to teach Irish and, subsequently, taught the language for twelve months.<sup>57</sup> A further source of finance was the Department of Agriculture, whose grants to the Irish Colleges, the Ministry for Irish acknowledged, 'assisted very materially' in maintaining the colleges. The report concluded:

It is obvious that the Dail could not be expected to finance the teaching of Irish on anything approaching this scale; and as in the case of the Gaelic League, it is thought more prudent not to ask the Colleges for the present, to come formally under the jurisdiction of the Dail. 58

However, the Ministry did propose, with the approval and co-operation of the Gaelic League, taking over the direction and financing of the language revival in the Gaeltacht.

Its plans included developing eight Irish-speaking counties: Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Kerry, and Waterford, with Cork divided into two areas, and providing each of them with a resident organiser, at a salary of £300 a year. Each county was to be divided into ten districts, which the organiser was required to visit once a quarter, spending a week in each district, visiting the schools, as well as the branches of the Gaelic League, and reporting on the progress of the language. In addition he was to assist in the establishment of Irish-speaking co-operative societies, and 'to interest himself generally in the smooth and efficient working of the county organisation as a whole.' <sup>59</sup>

To assist in preserving the language, it was laid down that parish committees were to be established. These committees were 'to embrace representatives of parents and of all national organisations, to ensure, if necessary, the fullest co-operation to enforce the introduction of the approved programme into all the schools under their influence.<sup>60</sup> The committees were also to concern themselves in organising competitions between Irish-speaking families, and in promoting the language and traditions of the country. The establishment of parish committees was a radical proposal, which had they been successful, might have developed into school management committees.

The Ministry envisaged involving public boards in the task of restoring Irish, and 'lines of activity' were submitted to the Ministry of Local Government. Furthermore its recommendation that the language issue be borne in mind by these boards, foreshadowed what later became Government policy in the new State: only those able to pass an examination in Irish would be employed in the public service. Surprisingly the report contained only a brief reference to that most influential of institutions - the Roman

Catholic Church: 'Its (the language's) position in relation to the Church and other institutions is having consideration'. <sup>61</sup>

The level of public support for the language policy was at its highest at this time, and 'Sceilg' reported addressing large gatherings, mainly under the auspices of the Gaelic League, throughout the country: 'The progress of the language everywhere is not only very marked but very encouraging'62he claimed, as he looked forward to the Ard-Fheis the following August, where the whole policy would be surveyed. One feature, however, soured his success: none of it was reported in the Dublin daily press, which he described as having 'boycotted' the meetings. The lack of press coverage may indicate prejudice against the language movement, or simply that the numbers attending were exaggerated. As 'Sceilg' was a journalist, he would have been adept at ensuring the maximum publicity for the meetings.

The Report of the Ministry for Irish included a detailed estimate of the costs of the programme totalling £10,000.<sup>63</sup> This was less than the amount spent by the National Board and showed the failure of the Ministry to comprehend the magnitude of the task required to restore the language. The report ended with a strong recommendation that the publication of standard works in Irish, and of popular reading matter, should not be subsidised by the Dail. 'Sceilg' wrote:

Personally I cannot bring myself to recommend anything more in this direction than the issue of two volumes a year -translations, if desirable. The circulation of an edition of each volume would be ensured by offering them as prizes to advanced pupils in the primary schools. Even with liberal financial resources I could not recommend the free distribution of literature, or its issue by the Dail except on a practical business basis. 64

This recommendation was accepted with disastrous consequences; there was no popular reading matter in the language and, without large subsidies, it could not be produced; what money was available was used to produce text-books, which were in very short supply. A memo to Blythe<sup>65</sup> on the shortage of text-books reported in 1920:

The lack of texts is felt in connection with every grade of education. Practically every available writer of Irish is now at work to remedy this want. <sup>66</sup>

Unfortunately, the content of most textbooks consisted of material suitable for rural communities, with little relevance or interest to those living in an urban environment. It was not until 1926, that An Gum, an Irish-language publishing branch of the Department of Education was established.<sup>67</sup> In its early days it concentrated mainly on text-books. Subsequently, it directed its efforts at producing reading material for Irish speakers but its output never exceeded more than an average of thirty titles annually.<sup>68</sup>

The short three-page Report of the Ministry for Irish was to be of fundamental importance in laying the groundwork for the campaign to revive the language, and it seems to have been accepted without much debate; it does not seem to have occurred to anybody that, at the very least, expert advice on the introduction of a programme of bilingualism into the education system should be obtained or that the experience of other countries should be studied. Moreover, Pearse was the only member of the State's founding fathers to have examined bilingual education in other countries. In 1926, the

Committee on the Inspection of Primary Schools<sup>69</sup> looked at education in Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Germany-Prussia, Germany-Bavaria, Holland, Italy, Scotland and Switzerland, and included detailed reports of aspects of their educational systems, though strangely no mention of their curricula.

In August 1921 the Ministry for Irish produced another report, *The Report of the Ministry of the National Language*. Though this was longer, amounting to eight pages, it is notable for what was left out, and for the way it glossed over difficulties, which had been encountered. Moreover, much of it was devoted to aspirational material, rather than detailed planning, a weakness which was to characterise the policy for the gaelicisation of the State. But its greatest significance lies in the lack of realism, displayed in two important areas: firstly, its dealings with the Roman Catholic Church, and, secondly, the financial implications involved in the language revival. The report began by outlining how consultations with the Roman Catholic Church, hinted at in the earlier report, were progressing: 'Bishops in Irish-speaking areas where the Hierarchy wield most influence in educational matters, with two exceptions, have promised active co-operation in the revival of Irish'. In addition it noted that in the Dioceses of Tuam, Kerry, and Waterford, only teachers with satisfactory certificates for teaching Irish would be appointed.<sup>71</sup>

The writers appeared satisfied with this progress regarding the Church's involvement in educational matters and no reference was made to the Church's power in ecclesiastical issues, such as the appointment of priests; no effort seems to have been made to persuade the bishops that only Irish-speaking priests be appointed in the Gaeltacht. This was probably due to the exalted position of Roman Catholic bishops of the period, and the customary deference and piety shown by those involved in the new State towards them. Furthermore the memory of Pearse's challenge over the teaching of Irish at Maynooth College<sup>72</sup> in 1909, which had resulted in his being denounced by the Hierarchy, was still

quite fresh five years after Pearse's death. Later on, there is this significant remark: 'Moreover, the Church alone could restore and perpetuate the national language, if only it so willed.'<sup>73</sup> The failure to engage the active support of the Hierarchy was to be costly; many bishops gave tacit support to the language's revival, and certain Religious Orders were noted for the zeal with which they taught the language, but, overall, the Church's role was passive and while it did not oppose the Government's policy, it did not greatly assist it either. The lack of success attending the establishment of parish committees is significant, and probably resulted from the Church's fear that their establishment could lead to the erosion of its powerful role in school management.

The report contained no mention of how the plans outlined for the language's development in the earlier *Report of the Ministry for Irish to the First Dail*, <sup>74</sup> in 1920, had progressed; neither were there any references to the work of county organisers and parish committees. Moreover, references to education were confined to reporting the results of school competitions, the lack of text-books, and complaints about certificates awarded by the Irish Colleges. <sup>75</sup> Concern was also expressed about the status of Irish in the National University, and County Councils were urged to use their scholarships to further the language policy and 'the nationalising of the university.' <sup>76</sup> That Irish would become essential in the public service was again signalled, and the need to convince Gaeltacht people that Irish speakers would obtain posts in the public service once the new State was established, was reiterated:

The Dail must convince the people of Irish speaking areas that henceforward those who know Irish will have equal opportunities to obtain appointments with those who know English.<sup>77</sup>

The report noted with satisfaction, that the campaign to make the country bilingual was progressing, with public bodies urging that Irish speakers be chosen as chairmen in Irish-speaking areas and elsewhere, while documents such as cheques, addresses, titles etc

were being printed in Irish. A further significant change was the gaelicisation of people's names as an indication of their support for the language policy. In addition the tone of the report was noticeably optimistic: 'In spite of the disturbed state of recent times the use of Irish in all these spheres is extending visibly'<sup>78</sup> but how justified was this optimism? Even at this early stage of the revival campaign there were signs of a lack of enthusiasm but they were glossed over; the lack of success in the competitions for medals at primary schools was put down to the irregular attendance of pupils, while the failure to attract as many entries as anticipated, at Intermediate level, was excused on the grounds that 'very many Intermediate teachers have been imprisoned.'<sup>79</sup> Furthermore small successes were magnified: the Gaelic League was commended for co-operating actively in the work despite its grievous suffering 'through the attention of the army of occupation', <sup>80</sup> while 'the public's interest in the language had not lessened' and the report again recorded that since the establishment of the Ministry for Irish, the Minister had addressed 'great hostings' around the country.<sup>81</sup>

In the midst of such romantic idealism, however, one paragraph stood out with its reference to the cost of primary education, 'Alien Estimate for primary education in Ireland over five million pounds.' Again the failure to evaluate the implications of the cost of the language revival was clearly demonstrated. There was a simplistic notion that such a major programme could be undertaken by providing a few extra scholarships and prizes, and, with independence, the people would suddenly become ardent Gaeilgeoiri. The report concluded sanguinely:

When we are again free to urge and address our people to do their duty by their mother tongue prompt and satisfactory results may be safely anticipated. 83

These two documents: The Report of the Ministry for Irish to the First Dail, <sup>84</sup> and the Report of the Ministry of the National Language, <sup>85</sup> laid the foundation for the new State's gaelicisation policy, and they illustrate the sharp contrast between the plans for the gaelicisation of the country, which were vague and sketchy, and those for the gaelicisation of the education system, which through the incorporation of the Gaelic League's educational programme, showed a considerable degree of planning. When the Irish Free State was finally established, in 1922, the gaelicisation policy was based on these two reports. Furthermore the new State's education policy owed much to the work undertaken by the Ministry for Irish, and the establishment of the preparatory college scheme was based on the earlier experience of the Ministry.

The period, 1919 – 1922, was to be crucial in the development of the gaelicisation policy and certain aspects of de Valera's<sup>86</sup> leadership during this period raise questions: firstly, why was a Ministry for Irish established? Secondly, why was 'Sceilg' appointed Minister for Irish? Thirdly, why did the Ministry for Irish cease? It has generally been assumed that de Valera created a Ministry for Irish in 1919, instead of a Ministry for Education, as a means of avoiding difficulties with the Roman Catholic Church at that time.

The appointment of 'Sceilg' as minister was due to certain factors: firstly, he was president of the Gaelic League and the Government wanted to ensure the co-operation of that very influential body. Secondly, his appointment strengthened the links between the Dail and the League. Thirdly, his political views were very close to those of de Valera. Unfortunately, 'Sceilg' was neither a scholar, nor an intellectual, and had little interest in education. A great propagandist, his primary interest was the promotion of Irish nationalism and he did not devote much time to education, though the adoption of the

Gaelic League's Educational Programme by the Ministry may have been due to his influence. The Indeed his service as minister was criticised by his successor, Michael Hayes, who asserted that 'Sceilg' was 'invisible for much of the time.' Moreover, Hayes declared that he could not recollect anything that 'Sceilg' did as Minister for Irish. This was not surprising as 'Sceilg' was in prison from November 1919 until February 1920. An indication that his colleagues were not entirely happy with his performance was the appointment of Frank Fahy as his assistant in August 1920. Furthermore there was considerable opposition to 'Sceilg' in the Gaelic League and he came close to failing to be re-elected president of the League in August 1921.

There has been much speculation as to why de Valera did not continue the Ministry for Irish after 1921. As President of the Executive Council he had a decisive say in which ministries were set up. By August 1921, de Valera felt in a position to establish a Ministry for Education, and despite the criticism of 'Sceilg' as Minister for Irish, he appointed him to the new post. This appointment did not last long, however, as shortly afterwards 'Sceilg' sided with de Valera in voting against the Treaty and, subsequently, lost office. As the Treaty and anti-Treaty sides opposed each other, there was much confusion and January 1922 saw the strange anomaly of two Ministers for Education, Michael Hayes and Fionan Lynch, 90 being appointed to succeed 'Sceilg.' Indeed the disappearance of the Ministry for Irish and the absorption of its role into the Department of Education was an indication that the education system was expected to bear the brunt of efforts to revive the language. A further reason for the disappearance of the Ministry for Irish may have been that divisions over the aims of the language policy were becoming apparent. While there was general agreement amongst the leaders of the new State that the language should be the main part of the focus on cultural nationalism and that its revival was necessary to emphasise the separation from England, there were those who wanted an Irish-speaking State, while others favoured an emphasis on bilingualism.

Indeed there were different views in the Cabinet as to what could be achieved. For Blythe<sup>91</sup> the education system was only one part of a process by which the whole country would be transformed into an Irish-speaking nation:

The Government can transform the schools inside a generation. It will take very much longer to transform the homes of the people - the greatest of all schools and to re-establish Irish as a living speech in the professions and business careers. It cannot be left entirely to the gradual processes of Gaelicisation that are beginning to operate from the schools. English-speaking parts of the country are being reconquered for Irish: regions in which Irish is still a living speech are in the position of a beleaguered fortress<sup>92</sup>

That radical action was needed to save the language was accepted by Eoin (John) MacNeill, <sup>93</sup> who was to become the Irish Free State's first Minister for Education in August 1922. He forecast that 'if this generation does not save Irish, it will be dead in twenty or thirty years, <sup>94</sup> but he did not believe that the school system could revive the language. As early as 1893, he wrote: 'No language has ever been kept alive by mere book-teaching, <sup>95</sup> and from this view he never deviated, later saying: 'You might as well be putting wooden legs on hens as trying to restore Irish through the schools' system.' <sup>96</sup>

MacNeill, who with Hyde, <sup>97</sup> and O'Growney, <sup>98</sup> founded the Gaelic League in 1893, <sup>99</sup> was a man of strong religious convictions. He was highly regarded by the Roman Catholic bishops, who saw him as a strong protagonist of the view that the social and religious sides of life must be given as much prominence as the political side. <sup>100</sup> Though he made few radical changes as minister, he did consider some innovative measures, such as unifying primary and secondary teaching into one national teaching profession <sup>101</sup> in an effort to resolve recruitment difficulties. In his view:

The National Government should regard general education as a unity and ought not to be forced by the existing sharp divisions of general education into primary and secondary to base its future

policy on this division unless it has clear and eminent advantages.' 102

MacNeill also advocated equality of opportunity for all, though he limited it to 'each according to the measure of his capacity, within the bounds of what is feasible.' In addition he considered making secondary education more easily available by establishing secondary 'tops:'

Schools in rural towns, primary in character with a central school for boys and girls, primary and secondary without any dividing line Attached to central schools teachers with special qualifications in certain subjects such as, music etc. The existing class of secondary schools would continue if parents select them but would develop into higher preparatory vocational schools to prepare for entrance to universities, training colleges etc. <sup>104</sup>

But he had a fear of State control and believed that 'the State should exist only to subserve and protect the people's well-being.' According to him, the State should be 'the instrument of the public good ... confined to its proper and necessary functions, developing to the highest degree the direct personal duty and responsibility of the individual citizen.' Moreover, his fear of State encroachment and his appointment to the Boundary Commission, together with a conservative mind-set, prevented him from making radical changes in education. He was responsible, however, for the implementation of the Government's language policy, which had been formulated before his appointment as minister, and it was during his tenure that the preparatory system was established.

Despite his Gaelic League background, MacNeill was more realistic about the prospects of reviving the language than some of his colleagues in the first Free State Government. Many of them held a rather sentimental view of the language, naively believing that the general public would support any Government efforts to save it. Typical of their views were those expressed by President Cosgrave 107 in March 1925:

The Irish people as a body recognise it to be a national duty, incumbent on their representatives and their Government as on themselves to uphold and foster the Irish language, the central and most distinctive factor of the tradition which is Irish nationality and that everything that can be rightly and effectively done to that end will be in accordance with the will of the Irish people. <sup>108</sup>

He believed the language had been 'waylaid, beaten, robbed, and left for dead by the wayside and we have to ask ourselves if it is to be allowed to lie there, or if we are to heal its wounds, place it in safety and under proper care, and have it restored to health and vigour'. <sup>109</sup>

The new State's civil servants, however, were not so sanguine about the prospects of reviving the language. As early as 1915, P.S. O'Hegarty, <sup>110</sup> a member of the IRB, who became secretary of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs in 1922, commented: :

We are constantly told that as Irish was threshed out of Irish children by the cane so it can be threshed into them. But it was not the cane, nor any sort of direct compulsion, that lost Irish. It was the fact that English had more to offer. The Irish boy in the forties was offered official life, the churches, the professions, the British Empire and America as his scope. He was offered with them one of the greatest of literatures and the key to modern civilisation and development. Irish offered him none of those things. It has practically no modern literature, its vocabulary is centuries out of date, it is not habitually used anywhere in Ireland for official, church, business or professional purposes nor is it possible so to use it. It has no international value outside philology.

The early leaders were agreed, however, upon one measure which the Government could take to increase the prestige of the language:

Irish is dying because the people of the Gaeltacht think that Irish and poverty and social inferiority are inextricably connected. The Government must show by acts, appointments, and salaries, the use of Irish as a real language; that Irish is a superior language, socially and economically, in other words that Irish pays. 112

Those with this view believed that the gaelicisation of the public services would make a significant contribution to the language revival, and proposed that Irish be made essential for all public services, central or local. They also believed that where there was not a sufficient supply of candidates those, with a knowledge of Irish, should be placed in a preferential position. The lack of realism of those who favoured the language revival was nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in this policy. In attempting to gaelicise the public service they overlooked the fact that at the establishment of the Free State, over 21,000 civil servants transferred from the old regime to the new State, and many of them regarded the language policy with scepticism.

One of the prime exponents of the gaelicisation policy was Ernest Blythe, <sup>115</sup> who as Minister for Finance in the twenties, wielded considerable influence in Government. A firm advocate of efforts to improve the economic condition of Irish-speaking districts, he was Minister for Finance at a time of great economic hardship and his action in reducing teachers' salaries in 1923, and old age pensions the following year, gained him a reputation for fiscal rectitude. Blythe made one of the most significant contributions to the development of the gaelicisation policy, and it was due to him that the preparatory system developed in the way that it did. The main features of his policy were: firstly, the use of propaganda to improve the status of the language among native speakers<sup>116</sup> and among the public generally. Secondly, the improvement of conditions in the Gaeltacht, and thirdly, the promotion of the language by gaelicising the public service. He greatly favoured the preparatory college system. Moreover, he was particularly attached to the Connemara Gaeltacht and devised special regulations to assist students from that

Gaeltacht to gain entry to the preparatory colleges. Throughout his life he tried to use modern media, film, books, magazines, newspapers, and theatre, to promote the language. In later life he was often viewed as a bitter old man for his continual reproaches over the failure of the language policy. Some of his difficulties may have come from his background: Blythe was an outsider, a self-educated northerner, a Protestant, and Minister for Finance at a time of great difficulty.

#### THE FIRST NATIONAL PROGRAMME CONFERENCE

The new emphasis on the language in the schools created difficulties for the INTO, many of whose members had been involved in the various movements for the language's preservation and revival. Teachers were prominent in the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language, and had been largely responsible for the inclusion of Irish as an extra subject in the national school curriculum. Moreover, from the earliest times members of the INTO were firm supporters of the Gaelic League's language policy, but the organisation's attitude to the League changed during the 1919-1922 period. This was due to three factors: firstly, the INTO considered the League's programme for the gaelicisation of primary schools unrealistic and over-ambitious. Secondly, teachers feared that the League's programme would be imposed on the schools, and thirdly, League members had become very powerful locally, and their authoritarian attitude frightened many teachers. Aware of the depth of feelings about the language, and realising that the schools would have a significant role to play in its revival, even before the Treaty was signed, delegates at the annual Easter Congress of the INTO in 1920, directed the Central Executive Committee to hold a representative conference to form 'a programme, or a series of programmes, in accordance with Irish ideals, due regard being given to local needs and views."117

Known as the First National Programme Conference, it was to have far-reaching consequences as its decisions were to affect primary education for decades. It was convened by the INTO to ensure that teachers would have a major say in drawing up the new school programme. The organisation thus hoped to out-manoeuvre the Gaelic League (and its more extreme supporters in Sinn Fein) which had drawn up its own programme for primary schools. Under it, Irish was to be taught for vernacular use to each child, for at least one hour, per day. The League maintained that after two years of such teaching 'it should be possible to commence teaching writing, grammar, oral comprehension, and kindergarten, in Irish and English, on alternate days, and in five years' time, it should be possible to have a bilingual programme in all schools.' 118

Teachers considered this programme unrealistic because in formulating their scheme the Gaelic League had failed to take into consideration that 'the inclusion of Irish in the curriculum meant the exclusion of some other subject, or subjects.' Alarmed at such unrealistic expectations, and aware that zealous Sinn Fein enthusiasts were creating difficulties at local level for teachers who failed to comply with their demands, the INTO feared that a threatened campaign of school strikes, and calls for the dismissal of teachers in Irish-speaking districts, who were unable to teach the full programme, would spread. 120

Among those invited to take part in the conference were the Professors of Education in the universities and University Colleges; representatives of the Gaelic League; the Ministry for Irish; the General Council of County Councils; the National Labour Executive; the ASTI; the Catholic Headmasters' Association; the Christian Brothers and the School Masters' Association. The invitation was accepted by the Ministry for Irish; the General Council of County Councils; the Gaelic League; the National Labour Executive; and the ASTI. Representatives from these bodies, together with three

representatives from the INTO, constituted the conference. The refusal by certain bodies to be represented was significant, for it meant that the conference membership was composed mainly of people who were Irish language enthusiasts.

At the first meeting held on January 6th, 1921, the conference's aims were agreed as:

- (1) The adoption of a minimum National Programme
- (2) Additional Subjects and the circumstances under which such additional subjects should be made compulsory.
- (3) The consideration of the best means of applying items (I) and (2) including the question of National and Local Administration, Training Facilities, Teaching Staffs, School Premises, Attendances, Provision of Text Books etc.

As was to be expected from the composition of the conference, the Irish language was to take pride of place in the programme, while other aspects of Irish culture e.g. dancing, music, and history, were to feature prominently.

At the conference's first meeting it was decided that in schools, where the majority of parents of children objected to having either Irish, or English, taught as a compulsory subject, their wishes should be complied with. This was the only recommendation printed in heavy black type in the report. A political consideration, it seems to have been included to counteract parents' fears about the new school regime. The conference met during 1921, and issued its report on January 28th, 1922. Most of its twenty-five pages related to the primary school programme, with little attention to other aspects of education, though teacher training and school attendance were dealt with in Part 111.

The main features of the programme drawn up by the conference were a concentration on a comparatively small number of key subjects, and an insistence on the Irish language and the History and Geography of Ireland as essential parts of this programme. <sup>121</sup> The conference recommended that the programme's obligatory subjects should be Irish, English, Mathematics, History and Geography, Needlework for girls (in third and higher standards) Singing, and Drill. This meant the elimination of Drawing, Elementary Science, Cookery and Laundry, Needlework (in lower standards), Hygiene, and Nature Study, as formal obligatory subjects, and the modification of the programme in History, and Geography, (which became one subject) and in Singing, and Drill. Teachers generally were pleased with these changes as they had long complained that the programme contained too many obligatory subjects.

Teachers gained further freedom under the new programme with regard to the grouping of classes and the allotment of time. Moreover, the only subject with a time restriction was Irish, where it was laid down that each pupil should receive instruction for 'at least one hour per day as an ordinary school subject.' Teachers also gained freedom to draw up special programmes, subject to departmental approval 'to suit the circumstances of their individual school taking into account the number and attainments of the staff, the local needs etc.' 123

On the face of it, teachers appeared to have made significant gains. The Irish requirement was not so alarming, when taken in conjunction with the conference's recommendation to help teachers acquire a knowledge of the language. Furthermore it strongly recommended 'that the Government take immediate steps to provide facilities, whereby existing teachers would at the earliest possible date, be fully trained and equipped for the carrying out of the programme, especially with regard to the Irish language.' It also recommended that attendance at classes, or courses, should not entail a curtailment of the usual holidays allowed to teachers, and that the expenses of teachers attending courses should be defrayed by the Educational Authorities. It further suggested that where no member of

staff was competent to teach Irish, an extern teacher should be employed.

But the change, which aroused the most controversy, was the proposal that Irish should be used as a teaching medium. For senior standards it recommended that Geography, History, Singing, and Drill, should be taught, through Irish, while the most radical proposal of the conference was that the work of the Infant Classes was to be entirely, through Irish, with no teaching of English. This was going further than the Gaelic League had proposed.<sup>124</sup>

While teachers generally accepted that Irish should be an obligatory subject, there was much debate about its use as a teaching medium. Many teachers and educationists believed that this would be psychologically damaging to young children. The INTO delegates were doubtful as to the practicability of this recommendation and thought it premature. However, the conference was influenced by the Rev. Timothy Corcoran, Litt.D., Professor of Education in UCD, who according to the report 'placed the benefit of his advice and experience at the disposal of the conference.' Corcoran maintained that this was the best way for children to learn a new language. He believed that at the infant stage children's minds were especially receptive and that this was the surest way of laying the foundation of an oral knowledge of the language.

Corcoran, a Jesuit, was Professor of Education at UCD from 1909-42, and during that period had a major influence on many aspects of Irish education. Born at Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, in 1872, he was educated at Clongowes Wood College, where he was an outstanding student. He entered the Irish Jesuit Novitiate in 1890, and taught Classics and History at his old school from 1894-1901. He studied Philosophy at Louvain from 1901-1904, while at the same time taking his BA degree from the Royal University of Ireland. In 1903, he graduated with a first-class honours degree in History, and was

awarded the Royal University medal for Latin and English verse. Three years later, he obtained the Higher Diploma in Education and was presented with a special gold medal for outstanding results. He studied Theology at Milltown Park from 1906 – 1909, when he was appointed Professor of the Theory and Practice of Education at UCD. The first holder of the office, he held the position until shortly before his death in 1943. Amongst his first students was Eamon de Valera, who shared Corcoran's vision of a Catholic, Gaelic Ireland. Subsequently, Corcoran canvassed successfully for de Valera's appointment as Chancellor of the National University in 1921.

In 1911, Corcoran was awarded a Litt.D. degree for his 'Studies in the History of Classical Education: an examination of Fr. William Bathe's *Janua Linguarum* (1611).' The following year he founded *Studies*, the Irish Jesuit quarterly. A prolific writer, he wrote extensively on education, and contributed to a number of influential Catholic journals, including *The Irish Monthly*, which he edited, and *The Irish Catholic*, of which he was joint editor.<sup>127</sup> In much of his writing he tried to direct attention towards the European mainland, and away from England and English educational methods and outlook.

Corcoran's impact on Irish education was most marked after the establishment of the Irish Free State. Of his influence during that period, Joseph O'Neill, secretary of the Department of Education, <sup>128</sup> wrote:

In the reconstruction of the Irish State he was from the beginning the master-builder in education.... The commissions on education, set up in 1921, were guided so largely by him that it may be said that the curricula, aims and methods in primary and secondary education which emerged from them were, in the main, the works of his hands. 129

Champion of an extreme Roman Catholic view of education, Corcoran believed that religion should permeate all areas of instruction, and because of his belief in the corrupt nature of the child, he maintained that strict authoritarian teaching was necessary in schools. Totally against child-centred education, he was opposed to the progressive methods of Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Montessori, advocating instead memorisation, repetition, and competitive examinations. Thoroughly conservative in his views, he opposed the teaching of modern languages at secondary schools, wanting instead to revive Classics. As a man he was known for his precision in planning, his endless capacity for detail, and his insistence on punctuality. These characteristics allied with a forceful manner of expression, a liking for his own way, and a dour, abrupt, aloof personality made him highly unpopular. Nevertheless his views on the gaelicisation policy effected the education system for decades, and his influence on Irish education continued long after his death.

A staunch advocate of the gaelicisation policy, he blamed the national school system for the widespread decay of Irish between 1830 – 1850, and believed rather simplistically that the system which crippled the language could just as easily revive it, blithely disregarding other factors, such as the Great Famine and emigration, which also contributed to the language's decline. Corcoran maintained that the language could be revived successfully by the education system, if two conditions were fulfilled: firstly, that only Irish was used in Infant Classes, for he was convinced that 'the totality of command of Irish as a vernacular depended on the entire use of the period pre-primary: the period of the child's language absorption,' <sup>130</sup> and secondly, that native speakers were recruited as teachers for pre-primary language work. Corcoran maintained that 'Irish-speaking districts of first quality could provide hundreds of such adolescent teachers-to-be every year,' and claimed that 'with few exceptions, girls who have had a full primary education in Irish are natural teachers.' Such was Corcoran's influence, that though he

himself, neither spoke Irish, nor took steps to learn it, 132 his view prevailed and his assertions were accepted, without any evidence that they were possible. In their enthusiasm for the language his hearers believed what they wanted to hear.

The INTO delegation was divided on the issue of teaching through Irish, and the matter was referred to the CEC, which convened special branch meetings in September 1921 to discuss the draft programme. To allay widespread teacher uneasiness expressed at these meetings, the Executive submitted a resolution to the Programme Conference asking that 'teachers, who owing to circumstances of age and opportunity are unable to take up or fit themselves for the teaching of Irish would not be penalised on that account.' Subsequently, the matter was referred to the Minister for Irish, J.J. O'Kelly, 'Sceilg' and a deputation was sent to him to discuss it.

In his response, published as an Appendix to the Official Report, <sup>135</sup> the Minister reiterated that the teachers' uneasiness was unfounded. He recognised that 'facts as they exist at present must be taken into account, that only a small proportion of teachers were fully competent to carry out the programme in its entirety.' In addition he gave an undertaking that in putting the programme into operation, there would be no undue hardship inflicted on any teacher who was unable to fit himself for the teaching of Irish. He warned, however, that teachers below a certain age would be expected to avail of the facilities afforded them to learn the language, and to obtain a certificate of competency to teach Irish. <sup>137</sup> These assurances satisfied the INTO.

The conference's report was quickly accepted by the Government and the new programme came into operation for all national schools on 1st April, 1922. Such, however, was the zeal of the Provisional Government to begin the gaelicisation policy

that on 1st February 1922, the day on which the Irish Free State Government took over responsibility for national education, the Minister for Education issued Public Order No. 4, in which he ordered that, from the following St. Patrick's Day, Irish was to be taught, or used as a medium of instruction, for not less than one hour each day in all schools, where there was a teacher competent to teach it. 138

Years later, T.J. O'Connell<sup>139</sup> who was secretary of the First National Programme Conference tried to justify the INTO's stance. He wrote that the new programme offered many advantages: a reduced curriculum, freedom for teachers to use their initiative in dealing with the programme as a whole, sympathy and understanding of their problems, and a prospect of improved conditions as regards attendance, school premises, and other aspects of school life. Furthermore he asserted that a minority report, or even a reservation on one point, would have impaired the report's value. How the educationally unsound. Moreover, the INTO, which had called the conference in the first place to ensure that teachers' voices would be heard with regard to Irish in the curriculum, conceded more than the Gaelic League had demanded in its Educational Programme. The INTO hoped that by accepting teaching, through Irish, it would gain two other cherished aims for its members: a compulsory School Attendance Act and graduate status for primary teachers. Both were recommended by the conference report.

Furthermore with regard to school attendance, the report noted that the average daily attendance was just below seventy per cent of those enrolled, and that approximately 100,000 children of school-going age were not on the roll of any school. In addition it noted that the average school-leaving age was eleven and strongly recommended that legislation be introduced, as soon as practical, to ensure that all children, between five and fourteen, attended school daily.

With regard to teacher training, the report strongly recommended that the training of primary teachers be conducted directly by the universities in a four-year course with a degree awarded on its completion and provision be made for existing teachers to qualify for a degree. For the early twenties these were radical proposals for teacher training, as it was not until the end of the decade that the majority of primary teachers entering training had received secondary education. <sup>142</sup>

Despite the report's strong words, however, a School Attendance Act was not passed until 1926, and though a conference attended by the INTO and representatives of the three colleges of the National University of Ireland in 1923, agreed a scheme of university training for primary teachers 143 it was never implemented. 144

The programme's significance, however, cannot be overestimated for it was to remain virtually unchanged for almost forty years. Under it, the main thrust of primary education became the promotion of the Irish language, and Irish, not only assumed a new and dominant role in the curriculum, it was also to be used as far as possible as the medium of teaching.

But those, who called the First Programme Conference in 1920, had not foreseen that the War of Independence, which ended with the Truce on 11th July 1921, and the subsequent signing of the Treaty on 6th December 1921, would be followed by a bitter Civil War from 28th June 1922 until 24th May 1923. The effects of the Civil War, in which 665 were killed and 3,000 wounded, following so soon after the War of Independence gravely damaged the new State economically, and resulted in 130,000 out of a total population of 2,750,000, being unemployed. <sup>145</sup> But of far greater consequences were its psychological effects, and the deaths during this period of those, who had been foremost in the language revival. In particular the loss of Cathal Brugha 146 in the Civil War, followed by the deaths

of Griffith<sup>147</sup> on 12th August 1922, and Collins<sup>148</sup> on 22nd August 1922, deprived the language movement of its greatest advocates. In addition the discrediting of MacNeill<sup>149</sup> over the Boundary Commission's findings in 1925, meant that plans to revive the language proved much more difficult than had been originally supposed. Moreover, a number of those involved in the Gaelic League, including MacNeill, Beaslai, <sup>150</sup> 'Sceilg,' <sup>151</sup> and Ó Caoimh<sup>152</sup> left politics.

Disillusionment among the public with the politicians, and with the difficulties of learning Irish, soon led to public disenchantment with the revival policy. This was well expressed in the following letter from a priest, Fr. T. Bradley, writing to Patrick McGilligan in 1923.<sup>153</sup>

Teaching through Irish is premature. The teachers are not competent and some of them will never be. It is quite impossible for youngsters, who have learned English as their native tongue, to learn Irish and to master other subjects through Irish at the same time. It is only feasible in Irish-speaking districts. I do not believe in bilingualism though Pearse led us to believe the Belgiums were bilingual. Experience of the Great War convinced me that the bilinguals of Belgium were not a conspicuous number. I met hundreds of Walloons and Flemings, who couldn't understand one another. It was the same with the Welsh. 154

Typical of how things had changed, in a short period, is this description by León O Broin: 155

I had seen in the Central Branch of the Gaelic League and in the Leinster College of Irish the crowds of teachers, civil servants and others that flocked to learn the language in 1922, but the beginnings of a decline of interest had set in as a result of the Civil War and through the discovery that Irish was a difficult language to learn. <sup>156</sup>

Moreover, disillusionment was not just confined to the cities. This letter from a priest, writing, in 1925, about the Gaeltacht of Knockadoon, between Youghal and Ballycotton, shows a similar change:

A priest had summer camps there in July and August. I had hoped to establish a preparatory college from September to June for the Dominican College, Newbridge. But the enthusiasm for the language has died down so much I fear it will be a long time before it will be possible to get a sufficient number of boys in the ordinary way for a school of that kind. Last summer there was a camp with a fully qualified teacher, a native speaker, but the boys were so indifferent to the language that it was impossible to keep the classes going. 157

Years later, in 1949, Blythe<sup>158</sup> admitted that much of the enthusiasm of the early twenties was merely propaganda:

It is an illusion that thirty, forty, fifty years ago young people in the Gaelic League were filled with enthusiasm for the language and, if stirred up again, the language would be saved without effort by the State and Government. I was in the Gaelic League at the height of its popularity and influence. It had zealous and enthusiastic workers. The results were nothing at all like those imagined to-day. The whole effort was little more than a campaign of propaganda which, however, was highly successful in that it convinced a vast majority of people that the Irish language should and could be kept alive. 159

### He went on:

The movement had no effect on the language or the Gaeltacht. It did not prevent decay. It did not succeed in imparting a working knowledge of the language to more than a handful of people in the Galltacht. Only about 200 learned enough Irish to speak it with reasonable fluency and accuracy out of scores of thousands who joined Branch classes. Others learned Irish in schools and colleges at the expense, direct or indirect of the British Exchequer. There was great curiosity about the language. It was thought it could be learned in evening classes once a week for a year or two during the winter. 160

## CONCLUSION

Throughout the struggle for independence the revival of the Irish language was of considerable significance as it had came to symbolise the separate cultural identity of the new State. Much of the philosophy behind Irish cultural nationalism originated in the ideas of the Gaelic League, <sup>161</sup> an organisation in which the early ideas of separatism, held by many of the leaders in the struggle for independence, were first nurtured. Once independence was achieved, the leaders of the Irish Free State in an attempt to emphasise the separate cultural identity of the new State immediately gave the Irish language a prominent place in the nation's affairs.

The language, however, was in decline. The number of native speakers was decreasing and the Gaeltacht was reducing in size. Learning Irish was also problematic as there was no standarised vocabulary, grammar, or spelling.

During the struggle for independence there was much support amongst the public for the gaelicisation policy but because of the poor economic conditions and bitter divisions created by the Civil War, and the loss of many of the most committed Gaeilgeoiri through death, or withdrawal from politics, the public soon lost interest in the language. Attempts to gaelicise the new State had to depend very much on earlier plans, drawn up by the Ministry for Irish during the War of Independence. These had been much influenced by the Gaelic League. The most significant feature of the League's policy was its reliance on the education system. Many of the country's teachers supported the gaelicisation policy and, in 1921, the INTO held the First National Programme Conference<sup>162</sup> to devise a new

programme for schools. This had three main features: firstly, infants were to be taught through Irish only. Secondly, Irish was to be taught for one hour per day in every school, and thirdly, certain subjects were to be taught through Irish.

Once the teaching of Irish became compulsory the necessity to devise ways to ensure that new teachers entering the primary system would be fluent in the language became imperative and the Government fell back on another idea of the Ministry for Irish – the establishment of preparatory colleges.

# FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 1, Part (i)

<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of the Irish Free State, (Saorstat Eireann), 1922, Article 4

p. 2
 <sup>4</sup> *Ibid*.
 <sup>5</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> See p. 20

<sup>9</sup> D.H. Akenson, A Mirror to Kathleen's Face, p. 36. See also R.F. Foster, Modern Ireland 1600 – 1972, (England: Penguin Books, 1988) p. 517

<sup>10</sup> Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, correspondence, statistics, etc (National Archives 8830 Education Central Registry)

11 Ibid., p. 12

William Thomas Cosgrave, (1880 – 1965). Revolutionary and politician. Born in Dublin and educated at James's Street CBS, he was first elected a member of Dublin City Council in 1909. He joined the Volunteers in 1913, and took part in the 1916 Rising, for which he was sentenced to death. The sentence was commuted and he was interned in Wales for a period. He won a by-election for Sinn Fein in 1917 and was Minister for Local Government in the First Dail in 1919. A strong supporter of the Treaty after the death of Collins in 1922 he became acting chairman of the Provisional Government.

Two months later he became President of the Executive Council. He showed a great sense of duty during the difficult early days of the new State when he put a great emphasis on the maintenance of law and order and it was due to his courage and leadership that the fledging State survived. In 1932, he showed great statemanship when he handed over the leadership of the country to a Fianna Fail Government and took his party into opposition following the defeat of his Government. Subsequently, he founded the Fine Gael Party in 1933, and was leader of the opposition until he retired from politics in 1944.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from Cosgrave, President of the Executive Council, to Mulcahy, chairman of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, Report of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, (Dublin: The Stationery Office, 1926), p. 3

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Ministry of the National Language, August 1921, National Archives,

Aireacht na Gaeilge DE2/54, p. 1

<sup>15</sup> Dr. William Walsh, (1841 – 1921). Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. Born in Dublin in 1841, he was educated at Catholic University School and St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. From 1867 – 78 he was Professor of Theology at Maynooth, Vice-President in 1878, and President in 1881. He was appointed archbishop in 1885, a post he held until his death. One of the leading nationalists in the Irish Hierarchy he was a strong supporter of the movement for Irish independence. A scholarly man, he was the first Chancellor of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> D. H. Akenson, A mirror to Kathleen's face Education in Independent Ireland, 1922 – 1960, (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), p. 36

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Report of the Ministry for Irish (Aireacht na Gaeilge) to the First Dail, 11 June, 1920, p. 2

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> The Gaelic Churchman, vol. 111, No. 10, March 1922. See also Leon O Broin, ....just like yesterday...(Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985) p. 67

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Pádraig Ó Brolcháin, chief executive officer, Department of Education, quoted in Report of the Department of Education, 1924 – 25, p. 22

the National University of Ireland. His published works include writings on education, Gregorian music and bimetallism.

The use of an h, instead of an aspirate symbol, was largely necessitated by the cost of producing type and typewriters with Gaelic characters

<sup>17</sup> The Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, Summary of the Report,

(1963) p. 68

Declan Kiberd, 'The Irish Language and Culture,' vol. 5, No. 2, 1981, in *The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies* 1977 – 1981, ed. M.P. Hederman and R.Kearney, (Dublin:

Blackwater Press, 1982) p. 835

<sup>19</sup> Fr. Eugene O'Growney, (1863 – 1899). Scholar and writer. A native of Co. Meath, he was educated at St. Finian's Diocesan Seminary, Navan. As a youth he developed an interest in the Irish language and spent his holidays in the Gaeltacht learning Irish. He was ordained in 1889 and became curate of Ballynacargy, Co. Westmeath. A frequent contributor to the *Gaelic Journal* he became editor in 1891. That same year he was appointed Professor of Irish in St. Patrick's College, Maynooth. He is chiefly remembered for *Simple Lessons in Irish*, first published in the *Gaelic Journal* and *Weekly Freeman*, and, subsequently, in book form in 1894. Due to ill-health he had to leave Ireland for the drier climate of Arizona and died in Los Angeles.

<sup>20</sup> Eoin MacNeill, (1867 - 1945). Scholar, revolutionary and politician. He was born in Co. Antrim and educated at St. Malachy's College, Belfast, and the Royal University. He worked as a court clerk in Dublin where he developed a deep interest in the Irish language. A founding member of the Gaelic League in 1893, he edited the League's first paper, the Gaelic Journal, in 1894, and, later, Fainne an Lae, 1898, and An Claidheamh Soluis 1899. A Celtic scholar, he was Professor of Early and Medieval Irish History at UCD, from 1908 to 1941.

Through the League he encountered members of Sinn Fein and he was chairman of the council that formed the Irish Volunteers in 1913, of which he was subsequently to become chief-of-staff. He countermanded the order for the Easter Rising, which was planned without his knowledge by a secret Military Council within the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Despite this he was sentenced to life in prison in the aftermath of the Rising but was released the following year.

He played a leading role in politics in the early years of the Irish Free State. He was first elected to parliament in 1918, and, subsequently, was Minister for Finance in the First Dail in 1919, and Minister for Industries 1919–21. He took the Treaty side in 1922 and served as the Free State's first Minister for Education from 1922–25. For much of that time, apart from an initial six months, he was absent from the Department due to his work as a representative on the Boundary Commission. His work as its chairman was much criticised and led to his resignation from the Cabinet. In 1927 he lost his seat and left politics. He was responsible for establishing the Irish Manuscripts Commission in 1926 was its chairman and editor-in-chief until 1945. A prolific writer, his major works include *Phases of Irish History* (1919) and *Celtic Ireland* (1921).

Douglas Hyde, or Dubhglas de h-Ide, (1860 – 1949). Scholar and first President of Ireland. He was born at Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon. Son of a Church of Ireland clergyman, he was educated at home and at Trinity College where he was an outstanding student with a command of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, and fluency in French, German and Irish. He originally intended to follow his father into the ministry but changed his mind. In 1888, he was conferred with an LL.D. degree. He took up a post at the University of New Brunswick in Canada in 1891, where he spent a year before returning to settle at Ratra Park in Roscommon. There he devoted himself to literary pursuits and the revival of Irish, which he first learned as a boy from the local people. From them he collected folklore and poetry. He co-founded the Irish Literary Society in London in 1891, and became president of the National Literary Society in Dublin the following year. His first collection of folk-tales, *Beside the Fire*, was published in 1889, and *Love Songs of Connacht* in 1893, the year in which the Gaelic League was founded with Hyde as president.

In its early years he played a dominant role and the League was successful in raising the profile of the language and making it a vital force in the movement for national revival. His 1892 lecture on 'The necessity for De-Anglicising the Irish Nation' marked a watershed in Irish history. In 1909 he was appointed Professor of Modern Irish in UCD, a post he held until retirement in 1932. Unhappy with the League's involvement in the separatist movement he resigned the presidency in 1915. Subsequently he concentrated on his academic pursuits. When the office of President of Ireland was created he was unanimously chosen by all parties and held office as president until 1945.

A prolific writer, his publications include many translations from Irish under the penname, 'An Craoibhin Aoibhinn.' His other writings include *Religious Songs of Connacht* (1906), *A History of Ireland* (1899) and some one-act plays.

The Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, *Summary of Report*, p. 1

<sup>22</sup> The Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, *Summary of Report*, p. 1 S. O Buachalla, *The Letters of P.H. Pearse*, (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1980), p. 469

<sup>24</sup> The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded by Michael Cusack to foster traditional

Irish games, such as hurling and Gaelic football.

Arthur Griffith, (1871 – 1922). Revolutionary and politician. A native of Dublin, he was educated at Strand Street CBS. On leaving school he worked as a printer and journalist. Subsequently, he joined the Gaelic League and the IRB. He spent three years in South Africa and returned to Ireland in 1899 to edit the *United Irishman*, a weekly paper, which ceased publication in 1906 as the result of a libel suit. He then started a newspaper, *Sinn Fein*. Through his writings he advocated passive resistance to English rule in Ireland and the establishment of a national assembly in Dublin. In 1913, he took part in the landing of arms by the Irish Volunteers at Howth. Though he took no part in the 1916 Rising he was imprisoned as an agitator. In 1918 he was elected a TD for East Cavan and, subsequently, was elected Vice-President of the Republic in 1919. During the War of Independence he was imprisoned in Mountjoy Jail in 1920 and 1921. Following the Truce he was one of the delegation, which negotiated the Anglo-Irish Treaty. When de Valera resigned as president on his refusal to accept the Treaty, Griffith was elected in his place. He died suddenly on 12 August 1922.

<sup>26</sup> Report of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, p. 14

<sup>27</sup> Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, Correspondence, Statistics etc. National Archives, 8830 ED Central Registry

<sup>28</sup> Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 14

<sup>29</sup> The Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, Summary of Report, p. 2

<sup>30</sup> See p. 57, n. 21

<sup>31</sup> See p. 57, n. 20

32 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 14

33 The Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, Summary of Report, p. 2

<sup>34</sup> An Claidheamh Soluis, 27<sup>th</sup> August, 1904

<sup>35</sup> Patrick Pearse, The Murder Machine: studies of the English Educational system in Ireland, Bodenstown Series No. 3, (Dublin: Whelan & Son, 1916)

<sup>36</sup> Edwards, p. 107

<sup>37</sup> Only the language being learned is used

38 Edwards, p. 107

39 Ibid., p. 21

40 Sean McDermott was one of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation and was later

executed for his part in the Rising.

- <sup>41</sup> Tom Clarke was the oldest leader of the 1916 Rising. A life-long revolutionary he served many years in prison. He is credited with having kept the revolutionary spirit alive during the gap between earlier revolutionary efforts and 1916. He was executed on 3 May 1916
- <sup>42</sup> Department of Education, Notes for Teachers Irish, (Dublin: Stationery Office, nd)

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> John Coolahan, Irish education history and structure, (Naas: Institute of Public

Administration, 1987), p 38

<sup>47</sup> J.J. O'Kelly or Sean O Ceallaigh, (1872 – 1957). Revolutionary and propagandist. He was born on Valentia Island, facing Sceilg Mhicil. From that developed he developed the nick-name 'Sceilg,' which he was to retain throughout his life. A journalist by profession, he became editor of the *Irish Catholic* in 1916, a post he held for many years. A staunch nationalist he was arrested in February 1917 and deported for making seditious remarks about the Roscommon by-election. He read 'The message to the free nations of the world,' in Irish at the First Dail session in January 1919. That same year he was elected TD for Louth.

A leading Gaeilgeoir, he was honorary secretary of the Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language and a member of the Gaelic League. His appointment as Minister for Irish in the First Dail in 1919 was due to his position as President of the League, which was then a very influential organisation. Much of his time as minister was spent 'on the run' or in prison. In April 1921, he became the first Minister for Education, a post he held until January 1922 when de Valera and his associates resigned. 'Sceilg' took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War. His skill as a propagandist was put to good use and he spent much of his time promoting the anti-Treaty campaign and fund-raising in the United

States. He was the author of Saothar ar Slan i gCéin, Brian Boirmhe and Tiobóid. He also translated a number of plays and was editor of Leabhar Aithriseacht na nGaedhael.

48 Report of Aireacht na Gaeilge to the First Dail, June 1920), National Archives, DE2/54

<sup>49</sup> Cathal Brugha, or Charles Burgess, (1874 – 1922). Soldier and revolutionary. A native of Dublin, he was educated at Belvedere College. He joined the Volunteers in 1913 and took part in the 1916 Rising. As a result of the wounds he sustained he was lame for life. During 1917-18 he was chief-of-staff of the IRA. A member of Sinn Fein, he was chief-of-staff of the Volunteers from November 1917 until April 1919. He was elected a TD for Waterford in the 1918 elections.

As acting president due to the imprisonment of de Valera and Griffith, he presided over the First Dail in 1919. He was Minister for Defence from 1919 – 1922. Strongly anti-Treaty, he fought on the republican side and was a member of the Four Courts Garrison in July 1922. Though he ordered the garrison to surrender, he himself refused to surrender, and was fatally wounded in O'Connell Street.

<sup>50</sup>Ernest Blythe, or Earnán de Blaghd, (1889 – 1975). Revolutionary and politician. The son of a farmer, he grew up near Lisburn, in Co. Down and was educated at the local primary school. A Protestant, he first moved to Dublin, in 1904, to take up employment as a boy clerk in the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. He worked as a journalist in Co. Down, for four years until 1913, when he went to Co. Kerry where he supported himself as a farm labourer, while learning Irish. During his time in Dublin he joined both the Gaelic League and Sinn Fein and was introduced by Seán O'Casey to the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

An organiser for the IRB, he was imprisoned several times and thereby prevented from taking part in the 1916 Rising. He was Minister for Trade and Commerce in both the First and Second Dail during 1919-22, Minister for Local Government, 1922-23, and Minister for Finance, 1923-32 in the Cumann na nGael Governments. Following the assassination of Kevin O'Higgins in 1927, he was Vice-President of the Executive Council and Minister for Posts and Telegraphs from 1927 to 1932. In 1933 he lost his Dail seat and served in the Senate from 1934 to 1936, when he left politics to become secretary of Clendalkin Paper Mills.

Keenly interested in theatre he had a long association with the Abbey Theatre, becoming managing director in 1941. A feature of his policy at the Abbey was the encouragement of plays in Irish. Throughout his life he kept up his commitment to the language and was President of Comhdhail Naisiúnta na Gaeilge from 1946-55. In 1957 he published his two-volume autobiography, *Trasna na Boinne*. In the sixties he served as a member of the RTE Authority and of the Commission for the Restoration of the Irish Language.

<sup>51</sup> Piaras Beaslaoi, (1897 – 1965). Gaelic scholar and writer. He was born and educated in Liverpool. In 1904 he came to Dublin where he became active in the Gaelic League. He took part in the Easter Rising and was imprisoned twice, escaping each time. A journalist, he was editor of *An t-Óglach* and became director of publicity for the IRA in 1921. In

1918, he was elected an MP for East Kerry. He took the Treaty side and later served in the Free State army. In 1924 he left politics to concentrate on his writing.

Pádraig Ó Caoimh, (1897 – 1964). Revolutionary. Born in Roscommon, he was educated at CBS Cork. A teacher, he joined the Volunteers in 1916 and was imprisoned in England from 1920–22. He took the anti-Treaty side and fought on the Republican side during the Civil War. Subsequently, he returned to teaching. In 1929, he became general secretary of the GAA. Páirc Uí Chaoimh is called after him.

53 Report of the Ministry for Irish (Report of Aireacht na Gaeilge), National Archives,

DE2/54

54 *Ibid.*, p. 1

55 Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>57</sup> See p. 21

58 Report of the Ministry for Irish, p. 2

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid., p. 2

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 3. Grants from the Department of Agriculture for Irish teaching to about twenty-four of the thirty or more Summer Colleges then existing, came to

£3,570 - 19s. - 5d. in 1918 -1919

64 Ibid.

65 See p. 60, n. 50

<sup>66</sup> Memo on the Preservation of the Irish Language (UCD Archives, Blythe Papers P24/15)

<sup>67</sup> Dermot Keogh, Twentieth-century Ireland Nation and State, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994), p. 32

<sup>68</sup> Breandan MacAodha 'Was this a social revolution?' in *The Gaelic League Idea The Thomas Davis Lectures*, ed. Sean O Tuama, (Cork: Mercier Press, 1993)

<sup>69</sup> Department of Education, Report of Department Committee on the Inspection of primary Schools, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1927)

<sup>70</sup> Report of the Ministry of the National Language, August 1921, National Archives, DE 2/54

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>72</sup> Edwards, pp. 74 – 78

73 Report of the Ministry of the National Language, p. 1

<sup>74</sup> See p. 27

75 Report of the Ministry of the National Language, p. 5

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8

77 *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5

80 *Ibid.*, p. 8

81 Ibid.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 7

That same year he was elected an MP for Clare. Following the War of Independence he was involved in negotiating a settlement with England but refused to be part of a delegation which went to London for talks with the British Government in 1921. His subsequent refusal to accept the Treaty, which was approved by the Dail, led to the Civil War. In 1926 he founded Fianna Fail, which soon became the largest political party in the country. In 1932, the party was elected to Government for the first time. From then until his retirement from party politics in 1959, he played a major role in Irish public life. He was elected the third President of Ireland in 1959, a post he held for two terms until 1973. <sup>87</sup> See p. 27

Michael Hayes, (1889 – 1976). Politician and academic. A native of Dublin he was educated at Synge Street CBS and UCD, where he later became a lecturer in French. He took part in the 1916 Rising but escaped capture. In 1920, he was arrested and interned. The following year he was elected to the Dail and appointed Minister for Education in 1922. He voted for the Treaty and, subsequently, became Ceann Comhairle in the first Free State Dail, a post he held until 1932. He failed to be re-elected to the Dail in 1933 but later was elected to the Senate where he was a member until 1965. He was appointed Professor of Irish at UCD in 1951.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 8

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>84</sup> Report of the Ministry for Irish to the First Dail, (Report of Aireacht na Gaeilge), June 1920, National Archives, DE2/54

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Report of the Ministry of the National Language, August 1921, National Archives, DE 2/54 This report was made to the Second Dail.

Eamon de Valera, (1882-1975). Revolutionary, politician and statesman. He was born in New York, and grew up in Buree, Co. Limerick. He was educated at Blackrock College and UCD, where he studied Mathematics. Later he became a teacher. He joined the Gaelic League in 1910 and the Irish Volunteers in 1913. He was commandant of the garrison at Boland's Mills during the 1916 Rising. After the Rising he was sentenced to death but was reprieved. As the senior surviving figure from the Rising he became the leader of the republican cause. In 1917, he was elected president of Sinn Fein.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> Frank Fahy was a native of Galway. He was arrested for his part in the supposed 'German Plot' in 1918. That same year he was elected a Sinn Fein MP for Galway. In the first Dail he was assistant to 'Sceilg,' the Minister for Irish. He took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War. When de Valera appointed his first Cabinet in 1932 it was expected that Fahy would be appointed Minister for Education as he had been an able shadow minister but instead he was appointed Ceann Comhairle.

Fionan Lynch, (1889 – 1966). Revolutionary, politician and judge. A native of Co. Kerry he took part in the 1916 Rising and was imprisoned in Mountjoy Jail, where he went on hunger-strike in 1917. On his release he served two further terms of imprisonment in 1918 and 1919. He was an assistant secretary to Erskine Childers on the Treaty delegation. He became one of two Ministers for Education in the Provisional Government in 1922 and Minister for Fisheries from 1922 –1923. Later he left politics to become a barrister and, subsequently, became a judge.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> See p. 57, n. 20

<sup>94</sup> Memo on the Teaching of Irish in Primary and Secondary Schools, UCD Archives MacNeill Papers, LAI/E/25-7

95 Eoin MacNeill, 'A Plea and a plan,' The Gaelic Journal, 4th March, 1893

<sup>96</sup> León Ó Broin.... just like yesterday...., (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985) p. 66

<sup>97</sup> See p. 57, n. 21

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. n. 19

<sup>99</sup> See p. 20

100 Rev. John Ryan, in 'Obituary', Analechta Hibernica, No. 17, 1949

101 Memo on Training Teachers, UCD Archives, MacNeill Papers, LAI/H/134

<sup>102</sup> Eoin MacNeill, 'A view of the State in relation to Education,' *The Irish Review*, 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1922.

<sup>103</sup> Eoin MacNeill, 'Education – the Idea of the State,' *The Irish Review*, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1922

<sup>104</sup>Memo on Training Teachers, UCD Archives, MacNeill Papers, LAI/H/134 <sup>105</sup> Eoin MacNeill, 'Education - the idea of the State', in *The Irish Review*, 28th

October, 1922 106 See p. 31

<sup>107</sup> See p. 56, n.12

Letter from Cosgrave, President of the Executive Council to Mulcahy, chairman of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1925, Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 3

109 Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> P. S. O' Hegarty, (1875 – 1955). Civil servant and writer. Born in Cork and educated at the North Monastery CBS, he joined the postal service in his native city and later transferred to London where he worked from 1902-1913. A member of the Supreme Council of the IRB he swore Collins into that organisation in London. Later he became close to Griffith and adopted his non-violent outlook. As a non-combatant he attempted to bring an end to hostilities during the Civil War. He was appointed secretary of the Department of Posts and Telegraphs in 1922, a post he held until his retirement in 1944. A prolific writer, he was a regular contributor to the *Irish Book Lover* and *Irish Freedom*. His writings include *The History of Ireland under the Union* (1922) and *The Victory of Sinn Fein*. (1924)

111 O Broin... just like yesterday....p. 66

Report of the Ministry of the National Language, 17th August, 1921 National Archives, DE2/54

113 The Gaelicising of Ireland, UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/71

114 Akenson, p. 31

<sup>115</sup> See p. 60, n. 50 <sup>116</sup> See p. 34

117 The Irish School Weekly, 7th January, 1922, vol. LXXI, no. 1

<sup>118</sup> T.J. O'Connell, 100 Years of progress, The story of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, p. 342

119 The Irish School Weekly, 7th January, 1922

<sup>120</sup> O'Connell, p. 342

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Letter from Blythe to Joseph O'Neill, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1931, UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/71Also National Archives Department of Education Papers 21111, Box 462 See p. 57, n. 20

122 Ibid.,

<sup>129</sup> Joseph O'Neill, Studies, vol. xxxii, 1943

131 Ibid.

132 O Buachalla, p. 427, n. 21

136 *Ibid*.

137 Ibid., Appendix 11, p. 31

138 Public Notice No. 4, Concerning the Teaching of the Irish Language in the National Schools, Ministry of Education, Irish Provisional Government, 1st February 1922. See Appendix G, p. 607

T.J. O'Connell, (1882 – 1969). Teacher, trade unionist and politician. A native of Co. Mayo, he was educated at the local national school and St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. He taught for fifteen years as a primary teacher before becoming general secretary of the INTO in 1916. He played a leading role in Irish education for over four decades and took part in many significant decision-making bodies, including the First and Second National Programme Conferences. He was deeply involved in the primary teachers' strike in 1946.

His political career began in 1922 with his election to the Dail as a TD for Co. Galway, which he represented for five years. Subsequently, he was TD for South Mayo, from 1927 - 32, and was also leader of the Labour Party. From 1932 until 1944, he was a member of the Senate. For over thirty years he wrote a column in the Irish School

The National Programme of Primary Instruction, (The National Programme Conference: The Educational Company of Ireland, 1922) p. 4

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>124</sup> See p. 27

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>125</sup>The National Programme of Primary Instruction, p. 3 For details about Corcoran see pp. 46 - 48 126 See p. 61, n. 88

<sup>127</sup> His major works were State policy in Irish Education (Dublin, 1916); The Catholic Schools of Ireland, (Louvain, 1916); The National University of Ireland 1908 - 32 (ed.) (Dublin, 1932) In addition he was involved in drafting the Gaelic League's educational programme of 1919, and was a member of the Molony Committee and of the Dail Commission on Secondary Education

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>128</sup> Joseph O'Neill, (1878 – 1952). Writer, scholar and civil servant. Born in Tuam, Co. Galway, he grew up on the Aran Islands, where his father was stationed with the RIC. He was educated at St. Jarlath's College, Tuam, and Queen's College, Galway. He studied Celtic Languages in Manchester and Comparative Philosophy in Freiburg. In 1908 he joined the Department of Education as an inspector and served in both the Primary and Intermediate Branches. He was appointed secretary of the Department in April 1923. He wrote a number of historical novels, including Wind from the North (1934), Land under England (1935), Day of Wrath (1936), Philip (1940), and Chosen by the Queen (1947) He retired in 1944.

<sup>130</sup> T.J. Corcoran, 'The Native Speaker as Teacher,' in The Irish School Monthly, April 1923, p. 188

<sup>133</sup> Report of the National Programme Conference, Appendix 11, p. 30

<sup>135</sup> Report of the National Programme Conference, Appendix 11, p. 30

Weekly, the official journal of the INTO. In 1968, he published 100 Years of progress the story of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation 1868- 1969 as part of the organisation's centenary celebrations.

<sup>140</sup> O'Connell, p. 353

<sup>141</sup> See p. 27

142 Séamas Ó hÉili, 'The Preparatory Training Colleges,' Oideas, 28, p. 37

143 The Irish School Weekly, 31st March, 1923

144 O'Connell, p. 400

<sup>145</sup> T.P. Coogan, Ireland since the Rising, (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1966), p. 47

<sup>146</sup> See p. 59, n. 49 <sup>147</sup> See p. 58, n. 25

Michael Collins, (1890 – 1922). Revolutionary and politician. He was born and educated in Cork. He worked in the Post Office in London and while there he joined the Gaelic League and the IRB. He took part in the 1916 Rising and in its aftermath he was arrested and interned in Frongoch camp in North Wales. Later he became the leader of the IRB during the War of Independence as director of intelligence he organised many clandestine operations against the British authorities. For these activities he gained renown as a folk-hero. In 1918 he was elected MP for South Cork.

In the First Dail he was Minister for Finance and while de Valera was in America he became the *de facto* leader of the movement for independence. He was a member of the Irish delegation, which negotiated the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921. The Treaty was accepted by the Dail but rejected by a sizeable minority led by de Valera. This was to lead to the Civil War. With the establishment of the Irish Free State Collins became commander-in-chief of the Irish Free State Army and led the Government side in the Civil War. He was killed in an ambush in Cork in August 1922

<sup>149</sup> See p. 57, n. 20

<sup>150</sup> See p. 60, n. 51

<sup>151</sup> See p. 59, n. 47

152 See p. 60, n. 52

Patrick McGilligan, (1889 – 1979). Lawyer and politician. He was born in Coleraine, Co. Derry, and educated at St. Columb's College, Derry; Clongowes Wood College, UCD and King's Inn. He joined Sinn Fein in 1910. His parliamentary career began with his election as a Cumann na nGaedheal TD in 1923 and continued until 1965. He held a number of ministerial posts including Industry and Commerce 1924–32, and External Affairs, 1927–32. In the First Inter- party Government he was Minister for Finance and in the Second Inter-party Government he was Attorney-General. A distinguished lawyer he was Professor of Constitutional Law at UCD from 1934–59.

154 Letter from Fr. T. Bradley, Plumbridge, Co. Tyrone, to Patrick McGilligan, UCD

Archives, McGilligan Papers, P35d/105

155 León Ó Broin, (1902 – 1990). Public servant and writer. A native of Dublin his career in the public service began in the Agriculture Department of the First Dail. A member of Sinn Fein he was imprisoned during 1920-21 and then served as a non-combatant officer in the Free State Army. In 1923 he became the first administrative officer appointed to the new civil service and was called to the Bar the following year. He served mainly in the Department of Finance and ended his career as secretary of the Department of Posts

and Telegraphs. A prolific writer, he wrote extensively in English and Irish. His main publications were Dublin Castle and the 1916 Rising (1966) and In Great Haste: the letters of Michael Collins and Kitty Kiernan, (1983)

156 O Broin, p. 67

157 National Archives, Department of Education Papers 21114

158 See p. 60, n. 50

159 UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/995

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>161</sup> See p. 20

<sup>162</sup> See pp. 43-45

#### **CHAPTER I**

Part (ii): THE EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND TO THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PREPARATORY COLLEGES
1922 - 1926

The establishment of the Irish Free State affected the educational system in many ways; the most immediate was curricular, where difficulties to be overcome in implementing the new National Programme were threefold. Firstly, there was almost a total lack of text-books in Irish. Secondly, there was a shortage of teachers competent to teach the language, and thirdly, few of the inspectors had more than a limited knowledge of Irish. Moreover, the whole system of recruitment for primary teaching was in urgent need of reform, not just because of the Government's Irish language policy, but also because of the failure of existing recruiting methods. Of immediate concern was the need to ensure that all students entering training had received secondary education and were sufficiently well-educated to derive full benefit from a third-level course. A further significant factor was the proposed introduction of a School Attendance Act. These were to be important considerations in the establishment of the preparatory colleges.

In addition to the problems created by curricular change, the political changes effected significant reorganisation in the structure and administration of education. Up to 1922, the oversight of education was the responsibility of five separate bodies:

1. The Commissioners of National Education were responsible for Primary Education

- 2. The Commissioners of Intermediate Education were responsible for Intermediate Education
- 3. The Commissioners of Education in Ireland were responsible for the Endowed Schools
- 4. The Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction was responsible for technical education.
- 5. A fifth category was the Department of Reformatory and Industrial Schools.

On the formation of the Provisional Government, the Minister for Education took over the supervision of the first three categories, which became the nucleus of the Department of Education.<sup>3</sup> The powers of the Commissioners of National Education were delegated to Pádraig Ó Brolcháin, who, as Chief Executive Officer, was responsible to the Minister for the conduct of the Primary Branch. Moreover, in June 1923, the Board of Commissioners of Intermediate Education was dissolved and replaced by two new Commissioners: Seosamh Ó Neill, secretary of the Department, and Proinsias Ó Dubhthaigh.

Pádraig Ó Brolcháin, also known as Patrick Bradley, acquired a place in the history of education as the official who dismissed the Commissioners of National Education. A career civil servant, he had little experience of education, having worked with the Health Insurance Commission, before being appointed to the Department by Fionan Lynch<sup>5</sup> in 1922. An ardent Gaeilgeoir, he studied Modern and Middle Irish and Irish Paleography, under Kuno Meyer, and for a time was President of the Celtic Literary Society. A member of the Gaelic League, he acted as publicity agent for Fr. O'Hickey<sup>6</sup> in a row over compulsory Irish at the National University in 1909. Ó Brolcháin, who was Chief Executive Officer from February 1922 until his death in 1934, played a

major role in the implementation of the new State's gaelicisation policy. As CEO, he played a pivotal role in the establishment of the preparatory colleges, working closely with the Minister for Finance, Ernest Blythe, who had been involved with similar schemes, run by the Ministry for Irish. A major feature of O Brolchain's policy was a close involvement with the Roman Catholic Church. He was a friend of the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Byrne, with whom he kept in close contact.

Ó Brolcháin's brief included the oversight of 13,000 primary teachers in 5,636 primary schools, with an enrolment of approximately half a million pupils, and a budget of over three million pounds. Most of the schools were small with only one or two teachers. The dominant influence in primary education was the Roman Catholic Church, which through the management of all, but one of the country's training colleges and of all, except approximately 900 of the country's primary schools, controlled the training and appointment of teachers. Moreover, the Church's powerful role in education was accepted by the general public, and the new Government, whose ethos was devoutly Roman Catholic, made it clear from its earliest days that it had no intention of changing the *status quo*. Indeed one of the Government's first actions was the closure of the State's only non-denominational training college at Marlborough Street. In addition it became part of Government policy to consult members of the Hierarchy, either individually, or, as a body, before possible changes were mooted in public.

An immediate difficulty for Ó Brolcháin was school attendance. The average daily attendance of the half million pupils enrolled in the schools was only seventy per cent. A further difficulty was the school-leaving age. Though seventy-one per cent of schools had pupils aged between infants to fourteen, most pupils left school at eleven with only a small proportion<sup>13</sup> going on to second-level education. This was provided

in the following ways:

## Table 1.2: Numbers receiving second-level education in the mid-1920s

22,897 pupils attended 278 secondary schools.

22,336 pupils attended 67 technical schools

41,417 pupils attended 1248 technical classes other than in technical schools

6,173 pupils were in 52 industrial schools

1,000 pupils were in day trades preparatory schools, schools of art and domestic economy and reformatory schools

93,823

Source: Report of the Department of Education, 1925-26-27, p. 100

The provision of second-level education was of significance for the recruitment of primary teachers because by the 1920s it was obvious that candidates entering training colleges needed not only to have received a secondary education but also to have passed the Leaving Certificate Examination. Though over 90,000 pupils received some kind of second-level education, the numbers who completed the full secondary school course and sat the Leaving and Intermediate Certificate Examinations were quite small:

Table 1.3: Numbers completing the State Examinations in 1924

Leaving Certificate Intermediate Certificate

745 boys 1,841 boys

<u>250</u> girls <u>1,062</u> girls

995 2,903

A grand total of 3,898 of whom 54.9% or 1,755 passed.

Source: Report of the Department of Education, 1924 - 25, p. 101

These figures show that almost three times as many boys as girls sat the Leaving Certificate Examination while the number of boys who sat the Intermediate Certificate Examination was nearly double that of girls. This was very much in keeping with social trends of the period when it was considered foolish to educate girls as they would give up their careers on marriage.

Such secondary education, as was available in the twenties, was very much the preserve of the wealthy, though there was a system of scholarships from primary to secondary schools. However, the number of pupils it provided for was meagre: in 1924, nineteen county or county boroughs held scholarship examinations but only 188 scholarships were awarded to the 1,029 pupils, who sat the examinations. The programme for the scholarships was Irish, English, Arithmetic, History, and Geography, with a choice of not more than two of the following subjects: Algebra, Geometry, Drawing, Nature Study, and Needlework. The Department's attitude to the availability of secondary education is worthy of note; its 1924 report commented complacently: 'On the whole the programme is so arranged that a scholarship award should not be beyond the reach of an intelligent pupil, twelve to fourteen years of age, who has completed sixth standard in a primary school.' 14

In addition to scholarships from primary to secondary schools, a further seventy-five scholarships were awarded on the results of the Intermediate Certificate Examination. Furthermore the Department's report noted that, under the old system, one of the weaknesses was that there was 'no general system of entrance tests, which might ensure that only suitable pupils should enter secondary schools.' This reflected MacNeill's philosophy that there should be equality of opportunity, according to ability. <sup>16</sup>

A major difficulty for the Department was the large number of untrained teachers. Of the 13,043 primary teachers, a high proportion: 2,957 were untrained while just over 2,000 were members of Religious Orders. The composition of the primary teaching body was as follows:

| <u>Table 1.4:</u> | Primary Teachers | 1924   |
|-------------------|------------------|--------|
| Total No. of p    | rimary teachers  | 13,043 |
| Lay Teachers      |                  | 11,020 |
| Religious         |                  | 2,023  |
|                   |                  |        |

| No. of trained teachers                 | No. of untrained teachers                          |
|---|--|
| 3,960 men<br>4,463 women = 86% of women | 727 women 1,870 JAMS (Junior Assistant Mistresses) |
| 8 423 TOTAL                             | 2 597 =23 5% of lay teachers                       |

Scurce: Report of the Department of Education, 1924 – 25, p. 21

The Department made the reduction of the number of untrained teachers a priority. An attempt was also made to ensure a better supply of qualified teachers by changing the rules governing the appointment of teachers. In 1925, a rule was introduced, <sup>17</sup> that no women were to be appointed to teach in any national school unless they had been

trained in a recognised training college. Exceptions to this were JAMS (Junior Assistant Mistresses), who were employed in schools in which the average attendance had increased to fifty pupils. They were allowed to keep their places if they passed the Easter Examination. Further exceptions were nuns, who passed the Easter Examination and were accepted as untrained assistants in convent schools, and women graduates, who having passed the Easter Examination and a test in teaching, were allowed to act as untrained assistants.

In the Department's view, the success of the new programme depended on three requirements being fulfilled: firstly, a method of ensuring that pupils attended school regularly; secondly, the supply of an adequate and competent body of teachers; thirdly, the supply of proper school accommodation, maintenance and equipment.<sup>19</sup> Of these, the most immediate was ensuring an adequate and competent body of teachers to teach the new programme. To achieve this the Department had to devise two strategies: firstly, to enable the current body of teachers to become proficient at Irish. Of the 12,000 lay teachers in the Free State in 1922, only 1,107 had bilingual certificates, though a further 2,845 had ordinary certificates.<sup>20</sup> Secondly, it had to devise a means of ensuring that all future teachers would be fluent in Irish.

To overcome the deficiency of teachers in Irish the Department organised a series of compulsory summer courses for all teachers under forty-five years of age, in Gaelic League Colleges in the Gaeltacht, during 1922 – 1925.<sup>21</sup> Evening classes were held also. Approximately 2,000 teachers received certificates at these courses in any year and, by 1925, almost half of the country's primary teachers had certificates to teach Irish<sup>22</sup> and the Department was optimistic that many of those under forty-five would qualify in 1926.<sup>23</sup> The value of these certificates, however, was questioned by Coimisiún na Gaeltachta,<sup>24</sup> which queried whether the standard of the bilingual certificate, or the Ard Teastas, was satisfactory for teachers in the Gaeltacht.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore the Commission called for no further appointments to Gaeltacht schools of teachers who were not qualified to teach the full primary programme through Irish. It also called for assistance for those, not fully qualified, to enable them to qualify within the shortest possible time and for the replacement of existing teachers in Gaeltacht schools, who could not be expected to qualify within a reasonable period of time. There was also criticism that the summer courses were too short.

In response, MacNeill<sup>26</sup> pointed out that teachers had been expected to study the language throughout the school year:

It is forgotten that these courses were intended not to be the whole year's work in Irish done by the teacher but rather to be the apex or culminating point of the work that each individual teacher was doing during the year. As such, they should have been of the utmost value to the teachers who worked steadily at Irish during the year as most teachers did.<sup>27</sup>

Furthermore, he was quick to add that the summer courses were intended only for serving teachers; the re-organisation of the training colleges, and the establishment of preparatory colleges, would ensure that future teachers were Irish speakers:

Another fallacy about these summer courses is they were a substitute for work that should be done in training colleges. They could not be, since they were intended to train the existing body of teachers whereas the training colleges are being reorganised through the establishment of preparatory colleges and in other ways for this work.<sup>28</sup>

More cynical critics questioned the value of courses, where 'teachers got a cheap holiday at some seaside resort and did not over-exert themselves at study.'<sup>29</sup> The high costs were another factor, though these declined considerably after 1923:

## Table 1.5: Cost of Irish Summer Courses

1922 = £75,668

1923 = £65,945

1924 = £42,779

1925 = £43,034

£227,426

Source: Report of the Department of Education, 1924 - 25, p. 31

The Department defended such expenditure on the grounds that it was 'an indication of the whole-hearted manner in which the problem of the language was being approached by the Government. The summer courses, however, were only a short-term measure to improve the teachers' fluency in the language. The Department's long-term policy was to concentrate on the training colleges, which it saw as a key factor in its plan for the gaelicisation of education. Its aim was to gaelicise the training colleges: 'to substitute Irish for English as the language of instruction, recreation and of life generally in them.' Furthermore it envisaged that when 'the training colleges were completely gaelicised, the primary schools would gradually pass from their almost uni-lingual English stage, through bilingualism, to a uni-lingual Irish stage in which Irish will be the normal speech of pupils and teachers in classes, playgrounds, etc.' 32

To consider how this could be achieved, the Department set up an internal committee in December 1924, to examine the 'existing arrangements for the recruitment and training of teachers' and to recommend necessary reforms, 'to bring the present system of training into line with the most modern methods'. The Department acknowledged that many of the problems in this area stemmed from the lack of a modern system of training. During the days immediately preceding the establishment of the Free State, there were seven training colleges. St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, and De La Salle College, Waterford, were for Roman Catholic male students. Our Lady of Mercy College, Carysfort; St. Mary's College, Belfast, and

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick; were for Roman Catholic female students. There were also two co-educational colleges: the Church of Ireland Training College, Kildare Street, for Protestant students, and Marlborough Street Training College, a non-denominational college run by the State.<sup>34</sup>

The establishment of the Free State brought significant changes for the colleges: St. Mary's became part of the educational system in Northern Ireland, while numbers in the Church of Ireland Training College reduced considerably as the majority of its students came from Northern Ireland, and once the island was partitioned, northern students went to Stranmillis College. In addition Marlborough Street Training College was closed and its students transferred to other colleges. This closure was significant for it indicated that the new State was firmly in favour of denominational education.

Changes were also made to the way the colleges were funded. Up to 1920, they received capitation grants and few students paid fees. Of those who did, the amount varied up to five pounds per annum. <sup>36</sup> However, the rise in the cost of living, resulting from World War 1, necessitated increases in the capitation grants in 1917, and again, in 1920, and eventually forced the introduction of fees so that, by the early twenties, all students paid the maximum fee of twenty-two pounds and ten shillings. <sup>37</sup>

There were two major causes for concern regarding the training colleges: firstly, the lack of sufficient students, and secondly, the poor academic quality of the entrants. Admission to the colleges was by gaining a place at the Easter Scholarship Examination, (known as the King's Scholarship Examination up to 1922). To gain a place a student had to pass an examination in certain obligatory subjects, including Irish, English, Mathematics, History, Geography, Rural Science, Drawing, and Music, with Needlework obligatory for women. Optional subjects included Latin, French, and German. The standard of the examination approximated to the Leaving Certificate and

to pass, a student had to obtain thirty per cent in certain subjects. In addition marks over thirty per cent, in not more than two optional subjects, were added towards the student's grand total, which had to amount to at least 800 for men and 850 for women<sup>38</sup> Each college was licensed for a certain number of students, though due to a shortage of candidates, St. Patrick's, De La Salle, and CITC, had less than the licensed number.<sup>39</sup>

Table 1.6: Licensed Numbers of Students at Training Colleges

|                  | Men | Women |
|------------------|-----|-------|
| St. Patrick's:   | 165 | -     |
| Carysfort:       | -   | 200   |
| CITC:            | 50  | 85    |
| De La Salle:     | 200 | -     |
| Mary Immaculate: | -   | 100   |
|                  | 415 | 385   |

TOTAL:

Source: Report of the Department of Education, 1925 – 26 – 27, p. 119

800

As shown in Table 1.6 the training colleges were licensed to accept an annual intake of 400 students per year for a two-year course. Table 1.7 shows, however, that there was a shortage of students able to pass the entry examination to training and that only 268 students passed their examinations in 1925, at a time, when the Department estimated that 300-350 students were needed. As the Department was planning to introduce compulsory school attendance the need to ensure that the training colleges had sufficient numbers of students able to complete the training college course was a matter of some importance.

Table 1.7: Students in training - Session 1925 - 26

Men's colleges

| Institution   | No. of students at start of session | No. at end of session | First Year Examination Passed Failed | Final Examination Passed Failed |  |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| St. Patrick's | 134                                 | 134                   | 78 15                                | 41 -                            |  |
| CITC          | 17                                  | 17                    | 9 9                                  | 6 2                             |  |
| De La Salle   | 170                                 | 168                   | 104 10                               | 51 3                            |  |
| TOTAL         | 321                                 | 319                   | 191 34                               | 98 5                            |  |

Women's colleges

| Institution     | No. of students at | No. at end of session | end         | and of | 1st Year |        | Final Examination |   |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------|----------|--------|-------------------|---|
|                 | start of session   |                       | Examination |        | Passed   | Failed |                   |   |
|                 |                    |                       |             |        | Passed   | Failed |                   |   |
| Carysfort       | 200                | 197                   |             |        | 105      | -      | 88                |   |
| CITC            | 84                 | 84                    |             |        | 43       | 1      | 37                | 3 |
| Mary Immaculate | 100                | 100                   |             |        | 55       | -      | 45                | - |
| TOTAL           | 384                | 381                   |             |        | 201      | 1      | 170               | 7 |

| TOTAL:<br>MEN AND | 705 | 700 | 394 | 26 | 268 | 12 |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|----|
| WOMEN             |     |     |     |    |     |    |

Source: Report of the Department of Education, 1926 - 27, p. 120

To continue in training, students had to pass the annual examination at the end of the first year, though in exceptional circumstances, they might be allowed a second chance. The course of study in training colleges included Irish, Mathematics, Practice of Teaching, Education, Drawing, Rural Science, Music and Physical Training. History and Geography were studied in first year only, and students studied a choice of English, French or German. That English was not compulsory is worthy of note. Women students also had Needlework and Domestic Economy. A matter of some concern at this time was the academic quality of the students. It was possible for training college students to apply to the National University to undertake a BA degree course provided they had attained a sufficient standard in their final examination. But the numbers accepted by the university were quite small as is shown in Table 1.8.

<u>Number of training college students accepted</u>

by the universities for a degree course in 1924

|   | 1924      |
|---|-----------|
| No. of second year students in training   | 275       |
| No. applied to be granted first university standing on the results of their final examination | 255       |
| No. accepted by the universities as having attained a sufficiently high standard              | 44<br>17% |

Source: Report of the Department of Education, 1924-25, p. 39

The Department realised that only students who had received secondary education would be able to complete the training college course satisfactorily. This had become the norm in other countries. In England, the Burnham Committee on teacher training recommended in 1925, that all intending teachers should stay at school until eighteen and take the school certificate before entering training college. In the Irish system, the main emphasis in the 1920s was on teacher training, rather than teacher education. The out-dated idea that teachers could be recruited from primary school pupils, who showed an aptitude for teaching, dominated the two major recruitment systems: the monitorial system and the pupil-teacher scheme, which are explained below. In 1924, the monitorial system supplied less than fourteen per cent of those gaining places in training colleges at the Easter Examination. The system had outlived its purpose, as few of those who were successful were sufficiently well-educated to derive full benefit from a third-level course. In most European countries it had been abolished, as neither the general education, nor the professional training of monitors, was good enough for the twentieth century.

The other major source of supply, the pupil-teacher scheme, supplied forty per cent of candidates for women's colleges, though the number recruited for men's colleges had

teachers. An advantage of both the monitorial and pupil-teacher systems was that candidates, recruited through these systems, gained some teaching experience as part of their courses. Monitors, who were selected from promising pupils in the senior classes of primary schools, did a certain amount of teaching each day, under the supervision of the principal. They were appointed in any suitable national school, on the district inspector's recommendation, and received a salary, varying from five pounds in their first year, to eighteen pounds, in their third year.

Pupil-teachers attended Model Schools, either as day pupils or boarders, and their lodging, subsistence, and travelling allowances, were paid by the Board of National Education. Like monitors, they were expected to do some daily teaching practice under the principal's supervision. Both pupil-teachers and monitors received special instruction for which the teacher was paid a small fee. At the end of their courses pupil-teachers and monitors did the entrance examination to training colleges and were entitled to a service mark of up to a hundred, out of a total of 1,500, for their teaching experience. Despite this, less than half of the pupils-teachers and only one-seventh of monitors secured places. The Department believed that these poor results were due to two factors: firstly, inadequate general education, and secondly, too much time was spent on teaching practice. <sup>46</sup> The emphasis on teaching practice in the monitorial system, and in the old pupil-teacher scheme, however, was not totally discarded but was retained in a modified form in the preparatory system, where an attempt at giving students some teaching experience was built into the system. <sup>47</sup>

Other causes for concern for the Department regarding recruitment, were the proposed introduction of a School Attendance Act and developments in teacher education. In countries, such as Scotland and Germany, definite links between training colleges and the universities were being forged. In 1922, the First Programme Conference declared itself in favour of university education for primary teachers, 48 but the Department

could not envisage this happening, though it acknowledged that existing systems of recruitment had failed.

The idea of developing full co-operation between the universities and training colleges is difficult until some method is found of supplying the training colleges with better material than they are receiving at present. The shortage and poverty of material is all the more alarming now that the operation of the new School Attendance Act will require a considerable increase in the number of teachers. 49

### THE COMMITTEE ON RECRUITMENT 1924

These were some of the factors to be considered by the Committee on Recruitment, established by the Department in December 1924. It had a two-fold brief: firstly, to consider how the training colleges could be gaelicised, and secondly, to examine how they could be supplied with native speakers from the Gaeltacht. The committee was chaired by the chief inspector of the Primary Branch, and included a general inspector, a senior inspector of the Technical Instruction Branch, the general organising inspector of Agricultural Science, and the principal clerk of the National Education Office. It was generally expected that it would recommend the establishment of preparatory colleges in Gaeltacht areas, and 'of temporary training Gaelic centres in Dublin and elsewhere, for intensive courses in Irish and in teaching methods, through Irish, until all young teachers, at present teaching, are competent to teach through Irish. It was estimated that 5,000 teachers needed intensive training in Irish and that Marlborough Hall could be used as a centre to train 500 annually, in relays of 150 – 170 teachers for periods of three months, at a cost of £10,000 - £14,000. 52

The committee invited submissions from managers and staffs of training colleges, the Managers' Associations, the INTO, and the Professors of Education in the universities. These included Professor Corcoran of UCD,<sup>53</sup> the *eminent grise* of the Free State's education policy. The recruitment of native speakers was one of his favourite themes. In his view:

The spontaneous ease in the speaking of Irish, the ease of the native speaker, is a pearl of great price. One such junior teacher can produce scores of really "native speakers" a year anywhere by working sixteen hours a week in the special pre-primary work centre. 54

In addition Corcoran advocated reserving half the entrance scholarships each year for native speakers, and encouraging them to compete for the rest: 'In this way recruitment of a native Irish-speaking young assistant master or mistress would be made quite easy with no special cost to the State.<sup>155</sup> Here again Corcoran's view prevailed, and, in March 1925, in an interim report, the committee made three recommendations: firstly, the abolition of the monitorial system; secondly, a revision of the pupil-teacher scheme, and thirdly, the establishment of preparatory colleges.<sup>56</sup> No mention was made of establishing centres for young teachers, currently teaching, to learn Irish and to study methods of teaching through Irish. This may have been for two reasons: firstly, summer courses had been provided, and secondly, the high costs of the summer costs had been criticised. <sup>57</sup> In addition the Department did not wish to incur any further financial outlay.

The new emphasis on Irish was reflected in the revised pupil-teacher scheme. Only boys and girls, who passed tests in oral Irish, and Singing, and who passed the Intermediate Certificate Examination with honours in Irish, were eligible for appointment as pupil-teachers. The successful candidates, whose suitability was assessed by an inspector, were then awarded scholarships to approved secondary schools for two years. On obtaining satisfactory results in the Leaving Certificate Examination, particularly in Irish, which included a special oral test, they were then eligible for places in training colleges. A point of some significance was that pupil-teachers ranked after preparatory college students, and had priority over Easter Scholarship candidates, in securing places in training colleges.

The establishment of preparatory colleges to recruit native speakers to primary teaching was not a new idea. Such recruitment had been tried before by the Ministry for Irish.<sup>58</sup> In 1920, a small scheme was devised, offering eight scholarships, one for each county in the Gaeltacht.<sup>59</sup> This did not work out very satisfactorily, however, as it had to be confined to boys as the organisers were unable to come to an arrangement with the management of a girls' schools. A further failure was that two Irish-speaking areas, Tír Conaill and the Deise, were not represented:

Last year we recommended to the Dail the establishment of a number of scholarships valued at £50 each for the benefit of native Irish-speaking boys anxious to attend a course of training to qualify them as teachers or organisers in primary schools. To our surprise there were no candidates from Tir Conaill or the Deise. A Co. Galway student died in the course of the year and a Co. Cork student involved in the National struggle had to return home. 60

Nevertheless, the scheme was considered satisfactory and worthy of development: 'Had times been less disturbed we contemplated the establishment of a Preparatory School under the auspices of the Dail.' The experiment was tried again in 1921/22, and this time the arrangements were better. Fifty scholarships were offered, twenty-four for boys and sixteen for girls from the Gaeltacht, six for boys and four for girls from the Galltacht, valued at thirty pounds each. They were to be awarded according to the results of a competitive examination held on 16th August 1921. The successful candidates were to attend a Scoil Ullmhúighthe for one year, for which the Ministry for Irish would pay thirty pounds to each candidate. From there, they were to enter training college for two years, at their own expense, though later the Ministry decided to pay ten pounds to each candidate on entry to training.

To be eligible for a scholarship, candidates had to fulfil three conditions: firstly, to be seventeen years of age on 1st February 1922; secondly, to be recommended by the organiser from the Ministry for Irish, and by their school manager, or teacher; thirdly, to pass an academic examination and a health test. A further condition for an award

was that they would undertake to become primary teachers. Otherwise the students, or their parents, would repay the cost of the scholarship. In addition any student, who did not do well at the final examination at the Scoil Ullmhuighthe, would have his scholarship taken from him. The scholarship examination had three subjects: Irish, English, and Mathematics, and in keeping with the policy of promoting Irish, there were twice as many marks for Irish as for English. For Mathematics, 200 marks were awarded. The programme was the same as that prescribed for a two-teacher school, with Algebra and Geometry compulsory for boys. <sup>62</sup>

The advertisement for the scholarships left no doubt as to the organisers' intentions:

The education system of the country must be Gaelicised and this will do it. The new primary programme is almost ready, a programme that will give equality of treatment to Irish. Are there suitable teachers to put the programme into effect? Indeed not. We must remedy this. It will not be long before we have native speakers from the Gaeltacht as teachers. The Training Colleges will have to do their part also. If they do not do it willingly we will have to make them.<sup>63</sup>

In 1921, the numbers competing increased. There were a hundred applications from girls, and sixty from boys, but only fifty girls, and forty boys, sat the examination, which was held in four centres: Athenry, Mallow, Letterkenny, and Dublin. To ensure the candidates' attendance, they were given their train fares to attend the nearest centre. Though fifty scholarships were on offer, the examiners recommended that only forty-four should be awarded: twenty to boys, and twenty-four to girls, who had gained at least forty per cent in the examinations. Hall the second scheme was more successful than the first, it had some unsatisfactory aspects: a number of candidates were not satisfied with the conditions and expected larger grants from the Ministry for Irish, much to that body's disgust. Moreover, the candidates' poor knowledge of Irish History was a cause of concern. The scheme, however, was repeated in 1922. This time, again fifty scholarships were offered; twenty for boys,

and twenty for girls, from the Gaeltacht, with five for boys, and five for girls, from the Galltacht. 66 Again the full number of scholarships was not awarded; only twenty-five girls, and ten boys, received scholarships. Furthermore as none of the winners for 1921/22 gained a place in a training college, the scheme was considered a failure. It served, however, as a useful experiment for the establishment of the preparatory colleges, which was announced on June 11th 1925. 67 Following the announcement, the Minister for Education discussed the scheme with 'interested' people during a tour of various centres for Irish courses. 68 In October 1925, the INTO was sent a full outline of the scheme, which it opposed from the very beginning. 69

There was also considerable opposition to the scheme in the civil service. In Education officials were divided in their support. An inspector of the period recalled:

The best of inspectors and many others were against the establishment of preparatory colleges, but Mr. Bradley carried through his pet scheme, what he used to call his "pet lamb." Mr. O'Neill acted as usual – backed up the winning side. 70

Officials in Finance, who had the responsibility for overseeing the financial arrangements, regarded the plan with scepticism and the history of the preparatory colleges was marked by continuous tension between the two departments.<sup>71</sup>

Behind the announcement lay many different ideas as to how the colleges should be established and it was at this point that three important decisions had to be made, which were of considerable importance for the system. Firstly, the location of the colleges had to be decided. Secondly, the question of management had to be resolved and thirdly, whether the colleges would be for student-teachers only. In Education, the system had the full support of O Brolchain, while at Cabinet it was strongly supported by Blythe and his view prevailed in all three decisions despite the fact that MacNeill, the Minster for Education, had different ideas. Correspondence between the two departments, from early 1923, shows how the scheme evolved. The early

proposals were for six schools for twelve-year olds, who had completed sixth class in a national school in the Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, Cork, and Waterford areas of the Gaeltacht. Education proposed calling them Higher Grade Schools and estimated their costs at £21,000.<sup>75</sup> Finance's response, however, was typically cautious, stating that 'more consideration was necessary.<sup>76</sup>

In June 1924, Joseph O'Neill,<sup>77</sup> secretary of the Department of Education, aware that both the monitorial system and the pupil-teacher scheme had failed as recruiting methods, proposed four preparatory colleges, one each in Donegal, and Connacht, and two in Munster; two for boys, and two for girls, with a hundred to a 150 students, run by Religious Orders; only native speakers were to be admitted and all training was to be through Irish. O'Neill believed that 'all candidates for training colleges needed to have attended a special type of secondary school or preparatory college' and as Irish-speaking districts were 'almost entirely lacking in the type of large school to give monitorial training,' and there was an inadequate supply of pupils from the Gaeltacht to training colleges, he proposed that the first preparatory colleges should be in the Gaeltacht.<sup>78</sup> By November 1924, <sup>79</sup> O'Neill was successful in persuading Finance of the need to provide schools in the Gaeltacht to bridge the gap between primary education and the training colleges.

A further significant factor in the decision to locate the colleges in the Gaeltacht was the requirement that the Irish language should have a prominent place in the primary school curriculum, Ó Brolchaîn believed that to be successful the system should be based on 'the total immersion method' of language learning:

The difficulty is the present condition of the country and the view of those framing the programme and of the present Minister for Education and of the Government generally, is to look to the continuity of the historic Irish nation based on Irish and in order to bring that back through the teaching profession it is necessary to have intensive centres to train our future teachers on an Irish basis rather than to have them scattered with other students.<sup>80</sup>

The reference to 'intensive centres' was an indication that the Department's policy was to be based on the earlier experiments, run by the Ministry for Irish. 181 The location of the proposed colleges was significant, because by siting them in the Gaeltacht it was believed that the students would absorb aspects of Gaelic culture and be in touch with Irish, as it was spoken, and that general intercourse with native speakers, such as *seanchai*, (storytellers) would be good for the students. Moreover, Blythe believed that by establishing the colleges in buildings, associated with the Ascendancy, that native speakers would develop greater esteem for the language. 182 Furthermore it was envisaged that the colleges would provide economic relief for the Gaeltacht, and by helping to keep emigration down would preserve the Irish-speaking areas. 183 In addition it could be claimed that the schools would provide second-level education in the Gaeltacht, which had few such schools, a defect pointed out by Coimisiún na Gaeltachta. 184

Originally MacNeill had proposed that eight experimental schools should be established. In his plan, the schools were not to be confined to the Gaeltacht, but were to be established in the Model School buildings in English-speaking areas. This raised interesting questions about management, but in view of the absence of any definite indication of MacNeill's intentions, one can only speculate on what he had in mind. Moreover, as MacNeill was a devout Roman Catholic, he is unlikely to have considered anything, which would have diluted the power of the Roman Catholic Church in school management.

In June 1925, it was proposed that the preparatory colleges would be under the paronage of the bishop of the diocese, in which they were located, and that 'the patron

would nominate the local manager of the college, subject to ratification by this Department. By that time, O Brolchain had more definite proposals and he was able to inform the church authorities that six colleges, five in the Gaeltacht and one in Dublin, were to be established. He was still uncertain of their locations, however, except that the Dublin college would be at Marlborough Hall and House. In addition he informed the church authorities how the monitorial scheme would be ended:

As the new scheme comes in it is proposed to wind up the present monitorial scheme:

- (a) appoint no new monitors this year
- (b) draft a hundred of the most suitable boy monitors into one college for completion of their course and a further number next year
- (c) draft 150 of the most suitable girl monitors into the Glasnevin College (Marlborough Hall and House) and a similar number next year. 88

He further informed the church authorities that it was 'the minister's intentions that, with the exceptions of the Munster boys' college in Co. Waterford, and the House of Residence for Protestant girls, <sup>89</sup> the houses would be conducted by members of Religious Orders, though the teaching staff could be religious, or lay, provided that they were persons with high qualifications. <sup>90</sup>

This letter provides clues as to why the management system changed, for O Brolchain went on to point out to the bishops, that while the Department had the whole of Ireland, from which to select lay teachers, finding members of Religious Orders to take charge of the colleges would be problematic:

According to information in the Department it is not possible at present to obtain suitable house staff drawn from any particular Order, in the particular Diocese, in which a college is to be established, unless an arrangement can be made, by which the Nuns who might become Principals, and might be from outside the Dioceses, would be in a position to obtain as assistants other

members of the same Order, from any diocese in Ireland. The same problem occurs re Professors who are members of Religious Communities.<sup>91</sup>

He ended by saying, diplomatically, that officials of the Department would be glad to discuss the matter with representatives of the Hierarchy. As a result of these discussions, it was agreed that the bishop in whose diocese a college was located, would be appointed manager and he could invite whichever Order he favoured to take over the running of the college in his diocese.

This letter reflected O Brolchain's care to ensure that the bishop's permission was obtained, before a member of a Religious Order could be appointed to work in his diocese. In addition it illustrated clearly the significant role the Hierarchy had in the establishment of the preparatory scheme and the key role they had in devising the management structure. Furthermore it underlined the power of the bishops in Irish education at this period. They were not required to provide any money or resources. The Department willingly provided the buildings and agreed to pay the full costs of financing the system. In return the bishops gained control of the six Roman Catholic colleges.

Another area where MacNeill's<sup>92</sup> view did not prevail was with regard to the segregation of student teachers from students intended for other careers. He wanted a much broader aim for the schools, with teaching as only one career option for students. He believed the schools should have a wide range of students, including those going on to technical schools, the civil service, and commercial life. He wanted them to be co-educational, with boys intended for agricultural college, and girls for house-keeping duties, among the students. Both MacNeill's and Blythe's views were summarised by Ó Brolcháin, in evidence to Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, in April 1925:

The question arises whether these students would not be better in a college moulding them for teaching and giving them the special knowledge in the first place - special talent which a teacher would require in future life, perhaps an enthusiasm for scholarship or some of the techniques of the teaching profession rather than putting them in a secondary school with a number of pupils, some going to be farmers, shop-keepers or other vocations. Something to be said on both sides. <sup>93</sup>

It was unfortunate that the decision to confine the preparatory colleges to student-teachers only was made for it was to be a weakness of the system throughout its history and it was one of the main reasons for the INTO's opposition.<sup>94</sup>

Throughout 1925, details of the curriculum, entrance examinations and administration, were worked out and interested bodies, such as the INTO, the managerial and ecclesiastical associations, and the Gaelic League, were informed. In May 1925, Finance sanctioned the establishment of six colleges, including one in Dublin to be located in premises formerly used by Marlborough Street Training College. Originally, it was intended that the Dublin college would be for all denominations: Marlborough Hall for Roman Catholic girls, and Marlborough House for Protestant girls. Protestant men were not to be recruited to preparatory colleges as it was felt that the pupil-teacher scheme would adequately supply the small number needed. 95

However, it soon became clear that a separate college for Protestants would have to be established. In October that year, a deputation from the Church of Ireland met MacNeill to discuss the matter. The deputation was prepared to accept an undenominational college but, when it was made clear to them that this was not possible, the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. J.A.F. Gregg, 6 the leader of the deputation, rejected the plan. 97 MacNeill then proposed a separate college for Protestants. However, few Protestants sat the first entrance examination and a

supplemental examination had to be held specially for them. Provision for the cost of the extra college was included in the Supplementary Education Estimates, in spring 1926, 98 and in February that year, the Executive Council approved proposals for the establishment of two residential preparatory colleges in Dublin, two in Munster, and three between Connacht and Donegal. 99 It was envisaged that when the colleges were in full working order, they would provide for 650 students, 300 boys and 350 girls, and that allowing for a 'possible small wastage' they would supply the training colleges with about 150 of the 300/350 students required annually. 100

However, despite Blythe's enthusiasm for the new system, the officials of his Department were never convinced of its efficacy and, at their insistence, the preparatory course was reduced from five to four years, because of the costs involved. Finance's great fear at this time was that the establishment of second-level schools in Irish-speaking districts would lead to calls for the establishment of similar schools in English-speaking areas:

Seven years in residential colleges too much money. No way of ensuring pupils at preparatory colleges go on to training colleges. Establishment of schools with instruction through Irish could lead to similar claims from the community for schools with instruction through English. <sup>101</sup>

In reducing the preparatory course to four years, at Finance's behest, Education made an unwise decision for it meant that the Intermediate Certificate course had to be completed, in two years, and this had the effect of narrowing the curriculum, and prevented the teaching of Latin, or a modern language, such as French, for examination purpose. Moreover, the failure to include Latin as a Leaving Certificate subject was to be the cause of much resentment among preparatory students over the years. <sup>102</sup>

Another unwise decision made in response to Finance's criticism about costs, was the introduction of a regulation that all preparatory students had to give a signed

undertaking of their intention to become primary teachers and to repay the costs of their education if they did not. This was to be one of the major criticisms of the system. An alternative proposal by Comisiun na Gaeltachta, that students, who had obtained the Intermediate Certificate, and 'who have the necessary competency in Irish,' be admitted to a two-year course was largely ignored, though this would have reduced costs considerably. In the early years of the system, a small number of students were admitted in this way, but it was customary for the Department to insist on students who had already done the Intermediate Certificate Examination, through English, doing it again through Irish. Indeed this was a feature of the Munster boys' college, where it was not an unusual happening.

Finance's officials were never in favour of the system and when the costs of acquiring suitable premises, originally estimated at £150,000, had by 1927 swollen to £340,000, they queried the necessity of having the colleges in the Gaeltacht:

The pupils are boarders, provision is made for all religious exercises. Suggests intercourse of pupils with local residents is normally limited. Would the Munster college do anywhere in Munster within reasonably easy reach of Irish-speaking areas?<sup>107</sup>

When one considers that £1,000 in the 1920s equalled £34,000 in today's terms, the alarm expressed by Finance was not surprising. Moreover, such had been the desperate financial straits in which the Government found itself after the Civil War, that Blythe, the Minister for Finance, 108 had made some drastic cutbacks in public expenditure, including cutting teachers' salaries and reduced the Old Age Pension. 109

An important factor, which allowed the Government's high expenditure on the preparatory colleges, to go unchallenged was the fact that legislation to do with the system was enacted by Ministerial Order, and was not brought in by way of a Bill and debated in the Dail. Once a Ministerial Order was published it was up to any Dail

Deputy to put down a motion on the agenda of the Dail. This could be accepted or rejected by the Government. Moreover, the fact that there were no requests from Deputies for the matter to be debated was an indication that they agreed with the decision, though it must be remembered that, throughout this period, there was no opposition party in Dail Eireann, as Fianna Fail did not enter the Dail until 1927. The fact that the system was established by Ministerial Order was important, for it allowed the Government to end the system in similar fashion in 1959. 110

The establishment of the preparatory system was viewed with concern by some educationists, including a senior adviser to Dr. Edward Byrne, who held the pivotal post of Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin in the early decades of the State. Byrne, who was born in Dublin in 1872, was educated at Belvedere College, and the Irish College, Rome. Following his ordination in 1895, he served as curate in a number of areas in the Diocese of Dublin, including Rush, Kilsallaghan and Rolestown, Howth, and Blackrock. From 1901-1904, he was vice-rector of the Irish College, Rome. Subsequently, he spent sixteen years as curate at the Pro-Cathedral, Dublin, before being appointed an Auxiliary Bishop of Dublin. In 1921, he succeeded Dr. William Walsh<sup>111</sup> as Archbishop of Dublin. In his new role, he concentrated mainly on the pastoral aspects of the post. He was responsible for the creation of parish structures, including the building of churches and schools in developing areas of the diocese. A major project, initiated by Byrne, was the building of a new cathedral, to replace the Pro-Cathedral, in Marlborough Street, and in 1930, he purchased a site in Merrion Square. However, the project failed due to the poor state of diocesan finances. As archbishop, he enjoyed good relationships with the Governments of both W. T. Cosgrave, 112 and de Valera. 113 The highlight of his episcopate was the Eucharistic

Congress, at which he presided in 1932. Despite serious ill-health, he was archbishop until his death in 1940.

The archbishop's adviser submitted a six-part memorandum covering six areas of education - 1) general 2) universities 3) technical and agricultural education 4) continuation education 5) secondary education 6) primary education. The unnamed writer attacked the gaelicisation policy, then three and a half years in operation, as an 'experiment upon an entire population, at a cost of £253,000, and an imponderable sum in accumulated illiteracy, educational inefficiency and stunted mental deficiency.' In his opinion, the Government's method of reviving Irish had produced a reaction against the language itself, which he feared might easily overflow in the region of Government. However, he was quick to excuse the Government saying that it had shown 'great fortitude in trying times.' Moreover, there were so many demands it had little time for the language issue, and had to accept the advice offered. He condemned the witnesses to Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, and expressed the view that the only way to revive Irish was by a constructive educational scheme.

He expressed disapproval of the Government's language policy on the following grounds:

Irish was untouched by the Renaissance, the language has not been used for the teaching of secondary or primary subjects in any real sense for a century and a half, and its greatest defect is that it is not a fit medium for the expression of higher educational thought or of the activities of modern life.' 115

He accepted, however, that Gaeltacht children should be educated through Irish but believed that they should also learn English:

The first duty of an Irish Department of Education is to ensure at the earliest moment that every Irish-speaking and perhaps every semi-Irish speaking child should have an opportunity of receiving full primary education or a primary education in part through the medium of Irish not excluding English (for life conditions determine that issue)<sup>116</sup>

Referring to third-level education he described the suggestion that 'professors of university subjects to teach through Irish could be obtained by advertising' as 'pour rire.' Referring to primary education he denounced the First National Programme Conference<sup>117</sup> as 'mirth provoking if not so tragic in its projections' and went on:

It is the intention of the 'Programmists' that the whole programme will be taught in a short time through Irish, ignoring the conditions of the children and teachers and incidentally proving that they had never read Davis or Pearse or if they had, that they were unable to understand them. 118

Furthermore he believed that the number of professors capable of teaching Irish as a living speech was 'practically negligible':

Yet on a recommendation of the famous Conference for the past four summers national teachers had been compelled to attend the courses to learn Irish from the lips of professors, five-sixths of whom do not know the language or even if they know it, have not the cultural nor the scientific method of teaching to produce results. 119

The writer described the preparatory system as sound in educational principle, but false in the method of application, and costly at £45,000 per annum. In addition he pointed out that forty professors would be required for six colleges, and he doubted if twelve, with the required standard of Irish speech, and cultural development, could be found. The result, he believed, would be six inefficient organisations in Irish education, which 'will command the very heart of the educational sphere'. He went on:

The establishment of six colleges, in several districts, would tend to stereotype a variety of dialects, while one of the purposes of such colleges should be the gradual development of a unified cultivated speech. <sup>120</sup>

This was a significant criticism of the language revival policy as the failure to devise a standardised form of speech, and spelling, added greatly to the difficulties of learning the language. It was also a difficulty for those who were trying to produce reading material in Irish. Indeed the need for reading material had been noted by Blythe and he was instrumental in establishing An Gum, a special section in Education to oversee the publication of such material. <sup>121</sup>

Despite the writer's strong reservations, he failed to make any impression on Archbishop Byrne, who did not oppose the system at any point. The reason for the Roman Catholic Church's lack of opposition may have been due to the way the colleges were to be managed; six of the seven colleges were to be under the direct control of the Roman Catholic bishop, in whose diocese they were situated, and staffed by a Religious Order of his choice, yet completely financed by the State. Somewhat similar views to those of the archbishop's adviser, were expressed by Fr. T. Bradley, Plumbridge, Co. Tyrone, in a letter to Patrick McGilligan.

Older teachers will never acquire a knowledge of Irish sufficient to enable them to teach Irish as a spoken language to school children. Therefore the money is wasted. You and I know that learning a foreign language must begin when quite young. The organs of speech are capable of forming new sounds and the memory is unimpaired. All our teachers of Irish at St. Columb's are quite incompetent. 125

The establishment of the preparatory system was also opposed by the inspectors. Their opposition, however, like that of the writer to the archbishop, was based on the difficulty of obtaining competent teaching staff for the colleges. According to one of them:

We all opposed the founding of the six (sic) preparatory colleges, pointing out the difficulty of procuring professors and the unfeasibility of speech intercourse between the native speakers and

the students as claimed by their promoters. 126

Moreover, he had a very different view to that of Corcoran<sup>127</sup> of the value of native speakers as teachers:

In choosing teachers for the many Irish classes established after the Treaty it was common to meet men with a good knowledge of the language, quite incapable of imparting it. However, the clerical officers convinced the authorities of the soundness of the bizarre preparatory college scheme. 128

Furthermore he believed that the earlier recruitment systems should not have been ended:

The Monitor and Pupil-Teacher system should never have been dropped as it gave managers, teachers, and inspectors, an opportunity of choosing the very best local material, and the future apprenticeship (in a really good school) trained the young teacher in his formative years. 129

The Irish National Teachers' Organisation was another influential body which opposed the establishment of the preparatory colleges from the very beginning. It was opposed to the segregation of student-teachers from other students and to the early age at which students entered the colleges. An editorial in the INTO's magazine, *The Irish School Weekly*, in March 1926, gave the union's views:

No matter how liberal the curriculum in the colleges the fact that all students are intended to be teachers will have a detrimental effect. The teacher of all others should be given the very broadest outlook on life. He has to guide and direct the citizens of the future and if he associates in his student career, only with young people without any diversity of outlook from his own, the effect on him must necessarily be narrowing. <sup>130</sup>

T.J. O'Connell, <sup>131</sup> general secretary of the INTO, expressed the union's position on the age of selection. He believed that it was better to leave the choice of a career

until the students were about seventeen, or eighteen, and to devise a system of bursaries, and maintenance allowances, so that student-teachers could attend Intermediate Schools with candidates for other professions. While O'Connell's views contained much wisdom, the context of the times has to be remembered. It was a period when large numbers of young people left school at fourteen to start their working life, while others began apprenticeships at that age. In addition many young people were recruited to Religious Orders at the age of twelve. Moreover, Ernest Blythe himself, left school at fourteen, and moved to Dublin, where at the age of fifteen he started work as a boy clerk in the civil service.

However, the inspectors' opposition to the preparatory system quickly changed as the personnel retired, and were replaced by Irish-language enthusiasts, <sup>134</sup> but the INTO neither changed, nor modified, its views. Indeed its opposition grew stronger, when changes in the selection procedure, in the thirties, made it more and more difficult for teachers' children to obtain places in training colleges.

The public at large was sceptical about the scheme and an editorial in a daily paper reflected their views:

Official documents are now in two languages even though legislators themselves scarcely ever use a word of Irish. Irish is no value to those who had to emigrate to seek employment. People should be free to choose whether or not their children will learn Irish. 135

In addition it went on to question the soundness of the scheme and expressed concern that students, as young as thirteen, were choosing teaching as a career and prophesied that the location of five out of seven colleges in the Gaeltacht 'would entail a maximum of inconvenience and cost.'

## CONCLUSION

Despite opposition from the inspectorate and the INTO the establishment of the preparatory system was seen as solving one of the most important issues facing the educational authorities in the newly-established Irish Free State: the recruitment of primary teachers. This was an urgent need as the failure of existing recruitment channels, the monitorial system and the old pupil-teacher scheme, was becoming more apparent. Furthermore as a major part of the Government's gaelicisation policy focussed on the primary schools it was imperative that a supply of Irish-speaking teachers be developed. Moreover, by establishing some of the colleges in the Gaeltacht, the Government could claim that second-level education would be provided for native speakers.

By 1926, the Department had worked out the main principles for the establishment of the preparatory colleges. One of the most important was management, where following negotiations with the Hierarchy, it was decided that the bishop in whose diocese the colleges were located, would be the manager, and he would chose the Religious Order to run the college. Once the approval of the Roman Catholic Church was obtained, the Department was able to go ahead and to make more detailed plans. It was at this point that crucial mistakes were made, particularly, regarding the age of entry for students, and the decision that the colleges would be for student-teachers only. These decisions aroused the opposition of the INTO. In addition the establishment of the colleges was opposed by two other influential groups: the inspectorate, and the Department of Finance. The attitude of the inspectorate changed as the personnel changed, but opposition from the INTO, and Finance, was to dog the system throughout its thirty-five years of existence. This was the background in which the preparatory colleges were established.

## FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 1, Part (ii)

- <sup>1</sup> Memo from CEO on Inspection Staff 1922, UCD Archives, MacNeill Papers, LAI/H/134
- <sup>2</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1924 25, p. 41

3 Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 63, n. 130

<sup>5</sup> See p. 62, n. 90

<sup>6</sup> Fr. M.P. O'Hickey succeeded Fr. Eugene O'Growney as Professor of Celtic Studies at the National University in 1896

<sup>7</sup> See p. 60, n. 50

<sup>8</sup> See p. 27

<sup>9</sup> See p. 93

<sup>10</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1924 - 25, pp. 13, 14 and 20

11 There were also eighteen Model schools which were not managed by the Churches

<sup>12</sup> Members of the new Government were noted for their devotion to their Church, particularly Cosgrave who had a private chapel in his residence. The one exception was Blythe who was a Protestant.

13 Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1924-25, p. 21

15 Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> See p. 39

<sup>17</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1924 – 25, p. 40

<sup>18</sup> The Easter Examination was the entrance examination to the training colleges. Formerly known as the King's Scholarship Entrance Examination its name was changed in 1922. In 1898 the holding of the examination moved from July to Easter.

<sup>19</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1924 – 25, p. 26

20 Ibid., p. 31

21 Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., The 6200 included 589 who had the Ard Teastas

<sup>23</sup> Of those who had no qualifications 2,500 were forty-five and over

<sup>24</sup> See p. 117

<sup>25</sup> Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 15

<sup>26</sup> See p. 57, n. 20

<sup>27</sup> UCD Archives, MacNeill Papers, LAI/E/25-7

28 Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Fr. T. Bradley to Patrick McGilligan, 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1923, UCD Archives, McGilligan Papers, P35d/105. See also p. 52

<sup>30</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1924 – 25, p. 31

Memo on The Gaelicising of Ireland, UCD Archives, MacNeill Papers, P24/303

bid.

- <sup>33</sup> Dáil Reports, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1926
- <sup>34</sup> S. Parkes, *The history of the Church of Ireland Training College*, 1811 1969 (Dublin: CICE, 1983) p. 142

35 *[bid.*]

 $^{36}$  Report of the Department of Education, 1924-25, p. 34

" Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 1928 – 29, p. 15

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 1924 – 25, p. 35
<sup>40</sup> See p. 41

41 *Ibid.*, p.38

43 Séamas Ó hÉilí, 'The Preparatory Training Colleges,' Oideas 28, Iris na Roinne

Oideachais, Samhradh 1984, p. 37

<sup>44</sup> These were supplemented by graduates, untrained teachers, known as JAMS, and private students
<sup>45</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1924 – 25, p. 41

<sup>46</sup> A limit was placed on the numbers recruited annually for the whole island: 700 for monitors and 200 for pupil-teachers

<sup>47</sup> See p. 210

<sup>48</sup> See p. 51

<sup>49</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1924 – 25, p. 40

- <sup>50</sup> The Irish School Weekly, Vol. LXXVII, No. 15, 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1926, p. 464
- 51 Memo on The Gaelicising of Ireland, UCD Archives, Blythe Papers P24/215

52 Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> See pp. 46 - 48

54 T.J. Corcoran, 'The native speaker as teacher,' in The Irish School Monthly, April 1923, p. 188

55 Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> The Irish School Weekly, Vol. LXXVII, No. 15

<sup>57</sup> See p. <sup>58</sup> See p. 28

- 59 Misneach, 19th March, 1921
- 60 UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/37

<sup>62</sup> Misneach, 21<sup>st</sup> May, 1921. Also 4<sup>th</sup> June, 1921

63 Ibid., 4th June, 1921

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1921

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid., 3rd June, 1925

67 Dáil Reports, 11th June, 1925

68 Ibid., 24th March, 1926

70 Letter from former inspector, Séamus Fenton, to Bishop Browne of Galway, 1st September, 1944, Galway Diocesan Archives, Browne Papers

71 See p. 92

<sup>72</sup> See p. 68

<sup>73</sup> See p. 60, n. 50 <sup>74</sup> See p. 57, n. 20

<sup>75</sup> Letter from O Brolchain to secretary, Department of Finance, 1st March, 1923, DF Papers, National Archives, S20/9/25

<sup>76</sup> Memo from O'Neill to secretary, Department of Finance, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1924, *Ibid*.

<sup>77</sup> See p. 63, n. 130
<sup>78</sup> Memo from O'Neill to secretary, Department of Finance, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 1924, DF Papers, National Archives, S20/9/25

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> There was also a link between Dublin University and the Church of Ireland Training College. From 1921 students who had successfully completed the training college course, and who passed the 'Little-Go' examination were accepted as rising Junior

<sup>80</sup> Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 5

81 See p. 28 82 See p. 41

83 Memo from O Brolchain to secretary, Department of Finance, DF Papers S25/4/29

84 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 4

85 Letter from O Brolchain to Archbishop Byrne, Dublin Diocesan Archives, Byrne **Papers** 

86 Ibid.87 Ibid.

88 Ibid.

89 Protestant boys were not to be recruited as there were few vacancies for them

<sup>90</sup> Letter from O Brolchain to Archbishop Byrne, Dublin Diocesan Archives, Byrne **Papers** 

91 Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> See p. 57, n. 20

93 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltacht, p. 5

94 See p. 218

<sup>95</sup> Minute from Education to Finance, 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1925, DF Papers, S20/9/25

<sup>96</sup> John Allen Fitzgerald Gregg, (1873 - 1961). Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin 1920 - 1939. Born in England, though his family was Irish, he was educated at Cambridge, where he studied Classics, and TCD. He was ordained in 1896 and served in parishes in Ballymena and Cork. From 1911 - 1915 he was Archbishop King's Professor of Divinity in TCD. In 1915 he was elected Bishop of Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin, and five years later he became Archbishop of Dublin, a post he was to hold during a difficult period of transition for the Church of Ireland. Gregg is generally acknowledged to have given courageous and wise leadership during a period of political turmoil. From 1939 – 59 he was Archbishop of Armagh.

97 H.M. Kingsmill Moore, *Reminiscences and Reflections*, (London: Longmans Green,

1930) p. 293

98 DF Papers, S20/9/25

<sup>99</sup> White Paper on the Establishment of Preparatory Colleges, Cabinet Papers, National Archives, S4828

100 'Scheme for Preparatory Colleges,' 22nd February, 1926, UCD Archives, Mulcahy Papers, P7/C/70

<sup>101</sup> DF Papers, S20/9/25

<sup>102</sup> See p. 148

103 DF Papers, S20/9/25

104 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 17

105 Interview with Aine Ni Chonaill, past student C. Ide.

<sup>106</sup> See p. 236

107 DF Papers, S22/1/26

<sup>108</sup> See p. 60, n. 50 <sup>109</sup> See p. 26

<sup>110</sup> See p. 41

111 See p. 56, n. 15

<sup>112</sup> See p. 4

<sup>113</sup> See p. 61, n. 88

Letter from Department of Finance, 25th November, 1924, DF Papers, National Archives, S20/9/25

113 Ibid., p. 1

116 *Ibid*.

<sup>117</sup> See pp. 44 - 45

Confidential memo, 'Examination of educational sphere,' unnamed document, Byrne Papers, Dublin Diocesan Archives.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.* 

- 120 *Ibid*.
- 121 UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/304

<sup>122</sup> See p. 195

<sup>123</sup> See p. 52

<sup>124</sup> See p. 65, n. 153

125 UCD Archives, McGilligan Papers, P35d/105

126 Seamus Fenton, It all happened, Reminiscences of Seamus Fenton, (Gill & Son: Dublin, 1948) p. 268

<sup>127</sup> See p. 46 - 48

128 Séamus Fenton, It all happened, Reminiscences of Séamus Fenton, p. 269

- Letter from Séamus Fenton to Bishop Browne, 1st September, 1944, Galway Diocesan Archives
- 130 The Irish School Weekly, 6th March, 1926, LXXVII, No. 10

131 See p. 64, n. 141

132 Ibid., p. 298

<sup>133</sup> See p. 60, n. 50

<sup>134</sup> Memo from the chief inspector regarding proposed changes in the Inspection Staff, UCD Archives, MacNeill Papers, LAI/H/134

135 The Irish Independent, 26th February, 1926

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> Confidential memo, 'Examination of educational sphere,' unnamed document, Byrne Papers, Dublin Diocesan Archives

## **CHAPTER 11**

## THE BACKGROUND TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PREPARATORY COLLEGES 1926 - 32

In keeping with its policy of restoring the Irish language, one of the first commissions, established by the Government of the Irish Free State, was Coimisiún na Gaeltachta (the Gaeltacht Commission) to inquire into the preservation of the Gaeltacht. This was a logical sequel to measures already in place: Irish was 'expressly recognised as the National Language' in the Constitution, and with its place in the educational policy of the new State secured, the Government turned to examine those areas of the country where the language was still spoken.

In the Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta,<sup>3</sup> presented to the Government in July 1926, the Commission produced a comprehensive series of recommendations for improving life in the Gaeltacht generally, and made a number of wide-ranging recommendations, which had they been put into effect, would have raised the standing of the language throughout the country. They included making Irish essential for entry to and promotion in the civil service, the Garda Síochána, and the Defence Forces. In addition the Commission endorsed the Government's plans, to gaelicise the education system, and gave its approval to measures, designed to ensure that all the country's teachers were fluent in Irish. In particular it endorsed the Government's plans to gaelicise the training colleges, and to establish preparatory colleges to assist this process.

The First National Programme Conference<sup>4</sup> had been in operation since 1922. The majority of the teachers, however, were still struggling to learn the language, and they were not helped by the injudicious zeal of the inspectors, whose increased pressure led to the holding of the Second National Programme Conference in 1926. This resulted in a number of modifications to the programme, which made life a little easier for the teachers, though the submissions of various inspectors to the conference, portrayed an almost Dickensian picture of the average school. They also clearly demonstrated the folly of the Department, in squandering scarce resources on an unrealistic and overambitious gaelicisation policy. Moreover, the submissions clearly reveal the strained relations, which existed in the second half of the twenties, between managers and inspectors, and between inspectors and teachers. In addition they set the context in which the preparatory students were to work as teachers, and clearly demonstrated the need for teachers to be fluent Irish speakers, which was one of the primary reasons for establishing the preparatory colleges.

Much of the work of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta was influenced by Blythe,<sup>5</sup> who was the most dedicated Gaeilgeoir in the Government, and its report, resonated with many of his ideas. Moreover, it was probably due to his influence that the Commission went beyond its terms of reference and did not concentrate on trying to restore the language in the Gaeltacht only. The Commission's terms of reference<sup>6</sup> were:

To enquire and report to the Executive Council as to the percentage of Irish speakers in a district which would warrant its being regarded as:

- (a) an Irish-speaking district
- (b) a partly Irish-speaking district and the present extent and location of such districts.

To enquire and make recommendations as to the use of Irish in the administration of such districts, the educational facilities therein, and any steps that should be taken to improve the economic condition of the inhabitants.

The Commission's report and recommendations were to be of major significance for Irish society over the next decades, and while it had little effect in stopping the Gaeltacht from declining further, its recommendations regarding the gaelicisation of the public service, made sufficient impact to give the required appearance of a new and culturally different State, thus satisfying the aspirations of the most ardent members of the Gaelic League, and effecting sufficient change to assuage those, who suffering from post-colonial mentality, needed to assert a new cultural identity.

The Commission's findings about the Gaeltacht were alarming: there was a disturbing rate of poverty and deprivation among native speakers, with a poor standard of primary education, and a complete lack of secondary education. Moreover, native speakers lived, mainly, in remote parts of the country with no infrastructure, and few employment opportunities. A further cause for concern was the low esteem which native speakers had for the language itself. Indeed the perception that positions of power and authority were held by those who spoke English, encouraged the learning of English by the more ambitious while the more industrious native speakers emigrated.

To combat this perception, the Commission made a series of wide-ranging recommendations to improve the standing of the language in the Gaeltacht generally. Many of them dealt with education, with recommendations for the provision of improved facilities at primary level, including plans ensuring that only Irish-speaking teachers taught in Gaeltacht schools. It also recommended the provision of free secondary education and Schools of Continuation Education in the Gaeltacht. To ensure that Gaeltacht students could pursue third-level courses, it proposed that UCG be gaelicised.

Finally, it gave effect to Blythe's doctrine that native speakers must be shown that Irish pays, by recommending a series of grants and loans to improve living conditions in the Gaeltacht.

The twelve-member commission, harded by Richard Mulcahy, began its work, in March 1925, and produced its report in July 1926. Born in 1886, Mulcahy made a significant contribution to different areas of the life of the nation as a revolutionary, soldier, and politician. A native of Waterford, he was educated at Thurles CBS, and while working as a clerk in the Post Office in the first decade of this century, joined the Gaelic League, and later the Irish Volunteers. A member of the IRB, he took part in the 1916 Rising at Ashbourne, Co. Meath, and was amongst those imprisoned at Frongach, in Wales. As chief-of-staff of the IRA, he played a leading role in the War of Independence. He took the Treaty side, in 1921, and became commander-in-chief of the new State's army after the death of Collins. Two years later, he became Minister for Defence, but resigned this office a year later, following criticism by a Government appointed inquiry into his handling of the 'Army Mutiny.' He became a member of the Cabinet again, in 1927, when he was appointed Minister for Local Government.

Mulcahy was first elected to parliament as an MP in 1918, and, subsequently, was elected a TD at all elections, apart from one period, 1937 - 43, until he retired from politics in 1961. In the thirties, he played a leading role in the Army Comrades Association, also known as the Blueshirts, an organisation with fascist tendencies, founded to defend Cumann na nGaedheal meetings from IRA attacks. A founder member of the modern political party, Fine Gael, and its leader from 1944 - 1959, he helped to form the First Inter-party Government in 1948. To his credit, he agreed to allow another member of Fine Gael, John A. Costello, 11 to become Taoiseach when memories of his role in the Civil War made him unacceptable to the other parties. He served as Minister

for Education twice: from 1948 – 51, in the First Inter-party Government, and also from 1954 – 57, in the Second Inter-party Government. In 1950, he set up the Council for Education.

Led by Mulcahy, the Commission visited Irish-speaking areas, and had investigations carried out locally by clergy and teachers.<sup>12</sup> It also interviewed one hundred witnesses and, as a result of its deliberations, its report containing eighty-two recommendations, was drawn up. Subsequently a major policy document, *Statement of Government Policy on the Recommendations of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta presented to both Houses of the Oireachtas by Order of the Executive Council*, was published.<sup>13</sup> In its report, the Commission's recommendations dealt with the following areas: firstly, a definition of Irish speaking districts;<sup>14</sup> secondly, education facilities;<sup>15</sup> thirdly, the use of Irish in the administration;<sup>16</sup> fourthly, economic conditions;<sup>17</sup> and fifthly, matters of a general nature.<sup>18</sup>

Amongst those who gave evidence to the Commission on behalf of the Department's Primary Branch was O Brolcháin, <sup>19</sup> who was questioned about the progress of the Government's plan to gaelicise primary education. His response to questions about the training colleges, which were seen as having a key role in supplying Irish-speaking teachers, illustrated the Department's difficulties in trying to gaelicise them:

The difficulty with regard to the training colleges is we have institutions actually existing, and teaching staff actually in operation, which it is difficult to change at short notice. Staff is the difficulty in the training colleges. The atmosphere is inherited from the past. <sup>20</sup>

Furthermore he revealed that the State's control of the training colleges was limited, because of the way in which the system of training operated:

The State supplies all the financial support of the training colleges yet they are regarded as private institutions subject to regulations as to the programmes prescribed for entrants and to the programme and course of teaching in the colleges.<sup>21</sup>

This passage illustrates the power of the Roman Catholic Church, which owned all but one of these 'private institutions,' and the conservative nature of the Government which never considered curtailing the power of the Church. Moreover, there is no evidence to suggest that any of the former revolutionaries, turned parliamentarians, considered assessing, or reviewing this system; rather they was quite ready to accept the Church's claim that it had the primary responsibility for overseeing the training of teachers:

We wish to assert the great fundamental principle that the only satisfactory system of education for Catholics is one, wherein Catholic children are taught in Catholic schools, by Catholic teachers, under Catholic control.<sup>22</sup>

O Brolchain pointed out that a further difficulty regarding the training colleges was that much of the teaching was, through English, and it was to overcome these difficulties that the preparatory colleges were to be set up:

In continental countries they are proposing to stop the monitorial system, not the pupil teacher scheme, but the monitorial system. We think that instead of that system, a system of preparatory colleges should be established and that, in order that the material for training should be Irish-speaking those preparatory colleges should in the main be set in Irish-speaking districts. We propose, if we get sanction of the scheme, which I am afraid will cost some more money than the present scheme, to set a number of the preparatory colleges in the intensely Irish-speaking districts. <sup>23</sup>

With regard to financing the preparatory colleges, he revealed that it was hoped that the local authorities would assist the central authority, by financing scholarships for poor pupils. Why this did not happen is not clear, for the method eventually devised to finance the system was to be extremely costly. He further revealed that though the curriculum

was to be entirely in Irish, except for English, it would include some continental languages. Furthermore the colleges would supply half of the students for the training colleges; the rest would be pupil-teachers, or come from private colleges.<sup>24</sup>

Questioned about the Department's plans to ensure that all current primary teachers learned Irish, he defended the expenditure of £45,000 on summer courses for teachers to learn Irish, explaining that the new programme was drawn up 'during the revolutionary period' and was largely a teachers' programme as the managers had not attended the First National Programme Conference.<sup>25</sup> Outlining the Department's success in implementing the new policy, he informed the Commission that all, but forty primary schools in the State, were teaching Irish; the exceptions, mostly in Co. Donegal and under Protestant management, had opted out under a clause in the Programme, <sup>26</sup> though he was careful to point out that 'generally speaking Protestant schools were taking up Irish teaching with enthusiasm.' Furthermore corroboration of this view, that there was no lack of enthusiasm among Protestants, was given in evidence to the Second National Programme Conference in 1926. <sup>27</sup>

Explaining the Department's policy regarding third-level education for Gaeltacht children, Ó Brolcháin stated that it was their intention that they should be educated at third-level, so that they could then take their places in the professions:

It is important we get the best material from the Gaeltacht to come up to university and go back from university to influence the life of the country and to infuse the life of the country with an Irish spirit. It is important that this should be so and in doing so to gaelicise the university itself by sending people into it who will afterwards become its professors and by that means influence the whole life of the country. <sup>28</sup>

The Department's Secondary Education Branch was represented at the Commission by Seoirse MacNiocaill, (George Nicholls). A militant Protestant from Galway, he was elected to the Sinn Fein executive in 1910. Later he joined the IRB and took part in the 1916 Rising. Subsequently, he was deported to England where he was held with a number of other prisoners under open arrest in Leominster in 1917. While interned at Frongach Camp in North Wales, he taught Irish to the inmates and was one of fifty-four prisoners, from 1800 internees, elected to the General Council of Frongach. A school inspector, he had the unusual distinction of having competed against de Valera<sup>29</sup> for the post. In 1918, he was elected MP for Galway. He voted for the Treaty in 1922. Known as a zealous enthusiast for the language, he caused outrage by expressing the following views at a public meeting, in Kilkenny, shortly after the publication of the White Paper, announcing the establishment of the preparatory colleges:

We are going to drive the English language out of Ireland. Why should English be on an equal footing with Irish? Going to see that every child born in Ireland will speak its mother tongue. Every hog, dog and devil will have to learn it.<sup>30</sup>

This outburst caused a furore and led to a public rebuke.<sup>31</sup> His subsequent failure to be appointed secretary of the Department may have been due to this outburst, though it has been attributed to his religion.<sup>32</sup> A genial character, he was musical and had some responsibility for music in the Department. He was also a member of the Second Programme Conference, and was involved in establishing An Gum, <sup>33</sup> the Department section responsible for publishing Irish writing. MacNiocaill told the Commission:

Our policy is to encourage education entirely through Irish ultimately. Bilingualism we only regard as a step to that method of instruction so we do not admit schools to Class B as we do not recognise bilingual schools as a permanent institution.<sup>34</sup>

In addition he informed the Commission that there were currently two secondary schools where all teaching was through Irish: St. Louis Convent, Monaghan, and the Convent of Mercy, Carrick-on-Suir, 35 and he had this to say about the method of teaching Irish:

We considered making an oral examination a part of the regular examination. This is very difficult. We didn't believe it really necessary. You couldn't teach a subject without it being done orally in Irish <sup>36</sup>

As MacNiocaill held an important post in the Department it was perhaps unfortunate that his views were accepted. Had an oral examination been instituted, it would have helped to focus attention on speaking the language.

One of the Commission's first tasks was to determine the precise locations of Irish-speaking areas. Certain districts in Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Clare, Cork, Kerry, and Waterford, were investigated and declared to be either a Gaeltacht, or a Breac-Ghaeltacht. Much of this work was done by Mulcahy himself. Later, schools in the Gaeltacht were marked with a special stamp on Department documents: an oval shape with the word GAELTACHT, or a rectangular shape with BREAC-GHAELTACHT.<sup>37</sup> The Commission defined a Gaeltacht, as an area 'where eighty per cent, or upwards of the population of the district, is Irish- speaking,' and a Breac-Ghaeltacht, as an area, where not less that twenty-five per cent, and not more than seventy-nine per cent of the population, is Irish-speaking'. <sup>38</sup>

In proposing steps to assist the restoration of the language, the Commission divided areas into two kinds: districts in which the Irish language may and should be restored at once in matters of education, administration, and for general purposes (a) to the position, for example, the French language occupies in fact in France, and the English language in

England. (b) A district in which the Irish language may and should be restored to such a position by gradual process at the earliest possible moment.<sup>39</sup> These aims show the unrealistic nature of those who wanted to restore the language. Such aims were overambitious and showed a failure to appreciate how far the language had declined.

Moreover, the picture portrayed by the Commission's work regarding life in the Gaeltacht was dismal, not only was the number of native speakers declining, but the quality of life in Irish-speaking areas was depressing and without hope. The native speaker had little chance of education, and such primary teaching as he received suffered from the following defects:

- (1) The inadequate provision of teachers with the necessary knowledge of Irish
- (2) The fact that English had been the language of the teachers' own education and training
- (3) The percentage of teachers reported as non-efficient
- (4) The want of good systematised cheap school books in Irish
- (5) Poor school buildings and equipment 40

Moreover, the lack of education facilities, dealt with in paragraphs 3 - 29, was a cause for concern:

The only type of education available to Irish-speaking children is primary education. Intrinsically this primary education is defective either a child gets it in English, not his native language or in Irish through teachers, who for the most part have received their own education through the medium of English and trained entirely in English-speaking districts. The child is instructed by means of unsuitable books and with school equipment with no pertinence to his language. The result in the child's mind his own language is given the brand of inferiority.<sup>41</sup>

In addition the primary school itself was likely to be in a remote area, with few facilities and unsuitable text-books. According to the Commission:

School buildings are small, depressing, unsanitary, and poorly equipped with desks and seats. Children are very often kept too long standing in class or have to sit on the floor. A complaint very generally made is that schools are badly heated in winter. 42

Even this poor education, however, did not continue beyond the age of twelve, when Gaeltacht children had to stay at home to help work on the family holding. Indeed the lack of employment opportunities was a serious cause for concern, as there were no prospects for a native speaker other than a life of drudgery, or servitude, unless he learned English and emigrated:

Irish-speaking children in Irish-speaking districts have little opportunity for Higher Education in any language. The education he gets leads nowhere except to emigration or to unskilled drudgery at home. It makes no contribution to the solution of local economic problems nor to the economic problem of a boy or girl who has to leave his/her native district to find a living elsewhere. 43

The Commission was quite clear that, if this situation continued, the language would die:

The continuation of this position means the death-knell for the language because when the English trained teacher, doctor, engineer, agricultural official, or other expert, comes into contact with the Irish-speaking population his influence inevitably tends to inspire the prestige of English and to lower the confidence of the Irish-speaking population in themselves: he impresses as nothing else does, the Irish-speaking youth who may have to seek a living outside his native district with the fact that in English and not in Irish lies his economic future.<sup>44</sup>

With such miserable conditions it was no wonder that the Commission found that 'no district now exists in which the English language has not penetrated' and that 'the number of native speakers was falling rapidly.' Furthermore the report found that the total loss of Irish speakers over seven counties between 1911 and 1925 was 137,509 or almost thirty-two per cent. 46

The report went on to review the history of the teaching of Irish in the school system, and emphasised the importance of the education system in restoring the language. In its view the contribution of teachers was of vital significance, and it censured the training colleges for their failure over the years to train teachers to teach through Irish: 'The general policy was to teach Irish, as an extra subject, and to make use of Irish in Irish-speaking districts for the extension of English', <sup>47</sup> and it added:

Where Irish was used as a medium of instruction, this instruction was imparted by teachers whose training was carried out entirely through the medium of English and who were without the assistance of suitable text-books in Irish. The teaching through Irish was done merely as a stepping-stone to the teaching of English and to instruction through English<sup>48</sup>

The Commission endorsed the Government's decision that all primary teachers should be fluent Irish speakers, and commended the following proposals to put this into effect:

- (a) the establishment of seven preparatory colleges to ensure an adequate supply of well educated Irish-speaking candidates for the training colleges
- (b) the development of teaching through the medium of Irish in the training colleges which are responsible for the professional teaching of teachers.<sup>49</sup>

To speed up this process the Commission proposed that Gaeltacht boys and girls of sixteen years of age, and upwards, be recruited for a short preparatory course at some of the training colleges before the normal two years of training:

The Commission is aware that in the Gaeltacht there are boys and girls of 16 years of age and upwards who have been prevented by

the suspension of the monitorial system from being employed as monitors, and who, under the present regulations are too old for entry to the proposed Preparatory Colleges. These boys and girls possess a traditional knowledge of the language, and are excellent material for training as teachers.<sup>50</sup>

This passage resonates with the views earlier expressed by Corcoran.<sup>51</sup> The Commission also proposed that boys and girls, who had completed the Intermediate Certificate Examination already, and who had the necessary competency in Irish, have their period in the preparatory colleges shortened from four to two years.<sup>52</sup> In the Commission's view, these proposals would ensure that students entering training colleges had 'such a grasp of spoken Irish on entrance,' that the work of the training colleges could be carried out through the medium of Irish.<sup>53</sup> These proposals were worthy of implementation but the Government's response was half-hearted. Had they been implemented, the costs of the preparatory system would have been considerably reduced.

The Commission made a number of recommendations to improve primary education in the Gaeltacht. Firstly, to improve the quality of teaching, it urged that 'a wide and fluent knowledge of Irish' should be an essential qualification for primary teachers in Gaeltacht schools. Secondly, it demanded that a systematic examination be made to 'ascertain how many teachers are competent to be retained as primary teachers in the Gaeltacht. Thirdly, it called for no further appointments be sanctioned to a Gaeltacht school, of a teacher who was not thoroughly qualified to teach the full primary programme through Irish. In addition it demanded the removal of teachers who were unable to speak Irish from Gaeltacht schools, after three years, and after five years, from Breac-Ghaeltacht schools. These were reasonable time limits for teachers to gain qualifications, but the Government's response was fearful, that such actions would 'arouse very serious opposition from teachers.' The offer of worthwhile compensation to the teachers

involved would have easily solved the problem. In addition the Government showed its fear of the Roman Catholic Church. The removal of teachers, it said, 'might easily give rise to grave questions about the powers and rights of managers.' <sup>56</sup> These responses showed a lack of determination on the Government's part to take worthwhile action to improve education in the Gaeltacht.

Noting that many teachers had acquired the Ard Teastas, the Bilingual Certificate, or the Ordinary Certificate, the Commission queried the value of these qualifications, and stressed that 'urgent steps should be taken to provide, within a short space of time, a large number of competent teachers, fully qualified, to teach through the medium of Irish.' <sup>57</sup> Moreover, with a view to ensuring a proper supply of Irish-speaking teachers, the Commission recommended that an investigation into the numbers of qualified teachers coming from the training colleges be undertaken. It feared that such numbers would be inadequate to fill vacancies occurring in the normal way, and also those brought about by the numbers of teachers likely to be required to be replaced within the next few years. To avoid a shortage, it urged that special steps be taken to provide additional competent teachers, <sup>58</sup> and recommended that suitable teachers, over sixty years of age, who were competent in Irish, be retained beyond that age.

In its response to the recommendations regarding the supply of sufficient numbers of Irish-speaking teachers, the Government pointed out that older teachers were being retained, and facilities being provided for teachers to learn Irish, included summer courses, the establishment of the preparatory colleges, and the gaelicising of the training colleges. Furthermore the Government accepted the Commission's recommendation, that bonuses be awarded of ten per cent for 'Highly Efficient' teachers, and five per cent for 'Efficient' teachers in Gaeltacht schools, as the remoteness of such schools made it difficult to get competent teachers. However, it rejected a recommendation that a

separate inspectorate for the Gaeltacht be established on the grounds that all divisional and district inspectors were fully qualified in Irish. Moreover, establishing a separate Gaeltacht inspectorate would mean that all Irish-speaking areas would be under one divisional inspector, which would be problematic because of time, duties, and travel. <sup>60</sup>

The Commission referred several times to the need for suitable textbooks for Gaeltacht schools, and recommended, firstly, that a series of school books in Irish for pupils up to Class IV, be prepared by the Department, to serve the three principal language areas: Ulster, Connacht, and Munster. Secondly, it recommended that from Class V a common selection of readers be considered, and thirdly, that a standard set of readers, in English, for the Gaeltacht be similarly prepared. It also recommended that such books should be sold at cost price to Gaeltacht children. This in the Government's view was 'acceptable in principle, but not feasible at present, due to serious practical difficulties,' which in reality meant that it would not provide the necessary finance. The final recommendation, regarding primary schools, was that a free meal should be provided each day in schools, where managers and teachers thought it advisable. The Government's response was that legislation was in existence to bring this into effect. 62

With regard to secondary education, the Commission's most damning finding was that there was only one secondary school in the Gaeltacht, and that was an English-speaking boys' school in Dingle, <sup>63</sup> though there were twenty-nine secondary schools in partly Irish-speaking districts: fifteen for boys, ten for girls, and four mixed. In addition the report noted that there were two secondary schools, teaching through Irish, outside the Gaeltacht. <sup>64</sup> To remedy this lack, the Commission proposed that a number of Free Day Secondary Schools be established in Irish-speaking districts, and in partly Irish-speaking districts, but the Government's response was negative. Moreover, it made no reference to the plans to introduce its long-awaited School Attendance legislation:

Owing to the poverty of the vast majority of people in the Gaeltacht it is very difficult in the present circumstances to induce parents in those districts to send their children to secondary schools. It is necessary for the children to earn their livelihood and to supplement the family income from the age of twelve onwards. One of the difficulties to be surmounted is compelling them to send their children primary school up to the age of fourteen. Where parents show desire the Government is prepared to consider providing in the Gaeltacht as done elsewhere finance for secondary education in the advanced classes of the larger existing Primary schools in each of the Commission's recommendations in paragraph 68.

A proposal that a system of scholarships be established met a similar response. The rejection of these two proposals was a clear indication of the Government's unwillingness to do anything worthwhile to remedy this major area of neglect. The likely reason for the Government's reaction was its fear, that the provision of free secondary education in the Gaeltacht, would lead to similar claims from the Galltacht. As one historian has commented, An approach towards equality of educational opportunity was too high a price to pay for the gaelicisation of Ireland. It is likely, however, that the Government intended that the establishment of the preparatory colleges in the Gaeltacht would compensate for the deficiency in secondary education, though there was the fear that once free secondary education was provided, Gaeltacht students would avail of it, instead of entering the preparatory colleges.

The Government promised, however, to give 'careful consideration' to the Commission's proposal, 69 that schools of Rural Continuation Education be established, giving instruction in:

- (a) the combined subjects of Agriculture, Horticulture and Manual Instruction
- (b) Poultry Keeping, Dairying, Domestic Science and Hygiene
- (c) Irish Literature, History, Geography, Elementary Science, and Mathematics applied

to Agriculture, and serving a population of approximately 4,000 people

In response to further proposals that an Agriculture College be established in which boys, mainly from the Gaeltacht, would be taught Agriculture, Horticulture, Afforestation and Manual Training, and that a similar college be established in which girls, mainly from the Gaeltacht, would be taught Poultry-keeping, Dairying, Domestic Science and Hygiene, the Government pointed out that such colleges were already in existence: there was a college for boys in Athenry, Co. Galway, and a college for girls in Clifden, though it had to admit that both colleges were open to English speakers also. 70 In addition the Commission recommended that financial inducements be provided to encourage prestigious secondary schools to become 'A' schools. This recommendation reflected Blythe's 71 determination to raise the standing of the Irish language. Moreover, he wanted the Government to give grants to diocesan seminaries, and major boys' schools, such as Clongowes Wood College and Castleknock College, to encourage them to become 'A' schools. Indeed so keen was Blythe on this policy, that he was unhappy with the Minister for Education's proposal, that such schools should receive additional grants of twentyfive per cent. Blythe wanted them increased to thirty-five or forty per cent. He also suggested extra grants for every teacher teaching through Irish. 72

In an effort to help Gaeltacht youths acquire skills, the Commission proposed that the Technical Education Commission being set up, be asked to reserve one quarter of the places for them. This was accepted by the Government. Furthermore to ensure that Gaeltacht students went on to third-level education, the Commission proposed that UCG become an Irish-speaking university. In response, the Government pointed out that it had no control over the university, though it was expected 'UCG would try.' The Commission also studied the use of Irish in the administration and made a number of significant recommendations in this regard. It recommended that all officials in Irish-

speaking areas, such as policemen, sub-postmistresses and assistants, should be Irish speakers, and, where people knew Irish, the language should be used in administration. A consequent of this would have been the removal of non-Irish speakers from Gaeltacht posts, a task the Government declared to be difficult but, nevertheless, it undertook to consider. <sup>75</sup> This had originally been proposed by the Gaeltacht and Gaelic Culture Committee, established by the General Council of County Councils, in 1924. <sup>76</sup>

Many of the Commission's proposals showed a lack of realism and a failure to accept certain realities of Gaeltacht life. An example of this was the Commission's recommendation regarding the Garda Siochana: Recommendation 39 proposed that seventy-five per cent of places be reserved for policemen from the Gaeltacht, until their numbers reached 500. This recommendation was made, despite the evidence given by the secretary of the Department of Justice, Enri O Frighal, and the Deputy Commissioner of the Garda Siochana, Eamonn Coogan. O Frighal gave this explanation for the small number of Gaeltacht men in the Garda Siochana:

During the Civil War the western seaboard was controlled by the Irregular side and while a native speaker might not be an Irregular, or a supporter of them, he was overawed by them. The time will come when they will get sense but, at the moment, we would not take a man, who had been blowing up our barracks the day before. 77

This was confirmed by Coogan, who told the Commission that few applications were received from Gaeltacht areas, with the exception of Ring:

Nobody applied from the Gaeltacht, except a few from Ring. We wanted five hundred native speakers but there are only 195 in the Garda Síochána. To help with Irish we have four primary teachers, who have been doing nothing but teaching men things they should have learned at school. We are spending four-and-a-half million pounds on education in the Saorstát and we cannot justify teaching

men in the Depot, things they should have got out of the four-and-a half million. 78

Nevertheless, the Commission proposed that as part of the strategy to encourage Irish-speaking officials to work in the Gaeltacht, bonuses be awarded to guards, who were native speakers to transfer to the Gaeltacht. This proposal was rejected by the Government, which pointed out that efforts being made to increase the number of native speakers in the Garda Siochana, had met with 'disappointing results.' This was a sensible proposal and one can see no explanation for its rejection other than that the Government would not provide the necessary financial inducements.

A further example of the magnitude of the task of preserving Irish in the Gaeltacht was the recommendation that Irish be used in courts in the Gaeltacht. The Government's response was that 'as soon as possible, it was hoped that books and documents would be in bilingual form,' though it acknowledged that the majority of judges, barristers, solicitors and court officials, were unable to transact business in the language.<sup>80</sup>

The section aimed at improving social conditions in the Gaeltacht contained many realistic proposals. The Commission recommended that loans and grants for home improvements be provided, that fishermen be helped to acquire boats, and that special schemes for the improvement of livestock and forestry be established. These were all sensible proposals, and had they been implemented, would have gone some way to redressing the neglect of the Gaeltacht and its people. To most of them, the Government's response was positive, though occasionally it displayed a wariness lest it upset the general public. An example of this was its response to the proposal that native speakers be assisted in getting employment. This, it declared, was 'not possible as it would give rise to considerable friction.' <sup>81</sup> The failure to provide equality of educational

opportunity, however, was a grave injustice, and must surely have been grounds for a constitutional case. Furthermore the appalling levels of poverty and deprivation, existing in the Gaeltacht, were illustrated in the assessments made by inspectors in deciding the amount of grants to be paid to preparatory college pupils. 82

The Commission made several practical proposals, which had they been properly resourced, had the potential to improve the lot of the native speaker. These included proposals to resettle Gaeltacht people in other western counties, and to provide grants for land reclamation. In addition they included a radical proposal that native speakers migrate to lands available elsewhere. The response to all of these recommendations was 'they are being dealt with and discussed'. Other proposals of a practical nature were that state nurseries for trees be established, and that a mineralogical survey of the Gaeltacht be undertaken. Again the Government's response was positive: such proposals, it declared, were 'being considered.' Indeed the Commission's blueprint to arrest the economic decline of the Gaeltacht was a step in the right direction, and had the Government been willing to make the necessary financial resources available the number of native speakers could have stabilised and, perhaps, increased.

A major part of Government strategy with regard to the restoration of the language was a programme for the Galltacht, where it was envisaged that the civil service would have a major role to play in gaelicising the nation. As early as May 1922, the use of Irish in the civil service was considered by the Provisional Government, and an extract from the minutes of the period records that the use of the Irish language should be introduced, wherever possible, as 'it was essential that each department should become thoroughly Irish and that forms and circulars etc. associated with the old administration should be altered to suit the new conditions.' <sup>86</sup> In keeping with these aspirations, the Commission made a number of significant recommendations: No. 43 declared that civil servants,

under the age of twenty-six, before 1st January 1926, and all subsequent entrants must possess the necessary qualification in Irish for passing any efficiency bar, or for promotion, while No. 44 proposed that a quarter of vacancies in the civil service be reserved for native speakers. In addition No. 46 recommended that all examination papers for the civil service be in English and Irish and that a certain percentage of vacancies be reserved for competitors answering in Irish. Other areas of the public service considered, included the Defence Forces, where it was proposed that one brigade of the army should be Irish-speaking, and that all army officers, under twenty-six years of age, and all future officers, should know Irish for promotion. The Commission also recommended that a special committee be established to see that all Departments carried out Government policy with regard to the language.

In an attempt to promote the gaelicisation policy among the public generally, the Commission proposed that encouragement be given to people to revert to the Irish forms of personal names, and that ordnance survey maps in Irish be produced. Moreover, the Commission stressed the importance of Gaeltacht culture and went on to make this somewhat exaggerated claim:

The Commission realises that in the memories, stories, folklore, songs and traditions of the Gaeltacht, there is preserved an interrupted Gaelic culture which constitutes the very soul of the Irish language. The native Irish speaker has a command of language, which is inculcated amongst English speakers only by the laboured teaching of the Classics. There is no parallel in English for the refined popular culture which is the highly wrought product of generations of Gaelic Civilisation. <sup>91</sup>

This statement encapsulated a certain anti-English sentiment, which pervaded the thinking of many of the new State's leaders, and was typical of the manner in which newly emergent post-colonial nations bolster their own self-image, by denigrating their

former rulers. Yet for all their claims, the Commission did not call for the reestablishment of a Ministry for Irish, or the establishment of a Department of the Gaeltacht. Their failure to do so would indicate that the Commission pinned its hopes for the revival of the language on the Government implementing its proposals for the gaelicisation of the education system and the civil service

It is worth noting that while the Commission's report touched almost every area of life in the country, there is only a brief reference to one of the most powerful institutions in the State, the Roman Catholic Church: No. 79 recommended that the Executive Council draw the attention of the Ecclesiastical Authorities to the State's policy, regarding 'the use of Irish and invite their co-operation.' The attitude displayed by the Commission was similar to that shown earlier by the Ministry for Irish, 92 and illustrated once again the timidity of the new State's leaders, who were afraid to suggest that the most powerful person in an Irish-speaking area, the parish priest, should be an Irish speaker. One can only speculate as to what would have happened had the Roman Catholic Church vigorously opposed the Government's gaelicisation policy, or how successful it would have been, if the Church had endorsed it whole-heartedly.

One of the Roman Catholic Church's over-riding concerns at that time, was the production of English-speaking personnel for its missionary endeavours and this contributed to its lack of interest in the revival. Nevertheless, there always were some priests who were ardent Gaeilgeoiri, though the attitude of the individual members of the Hierarchy varied. Unfortunately, few bishops were concerned to send Irish-speaking priests to minister in Gaeltacht parishes, while others made promises, and failed to keep them. In addition there were those who responded to requests, that only Irish-speaking priests be appointed in the Gaeltacht, by pointing out that it was the prerogative of the bishop to make such decisions, and his business only. A further cause of concern about

the Church's role in Irish-speaking areas, was that all priests, including native speakers, were educated in Maynooth, an English-speaking institution, which showed little regard for the Church's mission in the Gaeltacht.

## ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF COIMISIÚN na GAELTACHTA

What effect did the Commission's proposals have? The Government responses were noteworthy for the number of times it undertook to accept, or to consider a recommendation. Such acceptance, however, was often just a means of delaying decision-making. Certain recommendations were, indeed, put into effect, but often only in a minimal way. An example of this was the recommendation regarding scholarships to secondary schools. A scheme of scholarships for Fior-Ghaeltacht pupils 95 was devised, with the intention that on completion of their secondary education, they would be eligible to compete for special university scholarships. In addition nine places were reserved in Training Schools of Domestic Economy for girls wishing to qualify as teachers of that subject. However, the number of scholarships was limited to fifteen, and these were divided between the different areas in the Gaeltacht: six for Donegal, seven for Connacht, and two for Munster. A scholarship included free education at an appointed secondary school, a grant for travel, and the cost of a school outfit, amounting to thirty pounds in the first year, and reduced to twenty pounds, for subsequent years.

However, candidates had to satisfy certain conditions. Firstly, they had to have been reared in the Fior-Ghaeltacht. Secondly: Irish had to be the language of the home, and thirdly, they had to have received a primary education through Irish. While these conditions were reasonable enough, only very bright students had a chance of winning a scholarship, as the standard of the examination was similar to the annual examination for preparatory colleges with the same conditions, <sup>96</sup> regarding age and marks. Furthermore strict rules governed the scholarships. Firstly, they were awarded for one year only,

though they could be renewed for up to five years, 'if satisfactory'. Secondly, award winners could do the Intermediate Certificate Examination, after two years, if the principal and the inspector were satisfied, but scholarship winners had to get good results in that examination. Thirdly, conditions for students who received scholarships to Domestic Economy colleges included agreeing that, for ten years, they would 'not teach in schools without the consent of the Department of Education;' otherwise they would have to refund the costs of their education. <sup>97</sup>

To encourage candidates to enter, a system of awards for entrants and their teachers was devised. Expenses of one pound were to be awarded to any competitor, living more than five miles from the nearest centre who passed Irish and, at least, one other subject. In addition those who answered well but did not get an award, were to receive prizes. Furthermore teachers of good pupils were to receive gratuities on a graduating scale: three pounds for one pupil, five pounds for two pupils, and thereafter, one pound for each extra pupil. An additional gratuity was to be awarded to the principal of a school, whose pupils gained places in a preparatory college or a scholarship.

With so many conditions attached, for a small number of awards, it was no wonder that when the scheme was reviewed by the noted Irish scholar, George Thomson, (Seoirse Mac Tomais), in 1931, 98 its greatest weakness was identified as 'the apathy of the native speaker.' Thomson went on to review the progress of the language restoration policy generally. He stressed the need to deal with three urgent problems immediately. These were firstly, to equip the language for new work, secondly, to preserve the living tradition, and thirdly, to arrest the decay of the language in the Gaeltacht. The first difficulty, he believed, was being tackled 'somewhat cumbersomely' by An Gúm, 99 though he stressed the need for writers to have unity of spelling. To remedy the second difficulty, he suggested that, as 'the living tradition was generally neglected,' old Irish

texts should be reprinted, and expressed the belief that the only way to stop the decay of the language in the Gaeltacht was for Gaeltacht people to be trained to help themselves. <sup>100</sup> The memo also referred to the small number of native speakers who obtained places in the preparatory colleges in the early years, and endorsed Blythe's policy of reserving places for them. <sup>101</sup>

With regard to the Commission's recommendations regarding primary education in Irish-speaking areas, it is obvious from the memo that it had not greatly improved for Thomson reported: 'The low standard of some Fior-Ghaeltacht schools could be circumvented, if inspectors kept notes of the progress of prospective candidates, and reported on them at the time of the examination.' He also called for greater co-operation between inspectors and teachers in Gaeltacht schools, and criticised the Department for its practice of stationing an inspector in a province, other than his own. This, he claimed led to dialect difficulties:

The practice in the Department of Education is to station each inspector in some province other than his own. This leads to dialect difficulties. Therefore it is a mistake. He doesn't understand the Irish of his schools as well as he should or as well as the teachers under him. Therefore he has not their confidence. 103

Thomson made three proposals to improve matters. Firstly, he proposed that more scholarships to UCG should be established. Secondly, *feiseanna* should be established throughout the Gaeltacht, organised by the people themselves, with financial help 'at weak strategic points, such as Kilronan, Clifden, Uachtarard and Dingle.' Thirdly, a hall should be erected in every Gaeltacht parish for meetings and social events.

A response to Thomson's memo was drawn up by Professor Liam O Briain, 104 of UCG,

and signed by Blythe. In it O Briain stated that he 'agreed with Thomson but not on everything' and stressed that it was not sufficient to save the language in the Gaeltacht, consideration had also to be given to the Galltacht:

If the major part of Ireland definitely decided to speak English only, the Gaeltacht people and children will follow their lead and decisively throw Irish from them. We have to consider the Gaeltacht and the Galltacht. For the Galltacht great masses of reading material in Irish is needed and to suit all tastes. We should translate English novels, detective stories, translations from French, German, Italian, Scandinavian, and Slavonic languages. Modern and Early Irish prose literature should be made available cheaply to the public. <sup>105</sup>

The failure to provide reading material in Irish was one of the major failings of the gaelicisation policy and stemmed originally from 'Sceilg's' decision in 1919, <sup>106</sup> but was also due to the failure to provide adequate finance to implement the policy. Moreover, the shortage of reading material affected the preparatory colleges where due to the lack of text-books students depended on notes translated by teachers from English text-books. <sup>107</sup>

O Briain also reviewed the failure of the preparatory college scheme to attract sufficient numbers from the Gaeltacht, and acknowledged that it 'had gone wrong.' Referring to the scholarship system, he expressed the sanguine hope that Gaeltacht scholarship winners would go to all universities, and not just to UCG: 'Thus have people from the Gaeltacht in ten/fifteen years capable of filling university chairs in all areas.'

The Commission's proposals regarding the recruitment of sixteen year-old Gaeltacht boys and girls for special two-year courses, before entering the training colleges, were later shown to have been unrealistic, as there were few suitable candidates:

There are few suitable candidates in the Gaeltacht. Probably about twenty-five such students for each of the next two years would exhaust the number of Gaeltacht pupils who might have applied to become monitors but for the abolition of the monitorial scheme. There is no room in the preparatory colleges. They will have to give scholarships instead. Catholic boys: Mallow Preparatory College. Catholic girls: Carysfort, a preparatory college or similar place. Protestant girls: Celbridge. <sup>109</sup>

This was an important admission for it clearly contradicted Corcoran's view, 110 expressed to the First National Programme Conference, 111 and on which much of the policy for the gaelicisation of education was based.

In all the efforts to restore the language a leading role was played by Blythe, <sup>112</sup> the Minister for Finance. He was mainly responsible for the establishment of the preparatory colleges and he monitored their development with great care. He also took great interest in seeing how the recommendations of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta were implemented and kept a careful watch on other departments. An example of this occurred in 1931, when Blythe queried the Minister for Defence, Desmond Fitzgerald, <sup>113</sup> about circulars, seeking applications from Gaeltacht boys to enter the Army School of Music for two years, but in subsequent inquiries army officials said nobody was taken for less than twelve years. <sup>114</sup>

Though Blythe was a strong advocate of the view that the standing of the language could be raised by showing that Irish pays, nevertheless, he rejected many of the Commission's proposals that involved financial expenditure. <sup>115</sup> Indeed some of his decisions as Minister for Finance were disastrous and his stern attitude to fiscal rectitude gained him a place in Irish folklore. <sup>116</sup> Furthermore his decision to reduce primary teachers' salaries by ten per cent contributed significantly to teacher discontent in the early years of the State.

How effective were the Commission's recommendations in gaelicising the civil service? In 1934, an inter-departmental committee assessed progress in the matter and presented its findings in a confidential document, The Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Irish in the Civil Service. 117 The committee's brief was to examine the position of Irish in the civil service and to make recommendations as to 'measures best calculated' to advance the use of Irish in Government Departments, and to encourage civil servants to increase their proficiency in the language. The committee held thirty-three meetings and its final report 118 included an outline of efforts in the area. From 1925, there had been an Irish test at all open competition examinations for civil service appointments, except for one or two categories. In addition in making appointments to the civil service, preference was given to Irish speakers, except in the appointment of lower grades. 119 Furthermore an effort had been made to implement the recommendation of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta regarding Athenry Agriculture School, which from 1930 included a training school for Irish-speaking assistant agriculture overseers, whose work was mainly in Irish. It also pointed out that the following rules, regarding the use of Irish in the civil service, had been in operation following a direction, given by Blythe, in 1929:

- 1) All letters in Irish were to be replied to in Irish
- 2) Advertisements for jobs, where a competent use of Irish was required, were to be in Irish only
- 3) Forms for acknowledgement of communications were to be in Irish only. Other common forms issued by Government Departments, 'the nature of whose contents the public are by custom acquainted with', such as receipts, should be as far as practicable also be in Irish only
- 4) All civil servants in Irish-speaking districts should, as far as practicable, use Irish verbally or in writing on official business with members of the public who know Irish
- 5) Modern Roman lettering was to be used in all documents issued in Irish 120

These were the aspirations governing the use of the language. But the reality of life in the civil service was quite different as the committee found out:

The majority of civil servants find little occasion to use Irish. Occasional letters in Irish from the public. Translated into English. Decisions in English and answers translated into Irish. 121

Furthermore it pointed out that efforts to inculcate uniformity in Irish spelling, laid down in a circular by Finance, had not been generally adopted, <sup>122</sup> and it concluded, regretfully, that the stage had been reached when little further advantage would be gained by general directives or exhortations; rather efforts at promoting the language policy must be approached, in detail, in each department. Despite the pessimistic tone of the committee, it reported that in the ten years, from 1925 to 1935, the number of fluent speakers of Irish in the civil service had almost doubled from six to twelve per cent. <sup>123</sup>

The report 124 ended with a recommendation that a commission to examine, in detail, the use of Irish in each Department, be established and that its three members should include an official from Finance of chief executive officer rank, a representative of lower ranks and an official of senior administrative rank, who was to be its full-time secretary. The commission's brief was to frame schemes and to supervise the day-to-day operation of approved schemes within the civil service. An appendix to the report gave significant information regarding the use of Irish in Education. This revealed that of 1,500 school managers, only one per cent, not more than twenty, wrote to it in Irish, while of the Primary Branch indoor staff of 179 officials, the only section described as 'thoroughly Irish using' was the preparatory college section, and those responsible for awarding bonuses to parents of school-going children in Irish-speaking districts. Together both groups amounted to a mere eleven officials. The Training College and Examinations Sections of twenty-two officials were described as 'largely Irish-speaking,' while of the

Secondary Branch of thirty-five officials and eight inspectors, the report said that only the Inspection Section and four officials could be described as 'mainly Irish-speaking'.

It was this kind of hypocrisy which led to the language policy being ridiculed. Indeed as one writer put it: 'Time was to prove that the public service, like the letter boxes, had merely been painted green.' Moreover, the Commission's proposals that native speakers should receive grants and loans were not satisfactory either, for they led to the development of a hand-out mentality, and cultivated a dependency culture in the Gaeltacht. An aspect of the situation, which caused resentment among the general public, was the fact that in the years following the implementation of the Commission's recommendations, promotion in the civil service was often bestowed for proficiency in Irish, rather than on merit, a fact acknowledged by Blythe in 1931:

For other public services central or local for which there was not a sufficient supply of such candidates those with a knowledge of Irish were placed in a preferential position. 126

Efforts to gaelicise the civil service were unsuccessful, but it was many years before this was acknowledged publicly. Indeed it was not until 1963, that the *Report of the Commission for the Restoration of the Irish Language*, <sup>127</sup> admitted that the recommendation of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, requiring civil servants to have Irish on entry to the public service, and the subsequent failure to use the language, was a 'mistake'. In addition it censured the State, and the Roman Catholic Church, for not giving 'an unequivocal lead' in the use of Irish in the Gaeltacht. <sup>128</sup> The same report shed light on the follow-up to other recommendations of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta. It commended the establishment of the Rath Chairn Gaeltacht, in Co. Meath, where it noted 122 Irish-speaking families moved during 1935-40<sup>129</sup> This was one of the few successful enterprises, which developed from the work of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, though it is

noteworthy that its foundation was characterised by the same lack of generosity regarding funding. The only facility provided to assist the resettled community was a national school, Scoil Uí Ghramhnaigh, which is still in use today. Otherwise the new Gaeltacht community was left to fend for itself. The 1963 report also noted that apart from three degree courses taught, through Irish, in UCG, where Gaeltacht scholarships were tenable, there had been no sustained effort to provide third-level courses through Irish. Furthermore, though it acknowledged that all primary education in the Gaeltacht was through Irish, and that, since 1928, local services in the Gaeltacht had been staffed by people with Irish, it admitted that it was very difficult to get such people.

One group, who played a pivotal role in implementing the Government's language policy in the schools, was the inspectors. However, in the early twenties, even the inspectors were limited in their knowledge of the language. The new administration had inherited a highly organised inspectorate that had been in existence for ninety years. <sup>131</sup> Nevertheless, with the introduction of the gaelicisation policy, many inspectors left for Northern Ireland. A memo on the inspectorate from O Brolchain to the Minister for Education, in 1923, reported:

Of the eleven Senior Inspectors two are competent with Bilingual Schools, one is competent to deal with Irish in ordinary schools and is learning Irish. One has quite a good reading knowledge and understands spoken Irish. Two are learning Irish and will soon be fit to inspect Irish classes. In a year's time we will be able to count on nine or perhaps ten or eleven of the Seniors to be able to deal with Irish classes and six or seven (including three new appointments) to deal with Bilingual Schools<sup>133</sup>

This was a far cry from 1913, when there had been seventy-six inspectors in all: two chief inspectors, twenty-two senior inspectors, and fifty-two district and junior inspectors. Amongst those appointed in 1922 was Michael Breathnach, who outlined his

training as an inspector in *Cuimhne an tSeanpháiste*. <sup>134</sup> He began as an apprentice working for six months, spending fortnightly periods with different 'master' inspectors in various parts of the country. In his account of that period he noted that, because of the difference in social position there was a gulf between inspectors and teachers, and this compounded the tensions already there and led to uneasy relations. These relations became further strained by efforts to ensure the implementation of the gaelicisation policy in the schools.

Moreover, Ó Brolcháin's replacements were language enthusiasts who, because of their own quick progress in the language, had little sympathy for teachers struggling with Irish. Despite the INTO's understanding, that in implementing the new programme, <sup>135</sup> teachers' difficulties would be taken into consideration by inspectors assessing their work, and that it would be five, ten, or fifteen years, before the full operation of the programme could be expected, there were growing numbers of complaints from teachers. It was soon apparent that little reliance could be placed on the assurance, given by Fionán Lynch, <sup>136</sup> the Minister for Education in the Provisional Government, in 1922:

As far as the Department is concerned, no teacher need be alarmed as to his position or prospects owing to an inability to teach Irish. All that is expected is that teachers who are able will teach the language and all teachers will manifest a kindly and sympathetic spirit towards the national tongue. 137

Similar sentiments had been expressed by Ó Brolcháin, in November 1922 in a circular to inspectors, instructing them how to implement the new programme in the schools:

In assessing teachers' performance they were to take into consideration that the school year had started late due to unrest and disturbance in parts of the country and that schools would need to re-organise themselves to meet the requirements of the new programme. In rating teachers those who were 'Highly Efficient' in 1921/22 were to be similarly rated for 1922/23 without further

inspection; no teacher's rating was to be reduced unless for grave reasons clearly established and teachers rated 'Efficient' or 'Non-Efficient' were to be carefully tested. 138

Teachers were also to be allowed to draw up their own programmes to suit their schools, provided they were 'formed along the lines of the National Programme,' and sanctioned by the inspector. O Brolchain had also pointed out that teaching infants, through Irish, would not be feasible in a large number of schools during the current school year, but it was expected that steps would be taken to introduce the use of Irish as a method of instruction for, at least, one hour per day. Similarly the teaching of History and Geography, through Irish, was not expected in a large number of schools. The circular reminded the inspectors that schools should provide for instruction in all 'Obligatory Subjects,' unless the majority of the parents desired the omission of either Irish, or English. Neither, however, could be omitted unless the majority of the parents signed a request for the omission. 140

Much of this circular was lip-service, as the Department's response to resolutions passed in February 1923, by the Kilmore Diocesan Association of School Managers, showed. The resolutions urged that where parents were unwilling to have their children taught Irish, it should be optional, and pointed out that it was unfair to JAMs, and Easter Scholarships candidates, to be expected to qualify in Irish. The Association received little response from the Department and had to write several times requesting that a deputation be received to discuss the matter. <sup>141</sup>Parents protesting about the teaching of Irish were treated similarly. A note attached to a file about a protest from parents in a Co. Galway school in January 1929 records no action having been taken one year later, despite the manager, Fr. William Hickey, having included all the parents' signatures. <sup>142</sup>

## THE SECOND NATIONAL PROGRAMME CONFERENCE

Teachers became increasingly unhappy with the zeal of the inspectors in implementing the National Programme, particularly with regard to Irish. <sup>143</sup>It was obvious to them that its expectations were unrealistic, and there were many calls for its review. Moreover, the failure of the Department to fulfil its promise on compulsory school attendance was an added grievance, as was increased pressure from the Department through circulars and the inspectors. This increased dissatisfaction forced the INTO to begin organising another programme conference in 1924.

At first, the Minister for Education, Eoin MacNeill, <sup>144</sup> did not want to be involved but, subsequently, changed his mind and the conference was held under his auspices. <sup>145</sup> He may have feared severe criticism of the language policy from such a conference, and then concluded that the best way to circumvent such criticism, was to hold the conference himself, when he could nominate those attending. <sup>146</sup> The conference's term of reference were:

- 1. To consider the suitability of the National Programme of Primary Instruction at present in operation in the National Schools
- 2. To report to the Minister for Education thereon
- 3. To make recommendations to him as regards any alterations which may seem desirable.

The Second National Programme Conference was a more representative body than the earlier one in 1921.<sup>147</sup> The chairman was Fr. Lambert McKenna, SJ, <sup>148</sup> and the other twenty-four participants included three representatives of the school managers, five from the INTO, two from the General Council of County Councils, and two from the Gaelic

League. In addition the Minister nominated a further twelve members including three inspectors: Seoirse Mac Niocaill, <sup>149</sup> M. Franklin, and Henry Morris. Richard Mulcahy was also a member. <sup>150</sup> Therefore it was not surprising that the Second National Programme Conference commended the National Programme, though it made some significant modifications to it, including 'higher' and 'lower' courses in Irish and English. As was to be expected, it made little criticism of the Department, though it did point out that a more gradual approach to the implementation of the programme should be adopted, saying:

We have striven so to frame this new programme that it may set before our schools the same high purpose which the National Programme set before them, and will differ from the National Programme only in so far as it will be transitional, being indicative of gradual steps in a steady progress towards an ideal, and being adjustable to the varying circumstances of our schools. <sup>151</sup>

The second conference differed from the first in that it began, in June 1925, by soliciting subnissions from educational bodies, expert bodies, and the public in general. In response, it received replies from fifty-four public bodies, 150 individuals, and 1260 teachers attending the special summer courses for the teaching of Irish. Amongst those whe made submissions were eight divisional inspectors: P.J. Little, P.J. Fitzgerald, F.M. Hollins, H. Morris, Liam MacFhachtna, P. MacSuibhne, M. Franklin, and P.S. O Tiglearnaigh. Their submissions show that despite Lynch's promises that the new programme would be implemented slowly, 153 teachers were expected to implement it in full Its main requirements were that infants should be taught entirely through Irish, that Irisl should be taught in all schools for one per day and that certain subjects were to be taught through Irish. 154 They also show that there was not much sympathy among the

inspectors for the difficulties faced by teachers during this period of transition. Between them the inspectors covered most of the country and their reports dealt mainly with the following factors:

- 1. School accommodation and funding
- 2. Attendance
- 3. The present body of teachers and recruitment to teaching
- 4. The effects of the National Programme on the proficiency of the schools

On the matter of school accommodation they were agreed that there was a need for considerable improvement. While the areas they were responsible for varied a great deal, they pointed out that there were too many small schools and poor accommodation was widespread. Indeed their comments portrayed a grim picture of the establishments, wherein the vast majority of the country's children received an education:

While perhaps a majority of our school houses are fairly suitably designed for their purpose and are in a comparatively satisfactory state of repairs and maintenance, there is a very considerable number of school buildings ill-adapted in the first case to serve as schools and now in a bad state of repair, damp, decay, uncomfortable and often unsanitary. A few are mere hovels, yet frequently overcrowded a menace to the health of the children and teachers, an eyesore to the passer-by. 155

## Whle another inspector reported:

The majority of schools I visit are drab and uninviting, both within and without. Old maps, tattered and torn, are allowed to hang on the walls, long after their day of usefulness has passed, in company with dirty and discoloured tablets and charts; flowers and pictures are few.... School presses are insufficient, or non-existent, in a large number of schools, with the result that books and school material are piled up, here, there, and everywhere, strongly accentuating the general impression of drabness and disorder. 156

The exception to this dismal picture was Dublin, where the process had begun of building new schools to accommodate the large numbers of children moving from tenements in the city centre to the growing suburbs. 157

The inspectors gave different explanations for the poor state of school accommodation. O Tighearnaigh 158 blamed it on 'the depression, which existed in the country for the past few years, symptomatic of the lack of public spirit and of interest in education,' while Franklin<sup>159</sup> blamed the suspension of building grants from the beginning of the European War, and the high cost of labour and materials. Some inspectors criticised managers for the poor state of the schools, and proposed a new system for funding maintenance and repairs, advocating that funding should be provided centrally, instead of depending on maiagers to raise funds locally. According to MacSuibhne, 160 some managers would spend money on their schools, if they had it, but there were others, 'who did not like to be reminded about their schools.' Moreover, Franklin's report hinted at possible change in regard to funding and referred to 'the reasonable expectation on the part of managers that an Education Bill would make a State charge of what has hitherto been - in whole or in fart - a local one.'161 MacSuibhne 162 urged the Government to do three things. He warted the Board of Works to commission a survey on the state of school accommodation and to estimate numbers of schools needing repairs, and their costs. He also wanted the Government to decide who should be responsible for collecting funds in future. O Tighearnaigh 163 also called for change and urged the Government to 'wipe out the legacy, which the parsimony of foreign administration and our own neglect have left us, and to provide funds from public funds, such as the local rates. In his view, the costs

of school maintenance would be considerably reduced by the amalgamation of small schools, particularly, where there were separate schools for boys and girls:

The continuance of small schools side by side is sheer educational waste. I think that the requirements of the present programme, and the interests of economic administration demand that where no vital principle is involved these small schools should be eliminated where possible. I am prepared to go further for I think that the advisability of amalgamating all adjoining boys' and girls' schools, when school houses are being rebuilt or reconstructed, deserves careful consideration. 164

But he pointed out that such amalgamations had been 'opposed by managers with too much success.' All the inspectors noted that the majority of schools had few facilities. Litraries were rare, except where 'a few teachers of a scholarly turn' kept a stock of books in school. In addition school gardens had disappeared, since gardening ceased to be a subject in 1922.

The inspectors' comments about the managers are significant for they indicate a readiness to consider changing the management system. Such a change, however, would have necessitated reducing the power of the clergy at local level, something that was too racical for the Government to contemplate. Moreover, the condition of the schools, described by the inspectors, clearly showed the need for a large amount of money to be spent in this area. Yet such was the Government's desire to gaelicise education that it was quite happy to spend scarce resources on summer courses for teachers to learn Irish, and was willing to embark on an expensive programme to establish the preparatory coleges. The inspectors' comments clearly demonstrated the unrealistic approach of those who put the gaelicisation policy into operation.

All the inspectors stressed the need for school attendance to be made compulsory. Furthermore they were in agreement that irregular attendance was generally due to certain factors: firstly, children were kept at home in country areas to help on farms; secondly, sickness brought on by inclement weather, and thirdly, poverty. Indeed Fitzgerald asserted that the level of poverty was such, that children were often absent because they had neither food to eat, nor clothes to wear, and he stressed that the provision of food and clothing should be considered, before requiring attendance at school. Moreover, in some areas, poverty, cold classrooms and bad weather combined to cause illness:

There are some really cruel cases where the pupils come to school on wet mornings, the boys unprovided with overcoats and then sit throughout the school day in wet clothes in a cold, fireless room. <sup>169</sup>

To ameliorate these conditions the inspectors proposed the provision of hot meals during the day. Furthermore Fitzgerald<sup>170</sup> reported that where meals were provided, many children were attracted to school by the certainty of getting, at least, one meal of nourishing food. Several inspectors also stressed the need for regular examination of pupils' teeth and the provision of dental treatment. Indeed Little<sup>171</sup> pleaded, not just for dental treatment, but also for hospitals, where children could be sent for treatment of skin diseases and defective vision. In O Tighearnaigh's opinion, much of the illness was due to poor diet, which, he claimed, was due to false ideas of food values and bad 'housewifery,' <sup>172</sup> a stereotypical view reflecting the ideas of the period when women were held responsible for all domestic welfare.

The inspectors drew the conference's attention to the lack of accurate statistics

concerning the numbers of non-attenders. Some of them expressed the fear that the numbers involved were so numerous, that they would not be able to accommodate them in existing schools, and proposed to make room by banning children, under five, from attending school. In Fitzgerald's opinion, children did not seem to profit much by attending before five, 173 a view which was supported by O Tighearnaigh, 174 though he believed that an exception should be made for 'slum children, whose mothers had to go out to work.' The inspectors' views are interesting for they are at variance with those expressed by Corcoran<sup>175</sup> on the subject of language learning. The lack of accurate statistics was a significant point, but the conference failed to appreciate its importance. At a time when a School Attendance Act was about to come into force, it was vital that the Department should have had reasonably accurate statistics about the number of school places required, and the number of teachers necessary. Furthermore such information was indispensable, when recruitment was in a period of transition. The Department's laissez-faire approach to planning, and statistics, was to have disastrous effects in the thirties, and forties, and made recruitment to the preparatory colleges more problematic.

The reports showed that the age of entry to primary education varied. In some places, entry was as early as three, while children did not start until they were seven, or eight years old, in other areas. The school-leaving age also varied. In the inspectors' view it depended on the reputation of the teacher; where a teacher had a good reputation pupils stayed until they were fifteen years old, but in other places, they left at eleven.

The inspectors' reports contained revealing insights into how they regarded the work of the teachers. While they described the work accomplished by the majority of teachers as satisfactory, they had a number of complaints, particularly regarding male teachers, about whom Franklin observed:

It is to be remembered that the bulk of the present-day teachers were appointed at a time when salaries and prospects generally, were not such as to attract the most suitable people, especially in the men's side and it is not therefore a matter for surprise, that we have in the schools, teachers, whose qualifications and general aptitude are low.<sup>176</sup>

Nevertheless, the inspectors were agreed that the overwhelmingly majority of teachers were persons of good character, respectable members of society, with perhaps more than the average share of civic virtues. However, they complained that the teachers were lacking in scholarship, 'could not be classed as a reading body,' and needed, according to Morris, to be 'emancipated from the tyranny of the text book.' Despite this Fitzgerald noted that many teachers, including younger men, were profiting by the opportunities afforded of obtaining university degrees and diplomas.

All the reports contained references to recruitment, and pointed to a need for the training colleges to improve their courses, especially the provision of teaching methods for infants. Ó Tighearnaigh was emphatic that the influence of the teacher was the most important factor in education, and stressed the need to ensure that only the best material was recruited to training colleges. Hithertofore, he claimed students entering training had been badly prepared, and that most of the time in the colleges was spent giving students a secondary education, which they should have obtained before entry. Criticising the training course, he said that the amount of time and attention devoted to professional training was far too meagre. He called for an immediate inquiry into the course in the theory and practice of education, which he believed, was far too restricted.

He showed little sympathy for those involved in training teachers at a time of rapid transformation, and complained that the heads of some of the training colleges were quite out of touch with the spirit of the new programme. He stressed that the whole training college system would have to be recast, if education was to be founded on a basis of national culture. He had even less sympathy for teachers, particularly young teachers, whom he declared 'should be dispensed with,' if after two, or three years, they did not show promise of doing effective teaching.

Like O Tighearnaigh, Morris showed little understanding for the teachers and called for 'sweeping reforms in the system of recruitment that had prevailed for over half a century.' In his view, the system had to be changed, because many of the teachers passing through it were failures:

The cause of failure is occasionally due to some deficiency of character, such as want of disciplinary power or to the presence of some vice, such as sloth or intemperance but the most frequent cause of all is that the teacher cannot teach, cannot give out the knowledge he has accumulated in a clear, palatable form which the pupils can assimilate. <sup>181</sup>

He went on to make this claim:

Why we have so many failures is because it has never been recognised ... that a teacher is born not made; that the art of teaching is a natural gift that a man deficient in it will never become a successful teacher no matter how highly we educate or how technically we train him.

According to Morris, the only way to discover whether a teacher had a gift for teaching, was through the practical test of teaching, and his report resonates with the philosophy behind the monitorial and the old pupil-teacher systems. Indeed it was to allow for this

testing of practical ability that teaching practice was undertaken in the preparatory colleges.

The main thrust of the inspectors' reports, however, dealt with the teaching of Irish. Discussing the effects of the National Programme in the schools, they were unanimous in their view that expectations regarding the teaching of Irish had not been realised, and that there had been a decline in the eagerness of teachers to learn the language. In addition Franklin<sup>182</sup> said the considered opinion of the inspectors of his division was that the time, devoted to Irish, and to instruction through Irish, had not adversely affected the efficiency of the schools, and no large changes were called for in the programme. Morris acknowledged that the majority of teachers had begun to study the language with high hopes in 1922, but after two years, they found it a bigger task than they had anticipated, and so were disillusioned and discouraged. <sup>183</sup> A more realistic view was expressed by Little, who asserted that only the best schools would succeed in turning out competent speakers at fourteen, and that only their best pupils would reach that level of fluency. Little's view <sup>184</sup> contrasted with that of Morris, who claimed that disappointment over the progress in the teaching of Irish was confined to those, whose active interest in the language movement was of recent origin:

For those who have watched the slow steady march of the language movement during the past quarter of a century, and who know the limitations and traditions of our national schools the present position of Irish in the schools is full of hope and encouragement. 185

Furthermore he asserted that in a few years teachers who were weak at Irish would be replaced by young teachers, fully qualified in Irish; the problem was what to do with them in the meantime. For O Tighearnaigh, the answer was to retire them as soon as possible:

There are some teachers whose knowledge of Irish is meagre and inaccurate, but who are attempting to teach the language and even to teach subjects through the medium of Irish. Such work as they do is worse than useless and should be stopped. One is prepared to make every allowance for teachers advanced in years.... But there are a number of teachers under that age (forty-five) who for some reason have made no real progress in learning Irish and such constitute a difficulty for which I see no solution except to retire them as soon as they are eligible for pension. <sup>186</sup>

Some of the inspectors, such as Fitzgerald, showed more understanding of the teachers' difficulties and sympathised with older teachers, who were handicapped by their inability to speak Irish, despite having worked hard for some years to acquire a knowledge of the language:

The study is hard and exhausting and progress is not as rapid as was expected... Many after three summer courses have not yet advanced beyond the Bun Rang (first) standard. ...Irish is not easily learnt. It will take most of them years to acquire a competent knowledge of it. This is strenuous work especially when it is remembered that their daily work in schools makes so large a demand on their nervous energy. 187

Fitzgerald also pleaded for inspectors to encourage teachers, by showing themselves fully conscious of their difficulties, and anxious to recognise evidence of improvement. Hollins<sup>188</sup> also praised the efforts of older teachers to learn Irish and their attempts to carry out the National Programme, while Little <sup>189</sup>recalled the difficulties under which teachers had carried on the work of the schools from 1920 – 23, when there was widespread resistance to authority, which made control difficult, and pupils were unsettled, due to exciting events happening in their homes or neighbourhoods.

The inspectors agreed, however, that certain factors made the teaching of Irish difficult. They were: firstly, the irregular attendance of pupils; secondly, the teachers' lack of knowledge of the language, and thirdly, the lack of interesting teaching methods. Another factor, noted by MacFhachtna, was the lack of interest in the language shown by parents, managers, and even some inspectors, who continuously asked: 'What use is Irish?'

In discussing the proficiency of the teaching of Irish lessons, there was disagreement as to how far the rule that infant classes should be taught through Irish only was being implemented. Hollins asserted there were few schools in his area, where it was implemented, <sup>191</sup> while Franklin, on the other hand, declared that the work in infant classes in his area was 'usually done through Irish and, as a rule, quite successfully.' <sup>192</sup> While progress in reading was satisfactory, both Little and MacFhachtna, noted that older pupils were unable to express themselves in Irish, except to repeat answers already learned by heart to teachers' questions. <sup>193</sup> Moreover, they pointed out that written material presented great difficulties due to spellings, eclipses, accents and aspirates. Little urged that script and type, as well as most of the alphabetical names, should be identical for both English and Irish <sup>194</sup>

Despite the disappointing progress in Irish, however, Hollins<sup>195</sup> expressed the view that the teaching of a second language acted as a mental stimulus, and that the children were brighter, because of bilingualism, while MacFhachtna<sup>196</sup> declared that where children were taught by good teachers the teaching of Irish helped their intellectual development,

and stimulated their learning in other subjects.

While some inspectors were loath to admit that the level of general proficiency had declined, Hollins acknowledged that the working of the programme had not 'met with unqualified success.' Both Fitzgerald, and Franklin, however, claimed that there had been no deterioration in the teaching of English, and that proficiency in oral English was no worse than it had been before the introduction of Irish. Fitzgerald also complained that too much time was spent on reading aloud in senior classes, and that the subject matter was not adequately discussed.

With regard to the teaching of Mathematics, there were complaints that teachers were failing to implement the programme because they were unable to understand it. Such complaints, Franklin<sup>200</sup> disparaged as being due to a want of study on the teachers' part, rather than to the alleged obscurity of the programme itself, while Little<sup>201</sup> asserted that the lack of success with which Arithmetic was taught had nothing to do with the programme, but rather to faulty teaching methods.

With regard to teaching other subjects through Irish, there was general agreement that the teaching of History and Geography, through Irish, had not been successful, as neither the teachers, nor the pupils, had sufficient command of the language. Both Fitzgerald<sup>202</sup> and MacFhachtna<sup>203</sup> complained that Geography lessons consisted merely of lists of place names, learned by heart, while Hollins claimed that History lessons were mostly facts and dates. He believed that the two subjects should be taught separately, <sup>204</sup> a view with which Morris<sup>205</sup> concurred, while Little suggested that the lesson should be taught in

English, except for five minutes at the end, when the teacher should go over the main points in Irish.<sup>206</sup>

The reports showed that due to the emphasis on Irish, the curriculum was restricted to the basic subjects. Ó Tighearnaigh<sup>207</sup> noted that time had been found for irish, through eliminating Drawing, Nature Study, Domestic Economy, Elementary Science, and Hygiene. He believed that provision should be made for these subjects, even if it meant lengthening the school day.<sup>208</sup> Both Hollins,<sup>209</sup> and MacFhachtna,<sup>210</sup> complained that Drill was neglected, though Irish step-dancing was becoming fairly common. Drawing had disappeared almost entirely, except in schools, where parents had requested that Irish should not be taught, while Vocal Music was confined to the singing of songs, which were almost universally in Irish, with little teaching of musical theory.<sup>211</sup>

These reports showed the condition of primary education during this difficult transition period. Furthermore they highlighted the considerable difficulties faced by teachers trying to teach Irish as a subject, and to teach certain subjects, through Irish, as was laid down in the new programme, while they themselves were only learning the language. In addition they showed clearly how the curriculum was dominated by the teaching of Irish, and how narrow it had become as a result of the new programme. They also show clearly that most of the inspectors had little sympathy for the teachers.

The views of Morris and Franklin were of considerable significance as they were members of the conference. For them the teaching of Irish in the schools, for an hour a day, was not sufficient. In addition both firmly advocated the development of a nationalist atmosphere in the schools.

The atmosphere of most of our "national" schools was up till a recent period anti-Irish, and a certain amount of that atmosphere, different of course in different schools, still hangs round them and within them. It is mellowed to something merely non-Irish. Many good teachers do not and cannot realise this. They inhaled it themselves: they were trained to it as monitors and "King's Scholars," they grew used to it as teachers. Hence I say an hour per day for Irish, clearly railed off from any other subject, will not succeed in de-Anglicising our youth.

With views like these, held by two influential divisional inspectors, and with the Rev. Timothy Corcoran of UCD, 213 who played such a significant role in the previous conference, heading the list of experts, selected for oral examination of their views, 214 it was not surprising that the Report and Programme of the Second National Programme Conference, signed on 5th March, 1926, commended the National Programme for 'its character, its content, and the arrangement of its subject-matter, 215 and affirmed the ideal which it set before schools. However, while the report praised teachers for their efforts in teaching Irish, and spoke of being 'much impressed by the success which rewarded their general good spirit, and enabled so many of them to impart to their pupils a fluent power of dealing with various subjects in the Irish language, 216 it criticised them, saying some were 'striving to do the impossible, moved by their own excess of zeal.'217 Moreover, in dealing with teachers' grievances, it carefully avoided criticism of the Department and the inspectors, but blamed the teachers for 'imagining that they were carrying out the intentions of the Department' and for alleging 'that they were being urged on by the express or implied wishes of the Department's officials. '218 In addition the report claimed, that where teachers were 'sufficiently qualified' their efforts 'were crowned with gratifying success. 219

The report admitted, however, that the teachers' apprehensions about the programme had not been 'unintelligent,' and accepted that its working was beset 'with difficulties involving an undue strain on teachers,' <sup>220</sup> though it refused to acknowledge that the reason for this lay in the programme, particularly in its insistence on teaching through Irish. It endorsed this policy saying:

The members of the conference agreed on the supreme importance of giving effect as far as possible to this principle; and in confirmation of this belief they received authoritative evidence. It was argued with much weight that a 'direct' method of Irish teaching continued during the length of an ordinary school day for a few years between the ages of four and eight would be quite sufficient - given training and fluent teachers - to impart to children a vernacular power over the language. While in the case of older children it was shown that such a result would be more difficult of attainment. <sup>221</sup>

The 'authoritative evidence,' which was not included in the report, most likely refers to Corcoran, who was a staunch advocate of teaching infants through Irish only. Evidently he spoke convincingly on the topic for the report went on:

Members of the conference were at one in holding that the true and only method of establishing Irish as a vernacular is the effective teaching of it to the infants. <sup>223</sup>

The conference admitted, however, that efforts to teach History, Geography or Mathematics, through Irish, had resulted in an indifferent teaching of these subjects and 'adverse criticism of the general teaching standard of our schools.' While it excused such criticism, as having been 'inspired by prejudice or exaggerated by foolish rumour,' it did acknowledge that 'some of it was quite well-founded.' 225

The Second National Programme Conference made some changes to the programme.

Firstly, it modified the policy of teaching infants through Irish only by allowing English to be taught before 10.30 a.m. and after 2 p.m. Secondly, the conference proposed the introduction of higher and lower courses, in both Irish, and English, in higher classes during the transition period. These were to operate as follows: schools which offered the higher course in English, and the lower one in Irish, were to work towards the point where they could offer the higher course in Irish, and the lower one in English. Thirdly, to allow for the demands of teaching through Irish, the requirements in Mathematics, History, and Geography, were reduced. In addition the conference decided that portions of the Mathematics course, particularly Algebra and Geometry, were prescribed at too early an age, and that they should be made optional, in all one-teacher schools, and in all classes taught by women. 226 It also recommended that formal teaching of History and Geography, as obligatory subjects, should not begin till Class V. 227 Until then, it recommended that Geography should be introduced in Class IV, and the teaching of History should start informally with stories of important characters, or incidents, from Irish history in Readers for Classes 111 and 1V. The conference also recommended that more emphasis should be placed on Local History<sup>228</sup> and that Rural Science, or Nature Study, be included as an obligatory subject of the programme. 229

The report defended the reduced curriculum on the grounds that account had to be taken of the difficulties, entailed by efforts to restore Irish as a vernacular, and it expressed confidence that 'these temporary difficulties will be more than counterbalanced by the better mental development which a command of two languages confers upon young children.' The lack of realism here contrasted with the paragraphs dealing with the conditions of the schools:

It is plain that the material conditions of our schools are often such, as gravely to impair the quality of the work done in them. There is

an insufficiency of rooms, and the existing rooms are often too small; the structural state of the buildings and the sanitary arrangements are often very faulty; in many schools a better provision for heating and cleaning is desirable; in the case of numerous schools, too, there are no proper playgrounds.<sup>231</sup>

Further on, the conference recommended the provision of school meals on the grounds that to 'force starving or underfed children to attend school for several hours in a day, without providing them with some food, is at once, cruel and educationally futile.' It also recommended that necessitous children be supplied with free school books, though it added cautiously, 'we have no authority or competence to make suggestions' about who should pay for them.

In keeping with the emphasis on cultural nationalism, the conference complained about the content of many school books, which were 'out of harmony with the educational policy of the Department,' and urged that publishers be given 'fuller guidance' to ensure the books would 'promote the educational aims of the nation.' <sup>233</sup> It also recommended the establishment of a permanent committee, to supervise or veto books used in the schools, and to publish lists of approved texts regularly. In addition it recommended that the position of Music in the training colleges be investigated to ensure that teachers were enabled to give their pupils a satisfactory course in Irish traditional music. <sup>234</sup>

Other recommendations of the conference included the establishment of Continuation Schools,<sup>235</sup> the production of a new edition of *Notes for Teachers*,<sup>236</sup> and the reduction to ten years, or to the tenure of office of the present teachers, whichever was the longer, of the period laid down in the First National Programme, wherein the wishes of the majority of parents objecting, to having English or Irish taught, as an obligatory subject, had to be complied with.<sup>237</sup>

The changes recommended by the Second National Programme Conference were significant because they helped to ease the burden on teachers in certain ways. Firstly, it recognised that the programme would be carried out mainly in small two-teacher schools, <sup>238</sup> with pupils ranging in age from infants to fourteen. Secondly, it acknowledged that the motto: *festina lente* (hasten slowly) should be a guiding principle in teaching Irish to young children. Thirdly, the number of obligatory subjects was reduced. But the most significant changes were the modification of the infant programme, and the introduction of the option for schools, to follow the higher English course and the lower Irish course, or the higher Irish and the lower English course.

The Report of the Second National Programme Conference was presented to the Minister for Education, John Marcus O'Sullivan, in 1926. Born in 1881, O'Sullivan was a native of Killarney, Co. Kerry. He was educated at St. Brendan's College, Killarney, and Clongowes Wood College. In 1902, he graduated with a first-class honours degree in Philosophy from UCD. The following year, he obtained an MA degree, and in 1904, won a scholarship in Philosophy which enabled him to spend four years in Germany, where he studied Science in Bonn and Heidelberg. In 1908, he received a doctorate from Heidelberg University for a comparative study of Kant and Hegel. The following year he was appointed Professor of History at UCD.

O'Sullivan's family had been involved with the Irish Party, for which his brother, Timothy, had been an MP for Kerry from 1911-18. O'Sullivan himself was first elected to the Dail in 1923, and was Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Finance from 1924 until January 1926, when he became Minister for Education, a post he held until the defeat of the Cumann na nGael Government in 1932. Known for his European outlook, he represented Ireland abroad many times, particularly at the League of Nations. A competent administrator, it is likely that he was chosen as Minister for Education

because of his strong devotion to the Roman Catholic faith. An uncle of his, Dr. Charles O'Sullivan, was Bishop of Kerry for much of the 1920s, and with such credentials, he was likely to have close contacts with the Roman Catholic Church. The main achievements during his period as minister, included the holding of the Second National Programme Conference (1926), the establishment of the Commission on Technical Education (1926/27), the foundation of the preparatory colleges (1926), the passing of the School Attendance Act (1926) and the Vocational Education Act (1930), and the introduction of the Primary School Certificate (1929). Known for his genial personality, he was a man of great ability yet he never learned to speak Irish.

Once the Second National Programme was accepted by O'Sullivan<sup>239</sup> as the official programme for use in all schools, many of the teachers' grievances were removed. There remained, however, the vexed issue of inspection, and before the new programme could be implemented in the schools, the INTO requested the Minister to establish a special committee to investigate the existing inspection system. Earlier that year, at the 1926 INTO Congress, teachers had discussed the thorny issues of merit marks and teachers' ratings, and demanded an investigation. In response, O'Sullivan set up the Department Committee on the Inspection of Primary Schools, chaired by Fr. Lambert McKenna, with ten members, including representatives of the managers, the INTO, and the inspectors. Their brief was to examine the existing system of inspection in primary schools and the awarding of merit-marks to teachers, and to report to the Minister for Education (a) as to changes or reforms, if any, that might be considered necessary (b) to advise as to the desirability of instituting a primary certificate examination or examinations.

The Report of the Department Committee on Inspection of Primary Schools, <sup>242</sup> presented in April 1927, included an examination of inspection systems in a number of

other countries, including Belgium, Denmark, England France, Germany-Prussia, Germany-Bavaria, Holland, Italy, Scotland, and Switzerland. The committee recommended the discontinuance of merit marks for individual subjects, laid down guidelines for inspections, and recommended the establishment of an appeal board to deal with teachers' dissatisfaction concerning inspectors' reports. While the acceptance of the report helped to remove some of the teachers' remaining grievances, the question of teachers' ratings remained a source of conflict.<sup>243</sup>

The teachers, however, were not the only ones with difficulties at that time. Many of the inspectors were unsure, as to how they were to conduct inspections, following the introduction of the new programme. In November 1926, a conference of divisional inspectors was held to clarify outstanding points about the programme. According to a memo<sup>244</sup> by the chief inspector, they queried when roll-call and Religious Instruction were to take place, and if school work was to be entirely in Irish, from 10.30 to 2.00 p.m. Other points the inspectors considered needed direction were: firstly, if reading, in English, or Irish, should be undertaken in infant classes. Secondly, if History and Geography should be taught in two-teacher schools, and thirdly, the position of Rural Science. They also queried when the higher or lower course in Irish should be expected, to which the response was: when pupils have acquired a 'vernacular power over the language. By the age of eight it is clear the higher course is then expected of competent teachers. Otherwise each case is to be decided on its own merits.' <sup>245</sup>

The memo revealed that the inspectors were not unanimous in their views as to how the new programme should be implemented. As was to be expected, Franklin<sup>246</sup> and Morris,<sup>247</sup> two of the most zealous language enthusiasts, wanted Irish taught for a period of three hours, while O'Hanlon, the inspector of Rural Science, made a plea for the teaching of Rural Science where teachers could not teach an obligatory subject, such as

Irish, or Music. The memo suggested that the 'gradual extension of Irish teaching would be sufficient, if the teacher would annually increase, by half an hour, the time per day for instruction through Irish, so that in five or six years, all his work would be done through Irish'. To which the chief inspector made this wise comment:

Inspectors can assist by judicious suggestion and encouragement remembering that any attempt to teach any subject through Irish would be harmful unless

(1) the teacher is competent to give instruction

(2) pupils know Irish sufficiently well to assimilate it<sup>248</sup>

While the memo reiterated that there should be no English in infant classes, it accepted that the new programme allowed freedom in regard to language outside the hours constituting 'attendance' for the pupils concerned.

While the Minister's acceptance of the report's<sup>249</sup> recommendations removed many of the teachers' grievances, inspectors' reports were still a source of tension. Arising from an inspectors' conference in November 1928,<sup>250</sup> the matter was considered by the chief inspector, his deputy, and a divisional inspector. Following their deliberations, a memo from the secretary of the Department was sent to all inspectors in February, 1929. <sup>251</sup> This laid down guidelines for school visits: short incidental visits of ten to fifteen minutes to examine the rolls were to be reported on in the Beag Thuairisc - The Incident Report, while longer visits, to assess the teacher's performance, were to be reported in the Mor Thuairisc - The General Report. Guidelines for assessing a teacher's ratings, included the contentious reminder that teachers' ratings: Highly Efficient, Efficient and Non-Efficient, would depend to a large extent on proficiency in language teaching, particularly in oral Irish, and in the use of Irish as a teaching medium. <sup>252</sup> This circular was a violation of the understanding arrived at between the Department and the INTO at the 1926 Conference, and the rating system was to continue as a source of considerable

friction, until it was finally abolished in 1958. 253

The implementation of the Second National Programme Conference's recommendation<sup>254</sup> regarding the production of a new series of Notes for Teachers was a further help in reducing friction over the teaching of Irish. A handbook, Notai d'Oidi, (Notes for Teachers), written by two inspectors, Tomas O Suilleabhain and Séamas O hAodha, was published by the Department. It included guidelines on teaching methods for Irish and laid down clearly the way in which the language was to be taught, in three courses: Cursa A, grammar and structure of the language; Cursa B, vocabulary and Cursa C, conversation. In addition it was made clear that Irish was to be the 'official language' of the school:

The calling and answering of the Roll, all the school orders and Directions should be through Irish, but more important by far, the Words of praise or censure and all the personal intercourse between Teacher and pupil should be carried on in the same language. <sup>255</sup>

there were helpful references to phonetics, written work, and the teaching of reading and poetry. The Notes were used, not only in the schools, but also in the training colleges, and they continued in use until the sixties, when new methods came into use:

Bhi siad praiticiúil agus cabhrach agus thuill siad ard-mholadh. O thaobh modhanna teagaisc de bhí siad mar "Bhíobla" ag na múinteoirí go dtí gur thainig na modhanna closamhairc chun tosaigh sna seascaidí. 256

They were practical and helpful and they were much praised. As teaching methods they became the teachers' "Bible" and they continued in use until the sixties when the Hear and See methods were introduced.

#### **CONCLUSION**

As the end of the first decade of the Irish Free State's existence approached, the Government could claim that the country had not only gained its independence from England, but that the State had made considerable progress in effecting a cultural revolution. The Irish language was recognised as the National Language in the Constitution and measures to ensure the gaelicisation of the State were being implemented. Many of them stemmed from the work of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, which, in 1926, produced a comprehensive series of recommendations for improving life in the Gaeltacht generally, and made a wide-ranging series of proposals for raising the standing of the language throughout the country. These included making Irish essential for entry to, and promotion in the public service, the Garda Siochana, and the Defence Forces. However, the Government's failure to implement many of the Commission's proposals for improving the life of the native speaker was a clear indication that the gaelicisation policy was no longer a priority.

Nevertheless, the Government could claim that the education system, which was seen as having a key role in reviving the language, had been almost completely transformed. At primary level, the teaching of Irish had become the main focus of the curriculum following the First National Programme Conference with its requirements that each pupil should receive instruction in Irish, for at least one hour per day, and that infant teaching be entirely through Irish. The Government could further claim that it had successfully dealt with teachers' grievances, following such changes, by modifying the programme at the Second National Programme Conference in 1926. Moreover, as the end of the decade

approached the Government could reflect with satisfaction that the new programme had gradually extended until it was taught in varying forms in all but thirty-two primary schools in the country. <sup>257</sup>

The Government could also claim that it had been successful in ensuring that primary teachers were competent to teach Irish. It had initiated a series of summer courses for serving teachers and the preparatory system, which was commended by Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, had been established to ensure that all future teachers would be fluent in the language. Moreover, with the opening of the colleges, the Government could claim that it had provided second-level education in the Gaeltacht and with the entry of preparatory students to training in 1931, the work of the training colleges was almost entirely through Irish. The Department could declare with satisfaction:

Irish has become the everyday language of the four Roman Catholic training colleges. Both inside and outside the colleges it is noted that the students use Irish as a matter of course. Practically all the work in the training colleges is done through the medium of Irish.<sup>259</sup>

As the Cumann na nGael Government came to the end of its time in office, it could claim with some justification, that the process of gaelicising the new State's system of primary education was well underway.

# **FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 11**

<sup>1</sup> Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 4

<sup>3</sup> Report of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1926)

<sup>4</sup> See p. 44, n. 45 <sup>5</sup> See p. 60, n. 50

<sup>6</sup> Report of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, p. 4

<sup>7</sup> An example of the lack of amenities in these areas was Ballyconnell House, which had neither running water nor electricity when C. Bhride opened there in 1927

<sup>8</sup> See p. 41

<sup>9</sup> The other members were P.F. Baxter, T. Breathnach, J. Hanly, Rev. S. Mac Cuineageain, L.C. Moriarty, P. Ó Cadhla, R. Ó Foghludha, S. Ó hEochadha, P. Ó hÓgain, P. Ó Siochfhradha, Prof. M. Tierney.

<sup>10</sup> See p. 65, n. 148

John A. Costello, (1891 – 1976). Lawyer, politician and Taoiseach. He was born in Dublin and educated at O'Connell School and UCD, where he studied Irish and Law. He was called to the Bar in 1914. His political career began in 1933, when he was elected to the Dail. However, he continued to practice as a barrister while a Dail Deputy. In 1948 he was asked to become Taoiseach of an Inter-party Government as it was felt that he was the only person who could unite a number of diverse political groups. This Government lasted until 1951. From 1954 – 1957 he led the Second Inter-party Government. On its defeat he returned to working at the Bar, where he continued until a short time prior to his death.

<sup>12</sup> A special enumeration was undertaken in July and August 1925

<sup>13</sup> Statement of Government Policy on the Recommendations of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta presented to both Houses of the Oireachtas by Order of the Executive Council. (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1928)

14 Ibid., Recommendations: 1 and 2

- 15 *Ibid.*, Recommendations: 3 29
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Recommendations: 30 53
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Recommendations: 54 78 *Ibid.*, Recommendations: 79 82

<sup>19</sup> See p. 68

<sup>20</sup> Ó Brolcháin made a submission to the Commission on 17th April, 1925,

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Statement issued by the Central Council of the Catholic Primary Managers' Association in 1922, quoted in O Buachalla, p. 211

<sup>23</sup> Ó Brolcháin's evidence to Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 17th April, 1925

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> See p. 43

<sup>26</sup> Ó Brolcháin's evidence to Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 17th April, 1925, p. 6

<sup>27</sup> P.J. Fitzgerald, Report on the State of Education in the Dublin Division, Extract from file of evidence to the Second National Programme Conference, 1926

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Bunreacht Saorstat Éireann, (The Constitution of the Irish Free State), (Dublin: Iris Oifigiúl, 1922), Article 4

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<sup>28</sup> O Brolcháin's evidence to Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, 17th April, 1925, p. 4
<sup>29</sup> See p. 61, n. 88
<sup>30</sup> The Irish School Weekly, 6th March, 1926, lxxvii no. 10, p. 300
32 León O Broin, ... just like yesterday, p. 69
33 Ibid., p. 67
<sup>34</sup> Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 9
35 Mac Niocail gave evidence to the Commission on 17th April, 1925
<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 10
<sup>37</sup> Department of Education Papers, National Archives, Box 423, 19701
38 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 4
39 Ibid., p.6
40 Ibid., p. 14
41 Ibid., p. 11
42 Ibid., p. 18
43 Ibid., p. 11
44 Ibid., p. 37
45 Ibid., p. 10
46 Ibid. See also p. 18
47 Ibid., p. 14
48 Ibid.
<sup>49</sup> Statement of Government Policy on Recommendations of Coimisiun na
 Gaeltachta, p. 4
50 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 16
<sup>51</sup> See pp. 46 - 48
52 Statement of Government Policy, p. 6
53 Ibid.
54 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 15
55 Ibid. p. 16
<sup>56</sup> Statement of Government Policy, p. 5,
<sup>57</sup> Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 15
58 Ibid.
<sup>59</sup> Statement of Government Policy, p. 6
60 Ibid., p. 7
61 Ibid., p. 18
62 Ibid., p. 19
63 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 20
<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 20. See also p. 112
65 Statement of Government Policy, p. 9
66 Ibid., p. 10
<sup>67</sup> See p. 91
<sup>68</sup> J.J. Lee, Ireland 1912-1985 Politics and Society, (Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 1990) p. 135
<sup>69</sup> Statement of Government Policy, pp. 10 and 11
70 Ibid.
<sup>71</sup> See p. 41
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73 Statement of Government Policy, par. 26, p. 11
74 *Ibid.*, par. 29, p. 11

O Frighal's evidence to the Commission, 18th July 1925, Report of Coimisiun na Gaeltachta, Appendix p. 1, O Frighal had been a representative of the General Council of County Councils at the First National Programme Conference

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2

79 Statement of Government Policy, p. 16

80 Ibid.

81 Statement of Government Policy, p. 7

82 See p. 217

83 Statement of Government Policy, p.22

84 Ibid., No. 61, p. 23

85 Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Memo on Irish in the Civil Service, National Archives, Provisional Government Minutes, S9604

87 *Ibid.*, p. 17

88 *Ibid.* No. 48,

89 Ibid., No. 82, p. 25

90 *Ibid.*, No. 52 and No. 53

91 Report of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, p. 23, No. 79

<sup>92</sup> See p. 33 <sup>93</sup> See p. 18

- <sup>94</sup> Criostóir Mac Aonghusa, 'Mar a chuaigh an Conradh i bhfeidhm ar an nGaeltacht,' in *The Gaelic League Idea*, ed. Seán Ó Tuama, (Mercier Press: Cork, 1993), p. 79
- 95 Memo on 'A scheme of scholarships in Secondary Schools for pupils from the Fior-Ghaeltacht, UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/303

<sup>96</sup> See pp. 199 and 200

98 Memo by Seoirse MacTomais, or George Thomson, UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/304. Thomson was a noted Irish scholar. From an Irish family he grew up in England and in 1926 was awarded a scholarship from Cambridge University to study at Trinity College, Dublin. He translated many classical works into Irish and did much work for An Gum, the publishing section of the Department of Education. With Moya Llewelyn Davies he translated Muiris O Suilleabhain's Fiche Blian ag Fas into English. He died in Bermingham in 1987.

<sup>99</sup> See p. 111 <sup>100</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>101</sup> See pp. 213 - 217

102 Memo by Seoirse MacTomais

103 Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Liam O Briain, (1888 – 1974). Scholar and revolutionary. He was born in Dublin and educated at O'Connell School, and the Royal University of Ireland. Later he studied in France and Germany. In 1914, he was appointed a lecturer in French at UCD. He took

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Memo 'On teaching through Irish,' UCD Archives, Blythe Papers P24/345

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, Recommendation 31, p. 10 76 UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/215

part in the 1916 Rising and, subsequently, was interned in Frongoch, in North Wales. In 1917, he became Professor of Romance Languages at UCG, and the following year, he unsuccessfully contested the 1918 election. He was imprisoned twice during the War of Independence. He took the Treaty side in 1922. Keenly interested in theatre, he helped to establish an Irish language theatre in Galway, and translated several plays from French, Spanish and English into Irish, including works by Molière and Synge.

Response by Liam O Briain to the memo by Seoirse MacTomais, UCD Archives,

Blythe Papers, P24/303

<sup>106</sup> See p. 32

<sup>107</sup> See p. 205

- <sup>108</sup> Response by Liam O Briain to the memo by Seoirse MacTomais, UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/303
- 109 Department of Education Papers, 20302, Box 438, National Archives,

<sup>110</sup> See p. 48

<sup>111</sup> See p. 43

<sup>112</sup> See p. 60, n. 50

Desmond Fitzgerald, (1888 – 1947). Revolutionary and politician. He was born into an Irish family living in London where he learned Irish at Gaelic League classes. Later he went to the Kerry Gaeltacht where he joined the IRB and worked as an organiser for the Irish Volunteers. He was imprisoned in 1915 for sedition. Both he and his wife, Mabel, an Ulster Presbyterian, fought in the GPO during the 1916 Rising. Subsequently, he was interned in England. His parliamentary career began when he was elected as an MP in 1918. He supported the Treaty and served in Cosgrave's Cabinet as Minister for External Affairs from 1922-27 and as Minister for Defence from 1927-32. He continued as a TD for a further five years and later served as a senator from 1938-43. A scholarly mar, he co-founded the Irish Academy of Letters in 1923

114 UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/445

<sup>115</sup> See p. 41

116 *Ibid*.

<sup>117</sup> Report of Inter-Departmental Committee on Irish in the Civil Service, UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P/24/927

118 The committee produced an interim report on the 25th February, 1935

- <sup>119</sup> Certain minor categories, such as clerks and messengers, did not have an Irish examination.
- 120 Ibid., The directive about Roman lettering was withdrawn in 1932

bid.

122 Ibid., Circular 18/31 Department of Finance,

123 *Ibid*.

124 The Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Irish in the Civil Service, 1934

125 T.P. Coogan, Ireland since the Rising, p. 189

Letter from Blythe to Joseph O'Neill, 25/4/31 UCD Archives, Blythe Papers P24/442 Commission on the Restoration of the Irish Language, Summary of the Final Report, 1963, par. 12

128 Ibid., par. 37

<sup>129</sup> The Rath Cairn Gaeltacht was established in 1935 when twenty-seven families from Connemara were settled on land previously acquired by the Land Commission. A further

eleven families joined the original settlers in 1937. It was not until 1967 that Rath Cairn was officially recognised as a Gaeltacht following a campaign by the community. *Rath Cairn An Scéal 1935 – 1995*, (An Idirlion, 1998)

130 *Ibid.*, par. 90

<sup>131</sup> Michael Quinlivan, 'Inspection of National Schools (1831 - 1922): Perspectives from Writings in Irish,' *Oideas 30*, Spring 1987

<sup>132</sup> See p. 68

<sup>133</sup> Memo for CEO regarding proposed changes in Inspection Staff, UCD Archives, MacNeill Papers, LAI/H/134

Michéal Breathnach, Cuimhne an tSeanpháiste, (Baile Átha Cliath: Oifig an tSoláthair, 1966), pp. 217 - 235

<sup>135</sup> See p. 44, n. 45

<sup>136</sup> See p. 62, n. 90

<sup>137</sup> Report of the First National Programme Conference, pp. 30-32.

<sup>138</sup> Circular to Inspectors, November, 1922, Department of Education Papers, National Archives, 18844

139 See pp. 44 and 45

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 18840 Department of Education Papers, National Archives, 18840

142 Ibid., Box 457 20930

<sup>143</sup> Report and Programme presented by the National Programme Conference to the Minister for Education, (Dublin: Stationery Office, 1926), pp. 10 - 11

<sup>144</sup> See p. 57, n. 20

<sup>145</sup> O'Connell, p. 356 <sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 357

<sup>147</sup> See p. 43

was educated at Belvedere College and entered the Jesuit Novitiate in 1886. He was awarded a BA degree in Classics and Irish by the Royal University in 1893 and was ordained in 1905. He taught for a while at Belvedere College and Mungret Park. As a young man he was greatly influenced by Hyde and MacNeill and was in close touch with Pearse when he was headmaster of Scoil Eanna. An Irish scholar, he came to public notice when he published his *English-Irish Phrase Book* in 1911. His other publications included a series of bardic poems and *Focloir Béarla agus Gaedhilge*, which he edited was published in 1938. From 1922 to 1931, he was editor of *The Irish Monthly*, which he strove to make the organ of Irish Catholic social and educational thought. In 1947, he was awarded an honorary D.Litt. Celt. by the National University.

<sup>149</sup> See p. 111 <sup>150</sup> See p. 107

<sup>151</sup> Report and Programme of the Second National Programme Conference, p. 9

<sup>152</sup> The inspectors had responsibility for the following areas: Little for the Kilkenny area; Fitzgerald for Dublin and south-east Leinster; Hollins for Monaghan and Leitrim; Morris for Donegal and the north-west; MacFhachtna for Kerry; MacSuibhne and Franklin for most of Munster; O Tighearnaigh for much of Connacht.

153 Report of the First National Programme Conference, Appendix 11, p. 32

154 See pp. 44 and 45

155 P.S. O Tighearnaigh, Report of State of Education in Galway Division, p. 2, Evidence of Inspectors to the Second National Programme Conference, 1926,

156 H. Morris, General Report of the State of Primary Education in the National Schools

of the Sligo Division for the School Year, ended 30th June, 1925. Ibid,, p. 2

Large new schools had opened at North Great George's Street and Iona Road, Glasnevin. P.J. Fitzgerald, Report of the State of Education in the Dublin Division, Ibid., p. 2.

158 Ó Tighearnaigh, p.3

159 M. Franklin, Report of the State of Primary Education in my Division, Evidence of Inspectors to the Second National Programme Conference, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>160</sup> D. MacSuibhne, Tuarascdhail ar Bhun Oideachas mar ata se in mo Roinn-se, Ibid., p.

161 Franklin, p. 1

162 MacSuibhne, p. 2 163 O Tighearnaigh, p. 3

164 Ibid., p. 2

165 Ibid., p. 1

<sup>166</sup> P.J. Little, General Report of the State of Primary Education in Division V, Evidence of Inspectors to the Second National Programme Conference, 1926, p. 1

167 F.M. Hollins, Report of the State of Primary Education in my Division, Ibid., p. 1,

168 Fitzgerald, p. 3

169 Morris, p. 3 170 Fitzgerald, p. 3

171 Little, p. 4

172 O Tighearnaigh, p. 7 173 Fitzgerald, pp. 3 and 4

174 O Tighearnaigh, p. 8

<sup>175</sup> See pp. 46 - 48

176 Franklin, p. 3

<sup>177</sup> O Tighnearnaigh, pp. 10 and 11

<sup>178</sup> Morris, p. 9 179 Fitzgerald, p. 6

180 O Tighearnaigh, pp. 9 and 10

<sup>181</sup> Morris, p. 7

182 Franklin, p. 8

<sup>183</sup> Morris, p. 8 184 Little, p. 4

<sup>185</sup> Morris, p. 16

<sup>186</sup> Ó Tighearnaigh, p. 15

<sup>187</sup> Fitzgerald, p. 4

188 Hollins, p. 2

189 Little, p. 8

190 Liam MacFhachtna, Tuarasgabháil ar staid na Gaedhilge ins na Bun-scoileanna annseo thios, Evidence of Inspectors to the Second National Programme Conference, 1926, p. 5

191 Hollins, p. 4

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192 Franklin, p. 8
193 Little, p. 4, MacFhachtna, p. 2
194 Little, p. 5
195 Hollins, p. 6
196 MacFhachtna, p. 4
197 Hollins, p. 3
198 Fitzgerald, p. 8
     Franklin, p. 6
<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 7
<sup>201</sup> Little, p. 7
<sup>202</sup> Fitzgerald, p. 9
     MacFhachtna, p. 3
<sup>204</sup> Hollins, p. 5
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     Morris, p. 12
<sup>206</sup> Little, p. 5
     Ó Tighearnaigh, p. 12
<sup>208</sup> Ibid., p. 13
Hollins, p. 5
     MacFhachtna, pp. 3 and 4
     Franklin, p. 9
<sup>212</sup> Morris, p. 17
<sup>213</sup> See pp. 46 - 48
<sup>214</sup> Report and Programme of the Second National Programme Conference, p. 7
<sup>215</sup> Ibid., p. 8
<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p. 11
<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 10
<sup>218</sup> Ibid.
<sup>219</sup> Ibid.
<sup>220</sup> Ibid.
<sup>221</sup> Ibid.
<sup>222</sup> See pp. 46 - 48
<sup>223</sup>Report and Programme of the Second National Programme Conference, p. 10
<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 11
<sup>225</sup> Ibid.
<sup>226</sup> Ibid., p. 12
<sup>227</sup> Ibid., p. 13
<sup>228</sup> Ibid.,
<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 14
<sup>230</sup> Ibid., p. 14
<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. 16
<sup>232</sup> Ibid.
233 Ibid.
234 Ibid., p. 14
<sup>235</sup> Ibid., p. 15
<sup>236</sup> Ibid., p. 17
<sup>237</sup> Ibid., p. 28
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<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p.14. Seventy-one per cent of schools were in this category.

On 7 May, 1926, O'Sullivan stated in the Dail that he would accept the Second National Programme as the official programme for use in all schools,

<sup>240</sup> O'Connell, p. 413 <sup>241</sup> See p. 166, n. 148

<sup>242</sup> Report of Department Committee on Inspection of Primary Schools, (Stationery Office, Dublin: 1927) p. 3

<sup>243</sup> O'Connell, pp. 415 - 417

<sup>244</sup> Department of Education Papers, National Archives, 17065

245 Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> See p. 138

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.* 

<sup>248</sup> Department of Education Papers, National Archives, 17065

<sup>249</sup> Report of Department Committee on Inspection of Primary Schools, (Stationery Office, Dublin: 1927)

<sup>250</sup> Conference of Inspectors, 1928 Department of Education Papers, National Archives, 19418

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>253</sup> O'Connell, p. 420

<sup>254</sup> Report of the Second Programme Conference, p. 17

<sup>255</sup> Breandan Ó Croinín, 'An Ghaeilge sa Choras Bhunoideachais,' *Oideas* 33, Autumn 1988, p. 24

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> These were small schools under Protestant management along the Border. Under the special clause regarding parents' wishes in the First National programme they had opted out of teaching Irish.

<sup>258</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1930-31, p. 6

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, 1931-32, p. 15

# SECTION 11

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

# LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

#### Overview

In this section the thesis examines the establishment of the seven preparatory colleges. It includes an in-depth study of the Munster boys' college, C. na Mumhan, which began in Mallow, in 1928, and later moved to Ballyvourney in the Cork Gaeltacht, where it was known as C. Íosagáin.

In Chapter 111, *The Early Days of the Preparatory Colleges*, the criteria laid down for the colleges, particularly for their location, management, and staffing, will be examined. Other factors which characterised the system, such as the regulations for entry, the entrance examination, the fee system, the curriculum, and the intention that students would undertake teaching practice, will be considered. The thesis will assess the ethos of the colleges, particularly the emphasis on religion, nationalism, and sport. It will suggest that a number of important mistakes were made by officials at this time, due to poor planning, and a lack of experience in school management.

It will attempt also to show that Education's failure to control rising costs contributed to increased tensions with Finance, and will argue that changes instigated, in 1929, by the Minister for Finance, Ernest Blythe, with regard to the fee agreement, and to the entrance regulations to ensure that students from each Gaeltacht obtained places, were unwise.

In Chapter 1V, A Case Study of a Preparatory College Colaiste na Mumhan/Colaiste Íosagain The Munster Boys' College 1928 – 1961, an in-depth examination is made of a preparatory college. Much of the material in this chapter comes from the register of the college, the archives of the De La Salle Order, which ran the college, or was supplied by former students and teachers.

The life of the college is discussed in the light of the expectations of those who established the preparatory system. An attempt will be made to show that the college was very similar to the other preparatory colleges in certain aspects: discipline, curriculum, and ethos. It will also be demonstrated that it differed from the majority of preparatory colleges in its acceptance of students for a three-year course and by being located for twelve years in Mallow, where the size of the house precluded a new class entering each year.

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, Part (ii), The Educational Background to the Establishment of the Preparatory Colleges, the Roman Catholic Church was one of the most powerful bodies in Irish education. This chapter will examine the role of the Hierarchy in the dispute between the Government and the De La Salle Order over the closing of Waterford Training College in 1939. The thesis will argue that the sudden closure of C. Chaoimhín in 1939, was ordered by the Government to avoid further disagreement with the Hierarchy, which refused to accept the Government's decision about the De La Salle Training College.

This chapter will assess the contribution of the college's past pupils to Irish education and will conclude that the large number of distinguished past students was a testimony to the high quality of education in the college.

# **FOOTNOTES**

See p. 204. These changes took effect from 1930.

See p. 60, n. 50

See p. 199

#### **CHAPTER 111**

### THE EARLY YEARS OF THE PREPARATORY COLLEGES

After the official announcement in June 1925,<sup>1</sup> that the preparatory colleges were to be established, many decisions had to be taken regarding the premises in which the individual colleges were to be housed and the criteria for staffing and student selection drawn up. These decisions were of vital importance for the success of the system and it was at this point that certain fundamental mistakes were made, particularly with regard to the age of entry of students, and the manner in which the system was funded.

The most urgent task for the Department was finding suitable premises so that the colleges could be established as soon as possible. Three conditions were laid down for selecting premises: firstly, they were to be in the Gaeltacht; secondly, they were to be large enough for a school of about a hundred pupils, and thirdly, they were to be available for immediate use, as the Department wanted the colleges to open at the beginning of the 1926 school year. This meant establishing some of the colleges in temporary premises. The Department's long-term intention was that they would be show-pieces for Irish education, and no expense was to be spared in providing extensions, or purpose-built premises, to fulfil this aim.

As early as 1924, a significant memorandum on 'The Gaelicisation of Ireland' declared, that it was 'practically certain' that the Committee on Recruitment, established by the

Department<sup>3</sup> that year, would recommend the establishment of preparatory colleges in the Gaeltacht, and soon afterwards the search for premises began. Various places were suggested. A typical suggestion was Colaiste Dheaglan at Ardmore, Youghal, which was described as: 'Suitable for a hundred students, a fine house with a neat garden and orchard, situated amid mountain scenery.' Other suggestions were the Arran Coastguard and War Signal Station, Inch Fort, Tirconnell, and Fanad Head Coast Guard Station, <sup>5</sup> Co. Donegal, while places in Dublin included Stillorgan Priory, and Longford Lodge, Glenageary, which could accommodate only thirty pupils. <sup>6</sup>

Some suggestions were quite unusual. Following the announcement in the Dail, Canon E. Maguire, a Co. Donegal Parish Priest, wrote in August 1925, of three possibilities in that county: Teelin Pier Coastguard Station, Glencolumbkille Hotel, Carrick, and Carrick Lodge. Following an inspection, they were rejected on the grounds that Carrick village was unattractive and very remote, being ten miles from Killybegs. Furthermore the Coastguard Station was described as 'inaccessible, a wreck, no more valuable as a site for a college than a heap of stones on the side of a rock,' while Carrick Lodge had been badly damaged by fire. 8

A number of State agencies owned large houses, and the Board of Works was entrusted with the task of examining them and other possible choices. These included Ring College, County Waterford; Ballingskelligs Cable Station, Co. Kerry; Furbough House, Galway; Ballyconnell House, Co. Donegal; Swastika House, a former orphanage at

Spiddal, Co. Galway; <sup>9</sup> Ebor House, near Cong, and St. Mary's Monastery, Tourmakeady, Co. Mayo. Spiddal House, which was in ruins following a fire in 1922, was also considered, while the ruined Bungalow Hotel, on the north shores of Lough Corrib, was another possibility because of the suitability of its site. Most of them, however, failed to fulfil the three conditions, and by March 1925, the list of likely premises had been reduced to Ballyconnell House, Ring College, Furbough House, Ballinskelligs Station, Burnham House, and one or two others in Donegal, or North Connacht. <sup>10</sup> Burnham House, the former home of Lord Ventry, an imposing mansion at Ventry, near Dingle, in the Kerry Gaeltacht, had already been chosen to house C. Íde. As early as 1924, the Bishop of Kerry had approached the Sisters of Mercy in Tralee, with a proposal that the Order establish the Munster girls' college:

On the 23<sup>rd</sup> May 1924, his Lordship, Most Reverend Dr. O'Sullivan paid a short, but momentous visit, to St. John's. It was for no other purpose, than to acquaint Reverend Mother Mary Elizabeth Moynihan, that the Minister for Education proposed establishing Preparatory Colleges in the Gaedhealtacht, to be conducted by Religious and run entirely through the Irish language. Furthermore to request Reverend Mother to provide Sisters to take charge of one such college in his diocese. <sup>11</sup>

For the nuns, the choice lay between Burnham House and the abandoned Cable Station at Ballinskelligs. The former was chosen as it was in a good state of repair, and not far from St. Elizabeth's. <sup>12</sup> Moreover, it had forty-five rooms and as it was owned by the Land Commission, it could be used immediately. <sup>13</sup>

Marlborough House and Hall, formerly used for Marlborough Street Training College, <sup>14</sup> were chosen in March 1925. <sup>15</sup> Though not in the Gaeltacht, they were owned by the Department of Defence, and were considered very suitable as they would require little expenditure. Furthermore they were unoccupied, and so could be used almost immediately. It was envisaged that Marlborough Hall would be for Roman Catholic girls, while Marlborough House would be for Protestant girls: <sup>16</sup> Both sections would have recreation grounds, separate or combined, but it is intended to arrange the classes for all in Marlborough Hall<sup>17</sup> No Protestant men were to be recruited to the preparatory colleges as the small number needed could be supplied by the pupil teacher scheme. <sup>18</sup> When the Protestants refused to be part of a shared college, the Minister for Education, Eoin MacNeill<sup>19</sup> proposed setting up a separate college for them in Marlborough House:

As regards the proposal to provide a hostel for Protestant girls at Marlborough House under the patronage of the Protestant Archbishop of Dublin, and to allow students to attend for secular instruction at Marlborough Hall, it appears that on the position being further explained it will be necessary to arrange for Protestant girls to be in a separate college under the management of the Protestant Bishop of the diocese where the college is situated.<sup>20</sup>

As Marlborough House could accommodate only fifty students, and it was envisaged that seventy-five places would be necessary, it was decided that the Protestant college would occupy the premises temporarily, while a new college was built.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile it was decided to establish C. Chaoimhín, a college for boys, in Marlborough Hall. It was intended that it would open in September 1926, but it was not ready until 1st March, 1927.<sup>22</sup>

In its haste to get the other four colleges started in the Gaeltacht, the Department made some strange decisions and disregarded factors, such as cost and convenience. Many decisions were made with little regard for the students: it was not unusual for students to start in one college and, later, to be transferred to another. Often female students from Kerry were sent to the Donegal college, because of a shortage of places in C. Ide, while some of the early classes in C. na Mumhan had students from the Donegal Gaeltacht.<sup>23</sup> This led to requests from parents to the principals of the colleges to keep the students over the holidays, as they could not afford the fares home and accommodation in Dublin overnight. It also led to a complaint from a teacher in Kerry, that parents could not allow their children to sit the entrance examination, because of the cost of travel to Donegal. <sup>24</sup> Furthermore the inaccessibility of the colleges created difficulties for students who required hospital treatment, and led to a wrangle between Education and Finance, as to who should pay for the treatment.<sup>25</sup> The policy of O Brolchain, <sup>26</sup> a staunch supporter of the scheme, was to be as generous as possible and he was ever ready to make funds available.

Despite the support of Blythe,<sup>27</sup> however, Finance continuously questioned O Brolcháin's decisions, resulting in endless bureaucracy and delay. Five of the seven colleges opened in temporary premises. Only C. Chaoimhín and C. Íde opened in their permanent homes. In addition C. Bhríde had a Dublin branch, while it waited for its building programme to be completed:

Table 3.1: Dates of Opening of the seven Preparatory Colleges

| COLLEGE      | LOCATION     | DATE            | FIRST CLASS |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|-------------|
| C. Chaoimhín | Glasnevin,   | 1 March 1927    | 63 students |
| C Íde        | Ventry,      | 1 March 1927    | 47 students |
| C. Moibhí    | Glasnevin,   | 25 April, 1927  | 20 students |
| C. Bhride    | Letterkenny, | 23 May 1927     | 24 students |
| C. Mhuire    | Letterkenny, | 24 October 1927 | 49 students |
| C. Éinne     | Furbough,    | 23 October 1928 | 29 students |
| C. na Mumhan | Mallow       | 24 October 1928 | 34 students |

Source: Department of Finance Papers, S20/3/27

The establishment of the colleges was characterised by poor planning, and a failure to realise that the temporary short-term arrangements would last longer than anticipated. The remoteness of the Gaeltacht was a further delaying factor. An example of this was the choice of Olphert House, Ballyconnell Estate, Falcarragh, in the Donegal Gaeltacht, to house C. Bhride. Ownership could not be obtained until December 1926, and as it could not be ready for use for some time, temporary accommodation had to be found. The house, which was completed in 1800, had been uninhabited for years, but the beautiful gardens and orchard had been well cared for. The Department planned to extend the house by adding three large wings, a chapel, a large study, and a science room. Meanwhile C. Bhride was to open in temporary accommodation This was a choice between Ards House, Dunfanaghy, owned by Sir Peter Stewart Bam, and Rockhill

House, Letterkenny, owned by Sir Charles J. Stewart. In August 1927, an agreement between Sir Charles and the Commissioners of Public Works was signed for Rockhill House, to be leased for eighteen months, with a possible six-month extension, if required. Even before the agreement was signed, C. Bhride started there in May 1927, with twenty-four students, and moved to Ballyconnell House in the following October. <sup>28</sup>

One of the first students recalled her time there:

I well remember the first day I came to C. Bhride, then located at Rockhill House outside Letterkenny. My mother and I travelled by train from Drogheda on a bright May morning. When we reached Letterkenny a taxi quickly bought us to the college where we were graciously received by Mother de Lourdes and Mother Melissa. Mother Melissa had a loud speaking voice and I was rather in awe of her. I remember thinking to myself: She's very nice today but what will she be like tomorrow. I need not have worried She was always lovely. I was not the first arrival. Bridie Hanmore from Roscommon was already there. She had come, by mistake a week too soon but the good nuns looked after her until the opening day.<sup>29</sup>

Even when renovated, C. Bhride had neither gas, nor electricity, and was lit by paraffin lamps. Moreover, it could accommodate only forty-seven students, and five teachers. So a second branch of the college was established, in temporary premises, in Talbot House in Dublin, where it stayed until August 1930.

There were similar delays with the Connacht girls' college, C. Mhuire. St. Mary's Monastery, Tourmakeady, was chosen to house it, but its buildings were not suitable, so the Department planned a purpose-built school for this location. As it could not be ready for some time - it was February 1931 before it was eventually finished<sup>31</sup>- the Department in its zeal to get the seven colleges established, started C. Mhuire in Rockhill House, in

Co. Donegal, in October 1927, as soon as the first class of C. Bhride had moved on to its permanent premises in Falcarragh.

The Department originally planned to locate the Munster boys' college, C. na Mumhan, at Ring College, in the Waterford Gaeltacht, but this decision was changed in 1927,<sup>32</sup> when it was decided instead, that the Munster boys' college should be in Ballyvourney, in the West Cork Gaeltacht, in a purpose-built school. Meanwhile temporary accommodation had to be found for the college, and it eventually opened in October 1928, in Avondhu House, Mallow, which was rented from the De La Salle Order, by the Commissioners of Public Works.<sup>33</sup> This temporary arrangement lasted until 1940.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, the Connacht boys' college, C. Einne, opened in Furbough House, Galway. Behind its establishment lay a story of mismanagement and ineptitude. Originally, it had been intended to establish a training college in Galway; a Department memo in February 1928, <sup>35</sup> spoke of accommodation urgently needed for 180 women teachers, as there was a short fall, of eighty to ninety, in the number of teachers required for Roman Catholic schools. A site in Salthill had been purchased, plans were drawn up and a contract for £16,500 worth of steel signed. But because the Bishop of Galway and the Department could not agree on an Order of nuns to run the training college, the plan had to be abandoned in 1932. At the same time, difficulties about the title to Furbough House, home of C. Einne, arose <sup>36</sup> and to salvage some of the large amount of public money wasted on the Salthill site, it was decided to build a smaller college at Salthill for C. Einne. As this was not ready until 1937, the college had to transfer to Talbot House,

and in January 1931, it became the third college located, temporarily, there. Talbot House, in Dublin, was to have a crucial role in getting the system started, and, between 1928 and 1937, it housed three preparatory colleges in succession.

Nowhere does the Department appear to have given consideration to the difficulties involved in moving a school, from campus to campus, or, as in the case of C. Bhride, in running a school on two campuses, such a distance apart; rather it made ad hoc decisions as problems occurred, and completely disregarded the effects on the students, who were moved around the country, in a complicated series of manoeuvres as accommodation became available. In 1928 - 29, sixty first year girls and staff from C. Bhride, were accommodated in Talbot House. However, as Ballyconnell House was still not ready in the following September, the new intake of seventy students for 1929 - 30, had to be divided. Thirty were accommodated at Talbot House, while the other forty were sent to Dingle, where, in November 1929, a new wing had been completed at C. Ide. It was not until August 1930, later than anticipated, that Ballyconnell House was ready, and the students at Talbot House were distributed between C. Ide and C. Bhride. Dates of completion for C. Mhuire, were again wrong and it moved temporarily to Talbot House, in September 1930,37 and stayed there, until its new building, in remote Tourmakeady, was finally completed in February 1931. C. Mhuire's move coincided with C. Einne having to leave Furbough House, and it moved into Talbot House.

The Department had little experience of school management, and little thought was given to the needs of the students in temporary accommodation. As Talbot House had no

playing fields, the Department rented grounds from Loreto College, in North Great George's Street, for the girls' colleges. These, however, were not suitable for the students from C. Einne, who used the Phoenix Park for recreation. The cost of bringing the boys to the park three times a week was of some significance, as many of them were from the Gaeltacht, and 'in very poor circumstances.' When the matter was brought to O Brolchain's attention, he proposed a grant of twenty pounds, to cover their costs. A further request from the principal of C. Einne, that fares should be paid for all the students, resulted in the grant being increased to seventy-five pounds. This was a typical example of the generous manner in which O Brolchain responded to requests from the preparatory colleges.

Throughout the history of the preparatory system the role of the Hierarchy was important, and particularly that of the bishops, in whose dioceses the colleges were located. Arrangements at Talbot House were a cause of concern to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Edward Byrne. 40 Correspondence between the Department and Byrne, with regard to Talbot House, shows the close relationship between him and O Brolchain. 41 It was O Brolchain's policy to keep Byrne informed, and to consult him, before any decision was taken. 42 The correspondence also shows divisions in the Roman Catholic Church, and the power of individual bishops within their own dioceses. Moreover, Byrne favoured the State's Irish language policy and could speak some Irish. 43 In moving C. Bhríde, temporarily, to Talbot House, O Brolchain thought that the Loreto Order would be acceptable to Byrne, as he already had members of that Order in his

diocese, but a disagreement arose about the work of a chaplain, and Byrne was quick to point out:

It is not the business of the education authorities to give directions to priests re duties - privilege of the Archbishop. It is for the education authorities to put their requirements before the Archbishop who will look into the matter and give directions to his priests as he thinks proper. 44

Byrne showed his annoyance again, when O Brolchain wrote, asking permission for C. Mhuire to move to Talbot House in 1930, as 'the lease was up on Rockhill House and it would be very expensive to renew it'. A letter from Byrne stated: 'The Archbishop does not approve of the transfer of C. Mhuire, from Letterkenny to Talbot Street. These temporary arrangements, appear to him, to have a way of becoming permanent.' While he accepted that it was quite within the rights of the Department to place a college there, without his approval, he would not allow a Religious Community from outside the diocese to take charge of the college. Byrne was further displeased, when C. Éinne moved to Talbot House in 1931. A memo to O Brolchain stressed that the arrangement was not to last longer, than two years and six months, and went on:

This scheme sets down an ecclesiastical state of things in Dublin, which is thoroughly undesirable and I see no reason, why I should assent to it anytime. It was a cause of embarrassment to me when extern nuns were introduced. It is a far greater embarrassment to introduce secular priests, who are not my subjects.<sup>45</sup>

Earlier in 1928, Byrne reluctantly allowed C. Moibhí to use laboratory facilities, at the adjoining C. Chaoimhín, on the strict understanding, that 'the externs were not to mix with students of C. Chaoimhín'. This permission had to be renewed annually, until C. Moibhí moved to the Phoenix Park in 1934. <sup>46</sup> Byrne hoped, that by agreeing, he would be

able to persuade the Department, to give the management of the model schools over to the Church, and that when C. Moibhí vacated Marlborough House, it would be used to provide extra accommodation for Glasnevin Model School. <sup>47</sup> In February 1932, Byrne and O Brolchain reached an agreement on this, but things did not work out as planned, and when C. Éinne left Talbot House in 1933, it was moved to C. Moibhí's old premises in Marlborough House and Glasnevin House.

A further example of the powerful role of the Roman Catholic Church in education was clearly shown in the archbishop's refusal to allow teachers trained in colleges outside his diocese, to be appointed to posts in Dublin. This matter had been taken up by the INTO without success, and in 1932, the Minister for Education, John Marcus O'Sullivan, 48 took it up with Byrne, pointing out that Dublin students who applied by Open Competition, 49 to enter training, often had to go to training colleges elsewhere, not because they were weaker students, but because the first choice was given to preparatory students, and then to pupil teachers. In 1933, Byrne agreed to accept candidates trained in Waterford and Limerick. 50 A more complex matter, however, was that of Roman Catholic teachers, who because they had been trained in the non-denominational Marlborough Street Training College,<sup>51</sup> would not be permitted to teach in Roman Catholic schools. As early as May 1922, Micheal O hAodha, Minister for Education in the Provisional Government, 52 had written 'unofficially' to Byrne to 'obtain his advice, as to the possibility of teachers with a good standard of Irish, who had been trained in Marlborough Street, being allowed to teach in Roman Catholic schools.<sup>153</sup> In 1931, O'Sullivan again asked for the policy to be modified.

The Department's strategy was to turn the colleges into educational show pieces, with first-class accommodation, and facilities for recreation, and extra-curricular activities, but it under-estimated the costs involved. New buildings were planned for C. Mhuire, C. Moibhí, <sup>54</sup> and C. na Mumhan, with large extensions for C. Íde, C. Bhride, and C. Éinne. C. Chaoimhín in Marlborough Hall was the only college, which did not require large expenditure. By 1934, however, only C. na Mumhan, and C. Éinne, were not in permanent accommodation yet the costs of establishing the colleges had seriously overrun the Department's earlier estimates. These had been estimated in August, 1927, as follows:

Table 3.2: Estimated Costs of Preparatory Colleges 1927

| Preparatory College        | 1927    | 1934    |
|----------------------------|---------|---------|
| further slo                | £       | £       |
| Marlborough Hall           | 12,600  | 15,500  |
| Marlborough House          | 500     |         |
| Burnham                    | 57,600  | 64,275  |
| Ballyconnell               | 61,500  | 68,103  |
| Furbough                   | 56.900  | 124,957 |
| Tourmakeady                | 51,200  | 72,359  |
| Munster                    | 53,700  | 86,037  |
| Protestant College, Dublin | 44,800  | 44,650  |
| Rockhill                   | 1,100   | -       |
| TOTAL                      | 339,900 | 475,931 |

Source: Department of Finance Papers, S20/9/25

This was greatly in excess of the original estimate of £150,000, given in the Dail, in June 1926,<sup>55</sup> and, not unreasonably, led to protests from Finance. Education defended such high expenditure, by pointing to the large amounts of farm land, most of the properties had.<sup>56</sup> That the Government was willing to invest such huge amounts of money,<sup>57</sup> shows the seriousness, which it attached to the system, and the advantage of having support

from the Minister for Finance. Furthermore it is ironic that while so much of the exchequer's resources were being spent on the preparatory system reductions were taking place in teachers' salaries. Yet the Government seemed oblivious to rising teacher discontent and from 1934 until the outbreak of World War 11 agitation for the restoration of earlier salary scales formed one of the main activities of the INTO.<sup>58</sup>

It also shows clearly the lack of realism, which characterised the Government's plans for gaelicising the new State. There was a failure to accept the reality, that the language was in terminal decline, and that its revival could not depend on the education system alone. Moreover, there was little awareness of the magnitude of the task of turning the country into a bilingual society, and of its financial implications. The Government's naivete was further shown in that it expected to gaelicise the entire education system through seven colleges, and put little money, or resources, into any other effort to gaelicise the country. Government policy concentrated on the education system and the civil service, and neglected the areas where Irish was spoken. Indeed the failure to implement the proposals of Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, <sup>59</sup> showed that the Government's priorities had changed.

Government efforts were focussed on the effective use of propaganda and the cultivation of self-interest. <sup>60</sup> Locating the colleges in imposing buildings in the Gaeltacht, such as Burnham House and Olphert House, both formerly associated with the Anglo-Irish aristocracy, owed much to Blythe's desire <sup>61</sup> to raise the standing of the language amongst native speakers. That some of the colleges were so removed from the nearest village, as to make intercourse with native speakers almost impossible, was not

considered. Discipline was a further factor. A former student at C. Ide recalled that students were never allowed out of the grounds:

C. Ide was in a beautiful setting. Girls were allowed out in groups in the grounds only. We were not allowed out of the demense because of the dangerous cliffs around. 62

This contrasted with the way boys at C. Chaoimhin, in Glasnevin, were treated in the early years of the college. Keenly interested in sport, with an enthusiasm for Gaelic games, the first principal, Br. Hurley, <sup>63</sup> allowed the students to go into town on Saturday afternoons and to attend sporting fixtures at Croke Park on Sundays. <sup>64</sup>

In establishing five colleges in the Gaeltacht, however, the Government achieved a dual purpose: it was able to claim that it was providing second-level education for native speakers, and was also able to use the colleges for propaganda purposes. The fear, that the rest of the population, might seek similar educational facilities, became the excuse for failing to provide secondary schools in the Gaeltacht. Moreover, in providing education for bright Gaeltacht students, the Government used the colleges to secure a ready source of Irish-speaking teachers to assist its gaelicisation policy. This was to prove costly in the long term, as it introduced many unsuitable people into the teaching profession.

The significance attached by the young State to the preparatory system was shown at C. Chaoimhin's official opening ceremony, when the Government used the occasion for propaganda for its language policy. Held on 19th March 1927, the Minister for Education, Dr. Marcus O'Sullivan, <sup>66</sup> in an address to the assembled representatives of Church and State, including President Cosgrave, <sup>67</sup> and Archbishop Byrne, <sup>68</sup> took as his

theme, 'The revolution in education'. In his address, he enunciated the philosophy behind the system:

The training of a strong national character amongst our people is one of the greatest services that a Department like mine can render to the nation. As well as the purely intellectual side, we can not forget that the religious and moral aspects are also to be looked after.....By these preparatory colleges we hope to get a large number of teachers to instill the Irish language into the very outlook of their pupils<sup>69</sup>

Moreover, he stressed that in order to foster the spirit of nationalism, the colleges would be thoroughly Gaelic from the very start and, in keeping with this ideal, all the staff, not just the teachers, but also the domestics, and farm labourers, had to be Irish speakers.

O'Sullivan reiterated the Government's language policy, and expressed these aspirations for the new system, in which he made it clear that the main focus of language learning was to be based on the 'total immersion' method:

The whole attitude of these colleges will be thoroughly Gaelic from the very start. Not merely will Irish be the language of the classroom, but they will live in an Irish atmosphere. In that way we hope to foster a spirit of nationalism, which even from the material point of view, is very important.<sup>70</sup>

In his address, Cosgrave drew on the history of the early nation, and recalled the college's patron saint, Caoimhín (Kevin), who founded a school at Glendalough. Pointing out that Caoimhín had pioneered a new era, he sentimentally likened the principal of C. Chaoimhín, Br. Hurley,<sup>71</sup> and his assistants, to Kevin, saying:

We are founding these colleges on the same principles and we are looking forward to similar results. We are laying the foundations of these colleges, firm in the spiritual tradition of the historic Irish nation, believing with Thomas Davis that 'the language of a nation's youth is the only easy and full speech for its age' and that 'a people without a language of its own is only half a nation.' 72

Furthermore the ideals expressed by Cosgrave and the florid language he used were typical of the Government's simplistic approach to the gaelicisation policy.

C. Chaoimhín appears to have been the only college to have an opening ceremony in 1927. This was, probably, because it was the one college to open in its permanent location, which did not require an extension or major alterations. It was also one of the first colleges to open. A further factor may have been that it opened in a building of some splendour, whereas the other colleges were not so fortunate. In May 1934, C. Moibhí had an official opening ceremony to mark its establishment in the old Hibernian Marine School in the Phoenix Park. As it was the only college under Protestant management, and many Protestants of that period were openly hostile to the language policy, it was not surprising that the Government used the occasion for propaganda purposes, and to demonstrate how well it was treating the religious minority. The attendance included the Fianna Fail leader, Éamon de Valera, who had become President of the Executive Council in 1932, the Minister for Education, Thomas Derrig, of Brolchain, and the chief inspector. Such ardent Gaeilgeoiri, must have been gratified to hear the Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. J.A.F. Gregg, declare his support for the language policy:

It was his personal opinion that, whatever their private views when the matter was a Government regulation it should be done without hesitation and with the best heart they could put into it. There was nothing more undesirable than that people should make a grievance out of such an ordinary matter of educational routine.<sup>81</sup>

In addition Gregg paid a warm tribute to the Government for its generosity in funding a separate college for the minority community:

It had been decided to set up two or three (sic) large preparatory colleges through Irish and then the question of denomination came up and the Department agreed with the greatest readiness that there should a Protestant preparatory college and preparation for the Church of Ireland Training College. He thanked the Government cordially and heartily. He could not have expected anything more in courtesy and goodwill than he had received from the Government of the Irish Free State. 82

As the renovated premises cost £44,000,<sup>83</sup> and included the following facilities, Gregg's gratitude was not over-stated:

A swimming bath with its own terrace and dressing rooms, a gymnasium elaborately equipped where badminton could be played, a stage on which Gaelic plays are performed; horticultural plots, hard courts for tennis and two hockey pitches, a study hall, highly modernised class-rooms, large wide cubicles with hot and cold water laid on, a dining room and kitchens not surpassed in any college of these islands and the whole place beautifully warmed by central heating. 84

Truly, the renovated building more than fulfilled the aspiration of the system's founders that each college should be a showpiece for Irish education.

In addition to the emphasis on nationalism, the ethos of the colleges was profoundly religious. It was Department policy that the colleges, with the exception of C. Moibhi, were staffed by a Religious Order, chosen by the bishop, and all teaching appointments were subject to his approval. Moreover, before a college opened, the bishop had to satisfied with arrangements for a chapel, and a full-time chaplain. Each day began with Mass, and ended with prayers each evening. Chaplains also heard Confession once a

week, gave one weekly address, and took some Religion classes. They also organised an annual three-day retreat, which was paid for by the Department. This tradition had begun in 1930, when Ó Brolcháin received a request from the principal of C. Éinne, for the Department to pay for the annual retreat, and in keeping with the generous manner in which the preparatory colleges were treated by the Department, a sum of six pounds was agreed. Moreover, a memo from Ó Brolcháin noted:

A spiritual retreat is not part of the duties of a chaplain who is a secular priest. Usually they are given by one of the great preaching Orders. The religious discipline of the annual retreat may be fairly held to be a desirable part of their training. 85

This comment gives insights into O Brolcháin's attitude to the Roman Catholic Church. Nowhere did it occur to him that the State's provision for religious requirements was already very generous and that it was up to the Church to provide for anything further in this area.

Ó Brolcháin showed the same readiness to provide funding for minority denominations, though the attitude of the Church of Ireland to the religious formation of students was much less rigorous. The provision of an Irish-speaking chaplain to C. Moibhí was also more problematic, due to the scarcity of Irish-speaking clergy. However, following consultations with Archbishop Gregg, <sup>86</sup> in September 1928, the Department agreed to the appointment of a chaplain, whose duties were to visit the college, two days a week for Religious Instruction, and 'at intervals, to supervise the religious and moral life of the students.' <sup>87</sup> Education proposed that he should be paid fifty pounds per annum for these duties and in addition the Department would contribute seven shillings and six pence, per

person, to the church attended by the students on Sundays. This led to long correspondence between Finance and Education, with Finance querying how the 'old regime' had funded Protestant chaplains to training colleges. In response Education pointed out that when the Church of Ireland Training College was first established a chaplain had been appointed, but subsequently, this appointment had ceased, as Religious Instruction classes were given by clergy on the staff. However, 'pew rent' of thirty pounds per annum was paid to the church attended by the students. In the case of Marlborough Street Training College, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Church of Ireland chaplains had been appointed and each was paid a capitation fee of one pound. 'Pew rent' was not paid, and ministers from nearby churches acted as chaplains. The college also had a full-time Roman Catholic chaplain, who said Mass daily.

In the light of these precedents, Education proposed in January 1929, that a pound per week, for each week the college was in session, should be paid to the chaplain, plus a subscription to the church. An official in Finance noted drily:

Apart from the Gilbertian way in which Education shows solicitude for the moral and religious welfare of the students we cannot object to the provision of a chaplain. 89

By May 1929, the matter appeared settled, but two months later, Gregg wrote to inform the Department that he wished to appoint the Revd. R.A. Byrn, the local rector, as chaplain. He was to be paid ten pounds, per annum, for general religious and moral supervision, but as he had no Irish, the Revd. Paul Quigley, Rector of Lusk, would give twice weekly religious instruction classes in Irish, at forty pounds per year. As students from different Protestant denominations attended C. Moibhí, provision had also to be

made for Presbyterian students, who attended Abbey Presbyterian Church, Rutland Square, and this increased the costs.

# Table 3.3: Expenditure on religion at C. Moibhi 1927/28

| 1927/28:    | 26 students @ 7/6 per student  | £9 - 15s 0d.    |
|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1928/29:    | 41 students @ 7/6 per student  | £15 - 7s 6d.    |
| Subscriptio | n to Abbey Presbyterian Church |                 |
| 1927/28:    | 4 students @7/6 per student    | £1 - 10s 0d.    |
| 1928/29:    | 5 students @7/6 per student    | £1 - 17s 6d.    |
|             |                                | £28 - 10s - 0d. |
| Chaplain's  | payment                        | £40 - 0s 0d.    |
| Total       |                                | £68 - 10s 0d.   |

Source: Department of Finance Papers, S25/10/34

Subscription to St. Mobhi's Church Glasnevin

Education was satisfied to agree to Gregg's proposal, but Finance was quick to point out that a full-time Roman Catholic chaplain cost only £130, and that he 'gave more service.'

An official in Finance commented:

I thought we had this question settled but the Archbishop (C of I) has proved himself stiffer in negotiations than was expected. Taking all things into consideration we can hardly resist the terms for which he holds out. We were prepared take advantage of the failure of the Churches to apply for payment. 90

Subsequently, following representations by the Presbyterian Church, a Presbyterian chaplain was appointed with Gregg's approval in 1934. It was agreed that he would be teach one half-hour class, per week, for which he was to be paid ten pounds per year. In 1938, a similar request made by the Methodist Church was granted on the same terms. <sup>91</sup>

The difficulty in obtaining Irish-speaking staff did not apply to the Protestant community only and it had not been easy to find Religious Orders which could supply Irish-speaking teachers and house staff for the six Roman Catholic colleges. Aware that this could be problematic, O Brolchain wrote to the Council of Catholic Bishops, in June 1925, arequesting discussions regarding the staffing and management of the colleges. Originally it was intended that the bishop, in whose diocese the college was located, would nominate a local manager, but on further consideration, it was felt preferable, if the bishop of the diocese, as in the case of the training colleges, should himself act as manager of the college. Moreover, the choice of the Order to run the college in his diocese lay with the bishop. One can only speculate as to why this change was made. A likely explanation is that, because the students at the preparatory colleges were going to become teachers, the bishops felt that the system of management should be similar to that for the training colleges.

There were, however, some dioceses, where the choice of an Order was not a problem, and, as early as May 1924, even before the Department's Committee on Recruitment<sup>96</sup> was established, the Bishop of Kerry, Dr. O'Sullivan, requested the Sisters of Mercy, in Tralee, to provide sisters to take charge of a preparatory college in his diocese.<sup>97</sup> This was a year before O Brolchain wrote to Archbishop Byrne, enquiring which religious community was to run the Dublin college, and the Christian Brothers were eventually selected.<sup>99</sup> Moreover, it was not until August 1926, that they suggested the names of a principal and vice-principal for C. Chaoimhin to the Department, and it was January 1927, before these were sent to Archbishop Byrne for his approval. Subsequently,

Education and Finance agreed staffing arrangements for C. Chaoimhín, and the teachers were chosen by Education, after consultation with the principal, who then forwarded their names and *curriculum vitae*, to the Archbishop for approval. Once this system was in place, it was little wonder that the Hierarchy was satisfied with it, for each bishop had under his control a well-run residential school, operated by an Order chosen by him, and totally financed by the Government.

In addition to the emphasis on nationalism and religion, there was a strong concentration on sporting activities, particularly in the boys' colleges. Typical of their attitude to sport was this account from C. Chaoimhín:

The Brothers soon had several teams playing hurling and Gaelic football and the college developed a name at sport, winning many championships. In 1929 and in 1930 they won the Leinster Senior Championship at Football and in Hurling in 1934. That same year, 1934, they won the Football and Hurling Championship for Christian Brothers Schools. They repeated this feat at Hurling the following year. This was mainly due to the Brothers' enthusiasm for the game for the Annals record that, while many of the pupils were from the Fior-Ghaeltacht, most of them had never seen a hurley until they came to the college. Many of the students were chosen for inter-provincial or county teams. The college also won the Handball Championships many times. 100

The teaching staff agreed for C. Chaoimhín, included a principal, vice-principal, and four teachers. It also had a lay brother, a chaplain, and a medical officer. Domestic staff included a matron, a cook, two kitchen maids, three house maids, a porter/messenger, a boiler man, a gardener, and a labourer. The college also had its own doctor, who paid weekly visits to check on the students' health, in addition to visiting when requested by the principal. The Christian Brothers would have liked the post of bursar to have been

included but the Department refused this. This was one of the few occasions when O Brolchain refused a request from a preparatory college. As in the other colleges, domestic staff were native speakers and the Department generously undertook to pay travel expenses for them to return home for holidays. Occasionally nuns who worked in the kitchen were not very fluent at Irish, but they did their best to improve. 103

The appointments at C. Chaoimhin formed a pattern for the other colleges. As the bishop of the diocese was the manager, the day-to-day management of the colleges was undertaken by the principal. The main terms of contracts for principals were: three months' notice, in writing by either side, or three months' salary in lieu of notice, with provisions for accommodation and salary. A further condition was that the principal would ensure the college was kept in good repair. Moreover, the document stressed that the Minister for Education was the employer, and not the manager. 104 In reality, the principal became the administrator, and was responsible for every penny of expenditure to the Department. 105 One of the great weaknesses of the system was that principals did not have access to funds, which they could use at their own discretion; instead, they had to apply to Education for approval of any expenditure, which, subsequently, had to be sanctioned by Finance. This led to endless correspondence, and bureaucratic delays, often worsened by wrangling between the two Departments. Education's policy was to grant the colleges almost any request, in its efforts to support the system, while Finance's attitude was coloured by its scepticism about the system. 106 Because of the administrative demands on principals, it was accepted that vice-principals would be necessary.

The Department drew up regulations for the teachers, who were to be persons with high qualifications, competent to teach the secondary school programme up to the Leaving Certificate Examination, and also fluent Irish speakers able to teach through Irish. As it was not possible to get sufficient secondary teachers, able to fulfil the three conditions, nine primary teachers were among the early appointees. In its efforts to give the colleges a higher status than other second-level schools, and to entice teachers to this pioneering work, the Department called the teachers, 'professors,' and wanted them paid a higher salary scale, with residential 'perks,' despite objections from Finance, that they should be paid the current rate for secondary teachers and teachers in training colleges. Eventually, it was agreed that the basic salary, for single men, should be £240 per annum, with five increments of ten pounds, and six of fifteen pounds, up to £400, while for women the basic salary was to be £220, with increments of ten pounds, up to £300. This was a lot less than Education initially suggested. Different salary scales for men and women were a feature of the period and it was not until 1949, that the INTO began demanding a common salary scale for all teachers and an end to discrimination on gender grounds.

In June 1929, it was reported that special agreements had been signed with the staffs of the preparatory colleges. <sup>109</sup> Over the years it became necessary to work out pension, holiday, and sick leave arrangements. All appointments, however, were on a probationary basis, because of fears that those teachers, who had been national teachers, might not be able to teach the Leaving Certificate course. <sup>110</sup> A further example of O Brolcháin's generosity was his encouragement to teachers to improve the standard of their Irish, and special arrangements were made to assist the early teachers, by back-dating their

salaries, to include time spent in the Gaeltacht, before their official appointments. An example of this was three Loreto sisters, who were sent to Gortahork, in the Donegal Gaeltacht, in September 1926, to improve their Irish, so that they would be able to teach at C. Bhride. They were there until the following May. 113 In addition O Brolchain treated an appointee to C. Moibhí, W.T. E. Condell, 114 in the same generous manner.

At the same time as officials were making staffing arrangements they were also establishing criteria for student entry. The main emphasis was on their ability to speak Irish. Students were to be 'clever boys and girls from Irish-speaking districts who desire to become teachers; clever boys and girls from all parts of the country, who are highly qualified in Irish.' Students had to be clever, because they had to complete the Intermediate Examination, a three-year course, in two years, as well as adapting to teaching through Irish. To ensure that only clever students were admitted, a complex entrance examination was held annually in June. Strict regulations for entry and a complicated marking system characterised it. Candidates were to be between the ages of fourteen to sixteen, and to pass the entrance examination in five compulsory subjects: Irish, English, Arithmetic, History, and Geography. In addition Needlework was compulsory for girls. Optional subjects included Algebra, Geometry, Drawing, and Nature Study, or Rural Science. The standard of the examination was that of seventh class in a national school, and it was conducted by inspectors and examiners, appointed by the Department. In keeping with the emphasis on Irish, a high standard was demanded: candidates had to gain, at least, fifty per cent in Irish, which had two sections, oral and written, with 200 marks for each. To pass, a student had to obtain, at least, sixty

per cent in oral Irish. By contrast, the emphasis in English was on the written part of the examination, for which 120 marks were awarded, with only eighty marks for the oral part. To pass, a candidate had to obtain only forty per cent in both sections. These regulations were a deliberate attempt to ensure the success of Gaeltacht students. 115

The pass mark in both Arithmetic and Singing was forty per cent, while in the other compulsory subjects, History and Geography, no set mark had to be obtained, but an overall mark of fifty per cent, 550, was required in the compulsory subjects. To these marks were added the marks, in excess of thirty per cent, obtained by candidates in three of the optional subjects. Gaeltacht candidates were further favoured by a rule, that those who answered wholly in Irish, were given a bonus of ten per cent in each paper, (except in Arithmetic, where five per cent was awarded). Even the selection procedure was biased towards Gaeltacht students, for though candidates were to be selected according to merit, fifty per cent of available places, in each college, were reserved annually for those, who obtained eighty-five per cent, or over, in oral Irish, provided they reached the qualifying marks in other subjects.

The fees for preparatory colleges were forty pounds per annum, which included board and tuition, but few students paid the full amount. Alarm at the high number of students paying no fees, or small amounts, was expressed by the Committee of Public Accounts in 1929.

<u>Table 3.4:</u> Number of students paying half fees or less 1927 – 1930

| 1927              | No. in Class | Full Fees | Partial Fees | No Fees |
|-------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|---------|
| C. Moibhí class 1 | 20           | 2         | 14           | 4       |
| C. Moibhí class 2 | 12           | 1         | 7            | 4       |
| C. Mhuire         | 49           | 3         | 22           | 24      |

| 1928         | No. in Class | Full Fees | Partial Fees | No Fees |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|---------|
| C. Moibhi    | 16           | 2         | 9            | 5       |
| C. Mhuire    | 28           | 4         | 16           | 8       |
| C. na Mumhan | 34           | 0         | 14           | 20      |

| 1929         | No. in Class | Full Fees  | Partial Fees | No Fees    |
|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| C. Moibhí    | 16           | 2          | 12           | 2          |
| C. Mhuire    | No entries   | No entries | No entries   | No entries |
| C. na Mumhan | 34           | 1          | 19           | 14         |

| 1930         | No. in Class | Full Fees  | Partial Fees | No Fees    |
|--------------|--------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| C. Moibhí    | 12           | 1          | 8            | 3          |
| C. Mhuire    | 28           | 5          | 12           | 11         |
| C. na Mumhan | No entries   | No entries | No entries   | No entries |

| TOTAL      | 249 | 21   | 133   | 95  |
|------------|-----|------|-------|-----|
| Percentage |     | 8.4% | 53.4% | 38% |

Source: Registers of the colleges

Ó Brolcháin tried hard to defend the Department's generosity regarding fees:

Such students were Gaeltacht children, whose fathers had only five, six, or ten acres of rocky land. Others were labourers, or fishermen, who find it very hard to clothe their children. 119

In response to questioning, O Brolchain used the Department's inexperience in running colleges as an excuse, and this certainly was a contributory factor. However, there was no

reason why the funding system should not have been changed, when it became obvious that over-spending was occurring. The Department had a means test, which was euphemistically described as a 'scholarship.' O Brolchain explained how the system worked: 'First, we inquire from parents as to their income, and what they are prepared to pay. This is referred to the inspector, with instructions to consult local parties, especially the Garda Siochána.' The naivety of O Brolchain's approach was clearly shown in his remarks about asking parents 'what they were prepared to pay.' This rather casual arrangement was soon replaced with a more rigorous investigation of parents' means:

The Department and the Commissioners of Inland Revenue take very precise measures to ascertain the means of parents and to check their statement which they are requested to submit. The local school inspector, and the inspector of taxes, collect and supply the relevant information to the Department, which then fixes the fee in accordance with a definite and official scale which has been drawn up by the Department of Finance. <sup>121</sup>

Moreover, the examination by the Public Accounts Committee revealed a wide difference in attitude to expenditure between the two departments. It also showed a casual approach to planning in Education. Ó Brolchaín's approach was to provide the colleges with the best educational facilities and resources available, but this was not done in a methodical manner. An example of Ó Brolchaín's generosity was shown in the provision of gramophones and records. Queried about the necessity for such expenditure, his response was that such equipment was necessary for linguistic purposes. <sup>122</sup> But the haphazard way the Department dealt with the different colleges was clearly shown to the Committee, when Ó Brolchaín was asked to justify expenditure on musical instruments. While five colleges received a variety of musical instruments, and two colleges had orchestras, C.

Moibhí had only one piano. Moreover, in May 1928, the Minister refused to sanction the provision of a piano for C. na Mumhan. 123

A further example of the Department's generosity was the provision of stationery. All students, regardless of their means, were supplied with stationery at the nominal rate of twelve shillings and sixpence per annum. Principals were to collect the money and the Department was to be informed of any cases of hardship. Preparatory students were also exempt from paying examination fees. 124 In addition in 1929, a scheme was introduced, whereby training college fees were paid for those preparatory college students whose families could not afford to pay them. Under its terms, such students were to repay the money when earning. 125 This was typical of Blythe's actions as Minister for Finance. In an endeavour to assist poor Gaeltacht students, he was willing to advance their fees, but his generosity was always conditional. Moreover, he gave little consideration to the effects on education of some of his proposals. As the high costs of the colleges continued, Finance proposed, in 1930, reducing the preparatory course to three years, and the pupilteacher course to one year, as this would not only reduce the cost per head, but would also increase output. 126 How the course could have been undertaken in three years was not really considered, and as it had been reduced by a year already with students undertaking the Intermediate Certificate course in two years, 127 a further reduction was not possible. But the very suggestion was a further indication of Finance's uncaring attitude to education.

To protect the large amount of money invested in each student's education, at Finance's insistence, the Department drew up an agreement, which students had to sign before entry to the preparatory colleges. This was a declaration, that they would 'endeavour to qualify themselves thoroughly' for service, as teachers in national schools, and their parents, or guardians, had to give written assent to it. From 1930, preparatory students had to undertake to teach for five years as a national teacher. <sup>128</sup> In the event of failing to do so, they would be required to repay the cost of their education. Another condition of the agreement was that the principal of the preparatory college might remove the pupil, at any time, with the approval of the Department. Furthermore pupils, who failed to perform, satisfactorily, at teaching practice which was to be held in the fourth year, would not be allowed to continue.

This agreement was to be a source of contention throughout the history of the colleges. Critics claimed that due to it, students who were unsuited to the teaching profession went on to training, because they were unable to repay their preparatory college fees. In the early years, a number of student-teachers left training and the Department was unable to reclaim the money spent on their education. They were not all past pupils of preparatory colleges. A memo from an official in 1934, noted four such cases. <sup>129</sup> Of these, only one had been educated at a preparatory college. The student concerned, a past pupil of C. Ide, had been dismissed from training college for misconduct. She had paid no fees, however, and the memo noted that her fees were no recoverable because of her parents' poverty. Of the others, two were entering the religious life, while the fourth was a pupil-teacher. According to the memo, the Department was precluded from taking

legal action, because there would be little public sympathy where a religious vocation was concerned.

A further factor inhibiting the Department from legal action was the age of the students, when making the agreement. Moreover, the Department was careful not to seek reimbursement of fees from Gaeltacht students of low means, as it feared the response 'that free secondary education for general purposes should be provided throughout the Gaeltacht.' The fee system was problematic and many of the difficulties regarding the preparatory colleges might have been avoided had a proper system of scholarships been introduced at the start. The insistence that students must become primary teachers and their recruitment at such an early age, were fundamental flaws in the system and were, eventually, to contribute to its ending.

Throughout the history of the colleges there were difficulties over text books. It was Education's intention that text-books would be freely supplied to students, for use during their time at the colleges. However, as the number of text-books in Irish was limited, most teachers taught from their own translations of English text-books. Finance and Education disagreed over the provision of free text-books to students. Finance also advised against providing library books on the grounds, that there were few books in Irish, and the colleges should 'wait until more were available, otherwise they may countermand gaelicisation work,' phrases that have resonances of Blythe, <sup>131</sup> the Minister for Finance. Finance wanted the colleges to build up their own libraries. Eventually it was agreed that the colleges should receive fifty pounds, per library, and thirty shillings, for

each first-year student. This arrangement was fine, until it was discovered that due to the Department's incompetent planning, the colleges were receiving different rates per student, which meant that the contents of the libraries varied from college to college. C. Bhride had a good library having had £180 spent on it, while the limited nature of the library at C. Éinne, was noted by the Bishop of Galway. That O Brolchain had little understanding of suitable reading material for young people was shown by his proposal, that each library should have all modern Irish texts, published since 1898, and also a complete set of Cork Historical and Archaeological Journals.

From their earliest days there was keen competition for places in the colleges. The first entrance examinations were held in June 1926, when 1,946 students, 607 boys and 1339 girls, competed for places. Though only 154 in all, sixty-nine boys and eighty-five girls, were awarded places, the trend established in the early years, of well over a thousand students competing for approximately 150 places, was to continue:

Table 3.5: Numbers competing for places at Preparatory Colleges 1926 - 1935

**Awarded places** YEAR No. entering Boys Girls TOTAL Boys Girls 1,946 1,339 1,295 1,226 1,461 1,065 1,749 1,187 1,345 1,783 1,152 1,712 1,166 1,503 1,446 

Source: Reports of the Department of Education, 1926 - 35

These figures show that, generally, the number of girls entering the annual examination for places in the preparatory colleges, was twice the number of boys. Several factors may account for the gender imbalance. Firstly, it was an indication that primary teaching was perceived as a career for women. Secondly, the fact that there was already a large gender imbalance amongst primary teachers, meant that there were more female teachers to encourage the girls to enter. Thirdly, many rural families with sons, aged between thirteen to fifteen, needed them to stay at home to work on the farm.

### THE FIRST STUDENTS

Who were the first students? The first students came from all over the country, and from varied social backgrounds. There was also considerable variation between colleges. Almost throughout its history, C. Íde's students came mainly from Cork and Kerry. <sup>136</sup> In the early years, C. Mhuire's students came from Cork and Kerry, though later they were mainly from Galway and Mayo. The majority of students in C. na Mumhan also came from Cork and Kerry, though from time to time, it had students from Donegal. <sup>137</sup> C. Bhríde's students came from Donegal, mainly, with a number from Cork, Kerry and Tipperary. Unlike the other colleges, C. na Mumhan had a number of students who entered after the Intermediate Certificate Examination. <sup>138</sup> From the beginning, C. Chaoimhin had many students from Gaeltacht families of reduced means and, from its early days, the principal paid for repairs for pupils' clothes. <sup>139</sup> C. Moibhí always had a wide range of students with varying financial backgrounds and most classes, included students, who paid full fees and those who paid none. <sup>140</sup> The average age on entry of the early students was fifteen plus, though it decreased as time went by. <sup>141</sup>

A typical day in a preparatory college began at 6.45 am and ended at 10.00 pm.

6.45 am: Rising Time

7.00 am: Mass

7.30 am: Make beds

8.00 am: Breakfast

8.30 am: Free time. Walk 30 minutes

9.00 am: Classes started

11.00 am: Break

11.15 am: Classes

1.00 pm: Lunch

2.00 pm: Classes

4.00 pm: Free Time. Sporting activities, hobbies etc.

6.00 pm: Tea

7.00 pm: Study

8.30 pm: Free time on Thursdays for Irish dancing 8.30 - 9.30 pm

9.30 pm: Evening Prayers

10.00 pm: Bed

A complaint against the system was that the curriculum was too narrow for primary teachers, and in the early years, the prescribed curriculum was limited to Irish, English, Maths, History, Geography and Science. This was defended by Blythe, <sup>142</sup> in a Dáil debate, in 1932:

The work of giving a full secondary course through Irish was an experimental matter when the preparatory colleges were set up. It was necessary to have a minimum curriculum in the beginning because of the difficulties involved. 143

However, a study of the different colleges shows that while the basic curriculum was taught in all colleges, there were considerable variations as to which other subjects were taught. This was mainly due to the availability of staff<sup>144</sup> competent to teach extra subjects. A further criticism was that a modern language should have been included in the curriculum. How justified was this? Most Roman Catholic boys' secondary schools, of that time, taught Latin, while French was taught in the majority of girls' schools. <sup>145</sup> French was, however, taught in two of the preparatory colleges. <sup>146</sup> Latin was taught in the majority of preparatory colleges, though a memo in 1933, speaks of it as being a recent introduction, 'which will facilitate future teachers in getting university degrees and a bonus for special qualifications, an objective dear to members of the INTO. <sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, the teaching of Latin was to be a source of resentment for many students, as they were not able to take it as a subject at the Leaving Certificate Examination. <sup>148</sup>

The level at which a subject taken at the Leaving Certificate Examination varied from college to college. At C. Chaoimhín students studied all subjects, except English, at honours level, while at C. Mhuire some students studied Mathematics at Leaving Certificate honours level, which was unusual in girls' schools of the period. Once the colleges were established in permanent locations, however, the curriculum broadened and the subjects listed were Irish, English, Mathematics, History and Geography, Rural Science, Drawing, Music, with Domestic Science for girls, and Manual Instruction for boys. In addition from 1933, specially designed courses in Physical Training were given by army instructors in some colleges.

As the colleges differed from ordinary secondary schools, the question as to which branch of the inspectorate should be responsible for their supervision, had to be clarified soon after they opened. A memo on the role of the inspectorate in February 1929, drawn up by the chief inspector, recommended that the Secondary Branch should inspect Intermediate and Leaving Certificate classes, to ensure that they were suitably taught, while the Primary Branch was to be responsible for the administration and the examination of non-examination subjects: Manual Instruction, Vocal Music, Needlework, Cookery, and Rural Science. They were also to supervise arrangements for recreation, general reading, concerts, céilís, and what was euphemistically described as the 'organisation of opportunities for turning to advantage, the Irish-speaking population and environment'.

In the early days of the colleges much emphasis was laid on how the preparatory system would prepare students for their careers as teachers, and President Cosgrave<sup>152</sup> stressed this aspect, in April 1928, when he stated that 'students from preparatory colleges were specially trained for entrance to the training colleges.' <sup>153</sup> It was to fulfil this aspiration that teaching practice became part of the course, and all preparatory students were guaranteed places in the training colleges, on the successful completion of the Leaving Certificate Examination. <sup>154</sup> According to the Department it had two objectives:

- (a) to ascertain whether the students have an aptitude for teaching, and have the fundamental qualifications of voice, speech, manner and personality for the profession, and
- (b) to give the students an opportunity of ascertaining whether there is a real appeal to them in teaching as a life work. 155

Furthermore the memo on the role of the inspectorate<sup>156</sup> recommended that teaching practice, originally prescribed for the fourth year, be undertaken in the second half of the third year of the course, the same time as prescribed for pupil-teachers.<sup>157</sup> The carrying out of the requirement, regarding teaching practice, varied from college to college, and never really served any useful purpose.<sup>158</sup>

A significant factor in the operation of the colleges was the Department's inexperience in school management. This was particularly noticeable in its failure to consider before setting up the colleges, matters of considerable importance to their daily operation, such as recreation, and the financing of sports equipment. Principals were left to finance such undertakings, whatever way they could, and it was not until 1930 that games funds were established in all the colleges, with students contributing, on average, five shillings per annum. <sup>159</sup>

The Department did, however, insist that in keeping with the emphasis on native culture, Irish dancing was to be taught in each college, and this led to a complicated wrangle, between Finance and Education and the Irish Dance Teachers' Association, (Coimisiun an Rince), which insisted that qualified teachers should be employed, so that future national teachers would be properly taught. This was firmly resisted by Finance, which again showed its lack of commitment to the gaelicisation policy. O Brolchain's response was to reaffirm the aspirations behind the establishment of the colleges:

(The students would have) the advantages of collective school life lived in an atmosphere of Gaelic tradition. It was hoped every aspect of Gaelic culture, literature, folklore, and music would be encouraged and Irish traditional dances would be extensively practised in these colleges not only for aesthetic and cultural value but for usefulness in the Physical Training of students. 160

He also went on to point out that, while there had been a sustained effort on behalf of the language, there had been 'no similar effort to foster Irish dance, which was in a very unsatisfactory state throughout the country' and appealed against Finance's decision, on the grounds, that national teachers had a significant role, second only to the Gaelic League, in reviving and fostering Irish dance. The wide gulf between Finance and Education was shown in the following memo:

It is one thing for the State to encourage and directly assist the revival of the Irish language, quite another to attempt to spread Irish step and jig dancing. We should not allow ourselves to be driven by the Department of Education which has been bullied by the IDTA, greedy dance teachers, intent on seeking to impose on the community as a whole, a self-constituted exclusive body of teachers, obviously out to establish a monopoly in their own financial interests.' <sup>161</sup>

A key factor in establishing the preparatory colleges was their location in Irish-speaking districts, and the question of using the Gaeltacht environment to the best advantage was a cause of some concern to the Department. Moreover, the siting of the colleges in the Gaeltacht was raised from time to time in the Dail. In 1930 a questioner asked:

Why the students are brought from one end of the country to the other and the object is never realised, as the pupils are practically locked up and have no intercourse with the peasantry? Does the Minister think that there is something in the air that would give the pupils the 'blas' and make them Irish speakers? <sup>162</sup>

From then on, each college had to make reports on interaction with native speakers.

Furthermore principals were instructed to ensure that they visited the colleges, and that during free time students met with them. The reasons for these instructions, were not just

to improve the students' Irish, and to increase 'an spriod Ghaedhealach' (the Irish ethos) of the colleges, but also to dispel the perception of native speakers that only poverty and destitution were associated with the language, a theme often reflected on by Blythe. <sup>163</sup> A detailed report from the principal of C. Ide, Sr. Columbán, described concerts, drama, story-telling and singing sessions with native speakers. She complained, however, of difficulty in organising such visits as the nearest village was seven miles away, which meant expenditure on transport. Indeed, it was not long before the question of paying native speakers to visit the colleges arose, and a grant of five pounds, per year, was allowed to each college. <sup>164</sup>

#### THE FAILURE TO ATTRACT GAELTACHT STUDENTS

How did the Department view the operation of the preparatory system at the beginning of the thirties? Not surprisingly, the Department described the system as 'a complete success, in so far its main objective, securing of a large number of boys and girls, who are highly qualified in Irish, and able to do their school work and other subjects in the medium of that language. But an analysis of those securing places showed that the early students came, mainly, from outside the Gaeltacht, a fact noted with disappointment by the Department in 1930:

The preparatory college scheme has failed to secure sufficient numbers from the Gaeltacht. In 1930 only eleven per cent of the total number examined were resident in Irish or partly Irish-speaking districts. The low number of candidates from Gaeltacht areas of Galway and Mayo was 'distinctly disappointing.' 166

Amongst those most concerned with the failure to attract Gaeltacht students, was Blythe: 167

I am afraid it shows clearly that the present system will not deliver the goods. The number of boys and girls from the Fior-Ghaeltacht, half of whom are from West of Dingle, is much too few to enable the colleges to do their work with real efficiency... I regard the results of the examination, as not only deplorable, but as tragic. 168

Blythe attributed the lack of interest in the Donegal and Connemara Fior-Ghaeltacht to poverty, poor teaching, and parent apathy:

Probably a good proportion of children attend school hungry. Many of the teachers are not as efficient as they ought to be, but above all, parents have not the habit of making sacrifices to keep children at school in order to give them a chance of entering more lucrative employment. 169

To encourage more Gaeltacht entrants, he proposed a system of 'exceptional entry' to assist them gain places, by withholding twelve places, annually, from open competition, and awarding them in proportion to candidates from different Irish-speaking areas, which were not sufficiently represented in the ordinary list of successful applicants. He further proposed the establishment of special preparatory, one-year courses, for these candidates before they were admitted to the ordinary classes.

In response to Blythe, O Brolcháin<sup>171</sup> investigated the matter, and in a memo in July 1931,<sup>172</sup> he pointed out that great efforts had been made to inform Gaeltacht parents of the new scheme, and cited several reasons for their lack of interest. Firstly, poor economic conditions, which he described as 'bordering on semi-starvation in many areas.' Secondly, irregular school attendance owing to a lack of clothing, particularly boots, and thirdly, the tradition of leaving school at fourteen. Furthermore he believed the education system contributed to the lack of interest, as the programme was unsuitable for Gaeltacht

children, who also suffered from a lack of suitable text-books in Irish, an absence of school libraries, and no facilities for home work. School size was seen as also contributing to the problem:

The inability of teachers in ordinary two-teacher schools to devote special attention to students of VII standard without neglecting in some degree students in 1V - VI. Can't compare with children in large schools with special classes and special teachers. 173

O Brolchain considered the entrance examination requirements in English and Mathematics too high, while the age limit of fifteen years and six months, he believed, was too low. Another factor seen as contributing to parent apathy, was the length of time it took for students to qualify as teachers. Moreover, Gaeltacht students were seen as 'unsophisticated and overawed by examinations and so unable to give of their best.' To improve matters, O Brolchain suggested itinerant teachers, on motor cycles, or in cars, to go round the Gaeltacht, giving specialised instruction. He also proposed the provision of centralised schools, with residential facilities, or 'secondary tops,' for Fior-Ghaeltacht schools.

To encourage more Gaeltacht students to enter the entrance examination, Ó Brolcháin initiated a special scheme for them. It included:

- (1) the extension of the upper age limit to sixteen years and six months
- (2) the provision of a preparatory one-year course at the preparatory colleges, before admitting them to the ordinary classes
- (3) grants to cover the cost of travel and outfits
- (4) grants to cover the expenses of attending the examination 176

In addition O Brolchain proposed that bonuses of five pounds be paid to each Gaeltacht child who entered and failed, while ten pounds be paid to every school principal, with a successful pupil. This was intended as an inducement to teachers in the Connemara and Galway Gaeltacht to give 'after-hours' teaching to children for preparatory colleges.

These measures were successful in increasing the number of candidates from the Fior Ghaeltacht, who sat the entrance examination, and the Department was able to report, with satisfaction, that the numbers had increased from 100 in 1931, to 329 in 1934. <sup>177</sup> In addition the quality of the candidates improved, with fifty-one per cent passing in 1934, compared with forty-two per cent in 1933. The special Preliminary Course for Fior-Ghaeltacht students initiated by Ó Brolcháin in 1933, at Blythe's insistence, was in operation for three years. Boys attended C. Chaoimhín, while girls from the Donegal Gaeltacht attended the St. Louis Convent, Monaghan. Girls from the Connacht Gaeltacht attended the Mercy Convent, Tuam. <sup>178</sup>

Table 3.6: Preliminary Course for Fior-Ghaeltacht students

| YEAR    | NUMBER OF<br>AWARDS | BOYS | GIRLS | GAELTACHT             |
|---------|---------------------|------|-------|-----------------------|
| 1933/34 | 16                  | 5    | 11    | Connemara and Donegal |
| 1934/35 | 9                   | 3    | 6     | Connacht              |
| 1935/36 | 3                   | 3    | -     | Connacht              |

Source: Reports of the Department of Education, 1934 - 1936

These courses were declared a success, as all but one of the sixteen students for 1933/34, gained places in the preparatory colleges, and the other boy gained a scholarship to secondary school. The results of the students, who attended the course in 1934/35, were

almost as good, with seven of the nine students gaining places in the colleges that year. Of the other two students, one gained a scholarship to a secondary school. However, none of the three boys, who attended the 1935/36 course, was successful, and the Department decided that the course was no longer necessary as there had been a big improvement in the number of applicants from the Fior-Ghaeltacht.<sup>179</sup>

The entry of more Gaeltacht students to the colleges meant an increase in the number of those from low-income families, and Blythe, who was ever happy to assist them, had to include a subhead for £125 in the Annual Estimates for 1931/32, for small grants towards the outfitting and travel expenses of necessitous students from the Gaeltacht. A memo from O Brolchain, put at eighteen the number entering for the first time, needing such assistance for 1931/32, with £250 estimated for 1932/33, and £375 for 1933/34, with a maximum of £500 for 1934/35. This was a new scheme and did not affect the grant already given to C. Chaoimhín for repairs to students' clothes. That some Gaeltacht students and their families were in poor circumstances was clearly shown in a memo sent by O Brolchain to Finance in 1932. A typical case was that of a student, from Co. Kerry, at C. Éinne:

Father, a casual labourer with twelve shillings a week income. Very poor, neighbours sent 'the hat round' to provide clothes. The morning going to college teachers and class made a collection for pocket money. They have three acres of cut away bog; the cabin was cold and empty. The family often go to bed hungry; all barefoot ill-clad, and miserable, on the day of my visit which was very inclement'. <sup>182</sup>

Details of other students, in similar circumstances, were included, and in 1932/33, a grants system for Gaeltacht students came into operation. However, Education's proposal to extend assistance to non-Gaeltacht students by giving each student, fifteen pounds, was refused by Finance, which pointed out that the State wanted national teachers, who were 'bred in the-bone' Irish speakers. It was also intended to educate other native speakers to the stage where they would be eligible to compete for university scholarships for Fíor-Ghaeltacht students. Finance dismissed the idea totally:

Non Fior-Ghaeltacht students are essentially a different matter. There is never any difficulty filling places in preparatory colleges. Therefore no new inducements are necessary. If poor students adopted any other calling in life, e.g. Christian Brothers, or emigrated to England, they would be obliged to find considerable amounts to buy clothes, fares etc. 183

Not surprisingly, this system did not find favour with the INTO, which was against the preparatory colleges from the beginning.<sup>184</sup> The new regulations, and particularly those allocating forty per cent of reserved places, to candidates from the Fior-Ghaeltacht, <sup>185</sup> and a further forty per cent to candidates, from Breac Ghaeltacht areas, alarmed the organisation, and the CEC passed a resolution, in July 1933, describing the new regulations as 'reactionary and unjust':

While we have every sympathy with any reasonable efforts towards the revival of Irish and the fair treatment of the Gaeltacht, we consider the regulations for entrance to preparatory colleges as reactionary and unjust, and such as will ultimately injure Irish, in the non-Irish speaking districts, by excluding from these colleges practically all candidates from outside the Gaeltacht. That we suggest to the Minister the advisability of allocating to Irish a certain substantial portion of the total marks given to all subjects and insisting on a high standard in Irish oral, as well as written, for successful candidates, entrance otherwise to be settled in strict order of merit. That we direct the attention of parents and all those interested in our language, and the Irish public generally, to the

present unfair and invidious differentiation against the vast bulk of potential aspirants to the teaching profession. 186

The INTO's criticism was significant, because it was made by a group, which up to then, had supported the language policy. Undoubtedly, one reason for the teachers' opposition was that the new regulations made it more difficult for their offspring to follow them into the teaching profession.

#### CONCLUSION

Once the decision to establish the preparatory system was taken, major decisions had to be made regarding the location, management, and staffing of the colleges. In addition decisions concerning the students had to be made, rules for the entrance examination drawn up, and a fee system devised. The Department's intention was that the colleges would be located in the Gaeltacht and that each college would be a 'mini-Gaeltacht.' Their early days, however, were marred by poor planning and bureaucratic delays, due to the inexperience in educational management of those running the system. This resulted in all but two of the colleges: C. Íde and C. Chaoimhín, opening in temporary premises, with much inconvenience for staff, and students.

It was intended that the colleges should have first-rate facilities and Education was content to spend large amounts of money to ensure this objective. Such expenditure led to protests from Finance and at its instigation a fee agreement was initiated in 1930. This was a major error and along with the age of entry, and the segregation of preparatory

students, from students intended for other careers, was to undermine the system in the long run.

The development of the preparatory system owed much to the ideas of the Minister for Finance, Blythe, and he took great interest in its development. A cause of much concern to him in the early years of the system was the low number of Gaeltacht students, who obtained places in the colleges. At his instigation special measures were taken to ensure their entry. These included reserving an increased number of places for them, widening the age limit and organising special courses to prepare Fior-Ghaeltacht students for the entrance examination. Such incentives were eventually successful and the numbers of native speakers rose considerably. However, such discrimination in favour of Gaeltacht students reaffirmed the opposition of the INTO to the system and consolidated the view of many members of the profession that the gaelicisation policy was unrealistic.

## **FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER 111**

<sup>1</sup>Dáil Reports, 1925, vol. 12, p. 815

<sup>2</sup> Memo on the Gaelicisation of Ireland, Department of Education Papers, Central Registry of Files, Box 462, 21117. Also UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/302

<sup>3</sup> See p. 81

<sup>4</sup> Department of Education Papers, Central Registry Files, Box 462, 21115

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 21113

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 21114

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 21111

8 Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Minutes of Aireacht Oideachais, (Ministry for Education), DF Papers, S20/9/25

10 Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Annals of the Sisters of Mercy, Kerry Diocesan Archives

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> See p. 69

<sup>15</sup> Letter from S. O'Neill, secretary, Department of Education, to secretary, Department of Finance, DF Papers, S20/9/25

16 See p. 90

<sup>17</sup> Letter from Ó Brolcháin to Archbishop Byrne, Dublin Diocesan Archives, Byrne Papers

<sup>18</sup> DF Papers, S20/9/25

<sup>19</sup> See p. 57, n. 20

<sup>20</sup> DF Papers, S25/11/25

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Análacha C. Chaoimhghín, (Annals of C. Chaoimhín) St. Helen's Provincialate, York Road, Dun Laoghaire

<sup>23</sup> See p. 236

<sup>24</sup> DF Papers, S20/48/27

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, S25/11/28. See also p. 243

<sup>26</sup> See p. 68

<sup>27</sup> See pp. 213 - 217

<sup>28</sup> DF Papers, S20/48/27

<sup>29</sup> Rita MacChába, a student at C. Bhríde 1927 – 31,

30 DF Papers S20/9/25

31 Ibid., S25/4/29

<sup>32</sup> Micheál Ó Domhnaill, *Iolscoil na Mumhan Coláiste na Rinne Gearr-stair*, (Cork, Clo na Laoi Teo., 1987), p. 79, See also p. 228

33 DF Papers, S25/8/28

<sup>34</sup> See p. 252

35 DF Papers, S20/4/28

36 Ibid., S20/4/28

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., S25/2/28

38 See p. 68

<sup>39</sup> DF Papers, S18/34/31

<sup>40</sup> See p. 93

An example of this was in September 1922 when O Brolchain wrote to Byrne to inform him in advance of proposed changes in the programme for students in training colleges. A further example was when O Brolchain contacted Byrne about the proposed Marriage Ban in 1932. Dublin Diocesan Archives, Byrne Papers.

42 See p. 69

44 Dublin Diocesan Archives, Byrne Papers.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> See p. 155

<sup>49</sup> See p. 281

50 Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> See p. 69

<sup>52</sup> See p. 62, n. 90

53 Dublin Diocesan Archives, Byrne Papers

<sup>54</sup> C. Moibhi's permanent location was to be in a restored wing of the former Hibernian Marine School in the Phoenix Park

55 Dáil Reports, 4th June, 1926,

<sup>56</sup> DF Papers, S25/8/28

<sup>57</sup> See p. 92

58 O'Connell, p. 203

<sup>59</sup> See p. 119

<sup>60</sup> J.J. Lee, Ireland 1912 – 1985 Politics and Society, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 135

61 See p. 41

62 Interview with Maire Ní Chonaill, student at C. Ide, 1930 - 32

<sup>63</sup> Br. Donal Lucius Hurley was born in 1883, at Laragh, near Bandon, Co. Cork. From a family with a strong nationalist tradition he became a Christian Brother and taught in a number of the Order's schools for twenty-five years before being appointed to C. Chaoimhín. He was well-known for his dedication to the language revival.

<sup>64</sup> An Br. Oir. M. S. O. Flaitile, 'Colaiste Chaoimhin', An Reiltin, Fomhar 1956

65 DF Papers, S20/9/25. See also p. 91

<sup>66</sup> See p. 155

67 See p. 56, n. 12

<sup>68</sup> See p. 93

69 The Christian Brothers' Educational Record, 1927, p. 285. See also The Irish Times, 21st March 1927 <sup>70</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>71</sup> Br. D. L. Hurley was principal of C. Chaoimhín from 1927 to 1933. See n. 63

73 Both C. Ide and C. Chaoimhin opened at the same time Ist March, 1927

74 The Irish Times, 9th May, 1934

75 Valerie Jones, 'Recruitment and formation of students into the Church of Ireland Training College 1922 - 1961, M.Litt. thesis, Dublin University, 1989, p. 82

<sup>76</sup> See p. 61, n. 88

<sup>43</sup> The Irish Christian Brothers' Educational Record, 1927, p. 284

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<sup>77</sup> See pp. 277 - 279
<sup>78</sup> See p. 68
79 The Irish Times, 9th May 1934
80 See p. 102, n. 96
81 The Irish Times, 9th May 1934
82 Ibid.
83 This was a considerable sum at a time when the starting salary for a male teacher was
£170. O'Connell, p. 202
84 The Irish Times, 14th February 1938
85 DF Papers, S25/5/30
86 See p. 90
87 DF Papers, S25/10/34
88 See p. 69
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
<sup>92</sup> See p. 88
<sup>93</sup> Letter from O Brolchain to secretary to the Council of Bishops, Dublin Diocesan
Archives, Byrne Papers
<sup>94</sup> See p. 88
95 DF Papers, S20/9/25
<sup>96</sup> See p. 81
<sup>97</sup> Annals of the Sisters of Mercy, Kerry Diocesan Archives. See p. 147
99 Memo on Staffing Arrangements for C. Chaoimhín, DF Papers S25/11/34
100 An Br. Oir. M.S. O. Flaitile, 'Colaiste Chaoimhín', An Reiltín, Fómhar 1956
101 Memo on Staffing Arrangements for C. Chaoimhin, DF Papers S25/11/34
102 Ibid.
103 Interview with Maire Ni Chonaill, student at C. Ide, 1930 - 32
104 Copy of Proposed Agreement between the Minister for Education and the Principal of
a Preparatory College, 1927, Dublin Diocesan Archives, Byrne Papers. Also DF Papers
S20/9/25
<sup>105</sup> Department of Education Papers, Central Registry Files, Box 360, 17262
<sup>106</sup> See p. 85
107 DF Papers S1730
108 O'Connell, p. 242
109 Department of Education Papers, Central Registry, 17638
110 Memo from O Brolcháin to Finance, 14/3/1930, NA S1730
<sup>111</sup> See p. 202
<sup>112</sup>Department of Education Papers, Central Registry, 17638
113 C. Bhride Papers, Ballyconnell House, Falcarragh, Co. Donegal
114 W.T.E. Condell was teaching at Kilkenny College for seven years, five of which he
was in charge of teaching Irish. He was interviewed by Department representatives who
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suggested that he go to the Western Gaeltacht for intensive study in July 1928. As he was not in an incremental post at Kilkenny College he would receive no summer pay so O

Brolchain made his appointment date from 1<sup>st</sup> July. Condell was to be the Mathematics teacher at C. Moibhí until his retirement in the early sixties.

115 Circular from J. O'Neill, secretary, Department of Education, 1927, (CICE Archives)

116 *Ibid*.

O Brolcháin to Public Accounts Committee DT Papers, S1370 See also registers of C. Bhride, C. Mhuire C. Moibhí and C. na Mumhan

<sup>118</sup> DT Papers, S1730

- 119 *Ibid*.
- 120 Ibid.
- <sup>121</sup> Letter from J.A. Kyle, Principal of C. Moibhí, 1928 1933, (Hodges Papers, CICE Archives)
- 122 *Ibid*.
- 123 DF Papers, S25/8/28
- 124 Ibid., S25/2/28
- 125 Ibid., S25/2/28
- 126 Memo from Finance to O Brolchain, DF Papers. S20/14/30
- 127 See p. 91
- <sup>128</sup> DF Papers, S25/6/32
- 129 *Ibid*.
- 130 Ibid.
- <sup>131</sup> See p. 60, n. 50. See also p.41
- <sup>132</sup> DF Papers, S20/45/27
- 133 See p. 68
- 134 DF Papers, S20/45/27
- <sup>135</sup> See p. 72
- 136 Address book in C. Ide
- <sup>137</sup> See p. 236
- 138 Register of C. na Mumhan
- <sup>139</sup> DF Papers, S18/9/30
- 140 Register of C. Moibhí
- 141 Registers of the colleges
- 142 See p. 60, n. 50
- <sup>143</sup> Dáil Reports, 28th October, 1932
- <sup>144</sup> DF Papers, S20/2/27
- 145 Ó Buachalla, p. 270
- 146 Report of the Department of Education, 1930 31, p. 9
- <sup>147</sup> DF Papers, S25/11/34. See also p. 51
- <sup>148</sup> See p. 261
- <sup>149</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1930 31, p. 6
- 150 Ibid., 1932 33, p. 10
- <sup>151</sup> Memo on Inspection of Preparatory Colleges, Department of Education Papers, Central Registry Files, Box 458, 20983
- 152 See p. 56, n. 12
- 153 Dáil Reports, 18th April 1928
- 154 See p. 280
- 155 Report of the Department of Education, 1932 33, p. 19

<sup>57</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1932 - 33, p. 19.

<sup>158</sup> See p. 246

159 DF Papers, S20/10/27

160 Ibid., S18/2/33

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., Report of the First Programme Conference 1922, p. 15

162 Dáil Reports, 21st May 1930

<sup>163</sup> See p. 18

<sup>164</sup> Department of Education Papers, Central Registry Files, Box 360, 17268

165 Report of the Department of Education, 1925 - 26 - 27, p. 22

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, 1930 - 31, p. 8

<sup>167</sup> See p. 60, n. 50

<sup>168</sup> Letter from Blythe to O'Sullivan, Minister for Education, (UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/302)

169 Ibid., P24/443

<sup>170</sup> 'Exceptional Entry' was a device by which Protestant students who had not reached the required standard in Irish were admitted to C. Moibhi

<sup>171</sup> See p. 69

<sup>172</sup> Memo from O Brolchain to secretary, Department of Finance, (UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P 24/302)

173 *Ibid.* 

174 UCD Archives, Blythe Papers, P24/302

1/3 Ibid.

176 Report of the Department of Education, 1933 - 34, p. 11

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* 

<sup>178</sup> DF Papers, S25/4/31

179 Report of the Department of Education, 1935 - 36, p. 148

<sup>180</sup> DF Papers, S25/4/31

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>182</sup> DF Papers, S25/1/31

183 *Ibid*.

<sup>184</sup> See p. 97

185 Report of the Department of Education, 1933 - 34, p. 11

<sup>186</sup> The Irish School Weekly, vol. XXXV, No. 29, p. 687, 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1933

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>156</sup> Memo on Inspection of Preparatory Colleges, Department of Education Papers, Central Registry Files, Box 458, 20983

### **CHAPTER 1V**

# A CASE STUDY OF A PREPARATORY COLLEGE COLÁISTE na MUMHAN/COLÁISTE ÍOSAGÁIN THE MUNSTER BOYS' COLLEGE 1928 - 1961

This chapter examines the life and work of a preparatory college. The choice of college for the study was influenced by the availability of resource material. The Munster boys' college was chosen because it was one of the few colleges where the full contents of the register were available. Other material used included information supplied by former students, and teachers, through questionnaires and interviews. A typical preparatory college was marked by certain characteristics. Firstly, it was likely to be situated in the Gaeltacht, in a remote part of the country. Secondly, each college was a 'mini-Gaeltacht,' where not only the work in the classroom, but all the extra-curricular activities were undertaken, through Irish, and all the domestic staff, including the groundsmen and farm labourers, spoke Irish. Thirdly, as all the pupils were student-teachers, teaching practice was a feature of the course. Fourthly, a Religious Order, chosen by the local bishop, had responsibility for running the college, though a number of lay teachers were employed. In addition certain features characterised the ethos of the colleges. They included an emphasis on nationalism, religion, and sport.

The intake of pupils too, was distinctive, as many of them came from the Gaeltacht. Furthermore to gain a place in the colleges, the students had to be of higher than average

intelligence, and this resulted in the colleges gaining a reputation for excellent results at public examinations. In addition all students had signed an agreement,<sup>2</sup> introduced in 1930, which gave the principal the right to dismiss any student who failed to perform satisfactorily, and the fear of such disgrace helped to motivate pupils to perform well. Nevertheless, almost every class had pupils whose performance was unsatisfactory, and who did not finish the four-year course.

C. na Mumhan, the Munster boys' college, which was run by the De La Salle Order, opened in October 1928. Like most of the preparatory colleges, it opened in temporary premises. These were in the Galltacht in Mallow, Co. Cork, and it was intended that the college would later move to a purpose-built college in Ballyvourney in the West Cork Gaeltacht. Unfortunately the construction took longer than planned, and it was not until 1940, that the new building was finally ready and C. na Mumhan moved to Ballyvourney, where it continued under its new name, C. Iosagain. Between the two colleges, a total of 691 students were enrolled: 243 in C. na Mumhan, and 448 in C. Iosagain.

One of the earliest decisions made by those who set up the preparatory system was that there should be two preparatory colleges in Munster: one for girls, and the other for boys. In keeping with the policy that the manager of each college should be the bishop of the diocese,<sup>3</sup> in which the college was situated, and that the colleges should be run by a Religious Order acceptable to him, the decision as to where to site the girls' college, was made without much difficulty. In May 1924, the Bishop of Kerry, Dr. O'Sullivan, approached the Mercy Order, in Tralee, with a proposal that the nuns would establish the

Munster girls' college in the Kerry Gaeltacht.<sup>4</sup> The decision about the location of the boys' college was not so easy. Originally, it was decided that the boys' college would be at Ring, in the Waterford Gaeltacht, where there was already a very successful all-Irish residential school.<sup>5</sup> Indeed as early as 1924, Ring was mentioned as the likely location, <sup>6</sup> and there are several references to its having been chosen in the foundation documents of the system. In March 1925, the secretary of the Department of Education included it in a list of possible locations, in a letter to his counterpart in Finance,<sup>7</sup> while later that month, it was named in the minutes of Aireacht Oideachais, the Ministry for Education.<sup>8</sup> It was also named in the revised estimates of the costs of the preparatory colleges.<sup>9</sup> A further indication that it had been definitely decided to locate the college at Ring was a letter written by O Brolchain, <sup>10</sup> to the Archbishop of Dublin, Dr. Byrne, <sup>11</sup> in June 1925, outlining 'for his information,' proposals relating to the establishment of the preparatory colleges:

It is the minister's intention that with the exemption of the college for boys in Co. Waterford and the House of Residence (Marlborough House) which it is proposed to set apart for Protestant girls the Houses should be conducted by members of Religious Communities but teaching staff should be persons with high qualifications, religious or lay. 12

In January 1926, when discussions about possible locations for different colleges were ongoing, it was again noted in a memo that Ring was 'to be a preparatory college and a school for children, and to be left in the hands of the present body.' The decision was also referred to in a history of Ring College:

Bhí lucht na Roinne Oideachais chun colaiste ullmhuchain a bhunu in 1927 i gColaiste na Rinne ach, faoi mar a tharlaíonn go minic i gcursaí mar seo, chuir duine tábhachtach le polaitíocht a ladhar sa scéal ionas gur i mBaile Bhóirne a bunaíodh ina dhiaidh sin é.

The Department of Education was going to establish a preparatory college in Ring College in 1927 but as often happens in such matters an important politician intervened and it was in Ballyvourney that it was subsequently established.<sup>14</sup>

The intervention by 'the important politician,' probably Blythe, <sup>15</sup> meant that there was considerable delay in starting the Munster boys' college, and C. na Mumhan was almost the last college to open. Five of the colleges opened in 1927. <sup>16</sup> The opening of the final college, C. Einne, was delayed when difficulties arose over its planned location at Salthill, and it opened, instead in temporary premises, at Furbough, on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1928. <sup>17</sup> The decision to locate the Munster boys' college in Ballyvourney, in the West Cork Gaeltacht, where a completely new building was to be built, meant that the college had to start in temporary premises, as the Department wanted to get the scheme into operation as quickly as possible.

The choice of Mallow was due to an initiative taken by the provincial of the De La Salle Order, Br. Joseph Hannigan, who offered the Order's premises at Mallow as a temporary preparatory college until the Ballyvourney college was built. To ensure a good supply of candidates for its training college at Waterford, the Order had opened a private preparatory college at Avondhu House, Mallow, in 1920. The house, which had been unoccupied for ten years, and an adjoining farm, were bought by the Order from Mr. Nigel Bering for £5,000. A small building, an east wing had been added to provide accommodation for students. Mallow had been the scene of much activity, during the War of Independence,

and the building of the extension to Avondhu House was delayed, in 1920, when a soldier was killed during an attack by Republicans on Mallow Military Barracks. Fearful of vicious reprisals the tradesmen and building workers disappeared. Their expectations were not unfulfilled and ten days later reprisals resulted in the burning of the town hall and several houses in the town. The opening of the college was opposed by the Bishop of Cloyne, as there was already an Order of Brothers in Mallow, but he eventually agreed, when he heard that it would not be accepting day pupils. The private college soon gained a reputation for its high standards, under its first head, Br. Gall Deasy. The standard of teaching was high, and of forty-nine students who sat the Easter Scholarship Examination, forty-five were successful. 22

The Government responded coolly to Hannigan's offer, informing him that the De La Salle Order would have to obtain the approval of the Bishop of Cloyne, before a new preparatory college could be located in his diocese. This was in keeping with the Government's policy discussed in chapter 1, part (ii), of ensuring that all educational innovations had the approval of the Hierarchy.<sup>23</sup> Two senior members of the Order, Br. Joseph and Br. Benedict, had an interview with Bishop Browne, who was very cool towards the idea.<sup>24</sup> The bishop's coolness was due to an incident in 1920, when De La Salle students had engaged in heckling at a public meeting in support of the Government party.<sup>25</sup> The students' behaviour created tensions with the parish priest, Fr. Corbett, and his curates, who complained to the bishop. The incident was not forgotten by the bishop, but Fr. Corbett helped overcome his opposition to the proposed preparatory college. It was claimed by some of Br. Joseph's critics that had he acted sooner, the Order would have been put in

charge of the preparatory college in Dublin, but they were unaware that Hannigan had made a private approach about the matter to the Archbishop of Dublin, <sup>26</sup> which had been refused by Dr. Byrne, on the grounds that the Christian Brothers had been so long working in the Diocese of Dublin, that he was bound to offer it to them first. <sup>27</sup>

The choice of the De La Salle Order to take charge of the Munster boys' college was appropriate, as it had a long-standing involvement in education, and the Brothers were trained teachers. The Order took its name from its founder, John Baptist de La Salle, who was born at Rheims in France in 1651. From an aristocratic family, his father was Chancellor of State to the King of France. De La Salle's early education took place at home, until he was nine, when he went to the College des Bons Enfants at Rheims, and later, the preparatory school attached to the University of Rheims. Subsequently he entered the Seminary of St. Sulpice, in Paris, and took courses at the Sorbonne. However, when he was twenty-one, he had to return home to look after his siblings, as both his parents had died. Later he returned to his studies. In 1678, he was ordained a priest, and became involved in the education of the poor. He opened his first schools in 1681, and six years later, he established a training college for lay teachers. 28 Before long he had many followers, and having disposed of all his possessions, he made poverty the foundation of his Order. De La Salle was keenly interested in educational matters, and wrote a book, The Conduct of Schools, in which he emphasised the need for good teachers. The work of the Order soon spread, and in 1680, it opened its first house in Ireland, at Castletown, Co.

Laois. Subsequently, the Order developed a number of primary and secondary schools, throughout the country, and opened a training college at Waterford.

In 1928, it was agreed that the Order would rent Avondhu House, on a temporary basis, to the Commissioners of Public Works.<sup>29</sup> Despite the temporary nature of the arrangement, however, the Department spent £85,000 on renovations.<sup>30</sup> However, notwithstanding the large amount of money spent, the college could accommodate only seventy students. This meant that there were some years, when a new class of students could not be taken into the college. Indeed the shortage of accommodation, and the fact that Mallow was not in the Gaeltacht, which had been an essential consideration in deciding the location of the other colleges, are indications that the Department believed that the temporary use of Avondhu House would be of short duration. It was, however, to last twelve years.

The establishment of the Munster boys' college showed clearly the weaknesses in the Government's approach to the preparatory system in its early years. The haste in getting the college established, the large amount of money spent on buildings, and the poor planning, together with the failure to realise that temporary short-term arrangements would last much longer than anticipated, were all factors in the Mallow story. Finance's willingness to sanction the spending of such a large amount of money can only have been due to Blythe's support. Moreover, the decision to build a magnificent new college at Ballyvourney was part of his strategy to raise the esteem of the Irish language amongst native speakers. Originally, it was intended that the Ballyvourney college would have

accommodation for a hundred students, but due to difficulties over suitable schools for pupil-teachers to attend, the Department decided, in 1930, that the preparatory colleges should be extended to accommodate them. This resulted in the building at Ballyvourney, being enlarged to provide for 125 students, and increased the costs to £100,000.<sup>34</sup> This was a large sum of money at a time when teachers salaries ranged from ninety to £350 per annum.<sup>35</sup>

In its hurry to get the system established, the Department gave little consideration to the welfare of the students, and many classes at Mallow included students from the Donegal Gaeltacht. Both the 1929, and 1933, classes contained eight students from Co. Donegal, while the 1937 class had sixteen. These unfortunates had to travel, from one end of the country to the other, to get to C. na Mumhan. Often they were from impoverished backgrounds. An example of this was a pupil, in the 1930 class, who was from Bunbeg:

Both parents are dead. He lives with a married sister on a holding of four acres of poor land. Their rent is about twelve shillings per year.<sup>37</sup>

Aware of the hardship involved, O Brolchain<sup>38</sup> persuaded Finance, in 1931, to provide grants for necessitous Gaeltacht students.<sup>39</sup> There were also some needy students from the Galltacht in the colleges, and subsequently the Department sent letters to all the college principals asking for details of such cases.<sup>40</sup> The responses showed that C. na Mumhan had fewer cases than the other colleges, at that time, though there was a request from a pupil's mother to the principal that her son should be kept at the college during vacations, as she could not afford the fares for him to come home.<sup>41</sup>

Before the college opened, the Department sanctioned the following staffing arrangements in July 1928: a principal, a vice-principal, two male teachers and a chaplain. In addition the Department sanctioned the appointment of certain residential domestic staff: a matron, a cook, two housemaids, two kitchen maids, and a doorman/messenger. These appointments were similar to staffing arrangements for the other colleges. However, difficulties arose in filling the domestic posts, as the salaries were not over-generous, and in keeping with the aspiration that each preparatory college be entirely Irish-speaking, domestic staff had to be native speakers. An additional complication at Mallow, was that the De La Salle Order requested that the existing staff be kept on. 42 Moreover, by August 1928, friction between Education and Finance over expenditure, which was a recurring theme throughout the history of the system, arose over C. na Mumhan. An example of this was a memo from Finance to O Brolchain, complaining about the high costs of running the colleges, and the difficulty in obtaining domestic staff. This was more problematic at the boys' colleges as the nuns staffing the girls' colleges were able to fill the posts from among their Order. Despite an increase in salary, the first matron of C. na Mumhan left in 1931, and an official noted plaintively: 'Can't get anyone else. Know of an ex-nurse in Sir Patrick Dun's, native speaker, wants £100. Job advertised at ninety pounds. Has to be re-advertised at £100. 43

The early teaching staff of C. na Mumhan, included Br. Basil McGeehin, (MacGaoithin), Br. Edmund Murphy and Br. Raphael Fitzsimons, who were selected by the provincial, and appointed by the Department, with the bishop's approval. Later Mr. Donal Kavanagh, an examiner with the Department, became the fourth teacher. In October 1929, as the college

expanded two new teachers, Br. Stanilaus and Mr. J.V. Nevin, 44 were appointed. Br. Basil, who is remembered as a 'splendid teacher,' taught Irish, from 1928 – 37, while Br. Edmund, who taught English, was described as 'imaginative.' 45 Br. Stanilaus, who taught Mathematics, and also took French classes on Sunday mornings, became vice-principal in 1933. Other early staff members included Br. Raphael, who had responsibility for Drawing and sporting activities until he left the college in 1930, Br. O'Connor, who taught Mathematics, and Domhnall O Ciobhain, a lay teacher, who taught History and Geography. He also taught Irish dancing, and coached the college football team. In addition Rural Science was taught by Seamus O Cnaimhin. This was described as 'a smattering of everything: Physics, Chemistry, Dynamics, Physiology, Botany, and Nature Study.' 46 He also taught Latin on Sunday mornings. Dr. Sean O Siochain, a Mallow doctor, was appointed medical officer, at a salary of fifty pounds per annum.

One of the notable features of the early years of the system was the generous way in which Ó Brolcháin<sup>47</sup> tried to meet the needs of staff and students, and his handling of the appointment of a chaplain to the college was an example of this. It was agreed that Fr. Kelleher, a priest who had been in Mallow since 1919, should be appointed chaplain at a salary of £150 per annum, and that he would reside in a small cottage, rented by the Order to the Department. This was the same salary, as chaplains to the other colleges received. However, as he had no parish duties, his chaplain's salary was his sole income. Described in a memo as 'a man of wide learning and scholarship, a former university professor of

Irish,' O Brolchain arranged to increase his salary to £250, by withdrawing his allowance for board and residence, which he arranged would be provided by the Order. 48

The first class of thirty-four pupils, entered C. na Mumhan on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1928, <sup>49</sup> and were joined, in 1929, by two pupils from Co. Wicklow, and Co. Tipperary, respectively. Three more pupils joined the 1928 class in 1930. They had obtained the Intermediate Certificate Examination with honours elsewhere. With the exception of the boy from Co. Wicklow, all the pupils in the 1928 class, came from counties in Munster, with Cork and Kerry, predominating. Unlike the first class, the second class which entered in 1929, came from all over the country, and included students from Co. Donegal. <sup>50</sup> Once the first two classes had entered, no further classes could enter until 1932, as the building could only accommodate seventy-five students. The majority of the students came from the south of Ireland, <sup>51</sup> with ninety-nine from Co. Kerry and forty-six from Co. Cork. The rest came, mostly, from the other Munster counties, with thirty from Co. Donegal. An unusual feature of C. na Mumhan, and it continued in C. Iosagaín, was that a large number of students were only at the college for three years. Many of them had completed the Intermediate Certificate Examination elsewhere, but the Department insisted that they repeated the examination, through Irish. <sup>52</sup>

Table 4.1 shows how restricted entry to C. na Mumhan was due to the size of the building at Mallow, where altogether a total of 243 students entered C. na Mumhan, including twenty-one boys, who entered some time after the other students in their class.

Table 4.1: No. of students at C. na Mumhan 1928 - 1940

| YEAR  | No. of students entered each year | Allowed to join class |  |
|-------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1928  | 34                                | 2+3                   |  |
| 1929  | 34                                | 3                     |  |
| 1930  | No entries                        | rdents sav_the catras |  |
| 1931  | No entries                        |                       |  |
| 1932  | 28                                | 8                     |  |
| 1933  | 37                                | 3                     |  |
| 1934  | No entries                        |                       |  |
| 1935  | No entries                        |                       |  |
| 1936  | 30                                |                       |  |
| 1937  | 34*                               |                       |  |
| 1938  | 25                                | 2                     |  |
| 1939  | No entries                        |                       |  |
| TOTAL | 222                               | 21                    |  |

<sup>\*</sup>three did a three-year course

Source: Register of C. na Mumhan

The generous way in which the Government financed the colleges, in the early days, is obvious from the fees paid by students at the college. Only one student out of sixty-eight students in the 1928 and the 1929 classes, <sup>53</sup> the son of a butcher and farm owner in a flourishing sea-side resort, paid full fees. Moreover, they were reduced in his third and fourth year. <sup>54</sup> Less than half of those in the first class paid fees, and of those who did, the majority paid less than twenty pounds. A large proportion of the 1929 class paid no fees, and most of the others paid less than twenty pounds. <sup>55</sup> Out of thirteen Gaeltacht students

only two paid fees: one was the son of a State pensioner, while the other was the son of a publican.

The students entered the preparatory system for different reasons. As secondary education was available at that time only to those who had the means to pay for it, or who were fortunate to live near a school, run by a Religious Order, where the fees were low, it was not surprising that some students saw the entrance examination as a means of obtaining secondary education. In addition in some areas, the tradition developed, where primary teachers directed the brightest pupils in the class to enter the examination. Moreover, in some Gaeltacht areas, it was not unusual for the whole class to enter the examination: 'It didn't matter whether you wanted to teach or not. All the class entered.' Former students have different recollections as to why they did the examination. According to one:

It was 1929 I was the eldest of eight. Get secondary education somehow – anyway. The "scrudu le h-aghaidh dul isteach i gColaiste Ullmhuchan" (the entrance examination) was misguidedly considered an exam for a "scholarship." <sup>57</sup>

Yet another claimed that he entered out of a desire to be a teacher, and had been directed that way by his teachers. <sup>58</sup> A third past pupil's recollection was that 'he was entered for the examination and was called for. <sup>59</sup> A few were from teaching families. A past pupil with this background claimed that he entered 'because of a long unbroken family tradition in national teaching, going back to 1870. <sup>60</sup> A more pragmatic answer was given

by a past pupil who had already done the Intermediate Certificate Examination at a Christian Brothers' School:

For me it was either a county council or university scholarship. Medicine? engineering? I was 5'8" (too short for the Garda Siochana) local government, civil service or teaching. Against the Christian Brothers' advice I took the preparatory college scholarship. 61

Nevertheless most students had happy memories of the college. According to a student, who entered in 1929, there was a happy atmosphere in the college:

In general there was a happy atmosphere. The number in the place was small, the building was small – terribly claustrophobic, but none of us noticed it, as none of us had been to boarding school before and could not compare the size of the rooms, dormitories etc. The predominant feature was one of work. The more honours one got in an exam was more important than the goals scored against a rival college in football or in hurling though indeed they were important too. A work ethic Gaelach! This work syndrome permeated our existence and our thinking. <sup>62</sup>

The emphasis on success in examinations was reflected in the results of the 1930 Intermediate Certificate Examinations, when for the first time, students took part in a public examination. <sup>63</sup> Of the thirty-three students, who entered, twenty-five passed with honours, and the eight others obtained a pass. Three students were not called back to the college, however, and five new students entered. As in the other preparatory colleges there was no corporal punishment, but in C. na Mumhan it was replaced by the terror of 'Cuirfear abhaile thu' (You will be sent home). <sup>64</sup>

That this was no idle threat is obvious from Table 4.2 which shows that a high proportion of students did not finish the course. Most of them were described as 'unsuitable' but

there were others who were expelled for poor examination results. A marked feature of all the colleges was the number of students who suffered ill-health and C. na Mumhan had two students who died during this period.

Table 4.2: No. of unsuccessful Students at C. na Mumhan 1928 - 1939

| YEAR   | No. in class                | No. who left     | Year          | Cause                         |
|--------|-----------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 1928   | 34 + 5*                     | 1                | 1929          | Unsuitable                    |
|        | the colleges suffi          | 1                | 1930          | Died                          |
|        |                             | 2                | 1930          | Poor results                  |
|        | e of the system that        | 1                | 1931          | Died                          |
| 1929   | 34 + 3*                     | 2                | 1931          | Unsuitable                    |
| 1930   | No Entries                  | horane of fimile | eg, as the De | ga tareat was lostn to at     |
| 1931   | No Entries                  |                  |               |                               |
| 1932   | 28 + 8*                     | 2                |               | Never entered                 |
|        |                             | 1                | 1934          | Unsuitable                    |
|        | the blace tacked            | 2                | 1935          | Unsuitable                    |
| 1933   | 37 + 3*                     | y com 1          | 1934          | Unsuitable                    |
|        | il credients Bras           | 1                | 1935          | Unsuitable                    |
|        | drawing Process of          | 3                | 1936          | Unsuitable                    |
| 1934   | No Entries                  |                  |               |                               |
| 1935   | No Entries                  |                  |               |                               |
| 1936   | 30                          | 1                |               | Never entered                 |
|        | ar ple of the Dep           | rement 1         |               | Failed medical                |
|        |                             | 1                | 1938          | Failed Intermediate           |
|        | m mo, on the grot           | 2                | 1938          | Left after                    |
|        |                             |                  |               | Intermediate                  |
|        | At the second of the second |                  |               | the deal trends man different |
| 1937   | 34                          | 2                | 1938          | Left after a year             |
|        |                             | 2                | 1939          | Failed Intermediate           |
| Mallow |                             |                  | 1941          | Failed leaving                |
|        |                             | 2                | 1941          | Not called to training        |
| 1938   | 25+2                        | 2                | 1940          | Cause unstated                |
| 1939   | No Entries                  | GCSS, BRUCK WAR  |               |                               |
| Total  | 243                         | 31               |               |                               |

<sup>\*</sup> Those who entered to do a three-year course

Source: Register of C. na Mumhan

As in all the colleges, the standard of teaching varied:

We all did honours Maths. At least eight students were not able for this trial. The teacher, who then was 'teaching' left them sitting and made no effort to help them beyond a point at which they were stuck. We were not taught nor were we crammed. Two teachers did teach and teach well. The others presented the work in lessons. We wrote, and wrote, filling copybooks which were to be our only source of information and reference. They were pioneering days — no texts available in Irish. It was hard on teachers and on pupils.

Moreover, all the colleges suffered from a lack of text-books, <sup>66</sup> and resource material in Irish, a feature of the system that was to continue throughout its existence. In addition C. na Mumhan soon suffered from a shortage of funding, as the Department was loath to spend money on a temporary arrangement:

The place lacked basic equipment. We were not allowed experiment in the lab (a partly converted laundry) for fear we'd use up all the ingredients. Drawing was drawing not Art. Loaves of bread on a drawing board or a watering can in a wheelbarrow were our Still Life.<sup>67</sup>

A further example of the Department's reluctance to spend money on the college was obvious in a memo, on the provision of musical instruments, in the early years. Officials, who were happy to supply the other colleges with pianos, violins, and other instruments for a school orchestra, did nothing about C. na Mumhan as it 'was temporarily situated in Mallow.' 68

In addition to the lack of text books, there was no library, though there was a book case which was rarely opened:

Reading material was scarce. Those of us who wanted to read bought books on our way back from holidays and these circulated all the way around for the term. Books in Irish, translations of English classics and of fifth rate stuff as well, trickled into the bookcase but were not read.<sup>69</sup>

In 1931, however, the Department became anxious about the poor state of reading material in the colleges<sup>70</sup> and C. na Mumhan received a supply of books written by Annie M. P. Smithson:

Our lack of fiction was provided for by the works of Annie M. P. Smithson – I lie not – which appeared in the autumn of 1931. They must have come under the Department's "gift" for the whole clatter of them arrived together and much later, obviously soon after publication came *Travellers Joy*, the last A.M.P. Smithson, I ever saw. 71

The Department's lack of experience, in running secondary schools, was often shown in the way the management of the preparatory colleges developed. Great care was taken of students' welfare, and they had to produce a medical certificate<sup>72</sup> on their first arrival at a preparatory college, and at the beginning of each term:

On first admission to college or on their return to college after vacation a student must have a certificate showing that he or she has not been exposed to any infectious disease during vacation and that he or she has not entered any house where such disease existed.<sup>73</sup>

However, occasionally, hospital care was necessary and paying for it could be problematic, as many of the students were from low socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore difficulties arose in the early years over the provision of medical treatment for pupils who became ill and had to be removed to hospital. In 1930, the Department drew up a list of hospitals, where students could obtain treatment:

Table 4.3: Hospitals where Preparatory Students could obtain treatment

| Preparatory College | Hospital                |  |  |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--|--|
| Mallow              | Cork South Infirmary    |  |  |
| Galway              | Central Hospital Galway |  |  |
| Falcarragh          | Letterkenny             |  |  |
| Ide                 | Tralee Bon Secours      |  |  |
| C. Moibhi           | The Adelaide            |  |  |
| C. Chaoimhin        | The Mater               |  |  |

Source: Department of Finance, S25/1/30

By 1930, five or six such cases had arisen in Mallow. <sup>74</sup> In the case of a student who had to be hospitalised for three weeks difficulties over payment led to the principal, Br. MacGaoithin, informing the Department that the hospital would not take future cases, unless it received an assurance that it would be paid. <sup>75</sup> Such incidents led to arguments between Finance and Education over who should be responsible for paying for hospital treatment. Education, as usual, took the generous view that the pupils should not have to pay, as the colleges were situated in such inaccessible places. Finance's response as always was to take the opposing view, that the students were well looked after, and going to one of the best paid professions, therefore the parents should pay. Otherwise, they suggested that they could use the county scheme for the poor. As a number of students became seriously ill, during their time at the college, this was a matter of some importance. <sup>76</sup> There were, however, some students from fairly wealthy families, who could afford to pay for private nursing. <sup>77</sup>

As a result of the complaints over expenditure from Finance, and its power to control spending, the Department became less generous in its dealings with the colleges. An example of this was clearly demonstrated in 1935, when the cook scalded her leg with a dish of boiling dripping. As she would not consent to having a doctor sent for because of

the cost involved, her condition deteriorated, and she eventually had to go to hospital. Meanwhile the principal had to obtain sanction from the Department, to employ a substitute cook. This incident highlighted a weakness of the preparatory system. The failure of the Department to provide discretionary funds for principals was problematic, as was the need, for principals, to obtain permission for any unforeseen expenditure. A similar incident occurred in 1936, when there was an influenza epidemic. Thirty students became ill, and the college had to employ a nurse to help the matron. A Department memo recorded:

Thirty students at Mallow sick with 'flu.' Had to get a nurse in to help the matron. Some got better but there were five or six new cases every day. There was also a boy with mumps and another with a skin problem.<sup>79</sup>

C. na Mumhan, like the other colleges, relied totally on the 'total immersion' principle of language learning, and in this way it more than fulfilled the aspirations of those, who devised the system. A student from the 1929 class recalled:

The aim was to create a Gaelic atmosphere, and when this was achieved in the views of our mentors, to continue to nourish it. Irish was spoken as the school language from the first day. All our letters from home had to be addressed in Irish. All subjects, except English, were taught through Irish. The few songs we learned were all in Irish. We became fluent Irish speakers and absorbed wholly, I should say, the atmosphere. 80

While another student recalled how easily he learned the language:

The atmosphere was very nationalistic indeed and intensely Irish speaking. For someone like me born in the Galltacht, I soon picked up Irish naturally as a second language. 81

Indeed according to another former student, it took only six weeks at the college to make a Galltacht pupil into a good Irish speaker. (In aon sé seachtaine amháin dhéanfadh an áit sin cainteoir maith Gaeilge den dalta ón nGalltacht)<sup>82</sup>

Despite the success of the system in its early years, however, Blythe's desire to see more Gaeltacht students in the colleges, and the measures introduced by him, to ensure they obtained places soon had an effect. Moreover, the results were reflected in the composition of the students in C. na Mumhan, where from 1933 on, the majority of students in each class, came from the Cork or Kerry Gaeltacht. 44

It was part of the Government's strategy, that the colleges would become showplaces for their Irish language policy, and leading advocates of the gaelicisation policy visited the colleges, from time to time, and gave lectures to the students. In the first year of C. na Mumhan, such visitors included the Minister for Education, John Marcus O'Sullivan, who expressed himself delighted with the progress of the students in February 1929. Later in April that year, the students had a lecture on 'Patriotism,' given by Prof. O'Donoughue, of UCC, hills while in June, 'An Fear Mor,' Seamus O hEocha, President of Ring College, during a visit, declared himself highly pleased at the students' proficiency in Irish. Moreover, he and another visitor, Michael O'Grady, awarded medals to the two students, who composed and delivered the best original recitation in Irish. Lectures given by prominent people, in 1930, included one by Br. Philip Healy, Director of Ely Place, on the Shannon Scheme. Later that year, there were lectures by two professors from UCC, and a primary inspector

lectured on Irish Folklore, and distributed medals to those students, who were collectors of folklore.<sup>88</sup>

When the preparatory system was established, in the late twenties, there was still an emphasis on student-teachers having teaching experience before they entered training college, and this resulted in the introduction of a limited form of teaching practice A student of C. na Mumhan recalled his experience:

For two weeks maybe three towards the end of fifth year we 'taught' one lesson once twice a week in the boys' National School in Mallow. We were not given *any* advice, instruction or direction except the 'subject' we were to teach. I remember having a picture of a large sow, a pink and black one lying on her side and her bonhams feeding or clambering over her. All I did was ask questions. 89

While according to another past pupil:

Nil aon fhoirmle ceimiceach ann a thairgeodh dea-mhuinteoirí duit. Trian de san oiliúnt agus dha thrian sa duchas. Ní dearnadh aon iarracht céard an oide a stampáil orainn, ach tugadh duinn an sórt oideachais a bheadh ina chúlradh maith ag an duine a bheadh sa Cholaiste Oiliúna ar ball. Nuair a thángamar amach cáilithe mar oidí ar deireadh thiar bhí se bliana caite an uair sin againn a raibh ar n-aigne dírithe ar an gceird

There is no formula for producing good teachers. One-third of it is training and two-thirds is natural endowment. No effort was made to stamp us as teachers but we were given the kind of education that would be a good foundation for those going on to training college. When we eventually qualified as teachers we had spent six years focussing on that profession. 90

A significant feature of the boys' colleges was the emphasis on sport. At C. na Mumhan the boys played Gaelic football and hurling to great effect, and often individual students were

selected to play for Munster. Another significant aspect of life in all the colleges, except C. Moibhí, was the emphasis on religious formation. At C. na Mumhan, students attended Mass every day. There were also classes in doctrine given by the chaplain. Other religious observances, included marching in the annual Corpus Christi processions, and the holding of an annual three-day retreat. However, much of the work at C. na Mumhan was restricted due to lack of accommodation, and the ever-anticipated move to Ballyvourney. As the completion of the new college dragged on, through the thirties, conditions in primary education changed considerably. Furthermore the failure of the Department to monitor recruitment effectively led to an over-supply of primary teachers, which despite the introduction of a number of measures, in the late thirties, to absorb the extra teachers eventually led to a cessation of recruitment. Indeed by the time the Ballyvourney college was completed, it was no longer necessary. Moreover, the future of the preparatory system was in doubt following the *Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Preparatory Colleges*, in 1938, 2 which highlighted major weaknesses in the system.

The difficult economic conditions of the period led to increasing demands from Finance that costs in education be reduced, and this period saw Finance and Education locked in battle over the system, with Finance calling for the closure of all the colleges. When it was unable to achieve this, it sought a reduction in the number of colleges, which Education was reluctantly forced to concede. The choice for closure, eventually lay between C. na Mumhan and C. Chaoimhin. In 1939, the latter was suddenly closed. This was, mainly, because it was run by the Christian Brothers, and the Government had become embroiled in a dispute with the De La Salle Order, which was in charge of C. na Mumhan. In addition

the Government did not wish to exacerbate strained relations with the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, which had given its support to the De La Salle Order.

The dispute arose over from an effort to cut back on the number of male students recruited to training. As the country's economic conditions deteriorated towards the end of the thirties, Education decided to close the De La Salle Training College, at Waterford, as there was sufficient accommodation for male students at St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. In the Department's view, only one training college for men was needed, and it wanted both lay and religious students to go there. Early in 1939, however, the Order was successful in gaining a reprieve of a year for the college, which had been in existence since 1891, but, subsequently, the Taoiseach, de Valera, changed the decision, as he felt that was the only way to get the Order 'to face up to the necessity and reality of the closure.

The Order refused to accept the decision, and appealed to the local bishop and the Hierarchy for support. In June 1939, the Hierarchy sent a deputation to meet de Valera, and the Minister for Education, Thomas Derrig. The bishops' representatives, Dr. Kinnane of Waterford, and Dr. Browne of Galway, pointed out that the Order had incurred a large expenditure, providing and equipping C. na Mumhan, and C. Iosagain, and that the debt of £35,000, was only half repaid. In response, the Taoiseach, and Derrig, listed the advantages of St. Patrick's. Firstly, it had grounds and a farm. Secondly, it was in Dublin, where there were a great number of practising schools. Thirdly, the city provided many opportunities, for students to 'imbibe culture,' through its numerous museums, and

art galleries. Furthermore it was near UCD, where the education part of the course took place. In a conciliatory gesture to accommodate the Church's concerns, they offered to arrange a special wing in St. Patrick's Training College for religious students.<sup>97</sup>

As relationships between the Department and the De La Salle Order became strained, and the Department did not wish to exacerbate matters, it felt it would be unwise to propose discontinuing the Order's preparatory college, and so it decided to close C. Chaoimhín instead, and on 13<sup>th</sup> June 1939, the Christian Brothers were informed of the sudden closure of that college, from 31<sup>st</sup> July that year. Meanwhile the De La Salle Order continued to seek support for its position and on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1939, five Orders of Brothers: Presentation, Marist, Franciscan, Patrician, and De La Salle requested the Department to reconsider the deferral decision, but this was refused by de Valera on 12<sup>th</sup> July.

As the matter dragged on a conference was held in the Department, on August 19<sup>th</sup>, where the question of compensation was discussed. De Valera favoured compensating the Order for foregoing the postponement for a year. In addition he believed that it should receive compensation for the loss of farm and garden produce, and the salaries incurred. It was decided to pay £4,000, in compensation to the Brothers, as well as compensation to the staff, and to allow the Order to dispose of the property, as it liked. The Order and the Hierarchy, however, continued to campaign against closure, but de Valera was adamant, and closure took place on 31<sup>st</sup> August 1939. Correspondence between the Department and the Hierarchy shows a struggle between the De La Salle Order and the Christian Brothers,

as to whose college should be closed. Moreover, a Department memo on 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1939, <sup>99</sup> noted that its proposal that all Brothers should attend St. Patrick's had been turned down, and pointed out that it could not differentiate between the different Orders. It also commented that, even if the Christian Brothers agreed to send their students to the Waterford College, there would not be sufficient accommodation, as both St. Patrick's Training College, and the Waterford college, had the maximum number of students.

During the negotiations, it was proposed that a new college for all Orders, except the Christian Brothers, be recognised, and given a state grant of forty-five pounds per student. It was envisaged that it would start, in 1939, with twenty Brothers in the first year, and have an approved maximum of thirty-five. This proposal, however, was turned down by the Government, and two De La Salle brothers had a tense meeting with de Valera, during which Br. Philip angrily complained that they were being treated unfairly. Later he wrote and apologised to de Valera. Despite this, the Department refused to reconsider its decision and, on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939, issued a statement that it 'had closed Waterford Training College with extreme reluctance in the interests of the economy.' 100

The matter did not end there, however, and in November 1939, the Bishop of Waterford, Dr. J. Kinnane, wrote to de Valera expressing the Hierarchy's concern over the issue. In addition he made three points. Firstly, the bishops should have been consulted as the college had been established at the request of the Irish bishops. Secondly, the Brothers would be unable to dispose of such a large institution, and thirdly, the Order would be

unable to finance the training of young brothers as the Order had used the building as security with the banks to obtain loans. He pointed to an inequity in the treatment of student teachers: the annual grant for both Protestant and Roman Catholic lay students was seventy-five pounds, whereas it was only forty-five pounds, for religious students. The bishops also claimed that this was inequitable discrimination against religious students, and a violation of Article 44.2.3 of the Constitution, which stated: 'The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief, or status.' Moreover, they described the Department's explanation that it could not differentiate between De La Salle Brothers, and the Christian Brothers, 'as an attempt to excuse one inequitable discrimination by appealing to another similar one.' Faced with such a determined stand by the Hierarchy, the Government climbed down and the disagreement ended on 25th November, 1939, with the De La Salle Order being allowed to keep its training college open for religious students of all Orders, except the Christian Brothers, who had their own college at Marino. 103

One aspect of life at that period which was highlighted during the negotiations was the De La Salle Order's insistence on the need to segregate young boys intended for the religious life from other students:

It is not necessary in this country to stress that the young religious in their formative years should not be placed in a college on the same footing, or even the same conditions as lay students, even Catholic students. 104

It was thinking of this kind that explains why the preparatory colleges were confined to student-teachers only.

The dispute between the Hierarchy and the Government formed part of the context in which the Department had to decide what to do with the almost completed college at Ballyvourney. The closure of C. Chaoimhin was announced in June 1939, and took effect from the following 31<sup>st</sup> July, but it was not until July 1940, a year after the sudden closure of C. Chaoimhin, that C. na Mumhan moved to Ballyvourney as the new college was not ready, though it had been twelve years in planning. In announcing the closure of C. Chaoimhin, the Department emphasised that 'the buildings of C. Einne, Galway, and C. na Mumhan, Ballyvourney, were 'more modern and better equipped,' than C. Chaoimhin, which was built in 1908. Other factors, to which the Department did not wish to call attention, were the large amount of money spent on Ballyvourney, and the remoteness of its location, which would make it difficult to use for other purposes.

Before the move to the new premises, however, the De La Salle Order decided to change the name of the college, and on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1939, the Department gave its approval. The new college would be known as C. Iosagain, the College of the Child Jesus:

The name, Iosagain was enshrined in Pearse's story and in the ideals and traditions of our own institute, which is charged with the Archconfraternity of the Divine Child. 106

On 3rd July 1940, the Religious Community of C. na Mumhan made its long-awaited move, to its new premises at Ballyvourney, which along with Coolea and Ballingeary in the West Cork Gaeltacht, had been made famous by the An t-Athair Peadar O Laoghaire, the Irish writer. The following day, the college diarist noted:

The Community of Ballyvourney opened with the sanction of Dr. Roche, Bishop of Cloyne. Br. Philip, our Visitor, came and presided at prayer for the opening of a new House. 108

# COLAISTE IOSAGAIN

Located on a beautiful thirty-nine acre site on a plain, near the river Bohill, surrounded by the Derrynasaggart Mountains, the college was not far from the winding Cork to Killarney road. The spacious premises contained six dormitories, with a cubicle for each student. Each cubicle had a wash-hand basin, with hot and cold water. In addition the college had its own electricity generator, and was centrally heated throughout. No expense was spared, and the floors were covered with thick linoleum, similar to that on the luxury liner, the Queen Mary, while the tables and oak forms, supplied by the Board of Works, in the dining-hall had come from Kings College. Outside there were three spacious football pitches, a wide lawn, tennis courts, and ball alleys, and near the front entrance, a little pond with fish and water plants. In July 1939, the Department had sanctioned the appointment of a gardener and an assistant, and directed by Br. Joseph, they had begun planting trees in the grounds. Plans for the grounds were for eight acres as lawns, seven as tillage for college use, four to be planted with trees for shelter belts, and the rest, to be used as playing fields. With such exceptional provisions, it was no wonder that a past student wrote:

Without a doubt Colaiste Iosagain was a flagship as an education centre. When the first class entered in 1939 (sic) there was an air of magic and mystery surrounding the area that affected every student. They came to love the place and it stayed in their memory forever. 112

Despite the idyllic environment, however, the college diarist noted some shortcomings:

All expenses were borne by the Board of Works or the Department. As costs exceeded the estimates some contracts were postponed or cancelled. Hence no gymnasium or swimming pool. No wireless sets, projection lantern nor school cinema so far. 113

Furthermore the Department's grant of £200 to pay for laying out the grounds, was insufficient, and projects for laying down walks, planting shelter belts, and creating an enclosed garden for the community, had to be put into abeyance until December 1941, when funds became available. Meanwhile the old premises, at Mallow, became a missionary scholasticate. On 29<sup>th</sup> January 1941, they were formally opened, with a director, and two brothers, in charge of thirteen students. Subsequently, they were joined by fourteen French scholastics from the Channel Islands, and four French brothers.

The staff of C. Iosagain included Br. Joseph Lewis, the director, Br. Raphael, the sub-director, Br. Peter, and Br. Anastasius, who according to the custom at preparatory colleges, were 'professors.' Two lay teachers: Domhnall O Ciobhain, and Eighneachan O Flannagain, transferred also along with the house staff. A new chaplain, Fr. James Croinin, curate of Ballyvourney, replaced Fr. Kelleher, who remained at Mallow. In addition domestic staff sanctioned by the Department, in 1939, included an engineman and his assistant, a gardener and an assistant, and a medical officer. 117

On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1940, the college opened with fifty-three pupils. All of them had passed the Intermediate Certificate Examination with honours in June 1940.<sup>118</sup> Twenty-eight of them had been in Mallow for two years, while the other twenty-five had completed their first year in C. Chaoimhín. Subsequently, they spent their second year in C. Éinne. The Mallow contingent included fifteen from the Donegal Gaeltacht, while those who had been

in the other two colleges, included approximately twenty from either the Cork, or Kerry Gaeltacht. A student, who was in the three colleges, compared his experiences in them:

C. Chaoimhín was just like an ordinary boarding school. We didn't do teaching practice. There was a lot of concentration on exams. In C. Éinne things were not so strict. We were allowed out by ourselves in summer. I learned to swim in Salthill. It was much stricter in C. Íosagaín. We met up with a group from the Donegal Gealtacht there. There was great rivalry between north and south over the dialects. It never entered our heads to speak English. 119

As there were so few students in the preparatory colleges in the early forties, efforts were made by the Department to use the buildings for other educational purposes, and proposals were drawn up for in-service courses for primary teachers. <sup>120</sup> In 1940, the Department raised the possibility of using C. Iosagain, for vocational educational courses, but these were strongly resisted by the staff for the following reasons:

Since the college was designed or adapted from the first to the exigencies of a boarding school, under the care of a religious community there would be endless constant sources of disagreement and disorganisation, if the staff and pupils of the Vocational Scheme were frequenting the school premises by day and especially by night, independent of the college authorities. Moreover, it would militate grievously against the privacy and calmness required for application to studies by teacher-candidates here, and against good discipline in all the precincts of the college, where irregular mixing with certain outside pupils would probably be very prejudicial to the welfare of some of our pupils. <sup>121</sup>

The reference, to 'irregular mixing with certain outside pupils,' was a euphemism for girls. In addition they stressed the 'danger of such pupils bringing in contagious diseases and epidemics which our pupils' parents would justly resent.' They also believed that the 'noise of tradework, or of dances, and amusements, associated with vocational reunions,

might interfere with the recollection, required by the College residents, for study, or sleep.' Furthermore they stressed the many sources of inconvenience due to double management, or the provision of school requisites, and the damage to new furniture, and equipment, by 'heedless, or unrestrained' vocational pupils. Finally, they pointed out that all the schoolrooms, laboratories, and halls, were 'in daily use, by the students, from morning till bedtime, according to a minutely arranged timetable, adapted to pupils in a preparatory college.' 122

The attitude shown in this memo reflected the thinking of secondary school teachers of the period to the vocational system, and their remarks about discipline in vocational schools, and the prejudice they showed have to be viewed in this context. Nevertheless, they were the views of a Religious Community, with a tradition for providing education for the poor. Also of interest is the lifestyle they considered necessary for pupils, at a preparatory college, with their references to the 'need for calm and quietness for study.' The reality was that the brothers did not want to share their wonderful new facilities, with any other institution, and a vocational school was built in the area shortly afterwards. 123 As they had endured twelve years, in sub-standard premises in Mallow, there was some excuse for their attitude, and the Department's failure to insist that greater use be made of the premises and facilities, which were paid for by taxpayers' money, was probably due to the earlier dispute with the Order over the closure of Waterford Training College. 124 The brothers' reference to the possibility of outside students bringing in contagious diseases was ironic, as five years later, in 1946, there was an outbreak of typhoid in C. 10sagain, in which a boy died. 125 The others survived due to inoculation. The short-

sightedness of the Brothers' response was demonstrated in 1942, when they were unable to obtain a qualified woodwork teacher, and the principal had to request the Department to sanction the gardener as a teacher of woodwork. Had they not been so dismissive of the vocational proposal, there might have been some possibility of the teacher in the vocational school taking classes in C. Iosagain.

As recruitment to the preparatory system was in abeyance during 1939 - 1941, numbers at the colleges continued to decline, and to fill the empty places, the Department began sending Gaeltacht scholarship holders to the college, instead of to 'A' schools. 127 In 1941, eight students entered in this way. Though normal recruitment was resumed in 1942, numbers at C. Iosagain were never very high, and even during the fifties, when there was a demand for teachers, the college was never full. Indeed the average number entering each year for a four-year course, was approximately twenty. The Department, however, continued its practice of allowing an average of three students to enter each year for a three-year course. 128 This had been a feature of life in C. na Mumhan, where students, who had already done the Intermediate Certificate Examination through English, repeated it through Irish at the end of their first year, and so spent only three years in the college. There is no explanation as to why this occurred. As students became fluent in the language within a short period at a preparatory college, it must have led to boredom for them in class. Moreover, it occurred despite the recommendation of the Report of the Committee of Inquiry into the Preparatory Colleges, in 1938, 129 which advocated the acceptance of ten per cent of students, who had completed the Intermediate Certificate Examination, for a two-year course. The only college where such students were accepted was C. Moibhi. 130

<u>Number of Students who did not finish the course</u> at C. <u>Iosagain 1940 – 1960</u>

| Year of Entry | No. in Class        | No. who left          | Year of Leaving      | Cause   |  |
|---------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| 1940          | No Entries          |                       |                      |   |  |
| 1941          | 8Gaeltacht scholars | 2                     |                      | Unstated  |  |
| 1942          | 24 + 3*             | 1                     | 1946                 | Not called to training                                  |  |
| 1943          | 23 + 1*             | 1                     | 1945                 | Left after<br>Intermediate                              |  |
| 1944          | 19 + 4*             | 1                     | 1947                 | Unstated  |  |
| 1945          | 32 + 1*             | 1 1                   | 1945<br>1946<br>1949 | Only stayed a term Died of fever Not called to training |  |
| 1946          | 17 + 1*             | 1                     | 1946<br>1949         | Going to be a priest Ill-health                         |  |
| 1947          | 17 + 2*             | 2                     | 1948<br>1949         | Unstated<br>Ill-health                                  |  |
| 1948          | 20 + 4*             | 1                     | 1948                 | Only stayed a week                                      |  |
| 1949          | 17 + 1*             |                       |                      |   |  |
| 1950          | 21 + 5*             | 1                     | 1951                 | Would not pay fees                                      |  |
| 1951          | 18 + 2*             | 1                     | 1953                 | Ill-health. Died<br>1955                                |  |
| 1952          | 21 + 2*             | 1                     | 1954                 | Left after<br>Intermediate                              |  |
| 1953          | 21 + 6*             |                       |                      |   |  |
| 1954          | 12 + 4*             | 1                     | 1955                 | Would not pay fees                                      |  |
| 1955          | 19 + 4*             | 2                     | 1957<br>1957         | Unsuitable<br>Mentally ill                              |  |
| 1956          | 22 + 2*             | 1<br>1<br>6           | 1958<br>1958<br>1960 | Went to America Expelled Went to UCG                    |  |
| 1957          | 22                  | 1                     | 1960                 | Ran away  |  |
| 1958          | 25 + 1*             | 2                     | 1959                 | Unstated  |  |
| 1959          | 24                  | 1<br>Secrete chern. V | 1959                 | Deliberately failed exam                                |  |
| 1960          | 23                  | Service Class di      | SERVICE MALE         | Section 1   |  |

TOTAL: 33

Source: Register of C. Iosagain

There were also students in C. Iosagain, as in C na Mumhan, <sup>131</sup> who failed to finish the four-year course. Table 4.4 shows that, between 1940 – 1960, a total of thirty-three students did not complete the course satisfactorily, and go on to enter a training college.

<sup>•</sup> First number is that of those who entered to do a four-year course. \*Those who entered to do a three-year course

Moreover, there were only three classes in that period: 1949, 1953 and 1960, where all the students went on to training college.

The small numbers contributed to a pleasant learning environment and pupils of the period were very happy in the college. A past pupil<sup>132</sup> recalled his impressions of C. Iosagain, which he entered in 1943 and the freedom which they enjoyed: .<sup>133</sup>

My first impressions were very favourable. The building was very new and well maintained. It took me only a few weeks to adjust to the Irish-speaking situation. I have mainly happy memories of my time in C. Iosagain. Corporal punishment was forbidden but the policy in regard to discipline lacked consistency. I particularly enjoyed the sporting activities. Students were given a good measure of freedom but this was abused on some occasions. Most subjects were well taught with the exception of English and Maths. Our diet was rather restricted – but that was mainly due to a shortage of tea, white bread, etc. during the Emergency. 134

While according to another student, there was no stress on their going on to be teachers, and teaching practice was not taken very seriously:

There was a Gaelic atmosphere in the college though there was no emphasis on militant nationalism. We were not all student-teachers. A proportion were Gaeltacht scholarship holders. There was little stress on our being student-teachers. We did teaching practice once or twice in front of fellow class members; never with school children <sup>135</sup>

During C. Iosagain's early years, the remoteness of its location added to difficulties in obtaining staff, particularly during the Emergency. Typical of this was the appointment of a music teacher in 1942. In the late thirties, the Department became concerned about the quality of music teaching in the preparatory colleges and a new programme was devised for them. <sup>136</sup> Principals, who had a qualified member of staff, were instructed to start the

official programme immediately, so that the full programme would be in operation, in each college, from the beginning of the school-year, 1941/42.<sup>137</sup> As no one in C. na Mumhan was qualified to teach music, the matter was not dealt with until after the opening of C. Iosagain. This led to the following cynical comments from Finance:

Strange with only fifty-three pupils in the Leaving Certificate grade in C. Iosagain, and the prospect of only twenty-three, next year, the Department should so late in the present session, propose the appointment of a music teacher. They managed to get along so far without one, that one is inclined to think that there should be no difficulty in holding out until such time as the current year is over, until the Intermediate Certificate boys in the college derive more benefit from it. There is also the high cost of the physical training teacher. <sup>138</sup>

Despite Finance's objections, however, a Cork secondary teacher was appointed, at Easter 1941, to give two one-hour classes, followed by an hour for choir, each week. For this he was to be paid eight shillings per hour and his bus fare. However, the bus fare amounted to twenty-seven shillings, which was more than he was paid for the classes. The situation was exacerbated during the Emergency, when the deterioration of the bus services resulted in the man having to spend two nights at the college in order to teach his classes. 140

Throughout the forties, the main body of students continued to come from Munster counties, with Cork and Kerry predominating. Despite C. Iosagain's remoteness, the Department sent a number of students from the Donegal Gaeltacht to the college in September 1945 as they could not be accommodated at C. Einne, which was due to move back to its premises, in Galway, after its temporary stay in St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. The same year, an increase in student numbers at C. Iosagain led to the appointment of an extra teacher, Thomas Shiels. The college diarist recorded, with some

dissatisfaction, that the Department would not appoint Br. Sylvester, though he was 'most suitable and qualified,' because he was not qualified in instrumental music. 143

For much of the period, life in C. Iosagain changed little, and students continued to do well at examinations, and on the sports field. The practice of sending Gaeltacht scholarship holders to the college continued and the high standard of teaching in the college was reflected in the appointment of a teacher to the primary inspectorate in 1948. He Distinctions achieved by students, in the late forties, included the winning of a silver medal for Irish Composition, at the Intermediate Certificate Examination, in 1947, and university scholarships to UCG, in 1945, and 1947.

A cause of much student resentment in all the preparatory colleges was the failure to teach Latin to examination level. The syllabus for preparatory colleges stated that 'Latin may be taught to those, who may benefit from it.' However, it was necessary for matriculation, and those who had not studied Latin were unable to proceed to university, but had to continue on to training college. This was a matter of regret for many former students:

There was a weakness in the preparatory system that ensured that many students could not go on to university though they were all taking honours courses. As Latin was not compulsory they were unable to matriculate and so they had no choice but to stick with teaching. 147

Years later, this was still a bitter memory for many past students:

I, maybe cynically, believed that the no-Latin education was to keep us out of universities. In those days, Latin was necessary for entrance into any university faculty, except Science in UCG. It was necessary for First Arts in every college. A degree meant extra money to a teacher; therefore keep them out of university. 148

The inability to go on to university was a recurring theme amongst former preparatory students, and was not confined to past pupils of C. Iosagain. 149

During the forties, the age of pupils entering the preparatory system decreased, and the average age of pupils entering C. Iosagain was fourteen years six months. There was also a decline in the number of students, who paid no fees. This was similar to what was happening in the other colleges, where as a result of Finance's complaints, fees were raised to fifty pounds in 1948. The number of students paying full fees also doubled in the forties. A study of the college register, however, reveals that there was little change in the areas which supplied students to the college. The vast majority of students in C. Iosagain continued to come from Counties Cork and Kerry and often, from the same places, in these counties. This was similar to enrolments in the Munster girls' college, C. Ide, where the majority of students came from Co. Kerry.

During the fifties, numbers at the college increased, but the size of classes remained quite small, with an average of twenty-one pupils doing the four-year course. Despite the demand for more trained teachers, the largest class was that of 1958, which had twenty-six pupils. In addition the custom of sending students from the Donegal Gaeltacht to the southern college, resumed in 1956 and continued until 1961, when C. Iosagain ceased to be a preparatory college. The increase in student numbers improved the college's chances of success at sporting events, and several awards were won at Gaelic football, including the Simcox, Munster, and Frewen Cups, in 1951. The previous year, two pupils were

selected to play for Munster in an inter-provincial match against Ulster. Handball matches against other schools were also a frequent occurrence. Academic standards continued high and, in 1952, a student won second place for Irish Composition in the Leaving Certificate Examination, <sup>155</sup> while the following year awards won by students included an exhibition to UCC, and second place in Kerry County Council Scholarships. <sup>156</sup> In 1955, a student won a Gaeltacht scholarship to UCG, where the following year six of the twenty-four students went to study. Two more scholarships were won by students in 1957. <sup>157</sup>

Highlights of life in C. Iosagain in the fifties were visits by a travelling company of actors, who played Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, and Ballyvourney mobile cinema, which gave several shows in the college in 1950.<sup>158</sup> The following year, students were taken to Kenmare to see *Hamlet*, performed by Anew McMaster and Company. This was in addition to the annual outing to Glengarriff.<sup>159</sup> Other outings, for those sitting State examinations included a picnic to Killarney, Aghadoe and Torc Waterfall, in June 1952. Later that year the Minister for Education, Sean Moylan,<sup>160</sup> visited the college.<sup>161</sup> Early in 1954, the first meeting of principals of preparatory colleges took place, when issues of common concern, were discussed sympathetically with the secretary of the Department.<sup>162</sup> Extra-curricular activities at the college included debating, and there were two concerts a year, where the emphasis was on drama and music.

A student of the early fifties recalled his time there:

My first impressions were of the college's modern appearance, the space for games and the cleanliness There was a great concentration on games especially Gaelic football. Hurling and

handball were encouraged. The library was not great but there was a branch of Cork County Library in the college. 163

He had this to say about efforts at teaching practice:

There was no stress whatever on our being student teachers. We were asked to teach one lesson (in Geography) to our classmates during the final year. The teacher commented on our teaching but we regarded the exercise as a bit of fun. 164

There were three characteristics of life in the preparatory colleges, which set them apart from other educational establishments. These were the emphasis on the Irish language, a devotion to the religious formation of the student, and a dedication to sport. These were notable features of life in C. Iosagain, during its last years. A love of the language was inculcated in the pupils without much difficulty and the annual presentation of fainm was an occasion for celebration. In 1955, they were presented by General Richard Mulcahy. The emphasis on the religious formation of the students permeated all the college's activities, and in addition to annual retreats, daily Mass, Religious Instruction classes, and other religious activities, the triennial visits by the local bishop were notable occasions. The pupils were all members of the Apostleship of Prayer, and Crusaders of the Blessed Sacrament, in addition to being enrolled in Papal work for the propagation of the Faith. Many students were also members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association. 167

Sporting successes of the period, included winning the Cork Cup for the first time in 1956, while outstanding boys were often chosen to play for the province. There was also a nine-hole golf course, where students and teachers often played together. A pupil of this period recalled the spirit of C. Iosagain in the fifties:

I enjoyed my time there very much indeed. The numbers were small, only eighty or so students in all. We were well fed and cared for and yet had much freedom. There was a wonderful spirit in the college and precious little friction of any kind. I've always said that there were three religions in the place. The first was Gaelic football, the second: Irish and the third the Roman Catholic religion. Perhaps because of the difficult entrance examination the intellectual quality of the student body was high. Nevertheless little effort was made to stretch the students and no great pressure was exerted on them to do well in exams. 169

About this time, students' pride in their college led to an effort at establishing a past pupils' union, and the wearing of a college blazer, with a distinctive crest, was introduced. However, from time to time, there were some students who failed to live up to the college's high traditions, and with the introduction of the interview system, three students were not called to training college, while, in 1958, two others<sup>170</sup> were not allowed to continue in the college.

Despite these setbacks, a former vice-principal who was at the college, from 1947 – 59, recalled his time at the college in fulsome terms:

I can honestly say that they were the happiest years I spent anywhere. Conditions were near perfect. We were caught up in the 'system.' We enjoyed it, benefited by it and it produced excellent results from an Irish and educational point of view. The great drawback was St Patrick's College Drumcondra, where everything was in English, and some of the Gaeltacht students were 'lost' so they told me.<sup>171</sup>

Such claims, however, did not prevent the college receiving official notification in June 1960, that along with the other Roman Catholic preparatory colleges, it would close in 1961. <sup>172</sup> In subsequent negotiations, between the De La Salle Order and the Department,

the Order's offer for the building was accepted, and Br. Aloysius O'Brien, 'having received word' that the college had become the property of the Order, by an agreement with the Minister for Education, decided to turn it into an 'A' school, an all-Irish day and boarding school, the only one of its kind in Munster.' As such, the college until 1991, when it finally closed.

The Munster college had many past pupils, who had outstanding careers in a variety of areas of Irish life. Amongst them were a number of past pupils who attended C. Iosagain on Gaeltacht scholarships, and so were not going on to train as primary teachers. One of the most distinguished, was the late Dr. Colm O hEocha, President of UCG and chairman of the New Ireland Forum. 174 But there was also a number of past pupils who became teachers, and subsequently left teaching for other careers. They included Micheal O Muircheartaigh, the Gaelic games commentator, Padraig O Mealoid, RTE, and the late Sean O Siochain, a former President of the GAA. Other distinguished past pupils included the singer, Sean O Se, the writer, Diarmaid O Suilleabhain, and the Right Revd. Augustine O'Sullivan OSB, a former Abbot of Glenstal Abbey. Past pupils, who distinguished themselves in unexpected fields were Sean Blake, who became a heart surgeon at one of Dublin's leading hospitals, Liam O Maoileoin, Galway County Engineer, and Micheal O Cearbhaill, a nuclear physicist in the United States. The great majority of students, however, became teachers and served in primary schools throughout the country. Of these, Tomás O hEoghanáin became President of the INTO. Others who taught for a while and, subsequently, entered the academic world included: Micheal O Loinsigh and N. O Ceallaigh, Mary Immaculate College, Limerick; M. O Cleirigh, St Patrick's College,

Drumcondra, and Professor Diarmaid Ó Muirithe, UCD. At least eighteen past pupils became inspectors; of whom, five are still working in the Department: Dr. Eoghan Ó Suilleabháin, Breandán Bric, Seán Ó Ciarba, Tadgh Ó Siochfhradha and Diarmaid Ó Seadaigh. Amongst those who played a leading role in bringing about change in education were Breandán Ó Croinín, and Séamas de Buitléar, 175 who were involved in the development and implementation of the Curriculum for Primary Schools in 1971. Other past pupils who became inspectors included Liam Isdell, Denis Bradfield, Peadar McCann, Micheál Ó Loinsigh, Fionnbarra Ó Tuama, Michael Ó Dalaigh, Nicolás Rís, Brian Mac Cumhaill, Tomás Ó Colla, Conchubhar Ó Seitheacháin, and Pádraig Ó Neill.

## CONCLUSION

Between 1928 and 1960, C. na Mumhan and C. Iosagain enrolled a total of 691 students. That so many of them, subsequently, had outstanding careers is noteworthy, particularly, as many of them did not come from privileged backgrounds. The majority of former students, however, spent their whole careers in primary teaching. As such their influence on the nation's children was incalculable. During their formative years at C. na Mumhan and C. Iosagain, they had gained a fluency in the Irish language, a respect for their Church, and a love of sport, as well as a sound education. These were characteristics, which any educational institution would be proud to claim for its past pupils, and which the founders of the preparatory system would have applauded. For an educational system to have primary teachers imbued with such personal attributes was of immense value. To have produced teachers able to inculcate these virtues in succeeding generations, was the contribution of the Munster boys' preparatory college to Irish education.

# FOOTNOTES TO CHAPTER IV

- 1 See p. 9
- <sup>2</sup> See p. 91
- <sup>3</sup> See p. 88
- <sup>4</sup> Annals of the Sisters of Mercy, Kerry Diocesan Archives. See also p. 176
- <sup>5</sup> There had been a secondary boarding school in Ring from 1909-1915. In 1919, a residential primary school, Scoil na Leanbh, was founded. It is still in existence today.
- <sup>6</sup> DF Papers S20/9/25
- 7 Ibid.
- <sup>8</sup> Mlinutes of Aireacht Oideachais 31/3/25 Ibid., S20/9/25
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., S1730
- 10 See p. 68
- 11 See p. 93
- <sup>12</sup> Dublin Diocesan Archives, Byrne Papers,
- 13 DF Papers S20/9/27
- 14 Micheal Ó Dómhnaill, Iolscoil na Mumhan Colaiste na Rinne gearr-stair, (Cork: Cló na Laoi Teo, 1987) p. 79
- 15 Siee p. 60, n. 50
- <sup>16</sup> C. Chaoimhín and C. Íde opened on 1<sup>st</sup> March, followed by C. Moibhí on 25th April, C. Bhrride on 23rd May and C. Muire in 24<sup>th</sup> October. See p. 179
- <sup>17</sup> See p. 181
- <sup>18</sup> John Towey, Irish De La Salle Brothers in Christian Education, (Tallaght: Folens, 1981)
- De La Salle Records of all the Communities in Ireland, De La Salle Archives, The De La Sallle Provincialate, Howth Road, Dublin
- <sup>20</sup> History of the House, The De La Salle College, Mallow, p. 4
- <sup>21</sup> Towey, p. 429
- 22 Ilbid.
- <sup>23</sup> See p. 69
- <sup>24</sup> De La Salle Records of all the Communities in Ireland, p. 15
- 25 Ilbid.
- <sup>26</sup> See p. 93
- <sup>27</sup> De La Salle Records of all the Communities in Ireland, p. 15
- <sup>28</sup> The Order spread and is now at work in many countries throughout the world. In Dublin alome it runs three primary, and four secondary schools.
- <sup>29</sup> DF Papers, S25/8/28
- 30 Ilbid., S22/2/29
- <sup>31</sup> Siee p. 178
- 32 See p. 60, n. 50
- <sup>33</sup> See p. 41
- <sup>34</sup> DF Papers, S20/14/30.
- O'Connell, p. 367
   Register of C. na Mumhan
- <sup>37</sup> DF Papers, S25/1/31
- <sup>38</sup> See p. 68
- <sup>39</sup> See p. 215

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<sup>40</sup> DF Papers, S25/1/31
 41 Ibid.
 42 Ibid., S25/5/28
43 Ibid.
44 History of the House, De La Salle College, Mallow, p. 11
<sup>45</sup> Recollections of Micheal O Dalaigh, student at C. na Mumhan, 1929 – 33
46 Ibid.
<sup>47</sup> See pp. 202 - 203
<sup>48</sup> DF Papers, S25/5/28
<sup>49</sup> Register of C. na Mumhan
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ó Dálaigh
53 Register of C. na Mumhan
54 Ó Dalaigh
55 Register of C. na Mumhan
<sup>56</sup> Michael Baker, student at C. Iosagain, 1940 - 42
57 Ibid.
58 Diarmaid Ó Seadaigh, student at C. Íosagain, 1949 - 53
59 Séamas de Buitlear, Ibid., 1943 - 46
60 Breandan Ó Croinin, Ibid., 1943 - 46
61 Brian MacCumhaill, student at C. na Mumhan, 1933 - 37
62 Ó Dálaigh
63 History of the House, p. 13
64 O Dalaigh
65 Ibid.
66 See p. 205
67 O Dalaigh
<sup>68</sup> DF Papers, S25/8/28 See also p. 203
69 O Dalaigh

    See pp. 205 - 206
    Dalaigh. Also DF Papers S20/20/34

<sup>72</sup> A copy of the Health Certificate is included in the appendices
73 Report of the Department of Education, 1934 - 35, p.11
74 DF Papers, S25/1/30
75 Ibid.
<sup>76</sup> Two of the students in the first class died, one from TB in 1930 and the other from a
burst appendix in 1931.
<sup>77</sup> DF Papers S25/1/30
78 Ibid., S25/20/34
79 Ibid.
80 Ó Dálaigh
81 Mac Cumhaill,
82 Donncha Ó Ceileachar, 'Na Colaistí Ullmhúchain,' Comhar, Aibrean 1960, p. 3
83 See p. 215
84 Register of the college
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85 History of the House, p. 11
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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ó Dálaigh

<sup>90</sup> O Ceileachar

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>91</sup> See p. 350 <sup>92</sup> See p. 305

<sup>93</sup> See p. 61, n. 88

<sup>94</sup> Department of the Taoiseach Papers, S11339

<sup>95</sup> See p. 277 - 279

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> The Most Revd. Dr. Michael Browne, (1896 – 1980). Bishop of Galway. He was born in Westport, Co. Mayo, and educated at St. Jarlath's College, Tuam, and St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, where, subsequently, from 1921 –37 he was Professor of Theology. Known as a Fianna Fail sympathiser, he supported de Valera during the crucial mid-twenties when Fianna Fail was coming into being. Despite his turbulent temperament, he became Bishop of Galway in 1937, and was appointed chairman of the Commission on Vocational Organisation, set up by de Valera in January 1939. In the late sixties, and early seventies, Browne was one of two representatives of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy at the World Synod of Bishops. His time as Bishop of Galway was marked by the building of many schools and churches in the diocese; the most remarkable of these being Galway Cathedral, which opened in 1966. His outspoken comments on public issues involved him in frequent controversy, which he seemed to relish.

<sup>97</sup> Department of the Taoiseach Papers, S11339

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>101</sup> The Constitution of Ireland, (Dublin: Government Publications Office, 1937)

<sup>102</sup> Department of the Taoiseach Papers, S11339

Towey, p. 465, Also Report of the Department of Education, 1942 - 43, p. 108

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>104</sup> Towey, p. 462

<sup>105</sup> The Christian Brothers' Educational Record, 1940, p. 300

<sup>106</sup> History of the House, p. 10

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>107</sup> An t-Athair Peadar O Laoghaire, (1839 – 1920). Writer and Gaelic scholar. From Macroom, Co. Cork, he was educated at Maynooth College and ordained in 1867. He served in a number of parishes in the county. With the foundation of the Gaelic League in 1893, he saw the need for reading material in Irish, particularly for young people. He is remembered as being the first Irish writer to use 'the speech of the people' in his writings, which included the folktale, *Seadna*, and his autobiography, *Mo Scéal Féin*. For many years both works were on the post-primary school curriculum.

<sup>108</sup> History of the House, p. 10

<sup>109</sup> Berni O Luing, 'Colaiste Iosagain An Ré Orga,' Feile na nGael, 1991

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> *Ibid.* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> DF Papers, S25/20/34

<sup>112</sup> Ó Luing

<sup>113</sup> History of the House, p. 7

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114 Ibid., p. 10
115 Towey, p. 460
116 In the seventies Avondhu House was destroyed by fire and all that remains today is a
heap of rubble
117 DF Papers, S/20/34
118 History of the House, p. 10
<sup>120</sup> See pp. 355 - 356
121 History of the House, pp. 8 - 9
122 Ibid.
123 A vocational school was built in 1941
124 See pp. 248 - 250
125 History of the House, p. 10
126 DF Papers, S25/20/34
127 Ibid.
128 See p. 236
<sup>129</sup> See p. 305 - 320
130 From 1943 such students were accepted into C. Moibhi
<sup>131</sup> See p. 240
132 O Croinin
133 Similar recollections were expressed by O Luing,
134 Ó Croinín
135 de Buitlear
136 DF Papers S25/3/38
137 Ibid.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid., S20/2/27
140 Ibid.
141 Ibid.
142 C. Éinne's premises in Galway had been taken over temporarily by the Army for a
hospital during the Emergency. See pp. 367 - 378
143 History of the House, p. 23
144 Ibid., p. 13
145 Ibid., p. 25
<sup>146</sup> Report of the Department of Education, 1931 – 32, p. 9
147 Q Luing
148 Ó Dálaigh
<sup>149</sup> Two past pupils from C. Éinne also made the same complaint, Liam Ó Mainin and
Donal Desmond.
150 Register of C. Íosagáin
151 Ibid.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
154 History of the House, p. 30
155 Ibid., p. 33
156 Ibid.
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157 Ibid., p. 44

159 *Ibid*.

160 See p. 476, n. 4

161 History of the House, p. 34

162 Ibid,, p. 35

163 Ó Seadaigh,

164 History of the House, p. 44

<sup>165</sup> A fainne is a small silver or gold ring worn in the coat lapel to denote proficiency in the Irish language

166 History of the House, p. 36

- 167 Ibiid., p. 11
- 168 Ibid., p. 40

169 O Seadaigh

170 History of the House, p. 44

<sup>171</sup> Br. Bernardine Doyle, vice-principal of C. Iosagain, 1947 - 59

<sup>172</sup> See p. 511

<sup>173</sup> Towey, p. 544

<sup>174</sup> The New Ireland Forum was established by the Government in 1983 to examine the Northern Ireland conflict and to make recommendations on ways in which it might be peacefully resolved.

<sup>175</sup> Seamas de Buitlear was a member of The Primary Education Review Body, which reported in 1990.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p. 30