

THE DEVELOPMENT OF OFFICIAL IRISH STATISTICS

THOMAS P LINEHAN

Former Director of the Central Statistics Office

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1. INTRODUCTION

The trail of the development of and responsibility for Official Statistics that I am following in this presentation starts effectively from the Larcom involvement in the 1841 Census of Population (Section 2) and leads to:

- (a) the Registrar-General's Office (from 1851) (Section 3);
- (b) the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland (from 1900) (Section 4);
- (c) the Statistics Branch of the Department of Industry and Commerce (from 1923) (Section 5);
- (d) the setting up in 1949, albeit on a non-statutory basis, of the CSO attached to the Department of the Taoiseach; followed by two significant events (Section 6):
 - membership of the European Economic Communities in 1973;
 - setting up of the National Statistics Board in 1986;
- (e) finally to 1994 when the Central Statistics Office and the National Statistics Board and the Director General of CSO were established on a statutory basis (Section 7).

During all this period the scope of "official statistics" widened considerably and the degree of centralised responsibility increased significantly.

2. LARCOM

Censuses of Population were established to a decennial rhythm in Great Britain from 1801. In Ireland the start-up was somewhat later and more erratic, commencing with an unsuccessful exercise in 1812/13, followed by adoption of the GB frequency from 1821¹. However the 1821 Census and the succeeding Census in 1831 were little more than headcounts and in both scope and organisational aspects faded almost into insignificance beside the "Great Census" of 1841 which has been described in several papers on Census matters read before this Society². Capt. Thomas Larcom, attached to

the Ordnance Survey Office, was one of the three Census Commissioners, and is accepted as chief architect of the 1841 Census. The published Report reflects the Commissioners' view that the Census ought to be a Social Survey and not a bare Enumeration³.

In Ireland the newly formed RIC acted as enumerators and also for the first time, large-scale Ordnance Survey maps with considerable detail were available as a guide to enumerators at local level.

It will be of interest to local historians to know that it was in Cork City that the General Report of the 1841 Census first saw the light of day. In August 1843, invited by the Royal Cork Institution, the British Association for the Advancement of Science held its 13th meeting there under the Presidency of the Earl of Rosse, of astronomical fame. The Lord Lieutenant, "desirous of promoting science"⁴ forwarded to the President⁵ of the Association copies of the Census Report for presentation to the Meeting, even though the full Report⁶ had not yet gone through the customary stage of presentation to the House of Commons. On 20 August, in Corn Exchange Buildings, Larcom, who was a Member of the Association, introduced the Census Report to those attending the meeting of Section F - the Statistical Section - of the British Association⁷.

Another Irish member of the British Association present at the launch of the Census Report was Professor James A. Lawson, who at that time held the Whately chair of Political Economy in Trinity College, Dublin - a position presently held by our esteemed President. Lawson himself had contributed a paper to the Section F meeting on the topic "Connection between Statistics and Political Economy" and it is of interest to note that in December 1847 Lawson had the honour of reading the first paper to the Dublin Statistical Society under the same title⁸!

The wide scope of data collected leading to the detailed analysis embodied in the 1841 Census Report was fortuitous in that it provided, shortly before the tragedy of the Famine, a valuable record of the demographic position of every district in the country down to townland level⁹.

In 1847, linked to the Famine situation came the next significant development of statistical interest after the population census. Once again, Larcom was the innovator¹⁰. In 1847, arising out of consultations concerning the provision¹¹ of information about the extent of agricultural production throughout the United Kingdom, he introduced in Ireland the annual midsummer enumeration for each agricultural holding of the extent under various crops and the numbers of different types of livestock, supplemented by an autumnal inquiry on crop yields. This responsibility remained with him at the Office of Public Works, until 1851 when it was allotted for the next two years to the Commissioners appointed to undertake the 1851 Census¹².

3. REGISTRAR-GENERAL'S OFFICE

Because of ill health Larcom was unable to accept the position of chief Commissioner for the 1851 Census, which then was given to W. Donnelly, who, since 1845, was the Registrar- General¹³ of Marriages. The RG's Office continued to undertake the annual agricultural enumeration in subsequent years¹⁴ and, in 1856, through Larcom's influence¹⁵ (he was Under-Secretary since 1853) responsibility was formally given to the RG's Office for the annual enumeration, and also for "Emigration statistics" which had first been collected in conjunction with the 1851 Census and had been continued on a regular basis¹⁶.

Subsequently, until the end of the 19th century, various other statistical responsibilities were also attached to the RG, whose Office gradually became the principal centre for official statistics.. In 1886¹⁷ the position was described by the RG then in Office, T.W. Grimshaw, as follows:

"The statistical work of the Department comprises the compilation of Vital, Agricultural, Emigration and Banking Statistics as well as returns of Railway traffic in Ireland. The compilation and editing of the criminal and judicial statistics of Ireland is also done by he RG but not as a part of the work of the GRO."

Nevertheless, over the same period, other statistics, mainly byproducts of administrative activity, were being produced by other agencies, and not everyone was satisfied with that position. This was made very clear in the Report of the Recess Committee¹⁸ which made a strong recommendation for the creation of a Bureau for Agricultural and Industrial Statistics, observing that:

The duty of collecting and publishing Irish statistical information is now divided amongst five departments of Government:

- *The Registrar-General's Department;*
- *The Fishery Inspectors, (who, from 1894 collected returns of fish landed at all points on the coast);*
- *The Agricultural Department of the Land Commission, (who, from 1887, collected returns of agricultural prices as a result of the Land Law (Ireland) Act);*
- *The Veterinary Department of the Privy Council, (who, from 1878, prepared fairly complete records of the external trade in livestock);*
- *The Labour Department of the Board of Trade in London (to which we are expected to look for figures as to Irish farming societies, co-operative creameries, and trade and labour associations).*

The consequence is, the duty is not properly done....not one of these Departments, for instance, gives us the value of the butter, of the bacon, of the eggs, of the fruit, of the vegetables, of the honey, or of the timber, annually produced in Ireland. We propose that the Irish statistical functions now attempted to be fulfilled by these departments should be undertaken by this Bureau, and more besides.

4. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND TECHNICAL INSTRUCTION FOR IRELAND

Following the passing of the Agriculture and Technical Instruction (Ireland) Act, 1899 the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland was established. Its work was divided amongst six Branches, one of which was the Statistics and Intelligence Branch¹⁹.

Thus, at the very commencement of the twentieth century, there was established, for the first time for Ireland, an official unit with a specifically statistical orientation, even if allied to an Intelligence function for the Department as a whole²⁰.

The main statistical functions of the Branch were²¹:

1. To co-ordinate and centralise the collection, preparation and publication of the more strictly economic statistics relating to Irish agriculture, fisheries, industries, and trade heretofore divided among four distinct Government Departments in Ireland.
2. To secure the collection, preparation, and publication of a fresh set of important statistics relating to imports and exports, technical education, rural industries, and allied matters not yet undertaken by any existing Irish Department.

In effect, therefore, this Branch of the DATII took over responsibility for all existing official statistical work with the exception of vital statistics, emigration statistics and Census of Population which remained with the Registrar General. In addition it was committed to extend the scope of official statistics, in particular in respect of external trade.

Since 1825, when the system of separate Customs between Ireland and Great Britain was abolished, no general record had been kept of the trade between the two countries. Occasional returns were furnished regarding the quantities of particular articles imported or exported, but such information was slight, and afforded few clues to the changes which had taken place since 1825. Fairly complete records, especially since 1878, existed with regard to the trade in livestock²².

The first person appointed as Superintendent of the Statistics and Intelligence Branch was Professor W. P. Coyne, who held the chair of Political Economy and Jurisprudence at University College, Dublin²³.

On his appointment, Coyne, besides ensuring the smooth transfer of the ongoing inquiries, immediately faced into the difficult task of establishing statistical series on imports and exports in the complete absence of customs-type documentation which formed the basic source of such statistics in other countries. It was a time consuming and tedious task and 1904 was the first year in respect of which figures could be prepared.

Unfortunately Coyne did not survive long enough to witness the publication of the first results of his pioneering work. He died in 1904 at the early age of 37 years. He was followed as Superintendent by W.G.S. Adams, a distinguished economist from Balliol College, Oxford²⁴.

The First Trade Report²⁵ which was signed on 10 September 1906 by Adams, describes in detail the difficulties encountered. These were conveniently summarised in a SSISI paper on "The External Commerce of Ireland" read by A.W. Samuels, KC²⁶.

"Call to mind that since 1825 there has been no record kept of Irish Imports and Exports; that when the work was begun there were many ports where no return of imports and exports was procurable; that there was no common basis of weight or system of valuation of goods' and no settled classification; that the details had to be obtained from voluntary sources, from information courteously afforded by port and trade authorities, by shippers and railway companies, and by individual importers and exporters as well as by the Boards of Customs and Trade; and then but a very faint appreciation can be gained of the enormous difficulties of the task so energetically undertaken and so perfectly performed by the Statistics Bureau."

Useful and all as these new statistics were, however, they still had a number of serious deficiencies which Adams underlined in his 1909 paper to SSISI²⁷.

Somewhat earlier he had put on record his dissatisfaction with the source material available for deriving the trade figures²⁸, explaining that the root of the problem, the source of the deficiencies, was the absence of a document which clearly stated the description of the goods, and the weight and value of each particular commodity. His suggested solution was that the Department should be given powers to request correct returns both for imports and exports. He added that if one goes the length of the Census of Production Act, he didn't see why they should not go the length of requiring imports and exports.

However the type of source information he wished for did not materialise until the Saorstát Éireann Customs system came into operation. Thus the Coyne series continued from 1904 until 1921.

The Census of Production Act referred to by Adams was the UK 1906 Act which gave the Board of Trade the necessary powers to request compulsory returns throughout the UK in respect of production activity in the year 1907 and thereafter at five-yearly intervals. The Censuses of manufacturing industry of 1907 and 1912 were taken throughout Britain, Scotland and Ireland by the Board of Trade. No evidence has been uncovered which would indicate any direct involvement by any Irish based officials in these exercises. Experience gained from such an involvement would have been very valuable for subsequent independent Irish Production Censuses.

However, the DATII was given the task of carrying out the necessary inquiries in respect of Agriculture which was also within the scope of the Legislation.

For the first such Agricultural Census, which was undertaken by Adams, the result was an official publication on the Agricultural Output of Ireland in 1908²⁹, signed in 1912 by Butler, Adam's successor. For this exercise the recently established trade statistics formed an essential constituent.

The Final Report of the 1907 Production Census by the Board of Trade³⁰, also published in 1912, dealt with the results for the whole of the United Kingdom. It contained a number of figures relating to the manufacturing sector for the whole of Ireland³¹. The second Census of Production under the Act of 1906 was taken in 1913 in respect of 1912. Because of the disruption caused by the 1914-18 War, it did not lead to the same types of publications as in the case of the first Census. Once again the DATII undertook the enquiries in respect of Ireland for the agricultural sector and the results appeared in the Appendix material supplied³² to the Departmental Committee on Food Production in Ireland³³.

For the industrial sector the Board of Trade again undertook the inquiry work directly for the whole of the UK, but as the results were only partly compiled at the time of the outbreak of the War and as the compilation work was suspended during the period of the War, the Census was not completed and, accordingly there was no Final Report³⁴.

The 1914-18 War had other impacts on the statistical work of the DATII. To mention but one - in 1917, London sought more frequent estimates of livestock numbers and John Hooper, then in charge of statistics, managed to hold off requests for special censuses outside of the traditional one on the grounds of suspicions likely to be aroused within the farming community as to the motives, fearing possibly requisitioning measures³⁵. He also felt that this could have an injurious effect on the validity of the results of the routine statistical inquiries.

He devised a postal sampling system whereby during 1918 some 40,000 landholders were invited every two months to make a return showing the numbers of cattle, sheep and pigs under various headings present on their holdings, (i) at a specified date, and (ii) two months earlier. Evidently this scheme³⁶ proved quite successful in providing useful estimates of the numbers required³⁷.

In 1919 an Irish Department of the UK Ministry of Labour was created. It had a Statistics and Intelligence Branch which collected statistics relating to the working of labour exchanges and the Unemployment Insurance Act, trade disputes, changes in rates of wages, and as an agent of the London Ministry³⁸, retail prices for the compilation of the UK cost-of-living index number. It appears that Stanley Lyon served in this Office throughout its relatively short existence³⁹ until the Irish Labour Ministry, established after the Treaty, was absorbed into the Saorstát Ministry of Industry and Commerce.

No sooner were the War problems subsiding, when domestic conditions produced new problems for the Statistics Branch. In May 1919 the DATII was informed that the Irish Government considered that it was impracticable to furnish police assistance, either generally or in any County, for the enumeration duty during 1919⁴⁰. Perhaps emboldened by the success in the preceding year of the system of postal inquiries, it was decided to issue forms to all landholders for return through the post⁴¹ and these were used to prepare estimates by county⁴². The sample system worked and was extended to include all crops and was retained in one form or another until 1925⁴³.

The Registrar-General too had parallel enumerator problems. He had continued with his remaining statistical functions from 1900, including in particular the Population Censuses of 1901 and 1911 which were carried out without difficulty using the RIC as the enumerator force.

By early 1921 the political situation was such that the traditional enumeration force could not be used successfully. The Census Commissioners⁴⁴ made an approach on 8 March 1921, to the Union and District Clerks Association re their willingness to participate, as supervisors, in the Census operation⁴⁵. Their reply, of 16 March made the position quite clear:

“The Executive Committee of the Clerks’ Association on behalf of the Superintendent Registrars regret that in the present disturbed state of the country they cannot undertake the performance of any duties under the Census Act”.

As far as the Establishment was concerned this effectively put paid to the 1921 Census⁴⁶.

The decision to decline participation in the Census arrangements was almost certainly influenced by the fact that at its Session of 11 March 1921, Dáil Éireann adopted a

decree embargoing the making of Census returns⁴⁷. This followed a decision of the Ministry, prior to 8 February, that the British census would not be accepted and that steps would be taken to render it inoperative⁴⁸.

An interesting feature of the preparatory work for the 1921 Census was that, for what I believe was the first time, there was a Census Joint Committee⁴⁹ set up to ensure as great a degree of uniformity as was possible between the Census content for Britain, Scotland and Ireland. Irish participants in the work of that committee included not only Sir William Thompson, who, as Registrar-General, was a Census Commissioner, but also John Hooper, head of the Statistics Branch of DATII, who was especially interested in the plans for classification of occupations particularly in respect to persons involved in agriculture⁵⁰.

There was another involvement which brought Thompson and Hooper into useful contact with colleagues inside and outside the UK. Both of them were participants in the first conference of British Empire Statisticians held in London on 20 January to 26 February 1920⁵¹, with delegates from the Dominions, Colonies and Protectorates. The Report of the Conference, (Cmd. 648), shows that Hooper presented two papers, one on Irish Agricultural Statistics and the other on Recording of Irish Trade.

The exposure to and participation in discussions covering all aspects of statistical agencies, both technical and administrative, and the contacts made at such a conference must have been of great benefit to Hooper when, a few years later, Irish Independence brought him the formidable responsibility of establishing a viable statistical organisation for the new state.

He would also, around the same time, have been acquainted with the interesting literature⁵² considered by the Cabinet Committee which was set up in July 1920, to consider a Petition⁵³ addressed to the British Prime Minister on the urgent need of a reorganisation of the present system of official statistics.

5. STATISTICS BRANCH OF DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE

Independence

The emergence of the Irish Free State as a separate political entity brought its own consequences for the statistical system, which, from then on, had to cover a geographical area formerly part of the United Kingdom and part only of an island which, up till then, was, in itself, a statistical entity for several of the existing series already developed and for most of the statistical byproducts of administrative agencies.

Fortunately compilation and publication on a county basis had been the norm for statistics derived from agricultural enumerations, population censuses and the recording of vital events, thus providing a solid historical basis for comparable data for both

North and South. However for many other statistics, such as those for external trade based on customs documentation, or the cost-of-living index numbers, the UK as a whole had been the geographical unit used.

The first new problem with a statistical flavour that achieved mention in the minutes of the Provincial Government of 17 February 1922⁵⁴, concerned the need for a native Cost of Living index to be used in the determination of the bonus element of the pay of public servants in the Saorstát area, which up till then had been regulated by the cost-of-living index prepared by the British Ministry of Labour for the UK as a whole. It was decided that an inquiry would proceed as rapidly as possible and a committee which was set up, with Hooper as Chairman, reported in August on the estimated change between July 1914, and March and June 1922, of the cost of maintaining the same standard of living for a family dependent on wage earnings⁵⁵. The series was continued on a quarterly basis.

Emergence of Statistics Branch

From 30 August 1922⁵⁶, as part of a revised organisation of Ministries by the Provisional Government, there was established a Ministry of Industry and Commerce (Minister - J. McGrath; Secretary - G. Campbell) which combined the existing Ministries of Economic Affairs, Labour and Transport. A Departmental “Advisory Statistics Committee on Statistics of Trade, Labour, Transport, etc.”, which included both John Hooper and Stanley Lyon, was set up to assess the desirable statistical activity of the new Ministry. The more general question of statistical organisation was a different matter which arose later in the context of the Blythe Committee.

The Advisory Committee’s report,⁵⁷ dated 21 January 1923 began with the following daunting general idea of the work:

It will be desirable for your Ministry to measure the quantity and value of each commodity produced (and of the raw materials used in the process) in each industry in each locality, the quantity and value of each article in each stream of external and internal trade, the numbers of labourers, rates of wages, hours of labour, unemployment, accidents, diseases in each occupation in each industry and trade; the quantities and kinds of power, and of machines used; particulars of credit and finance (banking, insurance, mortgages, sales of property, shares, etc., etc.); prices of commodities, freight rates, rates of interest, etc.

Subsequent paragraphs went into greater detail on what the Committee considered should be undertaken, and repeatedly drew attention to the need for arranging for specialised staff, accommodation, statistical machines, etc.

They recommended an annual postal census of production and commented that such censuses were taken annually in British Dominions, Sweden, etc., and in such a backward industrial country as the Free State with a public so keen on industrial development, the taking of such annual censuses is important. They also adverted to the likelihood that monthly returns might be required from certain industries on the lines of the returns currently received from bacon curers.

Another annual postal census operation was recommended for distribution establishments - above a size to be determined later - showing as far as possible the same particulars as enumerated for establishments in the Production census, including numbers of persons employed classified by industries, occupations, and age.

A third census - Census of Wages - desired frequency not yet decided on, was recommended covering numbers of persons employed earning each amount in each industrial trade, particulars as to hours, overtime, holidays, etc., etc.

The Committee stressed that before these three censuses could be started up, the troublesome problems of classification of (a) industrial trades (b) occupations of employees and (c) commodities, had to be undertaken and as complete a list as possible of employers had to be compiled. They made suggestions as to how progress could be made in each case and advised that the whole work of the three censuses should be handed over immediately to competent statistical men who should go into them in detail, immediately studying foreign precedents etc.

Regarding the external trade statistics to be derived after 1 April 1923 from the particulars to be furnished under the Customs law by exporters and importers, in respect of all goods involved, both dutiable and non-dutiable, the committee recommended that the import and export statistics of non-dutiable goods should be compiled in the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and that the import and export statistics of dutiable goods should be prepared in the Customs Department, and the results supplied by Customs to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce⁵⁸.

The Advisory Committee's insistence on the need for specialised staff was taken seriously in so far as it probably led to Roy Geary's involvement with official statistics⁵⁹ - an involvement which formally began on Monday 1 January 1923 when he reported for duty in the Department of Industry and Commerce to John Hooper.

In the same month the Executive Council⁶⁰ appointed a Committee which included Campbell, with Earnest Blythe as Chairman, to review all state services with a view to a regrouping of Departments under the various Ministers. In preparing for the Committee's work Blythe sent a minute to each member of the Executive Council raising a small number of topics including statistical matters⁶¹.

Unfortunately the individual replies have not been located, but the Committee's report of 20 March included the following statement:

The Committee considered the desirability of centralising all Government statistics and was of the opinion that this was a development to be aimed at. It is understood that a step in this direction is about to be taken by combining the statistical work of the Departments of Agriculture and of Industry and Commerce. When this combination is in working order the Committee would recommend that the practicability of adding to it the statistical work of the other ministries, either immediately, or by degrees, should be examined into.

The transfer of staff took place on 1 April 1923 so that by the beginning of April the Department of Industry and Commerce had a Statistical Unit as part of its structure with John Hooper as its Director and the nucleus of its staff coming from the amalgamation of the existing Statistical Branches of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Labour, and including Stanley Lyon.

Frequent mention has been made of Hooper and Lyon. Perhaps this is the appropriate place for biographical notes.

In 1902 John Hooper - a mathematical science honours graduate (1898) of UCD, after a short service (1st Division Clerkship) in the GPO in London, was transferred to DATII apparently at the request of T.P. Gill, Secretary of the Department and former parliamentary colleague of Hooper's father⁶². Hooper ultimately became Superintendent of the Branch and subsequently the first head of statistics in Saorstát Éireann.

The following year another arrival from GPO London was Stanley Lyon⁶³, also destined to play a central role in later developments as successor to Hooper whose untimely death occurred in December 1930.

While full documentation on the early days of the Statistics Unit, and on its aspirations and endeavours to achieve them, is lacking, enough exists to give a picture of the developments.

I use the term "Unit" deliberately at this stage. The existence of the Statistical unit in Industry and Commerce was confirmed in Dáil Éireann on 16 May 1923 by the President when replying to a Question from Deputy Johnson⁶⁴, when he indicated that, while he was not prepared to create a separate Department⁶⁵ for Government statistics, the Government was fully alive to the advantages to be secured by the concentration of statistical work and it had been arranged that the Statistical Bureau of the Minister for Industry and Commerce would compile the statistics in relation to agriculture in addition to the statistics relating to Industry and Commerce. The extension of the activities of the Bureau to other Government statistics was under consideration.

Initially, in line with the terminology then in use for subdivisions of a Ministry, the title “Department of Statistics” was used for the unit and it is of interest to note the appearance of that title on the cover of the first issue of the Monthly Trade Statistics of the Irish Free State - that for January 1924⁶⁶ and subsequent six issues only, having vanished from the August 1924 issue.

Following the implementation on 2 June 1924 of the Ministers and Secretaries Act the term “Ministry” previously in general use in the principal divisions of administration, was, everywhere, replaced by the term “Department” necessitating a change from “Department” to “Branch” to describe the major subdivisions of Departments.

Directions were circulated within Industry and Commerce concerning the consequential changes in departmental stationery etc. and the Establishment Officer, in a minute to the Secretary on 28 October⁶⁷, noted that the only difficulty arising was in the case of envelopes hitherto addressed to the “Department of Statistics” (Roinn na bhFigúirí). He understood that there was a special reason for the omission of a reference to Industry and Commerce on these envelopes and possibly on other Statistical stationery.

“Mr. Hooper thought that you had specially approved the title ‘Department of Statistics’. I imagine the reason is to avoid prejudice on the part of farmers⁶⁸. If however we adopt the title ‘Statistics Branch’ it does not seem to me to stand by itself so well as did ‘Department of Statistics’. What should be done in respect of Statistics stationery, therefore? Mr. Hooper tentatively suggested printing envelopes addressed to “The Statistician”, but I told him I had no authority for this title.”

Secretary Campbell replied that

“In the case of Statistics, ‘Department’ would convey the idea that we were responsible for all statistics, a responsibility the Minister would not be prepared to accept without an adequate establishment, and this is a question he is going to raise with the Executive Council.”

He did raise it when on 13 October 1924 he submitted to the Executive Council a seven-page Memorandum on Statistics stressing the unsatisfactory position as his Department saw it. (This action led to an overall critical assessment of statistical needs and resource requirements of the Saorstát.⁶⁹) The ‘cri du coeur’ of the Memorandum:

“The Department of Industry and Commerce can only present undigested and unrelated tabular matter on isolated aspects of the economic position. The statistical staff is barely sufficient for the work of piece-meal compilation. It has few officers of skilled statistical capacity and a status inadequate for what should be its expert functions. Yet, as the only Department which does issue

economic statistics, it has all the public responsibility for the glaring deficiencies in plan, method, and scope and presentation which are becoming obvious.

The essential need is for additional skilled statisticians. Sanction for any such appointments cannot, however, be obtained from the Department of Finance which is not prepared to recognise the case for a statistical system in the sense indicated in this memorandum. That Department does not agree that it is the duty of statistical officers to initiate, but holds that they must wait until administrative officers demand information. The latter are to determine what information is to be collected and consequently to be responsible for the details and scope of the returns to be demanded and, ultimately, the results to be published. Such a conception is at variance with the practice of all other countries: in them the need for skilled statistical investigators has long been recognised.”

Having given a selection of examples of steps actually taken on their own initiative by individual members of staff, which served to “indicate the place the skilled statistician should take and the way in which administrators and legislators are dependent on his initiative”, and having explained the approach adopted elsewhere, particularly in the Canadian Statistics Act of 1918, the memo drew a number of conclusions and made certain submissions. I quote some of them:

- (a) “That a regular statistical survey of the economic life of the Saorstát is essential to constructive policy and effective administration.*
- (b) That the Saorstát cannot pretend to be making or even planning such a survey and that even when the results of the present unrelated statistical operations in its various Departments are published the picture presented will be distorted and blurred and will show many gaps.*
- (c) That a Central Statistical Bureau can be established and a complete and uniform survey gradually planned and carried out at a comparatively small additional expense by the introduction of statistical experts of the proper status who can organise the system and eliminate needless pedantic accuracy⁷⁰, as, after the present administrative records have been given a statistical touch here and there to produce uniformity, it would appear that the main gaps left to be filled in by statistics collected and compiled for information only would be filled by a Census of Population and a Census of Production.*
- (d) That steps should be taken to set up as quickly as possible a central statistical Bureau as such a Bureau can be set up now more easily than later on when Departments have become more rigid and vested interests have been established.*

(e) That pending the establishment of such a Bureau:

(i) All economic statistics already compiled should be, by experts, properly analyzed and presented in such a form to the Oireachtas and public as in the view of the experts is necessary to make them useful.

(ii) That this work and the devising and early establishment of an economic statistical survey should for the immediate present be entrusted to a Director of Statistics to be appointed to the Department of Industry and Commerce whose status should be such that he can obtain expert assistance from a sufficient staff of his own and, without friction, the necessary information and help from officers in all Departments particularly interested in, or having records which can be utilised for, economic statistics.

(iii) That co-operation should be arranged between the Director of Statistics and the officers responsible for other statistical work such as the Census of Population.”

Following consideration of the matter, the Executive Council approved the following proposals⁷¹.

1. Statistics on economic matters should be compiled and published through one agency only, the Department of Industry and Commerce.
2. The Minister for Industry and Commerce should appoint a Committee consisting of:

Mr. John Hooper
Professor Bastable
Professor Busteed

to advise him as to the economic subjects on which it was necessary for the proper information of the Oireachtas and the public to compile statistics, as to the details under each such subject that should be obtained and as to the best sources for obtaining them.

3. Every Department, on the application of the Minister for Industry and Commerce, is to give the Committee such information on matters within the province of the Dept. as the Committee may require.

It also agreed with the proposals of the Minister for Industry and Commerce for setting up a Statistics Branch.

The Committee on Economic Statistics was appointed on 8 November 1924 and reported on 19 January 1925. Professor C. F. Bastable was the Chairman.

The Committee members were informed⁷² that it was intended that the Statistical Branch of the Department of Industry and Commerce should be responsible for all statistical information to be published on economic matters within the Committee's terms of Reference.

While the detailed working papers of the Committee have not been located, it is clear from the published Report⁷³ that the earlier internal report of the Departmental Advisory committee, referred to earlier, was well known to them.

Having first given a comprehensive summary of headings as an indication of the more important divisions of well organised statistical inquiry, the Economic Statistics Committee, in Section III of their Report, confined their detailed specific recommendations to those more urgent statistics that directly measure economic conditions, and indicated what appeared to them to be the more obvious lines of immediate development required, observing that the more profitable of these directions for investigation would become clearer as the statistics were gradually established, especially after the Census of Establishments.

This Census was necessary to enable returns of the numbers of employees (other than agricultural labourers and domestic servants) to be obtained from all establishments employing three or more persons. These would give the first general measure of the relative significance of various industries and would form the basis of a Census of Production, and of other Labour Statistics (detailed returns of wages from a large representative sample of employers, and monthly returns of wage earners employed from a smaller representative sample, to yield a monthly index of employment).

A Census of Production for 1926 was specifically recommended, but preceded by the extension as soon as possible to the principal industries and to all the protected industries, of the system of monthly statistics of quantities produced already available in respect of breweries, distilleries, match factories and bacon curing establishments, thus giving material for compiling a monthly index of industrial production in the Saorstát.

Another specific recommendation was for a complete Census of Population to be taken in 1926, if possible.

Section VII of the Report recommended that a General Statistics Bill be immediately introduced, giving to the Executive Council general powers to obtain whatever statistics they consider desirable.

The Report, in Section IV, dealt with a number of aspects of statistical organisation, with particular emphasis on the importance of the centralisation of official statistics in

one Office which should be granted as much formal autonomy as is possible within its parent Department. It was suggested that this Office, with its numerous staff on specialised work, should be disentangled in its administration as much as possible from other Branches.

The Report did not, however, deal explicitly with the need for employing an adequate number of skilled statisticians, which was one of the central problems raised in the Industry and Commerce memo to the Executive Council.

Following almost immediately on the Report of the Committee on Economic Statistics, three fundamental activities were put in hands or brought to a final stage:

1. preparation for a Census of Production;
2. preparation for a Census of Population;
3. preparation of a Statistics Bill.

At this early stage of development everything was new, and both politicians and officials alike were finding their feet. It is no surprise, then, that the organisational, legislative and timing aspects of these three projects had become intertwined, and it may be useful to devote a little space to each of them.

Census of Production, 1926

For some time prior to the setting up of the Committee attention had been given to the preparation of a Census of Production Act for Ireland which would enable the collection of fuller details (particularly wages and salaries) than those permitted under the UK Census of Production Acts of 1906 and 1917 the application of which to Saorstát Eire had not, as yet, been repealed⁷⁴.

An attempt had been made within the Department of Industry and Commerce to prepare a draft Census of Production Bill on the lines of the British 1906 Act, with improvements, and explicitly including both Agriculture and Fisheries in its scope, but when provision was made to cover differing requirements of all three Departments a very unwieldy instrument began to emerge.

Hooper then examined the statistical legislation of the Dominion countries, particularly South Africa, Canada and Australia, with the help of the legal adviser in Industry and Commerce, and attention was directed to the formulation of an Irish Statistics Bill of a general nature. This new orientation was reflected in the recommendation in Section VII of the Committee's Report.

Ministerial promises had been made to have a Production Census in 1926 in respect of 1925 but plans had to be revised because of the lateness of the General Statistics Act and

the demands on Statistics' staff arising from the 1926 Population Census. In the event, a Census of Production in respect of 1926 was taken in 1927 under the 1926 Statistics Act.

Census of Population, 1926

The Committee on Economic Statistics, in Section III (g) of its report, envisaged that, given the intense pressure on the Statistics Branch arising from many new activities, the complete Census of Population, which it recommended for 1926, would be taken under the auspices of the Registrar-General as in the past, but with the close involvement of the Statistics Branch and with Census responsibility thereafter falling on that Branch. The first decision of the Executive Council⁷⁵ in the Census context was on these lines and preparations were put in hands for an April 1926 Census with responsibility resting with the Minister for Local Government and Public Health under whose umbrella the Registrar General then operated.

Initially it had been understood that the Population Census, like the Production Census, would be taken under the general Statistics Act, then under preparation, without the necessity for a specific Population Census Act⁷⁶. However with the slow progress on the main Act and Census day of necessity fixed, the alarm bells had evidently begun to ring in the RG's office. On 17 November 1925 at a meeting of the inter-departmental group involved it was decided for the 1926 occasion to proceed under a special Census Act which would get priority in the Dáil⁷⁷.

In December 1925 instructions to draft such a Census Bill were sent to the Parliamentary Draftsman's Office. So it happened that when the second stage of the Statistics Bill was being taken in the Dáil on 19 January 1926, as the Minister indicated, a separate Census Bill was under preparation and there was uncertainty as to what the actual final arrangements would be.

The final chapter of the saga was written some ten weeks before the Census date of 18 April, when a somewhat different agreement was announced in a ministerial statement of 8 February 1926 bearing the names of P. McGilligan, Department of Industry and Commerce, and Séamus de Búrca, Department of Local Government and Public Health⁷⁸. The crucial point regarding legislation was:

“We are now of the opinion that the Statistics Bill gives sufficient powers for the purpose, and propose that the Census should be taken under that Bill,....”

There was a second crucial point regarding responsibility:

“We are, however, of opinion that..... the Census should be taken by the Minister for Industry and Commerce under the powers to be conferred on him by the Statistics Bill. It will, however, be necessary that the Director of the Statistics Branch should have the co-operation of the Registrar General⁷⁹ and

Assistant- Registrar General with their staff, in the taking of the Census and this can be arranged if the Executive Council approves the duty being carried out by the Minister for Industry and Commerce.”

A subsequent Executive Council decision⁸⁰ on 11 February 1926 confirmed these arrangements.

Statistics Bill, 1925

The first draft of the Statistics Bill, 1925, prepared within Industry and Commerce was sent to Finance on 31 March 1925⁸¹, and following amendment was sent to the Parliamentary Draftsman on 25 June. A number of definitional and other issues arose which delayed⁸² the finalisation of the Bill which, in fact, was not introduced into the Dáil until 17 December 1925⁸³.

Oireachtas consideration of the Statistics Bill led to some amendments, mainly arising from discussion at a select Committee of the Senate to which it was referred, a number of Senators being unhappy with the wide scope of the Bill and with what they regarded as “coercive clauses”⁸⁴. They felt that these had generated a feeling of uneasiness in the community - there had been rumours as to the intentions of the Government and a certain amount of alarm had been caused, especially amongst that section of the public and its officers who are pledged to secrecy concerning the affairs of their clients; this related specifically to Irish banking. In making the case, Senator Esmonde (obviously alluding to more matters than merely statistical ones) referred to alarm amongst depositors in the State because of the trend of events, certain speeches and so on, and said that the country was losing money as a result. The amendment finally arrived at, took the form of a new Section (19) which specifically guaranteed the confidentiality of the affairs in question in the operations of the Statistics Act,

The Statistics Bill as amended was passed by both Houses on 10 March 1926, and became law on 18 March⁸⁵. Its entry into the statute books, and some implementing Orders made under it in the same year⁸⁶, marked a most important outcome of the initial stage of the assessment of the way forward for Official Statistics. A description of the Act is given in Appendix A.

Other activities

While the forging of a basic legislative framework was an essential task, especially in the context of informative as distinct from administrative statistics, from the outset there were many other important activities coming within the ambit of the native statistical machinery which had to be catered for.

A useful guide to early work in the statistical field is given in a summary of the work of the Statistics Branch from the time of its creation to the end of 1931⁸⁷.

It described the setting up ab initio of the trade statistics as the most urgent, (and probably the most onerous), task undertaken by the new statistical organisation.

The next large task which had to be undertaken was to re-establish the system of agricultural returns collected from 1847 to 1918 by the police from every farmer in the country. From 1919 onwards the services of the police force as enumerators not being available, estimates based on direct postal returns from individual farmers were introduced, and by linking results for matched samples, the extent of year to year changes was determined.

In 1925 it was found feasible to return to the traditional enumeration system with the assistance of the Gardaí. For the collection of these statistics each local Garda unit had to be supplied with the names and addresses and area of each farmer in that area as shown on the valuation lists and the Gardaí furnished returns for 1925 and later years for every farm in the country⁸⁸. In fact both systems were used for 1925.^{89 90}

A very comprehensive Census of Agriculture was made in 1929 as part of the World Census of Agriculture, conducted by the International Institute of Agriculture, Rome.

In 1925 at the request of the Gaeltacht Commission the Statistics Branch arranged for and carried through all the compilations of a special census of persons in Irish-speaking areas. A special enquiry in reference to the Irish language as spoken "in the homes" was made in the area of the Gaeltacht at the time of the collection of the annual agricultural statistics. This extended to all or part of eleven counties' identified on the basis of the information collected in the Census of 1911 on ability to speak Irish. It was on the basis of the results of this special undertaking that the Gaeltacht and Breac-Gaeltacht areas were defined by the Commission. This special census had been carried out before the decision had been taken to have a complete Census of Population in 1926⁹¹.

A new series of statistics of wages of Agricultural labourers was commenced in July 1925 and repeated in 1926. The inherited system of statistics of agricultural Prices based on returns received from fair and market reporters was continued. A printed return of the average prices of agricultural produce in each year from 1881 to 1925 inclusive, was laid on the table of the Dáil in 1926.

Statistics in relation to industrial disputes were compiled and published.

Much work of a very intricate nature had been done with a view to ascertaining as accurately as possible the items and their respective amounts that enter into the invisible trade of the country. In that matter there was close collaboration with the Department of Finance and as a result regular returns were expected from Banks, Stockbrokers and Solicitors showing their aggregate dealings on behalf of clients.

Three new series of Price Index Numbers had been constructed with a view to regular compilation: (1) Agricultural, (2) Export and (3) Import.

Shipping Statistics and Migration Statistics were established under the powers formerly possessed by the Board of Trade. Statistics relating to the operations of Railways were compiled and published annually while special Censuses of Railway employees were taken in 1923, and annually from 1925.

A few smaller blocks of statistics were also compiled regularly- weekly and monthly curing of pigs, monthly retail prices of fertilisers, feeding stuffs, and seeds, half-yearly banking statistics etc.

The processing of the 1926 Census of Population returns had thrown a very heavy strain on the Branch. It had included for the first time ever classification by industries as well as by occupations and for the first time in these islands a census of unemployment.

A second Census of Production was taken in respect of 1929 and a detailed Report published covering 1926 and 1929, while arrangements were in hands for a further Census in respect of 1931.

Other uses of Statistics Act

Apart from the Orders required in connection with the Population and Production Censuses, a number of other Orders had been made under the Statistics Act:

1. The statistics (slaughter of Animals for Food) Order 1926⁹²;
2. The statistics (Road Motor Passenger services) Order 1927;
3. The statistics (Road Motor Passenger services; returns as to staff) Order 1929;
4. Statistics (Sea and Inland fisheries) Transfer of Functions Order 1927⁹³.

It is worthy of comment that the 1926 Statistics Act was entirely geared to the collection, handling and protection of information collected by fiat and that there was no explicit mention of information obtained on a voluntary basis. In fact voluntary inquiries, such as Household Budget Surveys, Farm Surveys, sub-annual industrial and other inquiries, Retail, Agricultural and Wholesale prices etc., came to play a major part in the statistical infrastructure and in all operational procedures all data so collected was given the same protection as if collected under a statutory Order⁹⁴.

Amending Act of 1946

The provisions of the 1926 Statistics Act on the absolute prohibition on disclosure of individual information collected under that Act led to internal problems in Industry and Commerce when plans were being prepared for the development of industry in the post-war years. Information on existing firms in the sectors under consideration had to be sought from those firms directly by the Industries Branch of the Department even though it may already have been gathered in a Census of Production by the Statistics Branch of the same Department.

In 1946 a Bill, amending the 1926 Statistics Act, was passed by the Oireachtas. Its purpose was to enable the Minister for Industry and Commerce to overcome the problem by giving him the power to authorise disclosure, in specified circumstances, of specified statistical information, to specified persons for the proper discharge of their functions, with absolute prohibition on consequential disclosure to unauthorised persons.

If the original Act had, in fact, been a specific Act for Industrial inquiries only, the amending Act would have been confined to such inquiries. However, as mentioned earlier, the basic Act was very general in nature and so the amending Act was phrased in equally general terms. Hence the relaxation could legally be held to apply to any information collected under the 1926 Act, including for example, Census of Population information⁹⁵.

Subsequent Statistical Activities

The first major statistical inquiry directed to the services sector was the Census of Distribution (basically retail and wholesale outlets) in respect of 1933⁹⁶, taken under the Statistics Act in 1934, on the basis of a register specially compiled for the purpose by the Gardai⁹⁷. This was a pioneering exercise, claimed to be the first in Europe⁹⁸, and while figures on sales, employment, wages and salaries and stocks were requested, to ensure the receipt of the maximum numbers of returns properly filled in, particulars were not sought for such very important matters as the cost price of goods sold or the value of sales of individual commodities.

Population Censuses were taken in 1936 and 1946 implying a return to a decennial frequency.

The Censuses of Production were taken on an annual basis from 1931 onwards, with limited coverage in 1932-35 and 1939-42.

With industrial conditions changing rapidly in the war years, short-term indicators in the form of quarterly indexes of industrial production were introduced in September 1942, and around the same time, half-yearly series on industrial employment and earnings and an index of weekly wages.

From 1950, quarterly series on volume of production, employment, earnings, and hours worked were inaugurated on a comparable basis with the annual census.

The most significant development in the statistical work of the Statistics Branch in its later years was the compilation of the first official estimates of national income and Expenditure⁹⁹, for the period 1938-1944. The results were published as a White Paper by the Minister for Finance, and presented to the Oireachtas in March 1946. It had been prepared by the Statistics Branch, in close co-operation with Finance¹⁰⁰ and the Revenue Commissioners, following interdepartmental discussions held in November 1944. The Director of the Branch, Stanley Lyon, and Roy Geary were heavily involved in the work and it would appear that the latter was the principal author of the published document.

This national income publication was not the beginning of an immediate annual series¹⁰¹. Its preparation had left those involved with a backlog of work on other activities and with a list of new inquiries that, apart from their own intrinsic merit, would be necessary over time to provide the means of filling information gaps highlighted during the national accounts work. In time, particularly after the CSO was established, with Geary as its first Director, the national accounts evolved into an annual series.

The first step taken in the light of the experience gained in the first national income exercise, was to extend the scope of the information collected in the annual Census of Production on various supplementary production costs to enable "value added" to be estimated more accurately.

The second step was the inauguration, in January 1949, of the Passenger Card Inquiry - a continuing sampling of travellers into and out of the State, designed to collect information on questionnaire cards which would enable reliable estimates to be made of tourist expenditure by visitors to Ireland and tourist expenditure abroad by visitors from Ireland.

6. THE CENTRAL STATISTICS OFFICE

The Central Statistics Office was created on 1 June 1949 as being a separate Office attached to the Department of the Taoiseach, with a separate Vote, and under the control of a Director¹⁰². The only statutory requisite for this fundamental development was a Government Order, made under the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Act, 1939, transferring from the Minister for Industry and Commerce to the Taoiseach certain powers and responsibilities exercised by the former under the Statistics Acts of 1926 and 1946, and without the necessity for explicit mention of either the outgoing Statistics Branch or the incoming Central Statistics Office.

The archives show some interesting aspects of the events leading up to that change.

Specific proposals for a CSO [emanating from a memo submitted by Geary (who had become Director following Stanley Lyon's retirement) to the Taoiseach pressing the need for a more visibly central and independent status for the Statistics Branch] were first considered at Cabinet on 6 July 1948 when the matter was referred to a Cabinet sub-committee and was considered again on 4 January 1949 having been the subject of much inter-departmental and other discussion¹⁰³. A number of the proposals seemed to have been decided at the second meeting but certain matters were reopened by Department of Finance and considered further at the Government meeting of 28 February. The fundamental Finance objection was to the proposal to transfer the CSO to the Department of the Taoiseach from Industry and Commerce. In the Minister's view all that was required could be achieved without severing the existing links. Given that the Taoiseach's Department had neither an Establishment Branch nor an Accounts Branch¹⁰⁴, the transfer would lead to the necessity to provide for these internal administrative functions. This view was shared by the Secretary of the Taoiseach's Department although the Department of Industry and Commerce supported the original proposals.

Despite the opposition the transition went ahead, and from 1 June 1949 the Central Statistics Office was in existence, strengthened by the implementation of two other major elements of the agreed package:

1. the appointment, as Deputy Director, of Professor Donal McCarthy¹⁰⁵ (then Professor of Mathematical Physics in UCC), and
2. the recruitment through a Civil Service Commission competition of 4 Statisticians, the first appointees to that new departmental grade¹⁰⁶. It was arranged that, under an ECA technical assistance project, two of these would spend some eight months in the United States of America with a general brief to study the system of government statistics, concentrating on¹⁰⁷:
 - a) National Income statistics;
 - b) Household Budget Inquiries;
 - c) Farm Income Surveys;
 - d) Estimation of Yields of Farm Crops;
 - e) Design of Sample Surveys.

There is one feature of the 1949 package of changes which remains unexplained. The same Government decision which established the CSO also embodied a decision to create a Statistical Council as provided for on a discretionary basis¹⁰⁸ in the 1926 Statistics Act and this was announced in an official press release¹⁰⁹. However nothing was subsequently heard about such a body until 1984 when one was established without any reference to the 1949 decision. It is possible that if such a Council had been in existence by 1975 the cancellation of the 1976 Census would not have taken place.

Following the setting up of the CSO, the 1950s saw a significant widening of the scope of statistical activities. From July 1950 the responsibility for Vital Statistics, (but not, of course, for the registration of vital events) was transferred to the CSO.

In addition a government decision was taken to have a Census of Population in 1951. This decision was influenced by the desire to achieve a potential Register of Population at the same time, to facilitate the issue of a new set of ration books if this was deemed necessary. However it was also desired by the Statistics Office to enable more frequent and more accurate estimates of the level of net migration to be made, and represented the start of a five-yearly frequency for Population Censuses.

In 1951-52 the first largescale Household Budget Inquiry was carried out on a scientifically designed sample basis wherein selected households, in urban areas only, kept detailed records over a specified period of every item of expenditure of all household members. The results provided the raw material for an up-to-date weighting pattern for compiling the national Cost of Living Index number. They also provided valuable guidance in preparing the detailed breakdown of Personal Expenditure - the largest component of National Expenditure - especially for the service elements of spending. The HBS also collected information on household incomes so that analyses of the different expenditure patterns of the different income groups could be prepared.

1952 saw a Census of Distribution and Services undertaken in respect of the year 1951 - the first since 1933, and the start of an intended five yearly cycle of such censuses, with sample inquiries in intervening years.

A Quarterly Hotels Inquiry was introduced yielding estimates from the beginning of 1951 of total receipts with "hotel bill receipts" classified by area of permanent residence of guests.

The beginning of 1955 saw the inauguration of the National Farm Survey¹¹⁰ in which a representative sample of farms kept detailed records, under supervision, of financial and other data relevant to their farming activity, the objectives being (a) to improve the statistical quality of the existing official estimates of global farm output and income; (b) to establish the level of income from agricultural activity for individual farms, and the differences that exist between farms of different sizes and different regions and different patterns of farming; and (c) to determine the level of livestock mortality, the seasonal pattern of livestock births and deaths, and related characteristics.

The Survey was continued for three years by the end of which time it was considered that sufficient data had been collected for the requirements mentioned.

1956 saw another Population Census - this time restricted in scope to sex, date of birth and marital status, and in the interests of economy, subsequently restricted further at the compilation stage to a mere enumeration by areas. In conjunction with the Census a special investigation was held to determine the extent of the suburban areas or environs

of towns with legally defined boundaries and to establish, on a uniform basis, boundaries for “Census Towns” (i.e. towns without legal boundaries).

Most of these activities continued in one form or another through the 1960s and later, and were added to by the inauguration from January 1961 of the series of monthly index numbers of Retail Sales, while in 1964 the first Sample Survey of Road Freight Transport was carried out, covering transport on own account as well as activities of licensed hauliers. However the annual sample Distribution inquiries had to be terminated for reasons of economy at the beginning of the 1970s.

The third large-scale Household Budget Survey in 1973, covered both urban and rural households. It was followed in the following year by a smallscale continuing annual survey which had to be suspended in 1982 because of economy measures.

Other noteworthy developments were the “retirement” of Roy Geary in the mid 1950s to be succeeded as Director by Donal McCarthy and the unexpected departure of McCarthy some ten years later at which time I was honoured by the invitation to fill the vacant chair!

New assessment of Statistical Requirements

Over a period of years there developed increasing pressure on the CSO to produce more and more detailed statistics in practically every economic sector. Much of this increased interest in statistical material arose as a result of the general upsurge in economic and social activity in the early 1960s, from the advent of the national economic programmes and, at local level, as a result of the increased emphasis on physical planning.

Following discussions between the CSO and the Department of Finance in early 1968 it was decided to form a Committee to consider all aspects of statistical requirements and priorities. The Committee had the benefit of the views from a very wide cross section of users and was helped in its work by a number of inter-departmental Committees which considered in depth the requirements of specific sectors¹¹. Most of these were already in existence before the setting up of the new Committee.

Membership of European Communities

At a certain stage the work of the Committee and the preparation of its Report were delayed when it became clear that access to the European Economic Communities was certain and that serious account would have to be taken of statistical implications of membership - thus in effect extending the terms of reference of the Committee.

The Committee's Report recommended a considerable number of developments and gave a priority ordering to them.

Although the workings of the Committee enabled a thorough assessment of the position to be made, the Report, lacking, as it did, the status of a Governmental or Ministerial document, carried little clout¹¹².

However, it was an early indication of the dominant influence the EEC involvement would have from 1973 onwards, that the first two priorities, a monthly series of indexes of industrial production (in place of the existing quarterly series), and a Labour Force Survey, were EEC requirements and that they were in fact implemented without undue delay.

The overall EU position has been summarised as follows by the National Statistics Board:

“EU statistical requirements have had a strong influence on the development of Irish official statistics over the past two decades. There has been a resulting improvement in the range and detail on national statistics and in their comparability with other Member States. Almost all of the CSO's statistical activities are now mandatory under Community legislation. (my emphasis)”¹¹³

This is not the place for me to undertake an inventory of all the statistical activities on which EU membership has impinged, but it is, I believe, an appropriate place to acknowledge the substantial additional managerial activity found necessary to ensure that, when the EU statistical activities are being determined and provided for, adequate attention is given to the Irish situation and to Irish experience.

The National Statistics Board

The National Statistics Board was established, initially on a non-statutory basis, in February 1986, following the publication of a Government White Paper¹¹⁴. The Board's essential function consisted of guiding the strategic direction of the CSO with a mandate from Government to establish priorities in responding to the demands for official statistics. This has proved to be a successful initiative as evidenced by the contents of the Board's Reports, commencing with “Strategy for Statistics 1988-1992” up to the most recent Report “Implementation of strategy for Statistics 1993-1997”.

The establishment of the Board was the immediate implementation of one of the proposals for new institutional arrangements put forward in the White Paper on the basis of

1. Report and Recommendations of the Statistical Council¹¹⁵;
2. CSO comments thereon¹¹⁶;
3. NESR Report “Information for Policy”¹¹⁷.

7. 1993 Statistics Act

Fuller implementation of the White Paper proposals awaited the passing of the Statistics Act, 1993¹¹⁸ which replaced in full the earlier Acts and which established the new institutional structure comprising:

1. The Central Statistics Office;
2. The Director General of the CSO;
3. The National Statistics Board.

This final step in the creation of a statutory government agency with responsibility for Official Statistics in the State brings me to the end of an account which attempts to identify the principal steps which led to the development of a vibrant, efficient national entity which came to hold its own on the world statistical stage.

I have not attempted to provide an exhaustive guide to all the statistical series or once-off statistical inquiries undertaken “officially” in the State, nor to document the history of the changes in form, content or published information from such series or inquiries.

Because of their central position specific reference has been made to some of the personalities involved. It is for me essential to put on record, as well, an acknowledgment of the unselfish commitment, far beyond the call of duty, of many, many officers at all levels that I personally experienced in the CSO. Without them continued survival of the statistical system would have been virtually impossible.

APPENDIX A

Statistics Act, 1926

The Act bestowed a central and co-ordinating role on the Minister for Industry and Commerce and adopted a flexible approach for collection etc. of particular statistics by particular Ministers with provision for consultation with the Minister for Industry and Commerce but it did not in any way overrule any existing powers in relation to statistics vested by law in any Minister or in any board, body, or officer in charge of any branch of the public service.

It dealt with the procedures for prescribing, by Order, the persons or classes of persons by whom returns were to be made and for making the requisite regulations. It made provision, should the necessity arise¹¹⁹, for officers of statistics to inspect and, if required, obtain copies of public or other records.

Such officers of statistics had to have written authority¹²⁰ and were subject to strict confidentiality rules, as were all other persons engaged on the statistical procedures. Similar safeguards were imposed to prevent disclosure of individual data through publication of results “so far as was reasonably practicable”.

Breaches of the rules and regulations whether by failure or refusal to do any act or thing required lawfully under the Act, or by abuse of office by officers of statistics, constituted offences under the relevant sections and, on summary conviction thereof, rendered those involved liable to a specified fine and/or, in some instances, at the discretion of the court, to a term of imprisonment.

There was a stipulation in Section 17 that any Order made under the Act should be laid as soon as may be on the Table of both Houses of the Oireachtas¹²¹.

The Census of Production Acts, 1906 and 1917, were repealed thus clearing the way for the Statistics (Census of Production) Order, 1926.

Finance control was ensured by Section 20 which said that “All expenses of carrying this Act into effect shall, to such extent as shall be sanctioned by the Minister for Finance, be paid out of moneys to be provided by the Oireachtas.”

The Act was very general in so far as the delineation of the statistical scope was concerned. Section 2 provided that

“The Minister may collect, compile, abstract and (subject to the provisions of this Act) publish statistics relating to any matter affecting the general economic and other activities and conditions in Saorstát Eireann and in particular all or any of the following matters, that is to say:

1. population;
2. vital, social and educational matters;
3. local government;
4. employment and unemployment;
5. emigration and immigration;
6. agriculture;
7. sea and inland fisheries;
8. industry;
9. commerce;
10. banking, insurance and finance;
11. railways, tramways, shipping and other forms of transport;
12. ancient monuments¹²².”

The Act was also of a general nature in so far as the particulars to be collected and the modalities of collection were concerned. Section 16 stipulated that

“Minister may by Order do all or any of the following things, that is to say:

- (a) prescribe the subject matter, nature, character and periodicity of the statistics to be collected under this Act, and the time at or the occasion on which the same are to be collected;
- (b) prescribe, subject to the provisions of this section, the persons or classes of persons by whom returns are to be made or information is to be given for the purpose of any statistics collected under this Act¹²³;
- (c) make regulations for the collection, compilation, abstraction, or publication of statistics generally or any particular class or classes of statistics under this Act;
- (d) prescribe the schedules, forms, instructions and other documents to be used in the collection, compilation, abstraction, or publication of statistics generally or of any particular class or classes of statistics under this Act;
- (e) prescribe any matter or thing which is referred to in this act as prescribed or to be prescribed by regulations made under this Act.”

Footnotes

Abbreviations in References:

NA = National Archives. In many NA references below, the acronym CSO appears. The derives from the “Chief Secretary’s Office”. However, in the text itself CSO denotes Central Statistics Office.

NL = National Library.

Statistics Office = Central Statistics Office.

1. Separate legislative provision was always made for the Irish Census.
2. Linehan, T.P., 1991/92. “History and Development of Irish Population Censuses”, *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, Vol. XXVI, Part IV.
3. Report of the Commissioners appointed to take the Census of Ireland for the year 1841, p. vi, Dublin, 1843.
4. Report and transactions of the 13th Meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, 1843.
5. NA CSO RP 1843/O 11532. Also *Annals of County and City of Cork* by Henry Biggs, Cork, 1843.
6. An Abstract, dated 22 April, giving totals of population and families, for provinces, counties and towns, was presented to both Houses of Parliament in May 1843. It was explained that this procedure had been adopted in consequence of an unfortunate delay in the printing of the detailed returns and Report. (London Times, 5 May 1843, p.6). The date shown at the last page of the textual section of the 1841 Census Report is 14 August 1843.
7. Earlier that week, in his capacity as head of the Ordnance Survey Office in Ireland - his basic and permanent position in those years - Larcom had read a paper on “Contour Mapping” to Section A - the Mathematical and Physical science Section - of the Association.
8. Lawson, James Anthony, December 1847. “Connection between Statistics and Political Economy”, *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland*.
9. While the parochial division was the smallest one used in the detailed Report on the 1841 Census, in 1844 some 34 fasciculi were published furnishing the enumeration returns of houses and persons for each townland, but without reference to area or valuation. (General Report of 1871 Census [C-1377], 1876, pps. 37-38)

10. At that time he was a Junior Commissioner of Public works in Ireland and responsible for organising Famine Relief.
11. Larcom Manuscript 7743, (introductory note), Larcom Papers, NL.
12. It was originally planned that Larcom would again have responsibility for the 1851 census, but ill health prevented this. (Idem)
13. Compulsory registration of Marriages only, of all denominations except Catholics, commenced in 1845 under Act of 7&8 Vic. c81. Compulsory registration of all Births, Marriages and Deaths commenced in Ireland in 1864, W. Donnelly still being in office as Registrar-General.
14. It should be clarified that, for a long time, the successful execution of both the decennial censuses of population and the annual census of agriculture was due to the availability, at marginal cost, of a nationwide network of enumerators already in existence, trained and disciplined and capable of carrying out the different stages of the work. Initially and for many decades this network was the Royal Irish Constabulary, succeeded in due course by the Garda Síochána. Inevitably this valuable resource ceased to be available for statistical work and nowadays for any such full-scale census, special ad hoc enumeration networks have to be recruited and trained, while annual agricultural inquiries are carried out by postal contact as is done for other economic sectors.
15. NL Larcom Ms. 7743.
16. As part of the data collection mechanism associated with the 1851 Census (Form "O" of the set of Census Forms), from 1 May 1851, at every Irish port from which people emigrated, the constabulary collected for each ship departure, particulars for every emigrant as to name, age, sex, parish and county from whence emigrating, rank/profession/occupation, destination. This series continued up to the disbandment of the RIC. [In 1841 somewhat similar data were collected from 13 May to 31 August - see table 3 pps. 450-51 and xxv-vi of 1841 Report.]
17. 23rd report of Registrar General of Births Marriages and Deaths for Ireland. Situation confirmed by RG's answer to Question no. 2682 in evidence to the Commission on Financial Relations between Ireland and Great Britain, [Cd. 7720,1895].The broad scope of the statistical areas covered in the many questions addressed to the RG by this Commission indicates the central "statistical" role played by his Office.
18. Report of the Recess Committee on the establishment of a Department of Agriculture and Industries for Ireland, 1896.
19. The five other Branches were Agricultural; Technical Instruction; Fisheries; Veterinary; Accounts.

20. Since 1832 there had been a statistical department at the Board of Trade in London. [Reg Ward and Ted Doggett; Keeping Score - The first fifty years of the Central Statistical Office, London, 1991.]
21. First Annual General Report of the Department, 1900-01; [Cd. 838], 1901.
22. Report on the Trade in Imports and Exports at Irish Ports -Year ended 31 December 1904; [Cd. 3237] 1906.
23. He was a member of the Irish Bar, and held a Fellowship of the Royal University of Ireland. D. Hocter; *The Department's Story*, p.43.
24. He served for five years before going to Oxford to take up the Gladstone Professorship of Political Economy and Economics. Hocter, p.56.
25. [Cd. 3237] 1906. The Report on the trade in Imports and Exports at Irish Ports during the year 1904.
26. Samuels, A.W., KC, 1909. "The External Commerce of Ireland", *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland*, xii, 193.
27. Adams, William G.S., 1909. "Some considerations relating to the statistics of Irish Production and Trade", *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland*, xii, 310.
28. [Cd. 4054] Vice-Regal Commission on Irish Railways - Evidence, November 1907.
29. The Agricultural Output of Ireland, 1908. Report and Tables prepared in connection with the Census of Production Act, 1906, London, 1912.
30. [Cd. 6320]; Final report of the First Census of Production of the United Kingdom (1907); 1912 (HMSO).
31. Where confidentiality restraints permitted the series of preliminary reports, which preceded the Final Report, also gave some data for Ireland for the major industries. However, in comparison with subsequent results from the Saorstát Éireann Production Censuses, the 1907 results suffered from the restrictive nature of the basic 1906 legislation which allowed only data on products, materials used and persons engaged to be collected, to the exclusion, in particular, of labour costs.
32. In correspondence in April 1916, Butler (DATII) told Flux (Director of Census of Production Office, Board of Trade) that the tables appearing in Appendix I to the Minutes of Evidence related to the year 1912-13 and represented estimates subject to revision, made on basis of results available at that time. The tables had been put forward in a rough form merely for the private guidance of the Committee and were inadvertently published without reference to Butler and were not accompanied by sufficient reservations and explanations. Stats Office..SA156.
33. [Cd. 8158], 1916

34. Important sections of the Census were, however, compiled and through the courtesy of the Board of Trade, who kindly furnished the material, it was possible to include summary results for 1912 for Saorstát Éireann in an Appendix (page xxi) to the Report on the first two Production Censuses of the Saorstát. [P. No. 844] 1933; Census of Industrial Production 1926 and 1929 - compiled by the Statistics Branch of Department of Industry and Commerce.
35. NA CSO RP 1917/8927
36. NA CSO RP 1918/11787
37. For horses however, there was insistence on a census throughout the UK seeking compulsory returns and Hooper handled this in 1917 by getting the RIC to issue the statutory forms in June at the same time as they were carrying out the June enumeration. In 1918, however, London was unwilling to have such a compromise, or an alternative one of having horses included in the postal inquiries, and matters were heading towards a confrontation, when the Armistice intervened [NA CSO RP 1918/30896.]
38. Since the Irish Office had very little freedom, as almost everything concerning statistics was planned and ordered from the London headquarters, it did not publish any statistical reports but the Journal of the London Ministry contained summaries of the statistics compiled by it. [Lyon, Stanley, 1932/1933. "The Organisation of Official Statistics in Saorstát Eireann and in some other countries" *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland*, xv, 29.]
39. Thom's Directory recorded Lyon as a member of DATII staff until 1919. His name did not appear in the issues for 1920 or 1921 but reappeared, as head of the Statistics and Intelligence Branch of the Labour Department in 1922.
40. NA CSO RP 1919/13946.
41. The Statistics Branch supplied blank forms of inquiry to each police sub-district and the police were good enough to undertake to address these forms to each of the farmers who were requested to fill them up with particulars for 1917 and 1919 and return them to the police barracks where they were summarised. {Twentieth Annual General Report (1919-20) of the DATII}; 1921; p.106.
42. [P. No. 1577]; 1935; Agricultural Statistics 1927-1933, p. xxix. For 1919 the sample scheme aimed at estimating the numbers of livestock and the area under hay. For crops however a complete record was obtained through another mechanism linked to the Corn Production Act, 1917, which imposed compulsory tillage. In 1919, under regulations made under the Act, payment was guaranteed to growers of cereals on condition that each grower furnished a declaration as to the extent sown by him for cereal production. Inspectors engaged throughout the country on the checking of these declarations were provided with 25-inch Ordnance Survey sheets and instructed to record the actual area of each crop other than hay in each field. The summarised results of this survey provided a complete record.

43. Idem.
44. The following had been appointed as Commissioners for the 1921 Census: William J. Thompson (Registrar-General); Edward O’Farrell; Daniel S. Doyle.
45. The Census legislation put in place in 1920 had foreseen the possibility of a change being necessary in the traditional arrangements [Census (Ireland) Act, 1920, 10 & 11 Geo. 5, Cap. 42]. Article 2 (1) reads “*The Lord Lieutenant may appoint such officers of local authorities or such other persons as he thinks proper to act as and be enumerators for the purpose of this Act, or to superintend or assist in the enumeration.*”
46. The Commissioners concluded that the Clerks of the Poor Law Unions in Rural Districts and Town Clerks in Urban Districts would be the most suitable class of persons to act as supervisors and would be in direct touch with a number of trained subordinate officers who could act as enumerators. They were of the opinion that the acceptance or rejection of this duty by the Executive of the Association to which the officers belonged would give a very fair indication as to the popular attitude towards the Census [NA CSO RP 1921/22-2740/2] (Part of bundle from Finance acquisition of 1921/22 papers).
47. NA DE/2/8/34; the wording was as follows:
- Whereas the British Government, through its army of invasion and occupation, is about to attempt to take a Census of the population of this Country;*
- and Whereas such taking of Census is a usurpation of the right of the Irish people;*
- and Whereas the returns could be used by the enemy against Irish citizens;*
- now it is hereby decreed by Dáil Eire in session assembled that the people of Ireland will not make any Census returns whatever to the British Government or its agents.*
48. NA DE/2/51.
49. Stats. Office. SG 320.
50. By the time that the Census was called off, the content of the census Form had been finalised, and proof copies, and possibly some printed copies, were already available. If executed, the 1921 Irish Census would have joined those of GB in distinguishing for the first time between “Occupation” and “Industry” in the classifications of the workforce, [i.e. between the “skill” of an employee and the “business” in which he worked e.g. a carpenter working in a brewery!] This distinction was adopted in the first Saorstát Census in 1926. [Idem; CSO RP 1921/22-2740/2.]
51. NA . CSO RP 1919/32405; Finance 695/8; Taoiseach S 3207.

52. Proposals which had been put before the Royal Statistical Society by various persons, over a period of 40 years, that there should be a Central Statistical Office for the United Kingdom.
53. The five principal signatories were members of the Official Statistics Committee of the Royal Statistical Society. The many others included Professor C.F. Bastable (Dublin University) amongst the individuals and, amongst the Learned Bodies and Other Societies, the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland. The Committee was of the opinion that no case existed for an enquiry by either a Royal Commission or Parliamentary Committee, as requested by the Petitioners, but did recommend that for the purpose of ensuring more effective co-operation and co-ordination between the different departments in their statistical work, a permanent Consultative Committee of statistical officers should be established. This was done and Hooper and Thompson were nominated to fill two of the three places reserved for Ireland on that Committee, although there is no evidence that they had an opportunity to participate before they ceased to be officers of the UK. [*Report on the collection and Presentation of official Statistics*, London, 1921]; [NA CSO RP 1921/3271]
54. NA G 1/1
55. The results were based on (i) a current expenditure pattern derived from some 308 family expenditure records compiled with the help of national school teachers, and (ii) price quotations collected by the Ministry of Economic Affairs through Post Office officials as well as the Ministry of Labour and of the Local Government Board, as well as from records of data collected in 1914 for Ireland by the Labour Statistics Branch of the Board of Trade.
56. NA G 1/3
57. Stats. Office papers, SG 78; this internal report was not published and documentation is sparse!
58. This recommendation was accepted and the basic elements of the arrangements continued in place until, following the completion of the EU Single Market at the end of 1992, fundamental changes occurred.
59. An account of his life and work and of the extent of his involvement in official statistics is described in detail in Chapters 1 and 5 of *Roy Geary, 1896-1983: Irish Statistician*, ESRI, 1997.
60. NA G 2/1

61. One matter the Committee will have to consider is the collection and compilation of statistics arising out of the various branches of administration. In particular the Ministry of Industry and Commerce will require a large expansion of the statistics hitherto compiled relating to Trade and Industry and the Committee will require to consider whether it would be advisable for each Department to have its own statistical branch or whether statistical work should be centralised either under the Department with the largest volume of statistics or under independent control.
62. Obituaries of the younger John Hooper (also known as “Jack”), who was born in 1878 - *Journal of Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, 1930-31; *Journal of Royal Statistical Society*, Series A, 1931, December 1931 issue of “The Collegian” (Journal of Christian Brothers’ College, Cork). Alderman John Hooper senior was Parnellite M.P. for South East Cork and Editor of the Cork Daily Herald. In the latter capacity, and while still an M.P., close to Christmas, 1887, he was sentenced to, and served, in Cork jail and subsequently Tullamore jail, two months hard labour for publishing information re meetings of suppressed branches of the National League and, although under medical treatment, was subject to strict disciplinary measures when he insisted on his rights as a political prisoner. (Obituary of John Hooper senior, *Freeman’s Journal* 26 and 27 November 1897; General Prison Board and Chief Secretary’s Office records, National Archives - GPB 1888/222,511/572/961; CSO RP 1889/10670).
63. Born in 1882, he was a boy clerk in Department of Agriculture in 1901, (Census return of 1901); he evidently served in London before returning to Dublin (obituary, 1975 *Clongonian*). In 1906 he was awarded BA from Royal University of Ireland (Classics, Logic and Political Economy) (NUI records).
64. Dáil Debates, vol3, col.895.
65. Presumably “separate Department” meant “separate Ministry” or “independent Agency”.
66. Trade and Shipping Statistics of the Irish Free State, January 1924, issued by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, Department of Statistics.
67. NA I&C, E 53/24
68. At that time the agricultural statistics were being collected using postal returns from individual farmers, in the absence of the availability of the traditional enumerators, the police force.
69. NA D/T S 4766
70. This remark has its echo in a comment by Hooper in the course of his reply to Professor C.H. Oldham’s rather critical address to SSISI on 24 November 1924, which included the salvo re Irish statistics “*blotted all over with inaccuracies*”; Hooper remarked:

“Might I suggest that the comparatively little energy devoted in this country to Statistics should not be wasted on verifying with meticulous accuracy the work of junior clerks, but should be applied to the interpretation of official statistics. (“Oldham, Charles Hubert, 1924-1925. “The Interpretation of Irish Statistics”, Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland, xiv, 16)

71. Executive Council Minutes 15, 23 and 25 October 1924.
72. Report of Committee on Economic Statistics; S.O. 1925.
73. Idem
74. Statistics Office papers; SG 287. In fact, following advice to Statistics Branch from Mr. Flux of the Board of Trade Statistics Division, the following Order had been made, on 30 December 1922, under the Westminster Acts of 1906 and 1917 to enable Saorstát Éireann, if it so desired, to undertake its own Production Census in 1924 in respect of 1923, it being understood that it was merely an enabling measure and that it would not be mandatory to carry out the exercise:

“The Ministry of Industry and Commerce, in exercise of its powers under the Census of Production Acts 1906 and 1917 and of all other powers and authorities it hereunto enabling, doth by this Order determine that a Census of Production shall be taken in the year 1924.

This Order may be cited as the Census of Production Order 1922.”

It was signed by Gordon Campbell. In the event this Census was not carried out. Two years later the possibility was considered of making a similar Order to enable a Census to be taken in 1926 in respect of 1925.

75. NA Cabinet Minutes 12/8/25
76. The possibility of revitalising the Census (Ireland) Act, 1920 was raised by the President’s Office with the Attorney General on 16 September 1925, and, on 22 September, elicited the view that “the points raised could only be of academic interest as it was difficult to conceive the possibility of this Government proceeding to operate (even if it were legally possible to do so) under the Restoration of Order in Ireland Act or the Regulations made thereunder “. [NA AG 208/25]

This was in fact the basis of the procedure devised in 1921 to enable the Lord Lieutenant to issue an Order on 12 April 1921, postponing the taking of the Census legislated for 24 April, and directing that “the same shall not be taken unless and until a Census day is hereafter fixed for the purpose by an Order of the Lord Lieutenant under the said regulations”.

77. NA Finance E 109/34/25. Given the close involvement of both agencies with the Census project, there was still some uncertainty re ultimate responsibility as the manuscript note on the conference also recorded three further points:

“The Census for this occasion would be taken by the Minister for Local Government”.

“The Registrar general to be responsible for accounting and administration, but he would have the Director of statistics closely associated with him as Commissioner to assist in deciding what information should be asked from the public and what should be compiled therefrom.”

“Mr. McCarron will proceed with the preparation of a Bill on these lines.”

78. *Idem*

79. All previous experience of census taking resided with the Registrar General and his staff. It was the current holder of the office, Sir William J. Thompson, who read the traditional pre-census paper to SSISI on 25 March 1926, indicating, incidentally that the Minister for I&C would be responsible. He, himself, had been responsible for the 1911 Census and would also have been responsible for the 1921 Census if the plans therefor had come to fruition.

It was symptomatic of the fundamental changes being made in the Census area that, less than four months earlier, on 3rd December 1925, in his Presidential address to SSISI, Professor C.H. Oldham referred to a circular letter (of 10 September) which the Society had received from the Department of Local Government and Public Health announcing that it had been authorised by the Executive Council to take a Census in April 1926, and inviting the views of the Society. In the context of suggestions for change that the author was putting forward in his paper, he commented “It must have been noticed that the taking of the New Census by a polygenous Department, in the place of a Commission empowered and instructed *ad hoc* by a special act of the Legislature, is already an innovation of gigantic proportions.”

Thompson, William John, 1925-1926. “The First Census of the Irish Free State and its Importance to the Country”, *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland*, xiv, 239.

Oldham, Charles Hubert, 1925-1926. “Reform of the Irish Census of Population”, *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland*, xiv, 197.

80. NA Cabinet minutes 11/2/26

81. NA Finance F 96/4/24. This first draft was based largely on the Canadian and South African Statistics Acts. It had marginal notes indicating for each proposed Section the relevant sections of one or both of these Acts from which it had been taken.

82. In introducing the second stage of the Bill on 19 January 1926, the Minister, P. McGilligan said:

“If I were going into details to explain any delay that there has been in introducing the Bill I would stress very definitely the difficulties that have been met in seeking to get assent to the general proposal that the collection and publication of statistics should be centralised and should be placed under one Department of Government. The arguments and objections that have been used against that have not been raised simply for the sake of objection. There are a variety of matters that have to be dealt with: the particular season of the year in which one Department requires information to be collected as distinct from another; the form in which information has to be published, different forms required by different Departments.”

83. The Order under the 1926 Statistics Act for the taking of the 1926 Census of Production was signed on 24 June 1926.
84. Oireachtas; Reports of Committees; 1
85. Four days later, on 22 March the Statistics (Census of Population) Order, 1926 was signed by Mr. McGilligan to enable the taking of the Census on Sunday, 18 April 1926.
86. The Statistics (Census of Population) Order, 1926 [No.76];
The Statistics (Census of Production) Order, 1926 [No.46].
87. This forms part of a summary of the activities of the different branches of the Department of Industry and Commerce [NA T/ S 2225].
88. These agricultural enumerations, and all subsequent ones with the exception of those for the three years 1943-45 associated with compulsory tillage ordinances, were not the subject of an Order under the Statistics Act and, like their predecessors, they were *voluntary* from the statutory point of view although, it must be admitted, that in normal circumstances, the arrival on the doorstep or in the farmyard of a police officer in uniform as enumerator helped considerably in achieving a highly satisfactory response rate!
89. The only reference to a comparison of the two sets of results that the author has found recorded that the postal sampling estimates showed a decrease in the area of ploughed land from 1919 to 1925 of 32 per cent as compared with a decrease of 34 per cent shown by the complete enumeration [Statistics Office papers SG 325].
90. In Northern Ireland the traditional enumeration system was revived in 1923 with the RUC acting as enumerators. Here there was a two year overlap using both systems and some more information on the comparison of the two sets of results is available for the principal crops and categories of livestock [First annual Report of the Agricultural Statistics of Northern Ireland; HMSO 1925].
91. Coimisiún na Gaeltachta report; 14 July 1926.
92. This covered returns for the number and dressed weight of cattle, calves, sheep, lambs, and pigs slaughtered during a number of specified weeks in 1926/27. This

information was required as part of the data needed for estimating total agricultural production in that year. A Report on the output of Agricultural Production 1926/7 was issued in 1928.

93. By this Order the Executive Council used the flexible powers given to it under Section 3 of the Statistics Act to transfer to another Minister (the Minister for Fisheries in this case) the powers of the Act in relation to any particular class or classes of statistics (in this case in relation to sea and inland fisheries, but not including powers or duties relating to the export, import, and internal transport of fish, the manufacture of fishery products, or the fish curing trade). Subsequently the Minister for Fisheries in turn made Orders under the Act, as he was now entitled to do, in respect of the class of statistics transferred to him e.g. (Salmon, Seatrout, Eels) Order, 1927. These powers, at a later stage, were further transferred to the Minister of Agriculture by a Fisheries (Re-distribution of Public Services) Order.
94. Subsequently the Statistics Act, 1993 explicitly covered this point by recognising the existence of information gathering by the CSO on a voluntary as well as on a statutory basis, and by ensuring that all information, whether provided in response to an invitation or a statutory Order, gets the same legal protection.
95. The Statistics Act, 1993 repealed the 1946 Amending Act.
96. *Census of Distribution 1933*. S.O. P. No. 2302, 1936.
Eason, J.C.M., 1936/1937. "First Impressions from the Census of Distribution, 1933", *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry of Ireland*, xv, 19.
97. It will be recalled that the Committee on Economic Statistics had recommended that a Census of Establishments be taken as an initial step in the statistics program, which would have given, for all types of activity, information on sizes of establishments and employment. In fact, at one stage, Hooper had hoped, but without success, to have such a Census allied to the first Population Census.
98. The reason for this isolated Distribution census at this time is unclear. It may have been a reflection of a desire to produce information useful for the issues that led to the "Commission on Registration of Shops" [Report - SO P. No. 1313, 1934] or it may have been a reflection of interest shown in distribution by the International Institute of Statistics around that time (Stanley Lyon, Director at that time, was a member of a committee of the Institute considering the topic).
99. National Income and Expenditure, 1938-1944; SO P. No. 7356, published as a White Paper, and presented to the Oireachtas by the Minister for Finance in March 1946.
100. The constituent table of Receipts and Expenditure by Public Authorities was prepared by T.K. Whitaker of the Department of Finance. Statistics Office papers SG 2726.

101. A second publication was issued by CSO in 1951: *Tables of National Income and Expenditure 1938 and 1944-50.* (Pr. 350).
102. The formal statutory existence of the CSO and its Director General and the National Statistics Board came with the passing of the Statistics Act, 1993.
103. NA CAB 2/10; D/T S.14336 B/1
104. The accounting services required by the Department of the Taoiseach were provided by the Accounts Branch of the Department of Finance, and the Secretary of that department was the Accounting Officer for the Taoiseach's Vote.
105. Donal McCarthy's contact with official statistics began in January 1930, when he was the successful candidate for the post of Junior Statistical Officer, the first occupant of such a post. He left before the end of 1931 to join the staff of UCC.
106. J. B. Broderick, W. J. Hyland, Patricia McHenry and T. P. Linehan. It is a matter of record that Broderick was a UCD graduate and winner of a travelling studentship in Mathematical Science while the other three successful candidates were UCC students following a postgraduate statistics course under Donal McCarthy.
107. Statistics Office Papers SG 3208.
108. In the initial draft by Statistics Branch of the Statistics Bill 1925, the creation of a Statistical Council was mandatory, but this did not find favour with Department of Finance, whose advice to go for an optional position was adopted.
109. It was also mentioned by the Taoiseach on 20 July 1949, in his statement to Dáil Éireann concerning the setting up of CSO. Dáil Debates vol.117,col.1356.
110. *SO National Farm Survey, 1955/56-1957/58, Final Report.*(Pr. 6180). Ongoing results were published in various issues of the *Irish Trade Journal and Statistical Bulletin, September 1955 - December 1959.*
111. The areas to which those inter-departmental Committees related were (a) Foreign Trade; (b) Industry; (c) Building and Construction; (d) Labour and Manpower. In addition a similar group on Financial Statistics was set up on the recommendation of the main Committee itself.
112. Thus the recommendation, amongst many others, that "in view of the importance of the Census of Population results, high priority must also be accorded to adequate preparations for the 1976 Census of Population" did not prevent the cancellation of that Census.
113. Central Statistics Office, 1996. *1995 Annual report of the National statistics Board,* p.45, Pn. 3072.
114. *A New Institutional Structure for the Central Statistics Office,* (Pl. 3483). Stationery Office, Dublin, 1985.

115. Set up by Government on 30 May 1984, under the Statistics Act, 1926. Its Report appears as Appendix I of the White Paper.
116. Appendix II of the white Paper.
117. National Economic and Social Council, 1985. *Information for Policy*; Report No. 78, Pl. 3314.
118. The Statistics Act, 1993, (Number 21 of 1993), was passed by the Oireachtas on 14 July 1993, and came into operation on 1 November 1994, (S.I. No. 323 of 1994).
119. There is no evidence that the Act was ever invoked for this purpose.
120. Section 11 dealt in detail with the matter of written authority to be produced on demand by an officer of statistics on active duty. It must have been in anticipation of the use of the Act to take a Census of Population and the involvement therein of members of the *Gárda Síochána* as enumerators that the Section made special provision for due authorisation of such members in uniform to be achieved by the production of a certificate in writing, signed by a superintendent of the Force, that the member was acting as an officer of statistics.
121. This was a new Section inserted following the passing of a Senate amendment.
122. Not in version originally introduced; inserted at fourth stage by amendment proposed by Senator Guinness on 24/2/'26. this particular topic was never pursued.
123. As recommended by the Committee on Economic Statistics in section VII of its report, a farseeing provision was made to enable the use of sampling in statistical inquiries carried out under the Act. Section 16 (2) made the necessary provision without using the term "sample"!:

“...where owing to the prohibitive cost or for any other reason it is the opinion of the Minister impracticable or unnecessary to obtain returns from all persons or every member of a class of persons, or from the whole of Saorstát Éireann or the whole of any particular part of Saorstát Éireann, the Minister may require the returns to be made or the information to be supplied by particular persons or particular classes of persons or in respect of a particular area or areas selected by the Minister as being sufficient for the purpose in view.”

DISCUSSION

Edgar Jardine:

1. I would first like to thank Mr Linehan for a most interesting and informative paper. I know also of the important contribution Tom Linehan has made to the development of official statistics in the Republic of Ireland (RoI), particularly in his role as Director of the CSO. His influence in that position extended beyond Ireland and he had a formative role in the development of official statistics at European level. Tom has been active and productive in retirement and his paper to the Society this evening is but one example of his output. We are indeed grateful for the comprehensive and authoritative treatment of the subject; his work will be a key source for those involved in official statistics in Ireland for many years to come.
2. In reading Tom's paper I was struck particularly by the different ways in which official statistics have developed North and South. There are clearly functions which we have in common, including responsibility for the population census and in Northern Ireland (NI) we are interested to learn from your experiences with the 1996 Census. We in turn are pleased to share with RoI colleagues some of our experiences in running a General Household Survey. However, the CSO as a National Statistical Institute (NSI) has a clearly different role and focus from a regional statistical authority.
3. In examining the development of statistical work in Northern Ireland, the period between partition and the present day can be divided into a span from 1922 to 1972 when Northern Ireland had its own regional Parliament and the period since 1972 where there has been direct rule from Westminster. While the development of official statistics, certainly in pre-war years, is not recorded in detail, continuing importance was attached to official statistics on demography, on agriculture and on the economy in the new Northern Ireland. The principal instruments in respect of the first of these were the Censuses of Population and the Registrar General's Report.

Censuses of Population

4. Censuses of Population have been conducted in Northern Ireland in 1926, 1937, and decennially from 1941 to 1991. Exceptionally a mid-term enumeration was held in 1966 asking a more limited number of questions but covering the entire population, in contrast to Great Britain (GB) which based the enumeration on a sample (Compton 1993).
5. Responsibility for superintending the Census of Population up to 1971 lay with the Ministry of Finance after which it passed to the Department of Health and Social Services for the 1981 and 1991 enumerations. However the Census Office and the

General Register Office returned to the Department of Finance and Personnel in 1994 in preparation for its merger with the Statistics and Social Division and eventual Agency status for that grouping.

6. The Registrar General is formally responsible for making the necessary arrangements and for reporting the results of the Census. Prior to 1971 each Census was authorised by a specific Act of Parliament. Censuses since then are taken under the Census Act (Northern Ireland 1969) with an Order in Council prescribing the date on which the Census is to be taken and the content of the form. Census forms in Northern Ireland have been broadly similar in content to those in GB but normally contain several questions of unique Northern Ireland interest eg the religion of respondents.

RG's Annual Report

7. The Registrar General's Report is an annual statutory publication which details a range of vital statistics on births, deaths and marriages in Northern Ireland. The report is produced under statute and the 75th Annual Report dealing specifically with NI and reporting on 1996 was published in 1997 (Department of Finance and Personnel 1997).

Agriculture Statistics

8. There has been a strong tradition of statistics relating to agricultural production in Ireland dating back to post-famine times as illustrated in Tom Linehan's paper. Professor Oldham in his address to the Society in 1925, reproduced in the excellent CSO publication on Irish Farm Statistics, noted that the old Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction rendered "great services to the study of Irish economics" (although he lamented the defects of agricultural statistics in the early years of the Free State) (CSO 1997). The Department of Agriculture in the new Northern Ireland administration maintained the tradition of extensive agriculture statistics and between 1926 and 1957 six detailed reports were submitted to the Governor of Northern Ireland by the Ministry of Agriculture.
9. Agricultural censuses up to 1953 were undertaken by the RUC on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, so continuing a practice of police enumeration which predated the founding of the State. The Secretary of the Department of Agriculture clearly had little faith in postal surveys, or the reliability of agricultural data taken from samples of respondents. In the conclusions to his report to the Governor in 1957, Mr W A V Sanderson bemoaned the fact that the RUC were withdrawing from this duty (Department of Agriculture 1957). Thanking the police officers for their interest, enthusiasm and competence over 107 years, only interrupted by the period 1919-1922 due to the "disorderly state" of the country, Sanderson wrote "The Ministry's regrets are the greater, inasmuch as it is convinced that no other system of collection can replace the farm to farm visit for completeness and

accuracy". There was some substance in Sanderson's concerns because Oldham notes that, following the withdrawal of the RUC from 1918, only around 30 per cent of farmers complied with the postal survey of agriculture.

10. However, there is reason to believe that the accuracy of at least some returns may have been open to question. I am told by a retired policeman, who was involved as an enumerator in the Agricultural Census in the post-war years, that there was advantage, in a time of rationing of feed stuffs, for farmers to claim ownership of a larger number of livestock than might have been warranted and he thought that some over-counting almost certainly occurred. Furthermore farmers were not always candid with representatives of government about the scale of their activities. This was illustrated by the young constable of urban extraction who found himself doing the Agricultural Census with my retired policeman friend in a rural area of North Tyrone. When he returned to barracks having completed his quota of returns his sergeant drew attention to the frequent use of the letter 'w' in the column in which figures should have been entered. When challenged, "Sergeant" he replied, "when I inquired how many hens and pigs they had, they told me they had a "whean", and as I wasn't exactly sure how many were in a "whean" I just entered 'w' and intended to ask later!".

Labour Market and Production

11. A broad range of statistics dealing with the Northern Ireland economy was also maintained following partition. The seminal publication by Isles and Cuthbert - "An Economic Survey of Northern Ireland" (Isles and Cuthbert, commissioned by the Department of Commerce, 1957) represents perhaps the then most comprehensive analysis of Northern Ireland's economic condition. The authors attempted to understand the factors limiting NI's economic development by comparing the performance of the NI economy with that in GB. Whether the comparison of a small regional economy with that of Great Britain is always the most appropriate is a moot point but it does illustrate D S Johnson's argument in Kennedy's Economic History of Northern Ireland that, "partly because of the regional government and partly because of the Irish Sea, far more statistics existed relating to Northern Ireland than to other regions of the UK" [Johnston D S in Kennedy and Ollerenshaw (Eds) 1985].

The development of official statistics in Northern Ireland

12. It was perhaps inevitable that Northern Ireland as a region of the United Kingdom, would diverge in the pattern of development of official statistics from the Republic. However even within the UK the structures and organisation of official statistics in Northern Ireland differ in significant ways from that in Great Britain. The creation of a Central Statistical Office in 1941 London was not matched by similar developments in Northern Ireland. Nor were the development of the

Business Statistical Office and the Office of Population, Census and Surveys in the late 60s under Sir Claus Mauser replicated in Northern Ireland.

13. Turning to more recent history, by the late 1970s there were three professional analytical divisions operating in the NI Civil Service - Statistics, Social Research and Economics. In response to the Rayner Review of government statistics the opportunity was taken to reorganise professional services with statisticians working in mainly social departments amalgamating with the Social Research Division and those working on labour market and other economic statistics migrating to the Economics Division. A further important change at that time was the formal structural linking of the two professional divisions with the central Financial Resources Division to form the Policy Planning and Research Unit. The objective was to link more directly the efforts of economists, statisticians and researchers into resource allocation and decision making. It was followed by a period of rapid expansion of the new Statistics and Social Division and, after a further review in 1986, all statisticians including, those previously formally assigned to Economics Division, were located in a new professional Division embracing both all official statistics and social research. The situation pertained until 1994 when, in preparation for Agency status under the Government's Next Steps Initiative, responsibility for the Census of Population and the General Register Office, then in the Department of Health and Social Services, returned to the Department of Finance and Personnel and merged with Statistics to form the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency.
14. Today statisticians in Northern Ireland, whilst not formally part of the British Government Statistical Service (GSS), do in practice have very close links with GB colleagues. The NISRA Chief Executive has a seat on the GSS Policy and Management Group and senior colleagues participate in various GSS committees on Social, Economic and Regional Statistics. However these formalised links are relatively recent.
15. In common with the British statistical services, and in some contrast to the CSO, NISRA has remained a highly decentralised organisation with around two-thirds of the 100 professional staff working in Departments and Agencies alongside policy colleagues. Indeed a key feature of the Agency's work is its close alignment with its policy customers. Decentralisation also offers the prospect of applying the Agency's skills and expertise to departmental management issues and this is an important area for NISRA staff in a number of Departments and Agencies. Indeed one of the most rapidly expanding areas is in support of the NICS personnel management function where we have developed systems for improving pay-bill modelling and human resource planning.
16. Als, in an international review of arrangements for official statistics (Als 1992), notes that there are strong arguments in favour of both the centralised and decentralised models; however, a key feature of decentralised arrangements must,

Als argues, be a strong co-ordinating authority if fragmentation and duplication is to be avoided. NISRA seeks to achieve this co-ordination through an Agency Management Board comprising the Chief Executive, the Registrar General, the Head of Corporate Affairs and the Heads of all Branches. The Management Board is supported by a series of Board sub-groups which consider matters of common interest across the Agency.

17. Northern Ireland does differ both from Great Britain and from the Republic in the integration of the statistical discipline with social research, (including operational research). For almost 20 years now the formal distinction between the statistical grade and the social researcher has been abolished and staff move flexibly across different areas of work depending on the policy area in which they are engaged and their own particular qualifications and experience. In addition to conducting social research and social surveys a significant amount of research is commissioned externally and managed on behalf of Departments by NISRA staff.

What of the future?

18. I want to conclude by identifying a number of challenges for official statistics as the Society moves beyond its 150th anniversary.

European Union

19. I would expect the need for harmonised statistical output across a wider range of policy areas to be an increasing feature of our statistical effort both North and South of the border. This has been evident for some time as the Commission have sought more comparable data on economic, environmental and social conditions both to assist in the appraisal of bids for EU funds and as base-lines against which progress can be measured. Furthermore, as the regional dimension of the EU assumes greater importance, so the need for sound regional and sub-regional data will increase. Following a recent review of NUTS it will be possible, for the first time, to provide a sub-regional classification of Northern Ireland at NUTS 3 level (through aggregation at District Council level).

North-South collaboration

20. The Propositions on Heads of Agreement published by the UK and Irish Governments on 12 January 1998 envisaged three developments which may have important consequences for statistical work in Northern Ireland. In the event of a successful outcome to the political talks, the members of a devolved Assembly will provide an additional source of demand for statistical output. In addition any North-South as well as East-West bodies may also create demands. While work under the EU umbrella will contribute to this, more may be required.

National Statistical Service

21. There has been a radical shift in attitudes to the role of official statistics in the UK in the 1990s compared to the previous decade when the “Rayner doctrine” emphasised the role of Government itself as the principal customer of official statistics. However, the wider use for official statistics for informing national debate is now formally accepted and the Labour Party manifesto commitment to a “National Statistical Service” will undoubtedly reinforce arrangements which contribute to the quality, integrity and professional independence of statistics services throughout the UK. The renewed emphasis on the ‘national’ role of a statistics service (as opposed to statistics for government) will pose new challenges for dissemination which will require the full exploitation of new technology.

Data collection

22. It is generally accepted that the changing life-styles of the population, including patterns of working (fewer people at home during the day), and housing (more homes with access by answer-phone), will increasingly complicate life for the survey interviewer. This suggests that we will need to focus more sharply in the future on the potential of administrative sources to supplement or perhaps replace survey data and that statisticians will need to be more proactive in the design and management of such systems.
23. More generally, technological developments will result in data being increasingly captured from suppliers by electronic transfer and more rapid turnaround times will be required as our users become even more dependant on statistical outputs.
24. Finally Chairman, it is my pleasure to warmly propose the vote of thanks to Mr Linehan and add my thanks to the President of University College Cork for hosting this most auspicious occasion. I am very optimistic both about what I believe will be an expanding need for our services as statisticians and researchers to track the changes in our rapidly changing society and economy, and in the skills and professionalism of colleagues in the CSO and NISRA to rise to this challenge.

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Donal Murphy: As Tom Linehan’s successor as head of the CSO I am particularly pleased to join with Edgar Jardine in proposing the vote of thanks to Tom for presenting such an interesting and important paper. I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome Edgar and the Registrar General for Northern Ireland, Dr. Norman Caven, to Cork. We in the CSO have close contacts with the Northern Ireland statistical service and meet regularly. However, this is their first visit to Cork and I hope they enjoyed it.

It is particularly appropriate that tonight’s meeting is being held in UCC because, as both the Chair and Tom Linehan have already referred to, of the long association of the University with official statistics and the CSO in particular. I learned for the first time this evening of the close connection of the first Director of Statistics, John Hooper, with Cork. I was also reminded that Professor John Busted, my professor of economics here in UCC, was also a member of the Committee on Economic Statistics established in 1924. This was followed, as we have been told, by the appointment of Donal McCarthy, Professor of Mathematical Physics from UCC, as Deputy Director on the establishment of the CSO in 1949 and the arrival of three UCC graduates (including Tom Linehan) in the first set of Statistician recruits.

Subsequent to this there was a long stream of UCC graduates, including myself, appointed as Statisticians. This was due in no small measure to the existence of the Statistics Department under Professor Tadhg Carey. As an aside I should mention that in the electronic copy of the new Irish Statistical Association Newsletter which I received today the question was raised whether the Professorship of Statistics created in TCD in 1967 was the first such post established in Ireland. I suggest that the UCC Statistics Department clarify that there were graduates in statistics coming out of UCC long before this. Although I do not know the reason I suspect that the CSO

association with Cork was one of the reasons why the Office was decentralised to Cork in January 1994.

Tom Linehan is the most suitable person one could choose to write a history of Irish official statistics. He spent his working life in the CSO and strongly influenced its development from 1949 to 1991. He worked closely with Dr. Roy Geary who first joined the statistical service back in 1923. We all know of Tom's tremendous interest in the development of statistics in the nineteenth century.

From the historical perspective there is one question I would like to hear him answer. In the recent ESRI publication celebrating the centenary of the birth of Roy Geary, Tom in his contribution made abundantly clear that he considered Geary to have been the leading Irish statistician. However, it is clear that from his paper here tonight, and from his earlier 1992 SSISI paper on the history and development of Irish Population Censuses, that he holds Captain Thomas Larcom, the chief architect of the 1841 "Great Census", in very high regard. Tom, the question is who would rank first in the context of their times and the challenges they faced, Larcom or Geary?

I joined the CSO in 1964 during the latter part of the period between those two watersheds in the development of Irish statistics, namely the establishment of the Office in 1949 and accession to the EU in 1973. It is interesting to look back and compare the working life in the CSO then and now. When I joined I think in retrospect that the work environment was relaxed (looking at Tom I suppose I should not admit it to him), the pace of development leisurely, there was little contact with other national statistical services at my level, and attending a statistical meeting abroad was like winning the Lotto.

Now the pace is far more intense. There is a continuous stream of EU-related developments. Professional staff are continuously involved in detailed discussions and negotiations with colleagues from the Statistical Office of the EU (Eurostat) and other member states relating to statistical methodology, proposed developments, results and new statistical legislation. This is exemplified by, for example, the number of Working Groups, Committees, Task Forces attended by CSO staff each year. In 1997 a total of 228 foreign trips were made on EU business - 128 to Luxembourg (where Eurostat is located), 28 to Brussels and 72 to other EU locations. The size and structure of the Office has also changed over the years to reflect this EU involvement. In 1970 the CSO had a total staff of approximately 330 including 13 professionals. Now the core staffing is some 500 and there are 55 professionals currently serving in the Office.

Joining the EC has been beneficial for Irish statistics. We would have a far inferior system if this had not happened. However, there is also a down side. For example, the Commission has a voracious appetite for statistics and particularly for detail. This places a very heavy burden on national statistical services particularly those in

the smaller member states like Ireland. It also places very heavy statistical reporting demands on Irish business. In any national context a Government must fund the statistics which it requires. This places an automatic (and generally from the statistical perspective an excessive) break on excessive demands. This control is missing in the wider European Community context since the Commission vigorously presses for the statistics it requires for economic and social policy purposes, but it is the member states which must collect the data and pay for the costs involved. This is the meaning of “subsidiarity” in the EU statistical context!

Tom’s paper essentially covers the period up to 1991 when he retired and passed the baton onto me. The “baton” was actually a silver letter opener which he assured me that Roy Geary had passed onto Donal McCarthy and Donal had passed onto himself. I have kept it carefully. Since then there has been some major institutional and statistical developments. On the institutional front Tom has mentioned the Statistics Act, 1993 which came into operation in November 1994. This updated legislation had many beneficial features. However, one of the most important provisions was the establishment of the National Statistics Board on a statutory basis. The Board was first established on a non-statutory basis in 1986. From the CSO perspective this was a very beneficial development as the Board has been very supportive of the Office and the development of statistics under both the former Chairperson Paddy Geary, Professor of Economics in Maynooth, and the current Chairperson Frances Ruane, Professor of Economics in TCD. Frances is present here this evening and may wish to comment further on the role of the Board.

The other major institutional development was the decentralisation of the bulk of the CSO to Cork. This was politically announced in May 1991 and the transfer was completed on schedule in January 1994. The move was a major organisational and logistic challenge, but it was completed very effectively. A total of some 370 CSO staff are now located in Cork with approximately 130 core staff in Dublin.

I am glad that mention has already been made of Tom Linehan’s international role because the important influence which he and his predecessors had on the international development of statistics is not fully appreciated at home. Tom chaired the UN Statistical Commission as did Donal McCarthy before him. Both participated on the Bureau of the Conference of European Statistician which Tom also chaired for a period. Roy Geary was closely involved in the formation of the Conference and had an international reputation both academically and in official statistics. Tom also attended all meetings of the Director Generals of the National Institutes of Statistics (DGINS) from 1972 to 1991. I was honoured to be present at Tom’s final meeting in Luxembourg in November 1990 when he was presented with the Schuman Medal in appreciation of his long contribution to the development of the European Statistical System. This was well deserved.

In his introduction to the Irish section of his 1992 report for Eurostat on the organisation of statistics in member countries of the European Community, the

former Director General of the Luxembourg statistical service George Als referred to the CSO having “a harp on its letterhead” and being “for a long time directed by a bard”. The “bard” in question was Tom Linehan and the reference highlights another feature of his international involvement which is not generally known nationally. For many years it was an established practice for Tom to give an after-dinner speech at each DGINS meeting and the popular highlight was usually a statistical poem. In the interest of history I hope that he was kept a record of these poems because they were very popular. I think it appropriate that I conclude with one which relates to the work of the official statistician:

INFORMATION FOR THE NATION

Information for the nation
That in short is our vocation.
If others have the facts we need
then give us access too, we plead.

As for confidentiality -
We give a steadfast guarantee
To protect with strict propriety.
We offer this with pride.

The individuality
Of each and every entity
Is grouped with other company.
Its identity we hide.

We publish? - Yes - in aggregate.
This does some users irritate.
We do our best to mitigate
The impact of our rule.

Apart from this protectiveness,
We practice no selectiveness.
Our aim is user friendliness,
Our goal - a data pool.