

Symposium on the Report of the Commission on Emigration and other Population Problems

(Read before the Society on January, 27th 1956)

1 *Contribution by Professor C F Carter*

I greatly appreciate the honour of being allowed to contribute to this symposium. It would not be appropriate for me, as an Englishman, to comment on the varied views of the Commission on matters of Government policy, but I cannot let the occasion pass without an expression of admiration for the Commission's careful exposition of the facts, and in particular for the wealth of information contained in the fifty pages of the Statistical Appendix. The Society has reason to be proud of the fact that, small and poor as this country is, it has one of the finest statistical services in the world.

My comments are limited to two points, one demographic and one economic. The first arises from the observation that the Commission seems to have been in several minds as to what is wrong with the population of Ireland. In matters demographic Ireland is obviously out of step with the rest of the world, and it is difficult to avoid the sense of guilt which comes from being out of step with one's fellows. Yet if one looks ahead towards the end of the century, the future is overshadowed by the disastrous rate of multiplication of mankind. The human race is increasing by one every second of every day; its present rate of increase is enough to double the world's population in half a century, and that rate has itself been accelerating for many years past. Malthus may have been a little premature, but in the long run there is no escaping his arithmetic, we are on a curve which tends to infinity, and there is no prospect that the development of the world's resources can for much longer keep step with the ever-quickenening growth of population. If mankind continues to believe that "the ideal family is the large family" its number will be sharply abridged by famine.

Ireland is not therefore a straggler, out of step with a disciplined formation, so much as she is a little pig wondering whether to join her fellow swine of Gadara running violently down a steep place to destruction. In the twenty-first century the possession of a population which can be adequately fed from local produce may be the greatest of national assets, and the ability to export an agricultural surplus one of the greatest contributions a nation can make to the world. Furthermore, whatever the social evils of emigration, without it the Irish people would have felt the pressure of their natural increase in diminishing their standard of living. There are many countries which would give much to possess the ready-made chances of emigration which lie before the Irish man and woman. It may be fairly said, too, that

¹ Dr. Lucey's Minority Report, para 464, p 357

the very word "emigration" carries too many memories of a forced and permanent dispersal by long and dangerous voyages to distant lands. Nowadays the emigrant ship is frequently the *Hibernia* or the *Cambria*, pursuing their speedy and comfortable way to Holyhead and the emigrant, in Coventry or London, is near enough to come home for weekends if he wants to, and to be attracted back to work in Ireland if the prospects are good enough.

I would therefore suggest—

- (a) that there is nothing inherently wrong in having a small population
- (b) that there is nothing inherently wrong in having a stable population
- (c) that the fact that emigration is *possible* should be a matter for rejoicing. It may not always be possible. Britain and the United States, for instance, may both have their own future problems of excess population.
- (d) that the belief that emigration is *necessary* needs qualification. Emigration is necessary to secure for those remaining at home a stable or rising standard of living. Other countries have to face greater rates of natural increase without the possibility of emigration.
- (e) that there is no cause for alarm about the fertility of Irish marriages, or about the trends of mortality of Irish people.

What, therefore, is wrong? I would suggest that the really unhealthy demographic features are the late age of marriage and the high proportion of unmarried people, although these of course play their part in keeping the natural increase within bounds. Here I find myself at one with the Commission and with Dr. Lucey's more explicit statement (pp. 356-7) late marriages are in a very real sense unnatural, and there is tragedy in the cutting off of young people, in their years of greatest capacity for change, work and enjoyment, from the grace and joy of matrimony. I wish I could feel that the Commission had got to the bottom of the sociological problem of Irish marriage. The other thing that is wrong is that the natural resources of Ireland are under-developed—in particular, that her land produces too little. But this is not the consequence of a low population—Ireland is not under-developed for lack of hands and as the country becomes more productive, the product may well be taken to give a higher standard of living for the present population, rather than to support increased numbers.

My other point relates to what I would call the Law of the Decay of Extremities. I think that, in modern economies, three factors combine to produce a concentration of economic advantage at the existing main centres of population, which thus tend to grow still faster, while remote areas decay. The first of these is the development of transport, which lays open the local industries of remote areas to the competition of large-scale producers, while remaining expensive enough to inhibit large-scale production except near big centres of population. There is a striking example in the fact that throughout wide rural areas of the Six Counties the bread is mostly baked in the

mechanised bakeries of Belfast and the employment which was once diffused in many small bakeries is now concentrated in one city. The second factor is the standardisation of wages, and I would here endorse what Dr Geary and Dr McCarthy say (p 226) about the influence of British wage rates. If an employer cannot expect to offset higher transport costs by lower wages, naturally he will try to minimise his transport costs, and, whether he is producing for the home market or for export, this will often pull him to Dublin. It will be observed that the present attraction of the Six Counties to British firms is based upon the fact that, although wages rates are much the same, earnings are (because of full employment) much higher in Great Britain. I fear that this is an ephemeral advantage.

The third factor is the maintenance by manufacturers of standard retail prices which are the same over a large area, perhaps the whole country. This has during this century become very common, especially for branded consumer goods. It means that the manufacturer is prepared to absorb his transport costs to remote areas for the sake of a marginal addition to sales, and for the sake also of the advertising value of a standard price. This is an advantage to those who live in remote areas, but it means that those who *produce* in remote areas are deprived of the natural protection of remoteness, while still having themselves to meet most of its consequent extra costs. If you want to start a newspaper in Londonderry, for instance, you must face the fact that the *Daily Express* costs 1½d there just as it does in London or Glasgow. If you want to produce cornflakes in Enniskillen, you are wide open to the competition of Kelloggs, selling at the same price all the way from Ramsgate to Roslea.

I have taken these examples from the Six Counties, which are subject to these forces, sucking industry towards London and Birmingham, without having any recourse to the local protection of a tariff. But within the Republic the same forces are at work, building up Dublin at the expense of the rest of the country, and they are unlikely to be reversed by sending a few civil servants to Galway. I would suggest, too, that despite the tariff the same forces hamper many industries in the Republic in relation to its more populous and wealthy neighbour. Neither the improvements in transport, nor the standardisation of wages and prices, are likely to be reversed, and so extremities will continue to decay unless Governments are willing to deal with the problem by forthright action.

2 *Contribution by Professor G. Duncan*

The Reports of the Commission on Emigration and other Population Problems constitute a document of considerable magnitude, full of information and question-suggesting propositions. They have been available for study for only a comparatively short period, and the time allotted to each speaker in a Symposium must necessarily be limited. Consequently, faced with the embarrassing wealth of material, a speaker must make a somewhat arbitrary selection of topics for comment.

It is quite true, as Mr Meenan points out in his Minority Report, that the word "emigration" does not occur in the Commission's Terms of Reference. Yet the vulgarisation, which the Commission itself has tacitly accepted in the published title of its Reports, followed

a sound enough instinct. Migration is the obvious and illustrative resultant of all the forces that govern a population's reproductive habits on the one hand and its means of subsistence on the other, the magnitude and direction of that migration are the immediately observable phenomena which suggest a "problem" (in the scientific, not the social or political, sense). Normally, the magnitude of the movement of men (like that of the movement of goods) across the frontier of any arbitrarily selected area will vary inversely with the size of the area. Migration and "external" trade are likely to bulk more largely in the ecology of Co. Cork or the Morbihan than in that of the Irish Republic or Brittany, more largely in these than in a study of the British Isles or France, and more largely here than in a pan-European context. The recorded magnitude of migratory movements may, therefore, only reflect our original selection of the unit of reference.

In many small areas (such as the Republic, or the South-West of England, or Brittany) the *net* movement is outwards, in many others (such as the English Midlands or the Ruhr) the *net* movement is inwards. It is a tempting assumption that the quality of the *net* movement is directly related to the balance between the area's population habits and its means of subsistence, or "resources". As a final approximation, or pointer towards lines of investigation, the conclusion can usefully stand, provided that it be remembered

- (a) That the two elements being balanced are not independent of one another — on the one hand, the population pattern and the consumption pattern of the area are the expression of its inhabitants' mentality, on the other, that very mentality in a different aspect constitutes the area's chief "natural resource," not so much in terms of straight human labour as in terms of skill, energy and initiative. Often enough, instead of simple lines of causation, we have a hen-egg problem.
- (b) That movements of men and movements of goods are essentially alternative methods of solving the same "problem," namely, the raising of the levels or consumption of the inhabitants of a restricted area. The smaller the area the narrower will be the range of physical resources at the disposal of its inhabitants, and the more severely does the growing export of its specialised products become the inevitable condition precedent to the expansion in quantity and quality of their potential consumption and accumulation. Import of goods, purchased by the export of goods, is the alternative to the export of men.

Since circumstances obliged me to resign from the Commission after less than a year's experience of its task, it becomes for me something much more serious than a polite formality to express with the utmost warmth the admiration due to the Commission's devoted labours over six years, and to its success in reducing a complex and intractable topic to a manageable and intelligible form, and to the peculiar values of the Notes, Reservations, Addenda and Minority Reports. If I qualify that success as "comparative," I do so without

any derogatory intent, but solely to mark recognition of the fact that certain aspects of the Commission's reference were really beyond the reach of any investigation, however thorough, and of any recommendation, however well-weighed. Hence necessarily arises the *lacuna* most easily spotted by superficial critics, namely the absence of any "simple, bold plan."

As I see it, the Commission had four sides to its work

- (a) the authoritative assembly of the relevant factual data,
- (b) the interpretation of these *data* or some acceptable causal scheme,
- (c) the recommendation to our rulers and governors of *particular* policies in respect of any major determinants found above,
- (d) the formulation of a *general* policy, suggestible to our rulers and governors, in respect of the Republic's population.

Now, no sensible person could have expected either the Commission as a whole or any of its members to turn up some previously unsuspected trump cards wherewith to put paid to argument, opinion, sentiment and nonsense on the second, third and fourth of these tasks, because they all turn on *acceptable* objectives and *acceptable* causal relationships. If the Commission should appear to avoid sweeping, positive recommendations, that is only sensible in the nature of the case.

No hesitation can be felt in bestowing the highest praise on the factual apparatus of Chapters I to VII of the Majority Report. In conjunction with the corresponding chapters in the Report of the Banking Commission, it constitutes a foundation document for the study of the ecology of the Republic. I pick out only three points for observation.

Among the Census years, 1911 can be taken as a Great Divide, both in the wider context of world history and in the context of the Republic's experiences. The Censuses from 1841 to 1911 record first the catastrophic collapse of the unstable expansion of the preceding century, and then asymptotic approximation to a new equilibrium consistent with the 19th century conditions. The Censuses from 1911 to 1951 cover forty years of war—international and internecine, military and economic hot and cold. The critical character of the Census of 1911 shows itself in the local distribution of population changes in the Republic. If we array the Twenty-six counties in two columns, one in order of their loss of population 1841–1911 and the other in order of their denudation 1911–1951, then only two counties occupy the same position in each column (Dublin at one end and Longford about the middle). By every other comparison, the discrepancy between the two columns is equally striking.

The second point to which I wish to draw attention here is the apparent dysgenic effect of land-division. As the Tables 28 and 29 show, it can hardly be maintained that the settled policy of land-division and re-settlement has been a success in any absolute sense, since the number of holdings under 30 acres is still falling considerably, but it has no doubt been relatively successful in keeping that number higher than it would otherwise have been. The demographic concomitant is shown in Tables 21 and 22, namely that occupation-density,

particularly of farmers and their families, has been falling more rapidly on the smaller than on the larger holdings. Is this a causal relationship or a statistical accident? If the former, have we here a combination of

- (a) A process begun by Deasy's Act, 1860 (fewer and later marriages and the hiving-off of children as a concomitant of peasant-proprietorship), and
- (b) Another process begun in the 1930's (distortion by public policy of price-relationships in favour of the larger holdings, as suggested by Mr Meenan)?

This is one of the cases (industrial protection, high and rising levels of government expenditure and the Gaelic language are three others) where the legitimate criticism can be made that the Commission as a whole was over-timid about seizing by the horns certain sacred cows of "public policy" and shaking them hard to see what is in them, and in particular whether they are not inconsistent with the presumed over-riding objective of promoting the increase of population in the Republic.

Incidentally, it is difficult to agree with the Commission's judgment (para 193) that more than one-half of the agricultural land of the Republic is in medium or large holdings, on the ground that 58 per cent of the area is comprised in holdings of 50 *acres* and upwards, and 12 per cent in holdings of 200 *acres* and upwards. It is a pity that the Commission could not have a distribution by *valuation* to work on, which would have shown many of the "large" holdings in a truer light. Anyway, even 200 acres of good land can hardly be called a really large holding.

Thirdly, in this connection I should like to emphasise the statistician's sober warning that, even in the most favourable circumstances imaginable (i.e. supposing that there were no economic hindrances to an increasing population, and that the non-economic attractions of emigration were to lose their force), the growth of numbers that could be expected from natural increase would be only modest dimensions for a long period ahead. One must suppose that those who believe in and advocate the much greater increase in population commonly talked about pin their faith to either a revolutionary change in breeding habits or an equally revolutionary reversal of the flow of emigration. These need only to be mentioned for their improbability to be evident: indeed, any faint possibility of their occurrence is cast so far into the future that all the circumstances and conditions on which present calculations must be framed will by then have become irrelevant.

Looking now more generally at the Commission's analysis and recommendations, one cannot do other than commend its emphasis on "resources," "development" and "investment," though it appears that, as usual, the search for the highest common factor of agreement has endowed the Majority Report with a certain superficial naïveté. It could be argued, for example that inducements to emigrate other than those associated with some hypothetical "standard

of living" have been too lightly glossed over. It is probably time that, so long as emigration to the wider world (and particularly to the exceptionally wide world open to us) remains relatively free as at present, *no* equalisation of *ordinary* opportunities would check the emigration of the more adventurous, the more gifted, and those who feel cramped and oppressed by the restrictionism of a small, narrow and in-growing community. Even in the economic field we have a whole set of psychological imponderables—how people weigh "opportunity" against "security," the possibility of growth of institutions of the magnitude of the Queen's Island or Guinness', the scope for professional advancement, the satisfaction of professional pride in all walks of life, etc. All we can say is that, the smaller the community and the more self-development is hindered by incidental "policies," the stronger is the urge for persons above the average in character and intellect to seek their fortunes in the great world outside. Looking at the opposite side of the medal, one hesitates to think of the turmoil that would have been created in this state if this safety-valve had been absent.

In the economic background, moreover, there is one very special difficulty of interpretation along purely causal lines in respect of unemployment. It is obvious that both in Northern Ireland and the Republic official or recorded unemployment has long stood at levels characteristic of the Distressed Areas in other parts of the British Isles, and has absolutely failed to come down *pari passu* with the war and post-war experience of those other areas. Why? In Northern Ireland a portion was undoubtedly of the same "structural" origin as in Tyneside or South Wales, but the unresolved residue is not. In the Republic a portion has been similarly due to war conditions since 1932, but again the large and unresolved residue is not. To what is this persistent residue attributable? The simple answer seems to be "Because Ireland, North and South, is an under-developed area." That answer does not seem convincing, because a really under-developed area is usually characterised by over-full employment rather than unemployment. May it not be, considering the concentration of this unemployment in Belfast and Dublin, and taking into account impressionistic observations, that these cities are to some extent staging-camps, so that the causal relationship is the other way round, and a persistent float of unemployment is caused by the chance of emigration, rather than emigration caused by the fact of unemployment? I suggest this possibility principally in order to emphasise the necessity for further direct study of the complex relationship between emigration and employment.

Reverting again to the general problem, and the possibility of general recommendations, my fear is that any body like the Commission can so easily lapse into pious, unquantified platitudes, without any intention of doing so, but only because the words in which it has perforce to deal are so inexact and over-loaded with emotional associations. It is only a truism to say that if the Republic's agricultural "resources" had been "developed" to the same degree as in Denmark or Holland, and its industrial "resources" to the same degree as in Northern Ireland or the English Midlands or Flanders, then the Republic's present population would be greater than it is, and that population's vital habits (including emigration) different from what

they are (and, presumably, "healthier") We could go further, and extrapolate this truism into the future, and add the further truism that this "development" requires "investment" as a condition *sine qua non* (an investment which *ex hypothesi* has not taken place) But when we have uttered all these truisms we have in fact said nothing in a dangerously misleading way If the question is discussed in these generalities, the more simple fall too easily, because every sectional temptation leads them, into the absurdity of pretending that we possess great "undeveloped resources," which can be developed by "investment," fed by "repatriation of assets", that the critical point of attack is "investment," that every stimulation of some particular activity (e.g. growing wheat or assembling motor-cars) is unqualifiedly "development of the economy", and that only malevolent "interests" have prevented and are preventing "expansion"

The Majority did not, of course, fall for this fairy tale, but it is clear that some members did, from their *addenda* or reservations Further, it is clear that the fairy-tale is being hotted-up for political purposes, and that one of the tententious criticisms of the Commission is that it did not pay adequate lip-service to the pretty story Here and now, it is not possible to examine all the fallacies and half-truths and plain lies that go to make up the story It is best to seek a realistic approach from the opposite or positive end, and ask what "resources," "development" and "investment" really mean

For a century past we have been told by various "authorities" that "there is gold in them thar hills (or bogs)" if only malevolent "interests" did not prevent our exploiting them, and with depressing regularity the Eldorado turns out to be chicken-feed No doubt there are bits and pieces, and no doubt systematic search, new methods, and changing prices could reveal an Aladdin's Cave Nevertheless, within the limits of time relevant to a population inquiry, the unpalatable truth is that in this field nothing short of a miracle could produce results Let us by all means pursue the search and develop the bits and pieces, but let us also remember that such development will not add one iota to the chain of living in the Republic, unless it makes possible the growth of competitive exports If a new development replaces imports, even on competitive terms, its net effect on the whole economy is slight only the balance between different internal groups is altered If the substitution is effected, of course, by feather-bedding in any shape or form (e.g. protective quotas and duties, open subsidies, tax privileges), then the probable outcome is a net loss to the economy as a whole, the diffused losses of consumers outweighing the sectional gain Unfortunately, too much of what uncritically spoken of as "development" partakes of this character For practical purposes we have only two resources on which can be built the massive expansion of real income, in quantity and quality, necessary to make any impact on the balance of incentives that lead to emigration On the physical side there is our agricultural potential—but it is of the second order of importance It cannot be further developed by any amount of preaching by governments, commissions and publicists Only the human "resource"—the independence, courage and initiative of entrepreneurs and the skill and hard work of executives and work-people—can, as in post-war Germany, pull

the economy along the road of expanding wealth. Further, the economy in which this human resource abounds is not limited in its industrial operations to natural materials locally found, nor in its sales to local markets. Indeed, the stamp of genius appears often in the combination of primary materials drawn from one country, processed in a second, and sold in a third (cf. the Queen's Island)

The role of investment in an expanding economy tends to be misunderstood nowadays, not least by publicists in the Republic. It is quite true that the utmost initiative cannot build a growing industry without capital investment, but the argument cannot be reversed to read that if something called "investment" is provided, particularly in the funny things called "investments" by governments, then the "development" will automatically follow. The indispensable first step is the perception by someone of energy and initiative of a potentiality of new or expanded production only then will he call for capital, and there is no reason to suppose that new capital on any scale likely to be demanded in the Republic will not be forthcoming, provided that too much is not sopped up by government demand for amenities. It should be remembered also that capital obtained directly or indirectly by repatriation of assets is not new capital—it involves the sacrifice of existing earning assets, and, unless the real yield of its new employment exceeds its present yield of command over imports, the community suffers a net loss by every such transfer.

Looking at the picture in this way, the primary *desideranda* are enterprise and hard work. These are things which governments and public agencies of all kinds can do much to destroy and little to create. The conditions under which they can exert their fullest, most beneficial force often are unpalatable, seem paradoxical (e.g. that to work harder for less immediate reward may be the original starter, and the only possible original starter, of a spiral of growth), and run counter to fashionable public policy and political and social prepossessions. Yet, if the government, political parties and people of the Republic wish seriously to see an expanding economy as the basis of an expanding population, the only dependable and effective line of advance is to work for a "climate" favourable to the flowering of initiative, industriousness and competitive costing. I am afraid that, in this day and place, much of the preliminary work must be negative, in the elimination of existing trammels and featherbeds that distort the patterns of production and trade and expose the enterprising firm to certain obstructions and incalculable risks. I'm afraid also that I am less optimistic than some at any rate of the Commission about the scope for positive action by government. Common services, education (not strictly technical only) and dissemination of knowledge (including the encouragement of research) seem to me to embrace all the possible lines of fruitful action, and here too the efficiency of the services must be kept under constant scrutiny, if the private sector's vigour is not to be hamstrung by the public sector's costly dead-weight. That is a reason why, to conclude, I must mention briefly my scepticism about some of the Commission's recommendations—they point to new "organisations" to be created, and have a Parkinsonian smack.

3 *Contribution by Donald Nevin*

To my mind the most valuable aspect of the Majority Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems is the contribution it makes towards a better understanding of these problems on the part of the public generally

Two main conclusions emerge from the lucid analysis of a mass of statistical data, the unique demographic structure of the Twenty-Six Counties and the magnitude and persistence of the emigration problem

In any comment on the Report it seems to me essential to emphasise the now well-known facts of the exceptional position of this country from the demographic point of view The marriage rate is one of the lowest in the world (paragraph 136) while the percentage of young unmarried persons and of persons who never marry is exceedingly high (para 155) Furthermore, the average age at marriage is higher than elsewhere (para 146) Another unsatisfactory feature is the exceptionally small female population in relation to the male population in rural areas (para 36) The age structure of the population is also exceptional The proportion of the population in the "old dependent" group, 65 and over, is the second highest in a list of some twenty-five countries while the proportion in the "young active" group, 15-44, is the lowest (para 42) The serious implications of this distorted age-structure from the point of view of social policy will be obvious

Our exceptional demographic position is at once the consequence of, and, in turn, the cause of emigration, which is by far the most vital problem confronting the nation Our emigration experience is surely unique among the nations of the world

Net emigration amounting to 4 million from the Twenty-Six Counties within the past hundred years is a staggering toll Per head of population living at home, the number of Irish-born persons living abroad is probably larger than for any other country in the world (para 471) I do not think this is an enviable record for us to hold

At present, emigration amounts to more than one out of every three persons born (para 320) In Addendum No 2, Dr R C Geary and Dr M D McCaithy estimate that if the 1946-51 pattern persists, of every 100 boys and 100 girls in the State at age 14, no fewer than 34 boys and 42 girls will have emigrated by the age of 50

Each year the country loses through emigration a number of people roughly equivalent to one-third of the annual number of births (para 461)

It is not surprising that continuing emigration on such a large scale has induced feelings of apathy and complacency among many of our people and an attitude of hopelessness on the part of political leaders

"The ready outlet of emigration," as the Report states, "has provided the remaining population with a reasonably satisfying standard of living and that has been responsible for an acquiescence in conditions of under-development which are capable of considerable improvement The absence, over the country as a whole, of severe population pressure on resources has failed to establish the need for drastic action, and has made the need for full development of our economic resources less compelling" (para 310) Elsewhere the Commission itself implicitly accepts the need for drastic action but

this does not find reflection in its recommendations. Of the twenty recommendations listed in paragraph 481 none could be termed drastic. One expected that in the field of economic policy especially some proposals that might be termed drastic would be forthcoming particularly as the Commission agreed that the "fundamental cause of emigration is economic" (para 290). In this respect the Report is a disappointment. It is true that paragraph 2 of the Report makes it clear that the members of the Commission considered themselves to be specifically a Population Commission and not a Commission to inquire into the whole field of social and economic activities. It is, I think, unfortunate that a Commission with a personnel of such wide and varied experiences and representative of the most important interests in the country did not see fit to widen their interpretation of its broad terms of reference to include consideration of basic economic policy and the measures needed to eliminate involuntary emigration. Was it in expectation of fundamental disagreement on these issues that the Commission decided to limit its field of inquiry?

The remedy for emigration, the Report states, must be sought mainly in the economic field (para 322) since the two fundamental causes are "the absence of opportunities for making an adequate livelihood" and "a growing desire for higher standards of living on the part of the community, particularly the rural community" (para 292). The first cause can be remedied by a massive programme of capital investment and the second satisfied by a considerable increase in agricultural output. Now, the Report deals at length with questions of agricultural policy but relegates consideration of capital investment to just three paragraphs at the end of the Report. This seems to me to be the basic deficiency in the Report—the whole logic of the Commission's analysis of the economic structure and the trends in the national economy would appear to demand positive proposals for rectifying the inadequacy of present capital development programmes as one of the two outstanding problems that must be tackled if effective efforts are to be made towards solving our emigration problem.

It will, I think, be generally agreed that "the key to the solution of our population and emigration problems" is an increase in the productivity of agriculture (para 338) and quite rightly the Report lays considerable stress on agricultural policy.

There has been no significant change in the volume of agricultural output since the beginning of this century (para 101), a position surely without parallel in any other country. This is perhaps the most striking feature of the Irish economy. Clearly there is a connection between the failure to expand output and the system of husbandry that has developed here.

More than once (e.g. paragraphs 98 and 332) the Report has occasion to point out that agriculture has developed in a manner that severely restricts opportunities for employment on the land. Extensive farming on which the rural economy may be said to be based sets a distinct limit to the volume of employment.

Though this is regarded as a country of smallholders more than half of the agricultural land is in medium size or large holdings (para 103) and the pattern of production over the greater part of the country is set by the requirements of the large farms. Yet the gross output

per acre on large farms of over 200 acres is little more than half that on farms under 30 acres (para 112) Where agriculture is based on intensive cultivation, output per acre is higher and there is a higher density of farm population It is true that output per person tends to be lower but in this country demographic problems are such that it is necessary to have regard to "the wider consideration of providing the basis for more employment and more families" (para 470) All these things considered, therefore, output per person is of lesser importance

The adoption of a system of agriculture based on intensive use of land is clearly necessary and it is disturbing to learn in the Report that trends in tillage and livestock provide grounds for believing that even the small farm is adopting a more extensive type of farming with lower output per acre (para 475)

Even with the "revolutionary changes in methods of agricultural production and marketing" which the Commission considers are needed if agricultural output is to expand in such a way as to keep the people on the land (para 472) it is doubtful if the farm population over the country as a whole can be stabilised even, notwithstanding the welcome fact that the decline in the numbers of males engaged in farm work was arrested (temporarily) in 1954 By European standards, the present volume of farm output could probably be produced by about two-thirds of the number of workers at present on farms (para 472) It would, accordingly, by these standards, be necessary to raise output by one-half in order to maintain the existing population on the land The achievement of such a formidable increase is, to put it mildly, highly unlikely since the increase over the last hundred years has been of the order of only 25 per cent despite the advances in mechanisation, crop yields, etc

Surprisingly, there is only one reference to co-operation in the Report and that reference is a passing one Yet there is a considerable body of expert opinion which holds that the extension of co-operative methods both in agricultural production and in the marketing and processing of farm products can make a material contribution towards raising output I think that it will be necessary for the State by means of grants and other inducements to hasten the adoption of co-operative methods among farmers The Supplementary Agricultural Grants amounting to £4 $\frac{3}{4}$ millions might be more usefully spent in this way than by subsidising the employment of farm workers on large farms Is it not time, also, that the taxation code and particularly income tax was adapted as a weapon to compel owners of large farms to increase output per acre if they wish to maintain the level of their disposable incomes?

As I see it, the need for raising the volume of output on farms arises not so much from the necessity for maintaining the numbers at work on the land so much as to increase the surplus available for export in order to make possible imports of capital equipment and raw materials as will enable the non-agricultural economy to provide jobs for those entering the labour market and persons leaving the land A substantial increase in the level of external trade per head of the population, which at present is very low by comparison with more highly developed countries, is essential if living standards are to be substantially improved

The Report concludes that agricultural development is unlikely to bring about a substantial increase in the size of the agricultural community (para 423). Even assuming that the decline in numbers on the land is permanently arrested, there will be a need to provide additional employment opportunities. At present over 50,000 boys and girls enter the labour market each year. By 1959, as Dr Geary and Dr McCarthy point out in their Addendum, this number will be about 60,000, due to the increase in the birth rate during the war. Probably about 20,000 new jobs are required each year and these must be provided by the expansion of industrial and commercial activities.

It is remarkable that while the number of persons at work in non-agricultural production increased by 62,000 between 1946 and 1951 there was an increase of only 2,300 between 1951 and 1954. Clearly the pace of industrial development over recent years has been a snail's pace.

While the Commission refers to the wide scope that exists for further development, it does not make any specific recommendations that could be expected to speed up the pace of industrial expansion. The figures just quoted would seem to suggest that since industry has been the exclusive domain of what is generally referred to as private enterprise, that this form of enterprise has ceased to be very enterprising so far as the establishment of new industries is concerned.

Here I would like to use the words used by Dr Geary and Dr McCarthy in their Addendum with reference to public and private investment that "too doctrinaire a view" should not be taken "about exclusive reliance on private investment." Public enterprise has been conspicuously successful in this country notwithstanding the assertion by Mr Alexis Fitzgerald in Reservation No 2 that the growth of public investment "threatens grave social evil upon us." It seems to me to be high time that a less doctrinaire attitude was adopted towards private enterprise in industry and public enterprise be given an opportunity to enter this field especially in the establishment of new industries.

Part I of Chapter 8 of the Report outlines the considerable scope that exists for the development of our national resources. Capital development on a huge scale is clearly essential for a satisfactory solution of the problems of emigration and unemployment but as I have already indicated the vital question of capital formation and investment is dealt with in three paragraphs of the Report. If the raising of agricultural productivity is the key to our problems, a vast expansion of the capital investment programme is a necessary corollary. This is indeed implicit in many sections of the Report but the problems involved in carrying out a capital programme of such great magnitude are barely touched upon though a Minority Report of Mr James Meenan deals with them at some length.

I think it regrettable that the Commission did not advert to the economic and social consequences of the existing financial and banking systems and the manner and the degree in which they have operated to retard national development. It is notorious that national policies directed towards economic expansion have been frustrated by financial measures inimical to their achievement. This question is not simply a bugbear of immature political minds. It is a vital issue which must be

solved before any really substantial progress can be made in the field of capital investment. It is, of course, "highly complex and technical" (para 479) but that is scarcely an excuse for ignoring it as the Commission has done in its Report.

It may be true as the Report states that "it is not financial measures but the will and determination of the people which will decide the extent to which development of national resources will take place." But financial measures can effectively obstruct the people's will in relation to national development though I have no doubt that some time the people will tackle these and other problems with determination and effect the political changes necessary for their solution.

Before concluding I would like to deal with the question of raising living standards. The Report refers to "the almost universal determination to secure better standards of life." I am glad that this has been recognised by the Commission and I look forward to a better understanding of the efforts of workers to raise their living standards in the only way open to them, especially in the light of what Dr Geary and Dr McCarthy describe as "the impressive increase in productivity in Irish industry" during the post-war period.

"Wage standards," the Report says, "should be sufficient to enable a man to marry and rear a family without hardship" (para 433). I will resist the temptation to indulge in special pleading but I must point out that on any interpretation of this statement very large numbers of Irish workers are even now in receipt of grossly inadequate wages.

The smallness of the home market in respect both of the size of the population and its limited purchasing power is a serious hindrance to industrial expansion. In the view of Dr Geary and Dr McCarthy "there will be no significant change in total population during the next few decades." It will be all the more necessary, therefore, to ensure rising living standards for the present population so as to increase home demand and induce a large-scale expansion of existing industry bringing with it additional opportunities for employment.

4 *Contribution by Professor Liam Ó Buachalla*

As you have seen a group of four has been invited to take part in this discussion. I am grateful to the Society for asking me to be a member of the group. However, I should have preferred if terms of reference had been drawn up for each member. Such an arrangement would have made our individual tasks easier, but above all it would have obviated the danger of repetition in the discussion.

I should like to offer my thanks and I am sure the thanks of every member of this Society, to the members of the Commission for undertaking so heavy—and, may I say, so thankless—a task. If there is any disappointment at the result of the Commission, I feel that little blame attaches to the members of that body. Personally I should have been happier to see it with a wider representation of the Gaeltacht and Congested Districts generally. After all, the problems set for investigation and report have their origin in these particular areas. I do feel, with all respect to everyone, that we have missed an opportunity in not devoting special attention to them. I beg you to remember that this comment must not be taken as reflecting in any way on the

qualifications, on the sincerity or on the value of the work done by the Commissioners

It did not take long to discover that there was no cut, dried and prepared solution for the malaise. Still, many people believed that the Commission—carefully chosen as it was—would soon uncover the magic wand and give us the simple and effective formula by which all our difficulties would be resolved. The Commissioners must have realised, early on, that their task would be anything but a simple one and that its work would be tedious.

This was a very special Commission. It was set up under circumstances of a very unusual kind. It was felt, widely, that it would arrive at very constructive conclusions, rapidly. It took the Commission just six years to make up its mind and compile and issue its reports—and in the meantime emigration took on “a new lease of life.” You will excuse that cliché. For very many citizens the Commission was a disappointment.

Naturally I have read the Report. As a report it is a fine piece of work, and I am satisfied that it will prove a most valuable one. In the first place it is excellently prepared, concise but very readable. Secondly, it brings together a vast amount of relevant facts, statistical and otherwise, and thirdly, and by no means least in importance, it will end—or should end—much of the nonsense that has been indulged in about emigration and population. It will, I feel, end the bandying about of charges of indifference and neglect against sincere and capable men.

I think that for those who have been giving thought to these questions of population and emigration, the Report contains little that is new. On the whole, where recommendations have been made, there will be a large measure of agreement on them, though I may say that very often the conclusions are not sufficiently clear. I will return to that point in a moment.

I am particularly interested in the problem of the Gaeltacht and Congested Districts. I regret that the Commission felt it was not part of its responsibilities to deal with questions such as the financing of large-scale development programmes (e.g. para 479) and with economic decisions (para 476). In avoiding a full inquiry into these matters, I think the Commission fell down on one of the most urgent aspects of its tasks. There is no use saying that they considered themselves to be a population commission and as such were not expected to deal with the matters I have mentioned. The terms of reference contained this direction: “To consider what measures, if any, should be taken in the national interest to influence the trend of population.”

As I have indicated already, we have known for a long time what the essence of the problem is, certain specific steps were taken over the past twenty years to effect a solution. It is admitted that while these steps achieved something, they did not go anywhere near solving the problem. The reasons for such failure should have been inquired into, difficult—and perhaps embarrassing—as the task might be. If the Commission had not among its members sufficient individuals qualified to carry out such an investigation, then it is just too bad. I consider this matter of particular importance. I have referred to the Gaeltacht and Congested Districts areas. It would have been a very important

step to have selected say two or three parishes in West Galway, those of Knock, Carraroe and Rosmuc, for examination. This would have brought the Commission down to "brass tacks". The problems of the large family, the extent of holdings, the quality of the land, the uses made of the land, the problems of education and of alternative and complementary employments, the need for, and the alleged abuse of, the dole and other forms of assistance would then stand out in relief. The direct views of this independent Commission on these matters would have been important and their specific recommendations for their solution would have been interesting. The Board recommended (in paragraphs 418-422)—might be a good thing—but we ought to be given some idea of what it would do that was not being done already.

I have strong hopes that the Underdeveloped Areas Act will achieve a good deal of success. It will take some time to get things going fully—but already there are indications that it is bringing relief to the poorer areas, with, at the same time, desirable over-all economic advantages. Even so, it seems to me that as far as the areas suffering most from emigration and unemployment are concerned, redress will depend to a very large extent on State action involving State financing and the setting up of State and semi-State bodies. Such action has heretofore been severely attacked. It is a pity the issue was not more fully examined. It is one that needs clarification and this the Commission should have attempted. The Commission did, of course, recommend a State body "The Land Utilisation Body". Did not various Commissions, e.g. Agricultural Commission, 1938, and the Post-War Committee on Agriculture deal with most of the matters raised in paragraphs 346-352? Similarly, an "Export Corporation" is recommended—this to be a private undertaking. I am all for private endeavour and enterprise, but sometimes these are not equal to specific tasks. If private enterprise does not rise to the occasion should the matter be left there in abeyance?

I agree that land tenure and succession should be specifically inquired into. I would not expect the Commission to deal very extensively with this matter, but I strongly endorse their view that it requires urgent attention.

Paragraph 33 provides material enough for a lengthy paper—or symposium. The only comment I wish to make now is that during the period the Commission was sitting the emigration of girls from the west of Ireland seemed to have taken on a new impetus. It is important to find employment for the girls and yet it seems to me that it is still more important to find employment opportunities for young men since it is they who will influence—largely—any improvement in marriage rates, it is they who are responsible for maintaining the family.

I hope something will come of the views expressed in paragraph 430 relating to apprenticeship conditions and opportunities. The Irish Vocational Education Congress devoted considerable attention to this matter. Its special sub-committee carried out an extensive investigation but as it appeared that the trade unions were anxious to take up the whole question, the Congress agreed to a suspension of its inquiries.

One of our difficulties here is due to a bottle-neck caused by the low proportion of skilled labour to unskilled labour. There is little point in

discussing vocational guidance until this issue is straightened out I am aware that youths going to Britain readily get into skilled employments and the desire for such employment causes many to emigrate

Afforestation has been discussed so often that there is little need to go into it in detail here There is one aspect of bog development that has considerable possibilities, namely in its reclamation for the production of grass meal and certain root crops It is a pity the Commission did not look in at Gowla or take a run over to Glenamoy to see for themselves what might be done in this direction We have 3,000,000 acres of bog Bórd na Móna is doing a fine job and the E S B has taken up the running The Gowla scheme, while providing for the use of the bog for economic agricultural production, ensures that the peat remains intact, to be used for fuel purposes whenever it might be required

I agree with the Commission that the economic expansion of agriculture is urgent and that it is possible I have hammered it for twenty-five years But I have high hopes that we are due for an improvement It will not come rapidly, but with the interest now being taken in Education, valuable results must follow In this connection I hope the public will take serious note of the quotation from the Holmes Report (quoted on page 39), especially the last sentence " but I think I saw hundreds of fields growing just as little as it is physically possible for land to grow under an Irish sky "

I am not pessimistic about the possibility of industrial expansion The world is crying out for more and more goods of all kinds Nearly 2,000 million people get no more than a sub-standard of living, and world population is increasing at the rate of some 30 million per annum Technical and adult education generally must soon bring home to Irish Industry—Capital and Labour alike—that the market can be exploited, given an appreciation of the fact that price, quality and quantity are right

Ireland is still suffering from the effects of the Act of Union In the years 1801 to 1896 we lost through overtaxation some £300 million There is no minimising that handicap, but it is one we have to face and overcome

DISCUSSION

P Callinan said I would like to join with Professor Carter in expressing appreciation of the statistical data which is embodied in the report of the Commission

I am interested in that report as one who has had considerable experience of contacts with Irish people outside Ireland That contact was mainly in Great Britain in recent years, chiefly in London and in the East Midlands of England, and years ago in the United States of America It is a pity that the Commission had not sought fuller evidence from the many available who have had such experience If I were asked what I consider the biggest factor is in Irish emigration to Great Britain at the present time I would reply that the British Welfare State is the principal one and that so far as young women are concerned the increased opportunities open to them in England,

including their better prospects of marriage. Young women say that there is greater personal freedom for them in Britain than at home. The percentage of women emigrants is higher than men. I have had communications from young men and women who had spent a few years in England and then went to the United States. The men were less enthusiastic than the women in the change. It would be no exaggeration to say that the Irish emigrant of to-day yearns less for return here permanently than those who left in the early years of the century. Whatever may be done here in the matter of providing additional employment, many, and amongst them some of the best, will desire to try their fortune elsewhere and I think this factor should be more frankly recognised than has hitherto been the case.