

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
Submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Council, March 1999

1999

INTRODUCTION FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

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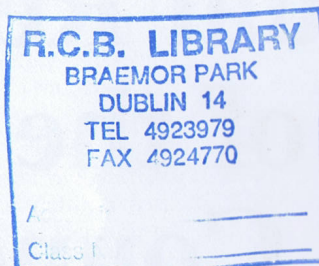
Annual Report of the Irish Council of Churches

There is no doubt that the past year has been a time of significant change. The lack of confidence in the political process has led to a new sense of urgency in Northern Ireland. The Church has had to respond to this new reality and to the challenges it presents.

And what of the churches in all of this? The survey conducted for the report of the British Churches' Organ Development Committee continues to show the centrality of the churches in Northern Ireland. The churches were able to focus people's beliefs and to provide a sense of community and support in a time of great change.

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We have learnt that there are no easy endings to civic conflicts and yet the fact of the Good Friday Agreement recognises that all has changed, changed utterly, in both the Republic and the North, and between Britain and Ireland, over the last thirty years.

We have made a bit of a start but the undertow of the past continues to pull against the possibility of a move to a more benign future. There is deep insecurity within Northern Ireland and communities feel under threat. The issue which symbolises all of this is decommissioning. Remembered violence makes people uneasy. Is it all over?

With the prospect of peace comes change and all the attendant difficulties. It can seem a new and strange country - a country we feel uncomfortable in with prisoner releases, political parties with paramilitary links at the centre of political life, the prospect of significant reform in the RUC, and so on. And how are we to come to terms with what has happened over the last thirty years?

There is much uncertainty about the future, fear about loss of identity, lack of confidence about the future, and unhappiness about the price of political agreement in significant sections of the Protestant community in Northern Ireland. The Referendum result showed this clearly. The churches need to reflect on how people can be helped to move forward through change.

When widespread violence begins to end, hatred, anger, resentment, a sense of loss and a fear of change often come to the surface. The Drumcree issue has provided a focus for a lot of this. The drum of civil conflict has continued to beat in the Garvaghy Road during the year.

And what of the churches in all of this? Surveys (including the one referred to in the report of the Belfast Churches Urban Development Committee) continue to show the centrality of the churches in Northern Ireland. The churches were able to focus people's feelings in towns and villages throughout Northern Ireland in the aftermath of the Omagh bombing. But the continuing Drumcree conflict has revealed another side. The Drumcree issue has become a defining one for the Church of Ireland, raising concerns about the integrity of the Church, its witness and worship. The issues raised have been particularly acute for the Church of Ireland, but they affect most, if not all, the member churches.

The publication in 1998 of John Brewer's book 'Anti-Catholicism in Northern Ireland: 1600 - 1998' shows that anti-catholicism is integrally wrapped up in the conflict. Sectarianism is, of course, not just a problem for Protestants, or for particular Protestants. And it is to be hoped that the publication of the report of the Moving Beyond Sectarianism Project of the Irish School of Ecumenics (its conclusions are to be discussed at the next Irish Inter-Church Meeting in April) will suggest constructive ways forward. For there is a reckoning to come for our complicity in community division and sectarianism despite all the positive Christian contributions in the conflict over the last thirty years.

There are other forms of exclusions than sectarianism. There are mentions in various parts of this Report concerning racism, refugees and asylum seekers. Gone are the days when we concentrated on Irish emigration. We are now increasingly dealing with the consequences of immigration. This is adding to the diversity of Irish church life. At the 1999 Annual Meeting we will be considering an application for membership from the Coptic Orthodox Church. There are black led churches looking to use church buildings in Dublin, there is a Chinese Christian Church in Belfast, and so on.

In a year which marked the 75th anniversary of the setting up of this Council it is useful to be reminded of an honourable history of involvement in such issues. The Haven Home in Dublin for European Refugees - which the Council had an involvement with - opened in the late 1940s and closed in the early 1970s, and the Belfast Committee for German Refugees was set up by the Council in the late 1930s. It is recorded in the 1938-39 Report that "The Committee now has an office in the Grosvenor Hall where a German doctor has undertaken much of the secretarial work. Close cooperation is maintained with the committee set up by the Jewish community of the city".

1998 was also the 25th anniversary of the first Irish Inter-Church Meeting. The publication during the year of 'The Irish Inter-Church Meeting: Background and Development' shows how far we have travelled in inter-church relations in the last twenty-five years. 1999 will be decision time concerning reconstituted inter-church structures and will show whether we can travel further together. National structures, however, need to be complemented by developments at local level. The importance of such groups was shown by the level of cooperation between local clergy after the Omagh bomb. This was helped by the existence of the Omagh Churches' Forum and other such groups in the Omagh area over the years.

MEETINGS

The Annual Meeting was held in March at the Dromantine Conference Centre, near Newry, Co. Down. The Friday evening was a celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Council with a Service of Thanksgiving and a lecture by Professor John De Gruchy, Robert Selby Taylor Professor of

Christian Studies at the University of Capetown on the theme 'Seeing Things Differently: Recovering Ecumenical Vision in a Post-Ecumenical Age'. We were glad to see many past friends and colleagues.

The Autumn Gathering was held in the Emmaus Conference Centre, Swords, Co. Dublin, and Pastor Paul Reid introduced the LifeLink Network of Churches to the Council. LifeLink has just become the tenth member church of the Council.

OFFICERS

The Rev. Edmund Mawhinney and the Rev. Dr. Ian Ellis became President and Vice President respectively at the Annual Meeting. We express our thanks to the outgoing President, the Rev. David Nesbitt for all the time and commitment he gave to the activities of the Council during his term of office.

MEMBERSHIP

Following an affirmative resolution at the Annual Meeting the LifeLink Network of Churches became a member church. Discussions have been taking place with the Coptic Orthodox Church in Ireland - which is presently an observer - concerning membership. A resolution will be brought to the forthcoming Annual Meeting.

THE ROLE, STRUCTURE AND FUTURE OF THE COUNCIL

The proposals regarding the future of the Council and the Irish Inter Church Meeting were forwarded to the member churches early in 1998 with a view to comments being made by the end of October and final decisions being taken in 1999. It has been agreed by the Executive Committee that further discussion in relation to the future of the Council needs to await the outcome of these decisions.

INTER-CHURCH CENTRE

Further work was carried out to the Inter-Church Centre in 1998.

COMMUNITY ISSUES

Meetings of those people in the member churches concerned with peace and political developments have continued through the year. The General Secretary has continued his active involvement in the Churches Initiative Group which brings together, on an informal basis, people from the churches and Christian groups concerned with political developments. The Group has met frequently during the year because of the many recent political developments. One of the issues it gave a lot of attention to was church involvement in the proposed Northern Ireland Civic Forum. The General Secretary made a submission to the Northern Ireland Commission on Policing.

Irish Churches' Council for Television and Radio

The Religious Society of Friends was invited to nominate a person to this body and the name of Philip Jacob was brought forward.

Churches' Commission on Racial Justice Education Committee

Mrs. Fee Ching Leong has become a member of the Committee.

BOARD OF INTER-CHURCH AFFAIRS

The Child in the Church Group

Representatives from the churches have continued to meet and keep each other informed about the latest resources in regard to children's work. There were no specific events organised during the year.

Women's Link

The annual Fellowship Day was held on October 3 in Gracehill, Ballymena, Co. Antrim, with the theme 'Forward Together with Vision'. Approximately seventy delegates from as far apart as Londonderry and Kildare travelled to hear the Rev. Jean Mayland from the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland speak and also discover more about the work of the Salvation Army and the Religious Society of Friends. The Fellowship Day for 1999 will be held in Taney Parish Centre, Dundrum, Co. Dublin, on April 17.

The President, Mrs. Marian Woods, and the Honorary Secretary, Mrs. Joan Kirk, attended the Four Nations Link for the Community of Women and Men in the Church held over the 12/13 September in the Marino Institute, Dublin.

Mrs. Liz Parkin has completed her term as Honorary Secretary and Mrs. Joan Kirk has been appointed in her place. Mrs. Gillian Kingston will follow Mrs. Marian Woods as President once her term is finished.

The Women's Desk in the Inter-Church Centre now has five helpers and operates on Tuesday and Thursday mornings.

Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women

A large party from Ireland attended the Four Nations Celebration 'Forward to the Promised Community' in Durham in April. The President of Women's Link attended the World Decade Festival in Harare, Zimbabwe, at the end of November.

Evangelism

The Moderator continues to attend meetings of the Four Nations Forum on Evangelisation.

Bridges of Hope Project

There are five churches in Ireland involved in this Britain and Ireland project which seeks to focus on local evangelism and what it means to be a missionary church. A presentation on the project will be made at the Annual Meeting.

Exchange of Information

One of the functions of the Board is to provide an opportunity for member churches to exchange information on inter-church interest.

BOARD OF OVERSEAS AFFAIRS

World Mission Committee

A joint Study Day with the Irish Missionary Union was held in November on the theme of 'New Ways of Sending, New Ways of Receiving' with input from Roman Catholic, Methodist and Church of Ireland traditions. Over seventy-five people attended.

The Committee continues to provide a forum for the member churches to exchange information and views on mission issues.

The Churches' Commission on Mission

The Very Rev. David Godfrey and Mr. George Clarke represented the Council at the eighth meeting of the Commission held in September, in Bangor, North Wales. The next meeting of the Commission is to take place in Belfast in September 1999.

Mrs. Maureen Irwin replaced the Rev. Paul Kingston as the Council's representative on the Commission's Standing Committee.

Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland

This is an issue which continues to be of concern to the Board. The Charter on Asylum Rights was endorsed. The Rev. Frank Sammon of the Jesuit Refugee Service and Mr. Remba Osengo, a refugee from Kinshasa, Zaire, spoke to the autumn meeting of the Board. This is not only a Republic of Ireland problem. There are in the region of fifty refugees and asylum seekers in prison in Northern Ireland. Concern has also been expressed about this.

The Position of Christians in Egypt

Deacon Sherif Gayed of the Coptic Orthodox Church spoke to the autumn meeting of the Board about the position of Christians in Egypt.

CCBI International Affairs Liaison Group

The Moderator continues to attend meetings of the Group. Its September meeting was held in Belfast and members of the Board were able to meet the Group.

Exchange of Information

One of the functions of the Board is to provide a forum for an exchange of information on various international situations and issues of church interest. During the year these have included: Jubilee 2000, Romania, Sri Lanka and the Sudan. The Board continues to hear reports about the work of Christian Aid in Ireland. There have been visitors from Sri Lanka and India for whom the Board has hosted meetings.

Christian Aid Board

The Rev. Dr. Norman Taggart was appointed to replace Rosemary Calvert on the new Christian Aid Board. Other Irish members are the Rev. Jim Campbell and the Rt. Rev. Michael Mayes.

EUROPEAN ECUMENICAL COMMISSION FOR CHURCH AND SOCIETY (EECCS) and THE CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN CHURCHES (CEC)

EECCS became the Church and Society Commission of CEC as from the end of 1998. The Very Rev. Dr. Samuel Hutchinson and Dr. Kenneth Milne attended the last Annual Meeting of EECCS held at Vaalbeek, Belgium, in September.

In order to safeguard Irish Church participation in European ecumenical bodies, the Council became an Associate Member of CEC during the year. This enables the Council to be an observer on the CEC Church and Society Commission and to be invited to be present at and participate in CEC meetings and Commissions. It was agreed that Dr. Kenneth Milne be the Council's observer on the Church and Society Commission for a period of three years.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The WCC is planning a team visit to Britain and Ireland in 1999. The Rev. Doug Baker is involved in the Belfast part of the Peace to the City Campaign of the Programme to Overcome Violence of the WCC. A report on the Eighth Assembly is to be given to the Annual Meeting by Irish delegates.

INTER-CHURCH RECONCILIATION FUND FOR IRELAND

The following grants were agreed in 1998:

	£
Whiterock/Westrock Residents Association, Belfast; seeding grant for after-schools club	1,000
Bone/Ballybone Community House, Belfast; towards educational youth work	1,500
NIMMA - Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association for display equipment	500
Larne YMCA; towards computer equipment for after schools and youth club	1,300
Colin/Forfar Youth Project, Belfast; towards equipment for youth work	900
Strabane Community Unemployed Resource Centre; for kitchen equipment	1,100
Coleraine Churches Action; towards a job creation project	1,200
Drumgallon Area Community Association, Enniskillen; for computer equipment	1,200
Shantallow Ballyarnett Cross Community Group, Derry; for programme and cross community residential costs	600
Fintona Development Association; for summer scheme	500
Youth with a Mission, Banbridge; for their reconciliation summer walk	1,000
Conway Youth Centre, Belfast; for summer scheme	400
Newcastle YMCA, Co. Down; for computer equipment to assist its job club	1,200
Alliance Ardoyne Playscheme, Belfast; for summer scheme	750
Eskra Development Association, Co. Tyrone; for summer scheme	400
John Paul Youth Club, Ardoyne, Belfast; for residential as part of their summer programme	750
Roden Street Festival Committee, Belfast; towards the programme of their summer festival	750
Speedwell Trust, Castlecaulfield; towards materials for their Growing Trees Together project	2,000
Pop Bar, Ardoyne, Belfast; for summer scheme	600
Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, Belfast; for summer scheme	500
REACH Across, Derry; for summer programme	750
Ballywalter Youth Club, Co Down; towards a cross community scheme	600
Zero-8-Teen, Brownlow; for summer scheme	750
Ardoyne Youth Club, Belfast; summer programme residentials	350

Ashfield Community Association, Fintona; towards summer scheme	400
St Oliver Plunkett Youth Development Scheme, Belfast; towards summer scheme	500
Grosvenor Youth Project, Belfast; towards summer scheme	500
Beragh Youth Centre, Co. Tyrone; a grant towards summer scheme	600
Gasyard Wall Feile, Derry; to bring a women's photographic exhibition from the Shankill, Belfast, and related programme	800
Corpus Christi Youth Centre, Ballymurphy, Belfast; for summer scheme	750
Holy Trinity Youth Club, Norglen Gardens, Belfast; for summer scheme	750
The Healing Hand, Harryville, Ballymena; towards costs of setting up drop-in centre	500
Volunteer Missionary Movement, Belfast; towards costs of conflict resolution education programme	1,000
Wishing Well Family Centre, Belfast; for summer scheme	500
Fermanagh Prisoners Dependents Association; towards costs of setting up their centre in Enniskillen	2,000
Women on the Move, Derry; for cross-community strategic planning for women	1,000
Tamlaght Women's Institute Resource Centre, Co. Fermanagh; towards equipment for their new centre	1,200
Unity Trust, Rathcoole, Newtownabbey; towards photocopier	800
Glenavy Community Support Group, Co. Antrim; towards necessary electrical work	1,200
Benburb Centre, Co. Tyrone; towards youth programme on troubles related trauma	800
Foyle Basin Council; towards innovative conference for the region on earth rights and sustainable development	500
Pax Christi, Britain; towards participation from Northern Ireland in reconciliation/healing conference	500
Knocks Community Association, Co Fermanagh; towards a planning/ committee room for their centre	1,200
Positive Ethos Trust (for EMU Promoting School Project), Londonderry; towards games book to go with peer mediation manual	1,000
Link Community Association, Andersonstown, Belfast; towards equipment and material for innovative arts and crafts work	900
Coa Community Association, Co Fermanagh; towards equipment for their community hall	1,200
WAVE Towards Healing, Belfast; towards youth programme with troubles bereaved and injured	2,000
Drumahoe Community Afterschool, Londonderry; for equipment	1,200

The following monies were designated by donors:

From Dr. Eberhard Spiecker - Corrymeela Community 1,598

Ms Lynda Gibson and Mrs. Mary Montague were appointed coopted members in succession to Mrs. Olive Marshall and Mr. Joe Cooper.

In the twenty-five years since the Fund has been operating in its present form nearly £550,000 has been allocated by the Committee to around 800 projects and an additional £345,000 passed through to designated groups.

IRISH ECUMENICAL CHURCH LOAN FUND

The Fund provides low interest loans to peace and reconciliation, church and community projects. The Committee agreed the following loans in 1998:

Ederney Community Development Trust, Co. Fermanagh - £15,000 at 4% for 4 years

Clough Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church - £15,000 at 4% for 4 years

Horizon House, Galway - IR£15,000 at 4% for 5 years

Irish School of Ecumenics - IR£25,000 at 4% for 5 years

BELFAST CHURCHES' URBAN DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Committee operates in association with the Council, but is appointed by member churches in the Belfast area, in order to encourage their social and community outreach. It is funded by Making Belfast Work. The Development Officer, Mr. E. R. McDowell, has been speaking at Deaneries, Presbyteries and the Methodist Synod. He continues to give general advice to churches, but increasingly he has concentrated his time on a limited number of church projects. He has also given time to working with the various Partnerships in Belfast and encouraging church involvement. Mr. McDowell has found that important issues are how churches engage with their local communities and the training of clergy for urban ministry.

A letter was sent to Northern Ireland Assembly candidates in the Belfast constituencies emphasising the importance of the local Partnership Boards and of local churches seeking to develop partnership arrangements with local communities.

Making Belfast Work's funding for the post was for a two-year period and during the year an evaluation was carried out. The result of this evaluation was favourable. The evaluation also showed that there was a great deal of voluntary activity taking place in and around the Protestant Churches in the Belfast area. The nature of that activity was focused on young people, parents with young children, and older people, in particular. Most church premises were also open to use by the local community.

Funding was extended for a further 3-month period from the end of December 1998 so that the Committee could work on a new funding proposal which would involve intensive work with a number of churches in the Belfast area plus a research element to establish the role that Protestant Churches could play in the regeneration of their communities.

The Rt. Rev. James Moore is now Chairman, with Mrs. Margaret Hutchinson, Vice Chairman.

THE CHURCHES' PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

(The Churches' Peace Education Programme is the legal entity which runs the joint peace education programme of the Council and the Irish Commission for Justice and Peace).

During the year Mrs. Brigid Lenane further developed the pioneer cross-border primary schools project with funding from the European Union Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation. Four groups of four schools were involved on a cross-border/cross-community basis. There were eight schools on the Londonderry/Donegal border (two sets of four) and four schools in the Cavan/Fermanagh border plus the four schools on the Donegal/Fermanagh border originally involved in 1997. The project continued with its cultural traditions emphasis and with both curriculum and contact elements, and with concerts at the end.

In 1998-99 the Programme will work with three groups of four schools in the Fermanagh/Donegal and Cavan/Leitrim areas (eight of these schools will be new schools) with the four schools from 1997 still involved. Further funding has been received from the EU Special Support Programme.

Using the insights developed from the cross-border project the Programme has begun to develop a similar cultural traditions project in the Belfast area. Mrs. Lenane is also currently working on a module on racism for the upper secondary school level.

During the year Ms Elaine Hall, the Peace Education Officer with responsibility for primary schools, began work on materials for Primary One and Two. These are currently being piloted and it is hoped that they will be available for September 1999. She has begun work on materials for Primary Three. During the year Ms Hall continued to promote the recently completed Pathways Programme for the upper primary age group. She is about one-third of the way through contact with all the primary schools in Northern Ireland.

The Resources Centre in the Inter-Church Centre has continued to receive a considerable number of orders.

The Programme continued to endure considerable uncertainties about the future of grant aid from the Department of Education through the year. An application was made for funding under the Department's new scheme

of grant aid. Following lengthy negotiations and a significant amount of work at the end of November further grant aid was secured until the end of August 2000. However, the administrator post has had to be made part-time and the present full-time administrator will be made redundant as from the end of June.

'What the Bible Says About the Stranger' is in course of preparation as part of the 'What the Bible Says ...' series.

The Rev. Dr. I.M. Ellis has replaced the Rt. Rev. J. Cooper as a trustee, and the Rev. T. Bartlett has replaced Ms L. Heffernan, who has died.

IRISH INTER-CHURCH MEETING

(The Irish Inter-Church Meeting is a relationship between the Irish Episcopal Conference of the Roman Catholic Church and the member churches of the Irish Council of Churches. The President of ICC is co-Chairman and the General Secretary is Joint Secretary)

The 25th anniversary of the first Irish Inter-Church Meeting was celebrated in September at the Ballymascanlon Hotel, Dundalk, where the first Meeting took place. Dr. Mary Tanner, General Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity, was the main speaker. The event was also marked by the publication of 'The Irish Inter-Church Meeting: Background and Development' with essays by the Rev. Michael Hurley, S.J. and the Rev. Dr. Ian Ellis.

The next Irish Inter-Church Meeting is to take place on 23/24 April when the issue of sectarianism will be the main subject under discussion.

Irish Inter-Church Committee

The Committee met five times during the year. Proposals for a reconstituted IICM were sent to the member churches for their comments by October 1998 with a view to final decisions being taken by the churches in 1999. The Review Group was reconstituted in September and it has been working to produce definitive proposals (including a constitution for the Body) by February 1999 with these being sent to the churches by the end of that month.

A document on 'The Pastoral Care of Interchurch Couples' was produced in April. A new pamphlet 'Ministering to Interchurch Couples - Help for Clergy' was produced which used much of the content of the Pastoral Care document and the earlier 'Interchurch Marriage Services and Baptism of Children of Interchurch Couples' (September 1997).

A letter was sent to the Minister and Deputy First Minister (Designate) of the new Northern Ireland Assembly concerning church involvement in the new Civic Forum.

Further meetings continued to be held of people from the churches concerning plans for the millennium. A one-day conference on celebrating

the millennium was held in December. Planning for the Northern Ireland National Service on Sunday, January 2, 2000, has commenced.

It is planned to arrange a discussion day on 'One Bread One Body' - the teaching document of the Catholic Bishops' Conferences of England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland on the Eucharist in the life of the Church - during 1999.

Department of Theological Questions

The Department produced a background paper on Intercommunion which outlined the current disciplines of the member churches and some of the issues involved. The Department is currently working on a study document on the church.

Department of Social Issues

The Department provides a meeting point for social responsibility (or equivalent) people from the member churches. Information sharing is an important part of the Department's role. The issues of refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, Sunday Trading in the Republic and of urban and rural poverty have been on the agenda. A submission was made to a Dail Eireann Committee on the subject of Sunday Trading (see appendix).

Local Ecumenism

A weekend for local groups is being planned for 30 April/1 May at the Drumantine Conference Centre. This is follow-up to the events held in 1995 and 1997. The newsheet 'Irish Ecumenical News' continues to be sent out to groups. The list of such groups was revised during the year and this showed that the number of groups continues to grow. The importance of these groups was shown by the level of cooperation between local clergy after the Omagh bomb. This was helped by the existence of the Omagh Churches' Forum and other such groups in the Omagh area over the years.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

A sub-committee produces the Irish Order of Service every year. The 1998 Order had prayers in relation to the 25th Anniversary of the first Irish Inter Church Meeting in 1973 and to the 75th Anniversary of the Irish Council of Churches.

APPENDIX

Sunday and 24 Hour Working in Ireland

Introduction

Over most of this century Sunday was an almost universal day of rest, apart from essential services. Since about 1990 there has been growing pressure in several important sectors of the economy to introduce Sunday working as normal. This trend is strong enough to change radically the atmosphere of a day of general rest and leisure, unless it is checked soon, within four or five years. It is very hard to recover ground lost in this area so a critical examination of the matter is long overdue.

Basic reasons for the Observance of Sunday as a Day of Rest.

The value of Sunday as a day of rest may be summarised as follows:

1. It is an assertion of the primacy of the spirit over the material world and its demands.
2. For a nation with a strong Christian tradition it gives scope for Christian worship and associated activities which develop and maintain a sense of Christian community.
3. It provides a day in which family gatherings can be held in the knowledge that most people do not have to work.
4. It provides a day when a large variety of activities of a sporting and cultural nature can be arranged in the knowledge that most people are free of the obligation to work, and so can attend if they wish.
5. The rhythm of a five day working week, followed by a two day free weekend, seems to correspond with most people's need of a balance between work and leisure. It is possible that within the next decade a further contraction of working hours to 36 hours may make a four day week of nine hours per day quite attractive, but there is no great demand for this at present and most workers appear able to renew their energies over a two day free weekend. It should be noted, however, that in most cases a large part of one day of the weekend is taken up with necessary household chores (usually Saturday) so there is only one day of genuine leisure in the weekend. For this reason the progressive invasion of Sunday by commercial interests is striking at a basic need for a balance of work and leisure in life.

Who Benefits?

It is worth asking who benefits from Sunday trading. The retail trade in Ireland, as in most countries, is dominated by powerful and wealthy companies who have chains of stores. These companies have absolutely no need to trade on Sunday in terms of a level of profits required for survival and growth. Many of them state that it is only competitive pressure that would push them towards Sunday trading. It only takes a few cases of

companies driven by greed to set a trend that others feel compelled to follow.

Sunday trading does not increase the amount of purchasing power in the economy. The same amount of purchasing power is spread over seven days rather than six, while extra costs are incurred. It is highly questionable whether seven day trading would increase retail profits in the long term.

The Effect on Labour

It may happen that when Sunday trading is at an early stage it will be stated by management that Sunday working is optional. This is very unlikely to last for very long. Clauses requiring obligatory Sunday working soon appear in employment contracts, and at a minimum heavy pressure to work on Sunday is put on workers who do not want to work on Sunday. Further down the line management is likely to demand that normal pay applies on Sunday, not overtime rates. The end result is that workers applying for jobs are confronted with a demand for seven day working at normal pay rates, with time off at management's discretion.

In the construction industry it is known to happen that workers are pressurised actually to work seven days a week for several weeks on end, with only an occasional weekend break. Although double time is paid on Sunday, these demands on workers' energies are excessive and potentially dangerous in terms of health and safety. It is a striking example of how, once the practice of a free weekend is abandoned, management can make demands lacking all proportion and balance.

Is Regulation Practicable?

In recent years the official Government line on regulation is that there is a constitutional difficulty about regulating Sunday trading, and that the Government has received legal opinion to this effect.

There are a number of odd things about this position, from the point of view of someone with an interest in maintaining Sunday as a day of rest. It is impossible to establish what exactly the advice is, or on what clause(s) of the Constitution it is based. One cannot mount a counter argument against it in the absence of precise information on these points. The burden of the advice appears to be that to try to distinguish between a large department store and a newsagent shop would be discriminatory and subject to constitutional challenge. Apparently Ireland has constitutional problems about regulating Sunday trading that other European countries do not have. This matter requires critical examination and debate. Those who have given this advice should be required to defend it.

The EU Directive on Working Time

The EU Directive on Working Time lays down the general principle of a two day rest period in a seven day week, and says that normally this should coincide with Sunday, while also giving due recognition to special needs in maintaining essential services, etc. It enumerates various types of activity,

either essential services or convenience services (e.g. restaurants at stations and airports), where there is a reasonable requirement to remain open throughout the weekend. It does not try to distinguish between traders on the basis of size, but rather on the basis of the activity being engaged in. It is arguable that the Irish Government could, if it so wished regulate Sunday trading in Ireland on the basis of the Directive, implementing it both in the spirit and the letter. If a challenge came on constitutional grounds and was upheld in the Irish Courts, the Government could refer the matter to the European Courts of Justice for a ruling. The matter is important enough to merit such a procedure. Ireland currently has one of the least regulated regimes about Sunday trading in the European Union, and is wide open to the growth of Sunday trading at the behest of commercial interests. It may be noted that there is a diversity of practice in Europe in the matter of Sunday trading, and the EU Directive is unlikely to eliminate this diversity. One of the most successful economies in Europe, Germany, has one of the strictest regimes about Sunday trading, so there is absolutely no link between the growth of Sunday trading and economic success. The issue comes down to the value attached to human, family and social quality of life, and the balance between work and leisure, as against a highly debatable perception by commercial interests that they ought to promote Sunday trading for reasons of profit and competitive pressures.

24 Hour Trading

24 Hour trading is also on the increase. This may be helpful to night workers and travellers, regarding convenience shopping, but seems hardly necessary for other sections of the retail trade. Its growth will lead to an increase in the demand for night workers. There is a large amount of research carried out by the ILO and other agencies that shows that night work has negative effects on personal health and on family life. So the same questions arise as in Sunday trading: Who gains, and why do they want to extend 24 hour trading? Who bears the human and social cost and is it worth the alleged gains? The answer is probably negative.

Conclusion

This is a brief survey of the main issues of a complex matter. Further more detailed discussion could take place orally or by way of a further paper on specific points which may arise. It is certainly worth pondering carefully the eventual outcome of trends which could adversely affect the quality of life in our society.

John Brady S.J.

National College of Ireland, Sandford Road

Ranelagh

Dublin 6

17 November 1998

On behalf of the Department of Social Issues
Inter Church Meeting

MEMBERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION 1998/99

Constituent Communions:

Church of Ireland; Greek Orthodox Church in Britain and Ireland; LifeLink Network of Churches; Lutheran Church in Ireland; Methodist Church in Ireland; Moravian Church, Irish District; Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church; Presbyterian Church in Ireland; Religious Society of Friends; Salvation Army.

Members appointed by the Constituent Communions:

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Miss J. Barcroft	Mr. W.T. Morrow
Most Rev. W.N.F. Empey	Mrs. R. McKelvey
Rev. Dr. I.M. Ellis	Mr. J.T.N. McGaffin
Very Rev. D.S.G. Godfrey	Rt. Rev. Dr. J.R.W. Neill
Rev. R.J. Gray	Mrs. J. Peters
Rt. Rev. B.D.A. Hannon	Rev. Canon R. Richey
Rev. Canon A.J. Houston	Rev. Canon W.D. Sinnamon
Rev. Dr. Canon M.C. Kennedy	Professor M. Wheeler
Rev. I. Knox	Rev. T.R. Williams

Greek Orthodox Church in Britain and Ireland:

Rev. Dr. I. Craciun	Mr. G. O'Donnell
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LifeLink Network of Churches:

Pastor G. Hilary	Pastor P. Reid
Pastor M. Houston	

Lutheran Church:

Mr. M. Sauter

Methodist Church:

Rev. T.D. Cooper	Rev. Dr. J. McMaster
Mrs. I.M. Gallagher	Rev. E.T.I. Mawhinney
Rev. T. Kingston	Miss F. Moffitt
Mrs. G. Kingston	Mr. R. Ritchie
Dr. E. Loane	Rev. D.M. Twinem

Moravian Church Irish District:

Rev. L. Broadbent	Mrs. M. Woods
Mr. D. Woods	

Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church:

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Rev. T.W. Coey	

Presbyterian Church in Ireland:

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Rev. S. J. Campbell
Rev. J.M. Cathcart
Mrs. E.P. Crossley
Rev. A.D. Davidson
Rev. G.A.J. Ellis
Miss D. Gilmour
Rev. Dr. R.J.G. Gray
Rev. R. Herron
Very Rev. Dr. S. Hutchinson

Religious Society of Friends:

Felicity McCartney
Brigid K. Jacob

Salvation Army:

Lt. Heather Abbott

Co-opted Members of Council:

Mrs. E. Parkin/Mrs. J. Kirk
Mr. G. Clarke

Ex-Officio Members of Council:

Rachel Bewley-Bateman
Rt. Rev. L. Cockroft
Rt. Rev. Dr. J. Dixon
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Vice President:
Honorary Treasurer:

Immediate Past President:
General Secretary:

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Church of Ireland:

Rev. R.J. Gray
Rev. Canon J.C.D. Mayes

Greek Orthodox Church in Britain and Ireland:

Mr. G. O'Donnell

LifeLink Network of Churches:

Pastor P. Reid

Mrs. M. Irwin
Rev. J.G. Johnston
Rev. C. McClure
Miss. C. Roberts
Rev. D. Mark
Rev. D. Nesbitt
Mr. J. Patterson
Mrs. E. Sheppard
Mr. D. Whitcroft

Dr. David B.R. Poole

Mr. J. Unsworth

Rev. D. Kerr
Rev. V.D. Launder
Pastor F-G. Mayer
Major G. Pilkington

Rev. E.T.I. Mawhinney
Rev. Dr. I.M. Ellis
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F.C.A., L.T.C.L.

Rev. D. Nesbitt
Dr. R.D. Stevens

Rt. Rev. Dr. J.R.W. Neill
Rev. T. Williams

Lutheran Church:	Pastor F-G. Mayer
Methodist Church:	
Mrs. I.M. Gallagher	Rev. Dr. J. McMaster
Moravian Church Irish District:	Rev. L. Broadbent
Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church:	Rev. B.S. Crockroft
Presbyterian Church:	
Rev. A.D. Davidson	Very Rev. Dr. S. Hutchinson
Rev. R. Herron	Mrs. M. Irwin
Religious Society of Friends:	Dr. David B.R. Poole
Salvation Army:	Major G. Pilkington
Co-opted:	
Mrs. G. Kingston	Mrs. R. McKelvey
Ex-Officio:	
Very Rev. D.S.G. Godfrey	Rev. V.D. Launder
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Associate Secretary	Mr. R. Fairmicheal
Administrative Secretary	Mrs. F. Pyper
Secretarial Assistant/Bookkeeper	Mrs. D. McFarland
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Deputy Moderator:	Rev. R. Herron
Secretariat:	Dr. R.D. Stevens
Overseas Affairs	
Moderator:	Rev. V.D. Launder
Deputy Moderator:	Mrs. I.M. Gallagher
Secretariat:	Mr. R. Fairmichael
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Mrs. Sally Ayling	Mrs. Marion Woods
Mrs. I.M. Gallagher	Mrs. M. Williamson
Mrs. M. Irwin	

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on Irish Committee of Christian Aid:	Mrs. I.M. Gallagher
on Christian Education Movement:	Mr. D. Woods
on Commission on Inter-Faith Relations of CCBI:	Rev. Canon D. Sinnamon
on Commission on Racial Justice of CCBI:	Mrs. Fee Ching Leong
on Standing Committee of Churches' Commission on Mission of CCBI:	Mrs. M. Irwin
on Churches' Commission on Mission Annual Meeting & Four Nations Forum on Evangelisation:	Very Rev. D.S.G. Godfrey
on Churches' Peace Education Programme:	
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Vice President	Dr. R.D. Stevens
Immediate Past President	Mr. J. Unsworth
Honorary Treasurer	
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	Rev. Dr. J. McMaster
	Mr. I. Slaine
	General Secretary
on Irish Ecumenical Church Loan Fund Committee:	
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Dr. M. Downes	Mr. Irwin Pearson
Mr. J. Fitzpatrick	Mr. H.R. Roberts
Mrs. H. Gilfedder	Mr. R.H. Sherwood
Mr. R.W. Jess, F.C.A.	Mr. J. Smyth
Mrs. L. Hopley	Mr. R. Fairmichael
	General Secretary
on Irish Inter-Church Meeting:	
The President,	Vice President
Moderator of Boards of Inter-Church Affairs and Overseas Affairs.	
on Irish Inter-Church Committee:	
The President	Vice President
on Steering Committee, Churches' Representative Meeting and Assembly of CCBI:	The General Secretary
on International Liaison Committee of CCBI:	Rev. V.D. Launder
on Conference of European Churches Commission on Church & Society:	
Rev. Dr. K. Milne	

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