

## THE CHANGING DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN DONEGAL, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CONGESTED AREAS.

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The past hundred years have seen the total population of Éire reduced to less than half its peak level of 6,528,799 in 1841.<sup>1</sup> Apart from Dublin city and county, with 157·4 per cent. of its 1841 population, only the counties of Louth and Kildare now have more than half their 1841 population. Then follow Donegal (48 per cent.), Kerry (47·6 per cent.), Wexford (46·6 per cent.), Wicklow (46·4 per cent., in spite of suburban developments), Limerick (42·8 per cent.), Cork (41·6 per cent.), and Mayo (41·5 per cent.). The remaining counties now have between 30 and 40 per cent. of their population a hundred years ago, and it is most curious that Donegal and Kerry should have maintained their position better than many counties in which the agricultural resources are admittedly greater. In a previous paper,<sup>2</sup> it was shown that the density of agricultural workers per 1,000 acres of crops and pastures is as high in Donegal and Kerry as in any part of Ireland and rivalled only in the county of Mayo which, one may note in passing, has also a substantial percentage of its 1841 population. Here then in Donegal is a community of people, 142,310 strong in 1936, who have managed to maintain their identity better than their countrymen in other areas. The explanation lies in many factors, some of which will be considered in this paper. Among them are the opportunities for seasonal migration within the county itself and to Great Britain (notably to Scotland), the development of domestic and small factory industries, fishing and, so it is commonly said, the resource and enterprise of the people themselves. Without using this last factor as a *deus ex machina* to solve all difficulties, there are some parts of the county, at least, where it is apparent even to a casual visitor.

Many writers have tried to define overpopulation and the appalling sufferings of Ireland in the 'forties strongly suggest that the country was overpopulated. An interesting statement of what overpopulation means has been given by Professor Michotte, of Louvain.<sup>3</sup> "In seeking signs of overpopulation four indications may usually be expected: the exaggerated concentration of population, a persistence of migration, a state of endemic poverty, and a standard of living not far removed from misery." There can be no doubt that these conditions did prevail

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<sup>1</sup> Census of Population, 1936, vol I, pp 5-7. A general acknowledgment is made to various Census Reports, some of which are mentioned below

<sup>2</sup> Freeman, T. W., in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, vol. xvi, 1938-1939, pp. 89-104.

<sup>3</sup> Michotte, P. L., and de Vent, P. C., quoted in abstract in *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, vol. 54, 1938, pp 96-106, esp p 99.

in Ireland one hundred years ago and in Lord George Hill's "Facts from Gweedore"<sup>4</sup> a moving picture of peasant poverty is given by Patrick M'Kye, a schoolmaster who speaks of an area near Gweedore in a memorial he was bold enough to send to the Lord Lieutenant. "The parishioners of West Tullaghobegley," he says, "are in the most needy, hungry and naked condition of any people that ever came within the precincts of my knowledge, although I have travelled . . . Ireland, England and Scotland . . . British America and the United States. . . . I have never witnessed the tenth part of such hunger, hardship and nakedness." More explicit details are given and the story of the famine years and social conditions subsequently are too well known to need repetition here.

There has been much discussion of emigration as a remedy and among many comments we may note that of Tuke, quoted by W. P. O'Brien<sup>5</sup>; "whilst thousands of the well-to-do and able young men and women are leaving the country, those whose position most demands relief are left behind. . . . The withdrawal of families from crowded districts would have the double advantage of leaving more land for those who remain." In other words, it is not poverty alone which determines emigration, and the smaller decline of population in Donegal than in many naturally richer parts of Ireland may be explained partly by the factors noted by O'Brien. Though there were many efforts, notably those associated with Tuke,<sup>6</sup> to assist emigrants, many had to use their own savings or those of their friends and relatives already in America. In any case the amount of emigration from Donegal was not phenomenally large during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Of approximately three million people who left the whole of Ireland during fifty years, 123,000 were from Donegal. The movement from year to year depended largely upon conditions at home and in the United States and Britain.<sup>7</sup> From Donegal, 38,000 left between 1851 and 1861, and the flow was particularly heavy in the earlier part of the decade.<sup>8</sup> It slackened from 1861 to 1871, with a total of 12,000, but 60,000 emigrants were almost equally divided between the next two decades, and 13,000 left between 1891 and 1901.

The population of the county was 296,448 in 1841 and 185,636 (62.6 per cent.) in 1891. The effects of movement from the area of emigration may be hidden for a time. In many parts of Ireland there is an unusually large proportion of old people in the population, probably partly supported by their sons and daughters in Great Britain, America and other parts of the world. With the death of the old people the farm, if poor, may be added to another holding or even find no tenant; the land, once wrested with toil and sweat from the surrounding heathland, returns to it again and the cottage falls into ruins. A remark made to a research student in Glencree might be made all over the poorer areas of Ireland, "the families here are worn out."

The reports of the Congested Districts Board, though varying according to their writers, are most revealing documents.<sup>9</sup> They give an admirable

<sup>4</sup> Lord George Hill, *Facts from Gweedore*, first published 1838, fifth edition, 1887.

<sup>5</sup> O'Brien, W. P., *The Great Famine in Ireland and a Retrospect of the Fifty Years 1845-1895*, 1896, pp. 286 ff

<sup>6</sup> Tuke, J. H., *The Condition of Donegal*, 1889.

<sup>7</sup> Carrothers, W. A., *Emigration from the British Isles*, 1929, esp. chs. x-xii

<sup>8</sup> Census of Ireland, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901.

<sup>9</sup> For a general survey of the work of the Congested Districts Board, see Micks, W. L., *History of the Congested Districts Board*, 1925. The remainder of the paper is based partly on the Base Line Reports of the Congested Districts Board, produced in the years from 1891, with various Census and Government Reports and personal observations.

picture of those parts of Ireland which were deemed the poorest (see fig. 4). The basis of the classification was the rateable value and an area was termed congested if the valuation was less than thirty shillings per person. Naturally this led to many curious anomalies: in any case it could take no account of those ancillary resources of income which were not expressed in the value of the holding. These extra contributions to the exchequer were very numerous in Donegal and explain to some extent why the degree of depopulation was not greater. None the less, the congested districts cover practically the whole of the mountain heartland of Donegal, the more westerly and poorer parts of the lowland in the south and the whole of the south-western peninsula, the west coast lowlands and also the lowlands around the Bloody Foreland to Dunfanaghy and on to Rosguill. From this area, eastwards, the increasing productivity of the land becomes apparent. Two divisions in the Fanad were not recorded as congested and in Inishowen there are significant gaps, notably along the coastlands which face Lough Foyle and in the Malin area. The continuous belt of lowland from Millford, around the southern part of Lough Swilly and from Buncrana and Fahan southwards to the county boundary stands out as the most fertile area of Donegal and is not classified as a congested district. This important lowland area has been able to make a contribution to the life of the whole county by absorbing seasonal labour from less well endowed regions. Two interesting revisions were made in the area of the congested districts at later stages; in evidence before the Congested Districts Commission of 1906,<sup>10</sup> Sir Henry Doran suggested that maritime districts should be separately considered. It may be noted that many maritime communities in Donegal, partly owing to the nature of the coast, derive none of their living from the sea. In 1909, it was found convenient for administrative purposes to regard the whole of Donegal as a congested district,<sup>11</sup> partly owing to the intimate links between the poorer western and richer eastern parts of the county.

In the period between 1891 and 1936, the population of Donegal declined by 23·4 per cent., and almost every district electoral division shows a decline, with a few notable exceptions which include Clonleigh South in the extreme east, Stranorlar, Letterkenny and a group covering almost the whole of the Rosses (see figs. 1, 2 and 3).<sup>\*</sup> The mountain areas show a decrease which is considerably higher than the average and the decline in the south-western peninsula has also been heavy. None the less, to correlate the rate of decline with the apparent natural resources would be fallacious, for many of the richer lowland areas of the east have rates of decline which are at least as high as the average. In Inishowen the rates of decline are particularly heavy in many divisions along Lough Foyle and greater than those in the less fertile interior. It is not only those living in the least hospitable environments who leave as permanent migrants, the attraction is felt equally by those in better-endowed areas where the initial financial difficulties may be solved more easily. The Lagan has lost a quarter of its population in forty-five years, but the Rosses, even though, or probably because, temporary migration is general, have now a greater population than in 1891.

<sup>10</sup> Royal Commission on Congestion in Ireland, First Report, 1906, with map, p. 959

<sup>11</sup> *Comisiún na Gaeltachta*, Report, 1926, p. 36

<sup>\*</sup> In almost every case the increase is relative rather than absolute, for it is not of necessity equal to the natural increase through excess of births over deaths

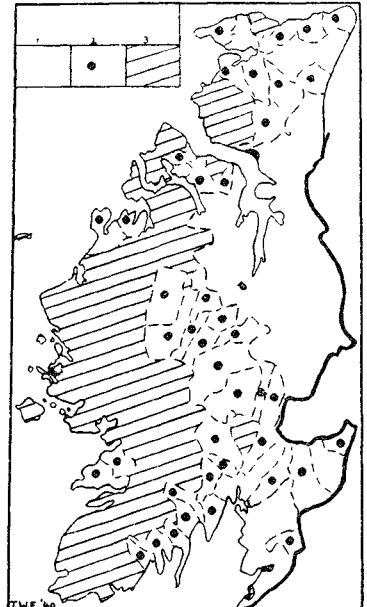
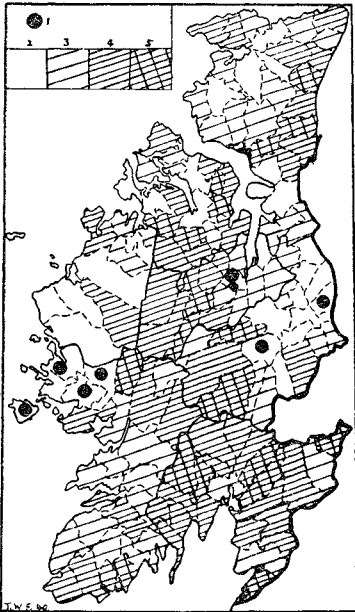
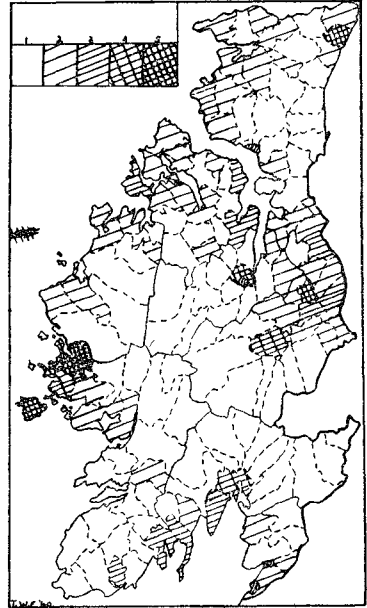
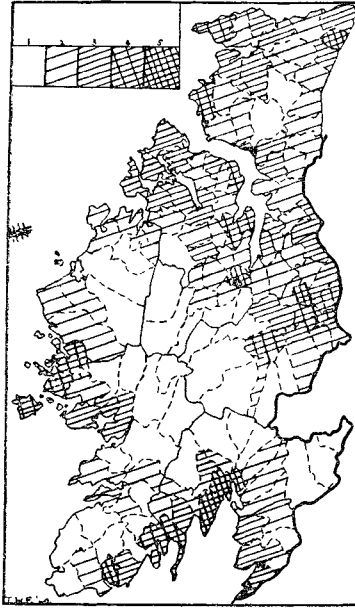


FIGURE I (top left) —Distribution of Population in 1891, according to District Electoral Divisions Key: Persons per square mile—1 0-80; 2 81-120, 3. 121-160, 4 161-200, 5 201 and over

FIGURE II (top right) —Distribution of Population in 1936, according to District Electoral Divisions Key as for FIGURE I

FIGURE III (bottom left) —Increases and Decreases in Population, 1891-1936. Key: 1 Increases Decreases per cent; 2 0-20; 3 20-30, 4 30-40; 5 40-50.

FIGURE IV (bottom right).—Congested Districts: 1. Areas not congested; 2. D E.D.'s ranked as congested in C.D. Reports, but with a valuation of more than £1 10s per head in 1936, 3 Areas congested in 1891 which still have a valuation of less than £1 10s per head.

Scale approx 1:1,400,000—about 22.5 miles to 1 inch.

The general picture given in the congested districts reports is that of a peasant community of small holders paying a very small rent for farms of less, sometimes very much less, than ten acres. The peasant farmers are obliged to till a very considerable part of their land to provide food for themselves and their stock. Only two crops figure prominently, potatoes and oats, and almost the only form of rotation is the alternation of these two crops. The fields are prepared for cultivation with the utmost care, in most cases with the application of sand, seaweed and other manures; rather curiously, as each congested district inspector noted, and observations in 1940 confirm, the crop is almost everywhere left to grow unimpeded by weeding and there is a striking contrast between the well-prepared potato field of spring and the colourful mass of weeds in the summer and autumn. Many of the farmers living away from the sea have access to upland grazing and there is a ready and accessible supply of turf from the peat bogs in most areas. In some islands and maritime districts the provision of turf is a serious problem.

It is very obvious that the small farms could not support the inhabitants without some ancillary sources of income and it is here that the Donegal people have shown particular enterprise and perhaps also a devotion to their homes without which the decline in population would have been much greater. The men go to Scotland or the Lagan after the planting of their own crops, as general farm labourers, potato diggers and harvesters, returning for their own harvest and for the winter of comparative ease, with long sessions in each other's homes for the inexpensive pastime of conversation. The women go far and wide in search of work and the increasing opportunities for female labour are reflected in the steadily increasing surplus of males over females in most areas, the significance of which was discussed in a previous paper.<sup>1</sup> In 1911, the male excess was observed for the first time but, though widespread at the present, it is not as marked as in some other parts of Ireland, owing to the fact that the women of Donegal have developed domestic industries in their own homes. These have provided the background for the industrial life of the county, particularly in textiles, in which 339 men and 852 women are now employed.<sup>12</sup> 498 men and 1,334 women are "makers of textile goods"; among the women there are 423 sewers (in shirt and other factories) and 245 embroiderers; in 1891 there was home-sewing, weaving, knitting and sprigging and the factory development was only in its beginning with efforts of the charitable to open "sewing rooms" to occupy the brave women whose industry kept the home going. Fishing was in 1891, as at present, a resource not always available even in maritime districts and the vicissitudes of the fishermen have only been exceeded by those of the kelp-gatherers. At present, the whole question of the use of seaweed is under investigation.<sup>13</sup> Finally, in almost every area some contribution to the family budget was made in "American money"; in a general sense this may be taken to mean all contributions from Irish people to their relatives from countries in which they have settled.

We may now consider the various areas of Donegal in relation to their resources and population. As a unit, the county may be divided in various

<sup>12</sup> Census of Ireland, 1936, vol 11, Occupations.

<sup>13</sup> Éire, Department of Industry and Commerce, Industrial Research Council Report for 1938-1939.

ways. The mountains of central Donegal and the isolated area, primarily of mountains, which has already been mentioned as the south-western peninsula, are fringed by coastal lowlands and intersected by valleys and lowland corridors. In some of these, flat areas at quite a low altitude are covered with peat bogs; in others communities of isolated farmsteads and small hamlets, with small village market centres, present a picture of constant, if scantily rewarded, effort.

An attempt will now be made to consider Donegal on a regional basis. From Ballyshannon road and rail wind through an industriously farmed landscape of little hills (drumlins) to Donegal town. In this area, about one-third of the farms are of less than 15 acres, one-third between 15 and 30 acres and the remainder larger with few really large farms. It is not markedly poor, though including in the hill country on the east one division which was "congested." None the less, it has lost over 30 per cent. of its population since 1891.

Beyond Donegal town the landscape has the same little hills, but between the river valleys are broad expanses of wind-swept peat bogs on higher ground, with intermittent agricultural settlement. Passing westwards, each valley seems less fertile than the one before it; there are fewer trees and the soils show increasingly the black colour of the land wrested from peat-bog. In the districts of Lough Eask (excluding Donegal and other divisions), Inver and Killybegs, the decline of population has been heavy, averaging over 30 per cent. The number of families recorded by the congested districts inspectors as very poor, essentially a subjective judgment and therefore possessing considerable but not invalidating limitations, increases steadily towards the west. In Lough Eask and Inver about two-thirds of the farms had a valuation of less than £4; in Killybegs, three-quarters of the farms were of this type, and it is recorded that in this last district 32 per cent. of the farmers were in very poor circumstances. In general, migratory labour to Scotland was common only in the eastern part of this area but there was some demand for local labour and fishing based on Killybegs and Inver, with the area around St. John's Point. Knitting in the homes was widespread.

West of Killybegs lies the mountainous region of the south-west, which may be delimited by a line drawn from the foot of the hills south of Ardara, around Mulmosog and Crownarad to the sea near Largy. This is one of the loveliest districts in Ireland, but one of the hardest agricultural schools. Settlement is restricted to the lower slopes of the hills, to valleys such as those focussing on Kilcar and Carrick, to Glengesh and to small coastal lowlands such as those south of Carrick and Kilcar and at Glencolumbkille. This south-western peninsula is without question one of the poorest areas in Donegal, and in 1891 85 per cent. of the actual holdings were valued at less than £4 and almost half at less than £2. It was reported to have a large number of families in very poor circumstances, almost everywhere over 20 per cent. and in many places over 30 per cent. The relative wealth of farms may often be gauged in these congested districts by the distribution of meadowland and cropland. Generally, in this particular area, meadowland covered more than half the area of the farm, especially on rough ground. The areas devoted to potatoes and oats were about equal, but on the very poorest farms the area devoted to potatoes might be as much as three times that devoted to oats. Obviously very few cattle could be kept under such circumstances and the life of the farm becomes merely a struggle to keep the family alive on a diet of potatoes. More than one-tenth of the families

on farms were recorded as having no cattle at all. Fishing was based on Teelin harbour and on a small inlet near Glencolumbkille but few families depended solely on this occupation. Weaving and spinning were widely practised in the homes and led ultimately to the small industrial developments based upon Carrick, Teelin and Ardara. Migratory labour to Scotland does not appear to have been practised in these isolated regions and the monetary income of the families, between £23 and £28 per annum, was lower than in any other part of Donegal. In many of the returns "American money" figures, and it was from such an area that absolute poverty drove many to seek better conditions in the New World. The population is now one-quarter to one-half less than in 1891.

In western Donegal there are considerable stretches of lowland, with many insular remnants of a formerly greater lowland reduced by marine submergence. From the hill-foot of the south-western peninsula northwards to the Gweedore river the lowland area is seared with rocky hills and smaller outcrops and strewn with lakes among peat bogs. The fields have black bogland soils and even among them the rock comes to the surface in many places. The stones, lifted from the fields, have been made into walls in many places; some fields, formerly cultivated, have been abandoned but in all this area the patient farmer wrests a living from reluctant soil with the aid of seaweed, sand and other fertilisers. It would be difficult in some areas to believe that any population at all could be supported, but in among the stony lands one may see a couple of fields with black soil, a cottage, generally with two rooms, and the pile of turf gathered for the maintenance of the constant fire. For convenience, we may divide this lowland into three sections—from the hill-foot south of Ardara to the Gweebarra river, from the Gweebarra river to the area around Dunglow, and the Rosses, with the island-studded coast and notably Aran Island, which has hills and lowlands like Donegal, as a whole. From this lowland there is easy passage into the valleys of the mountain area, several of which focus upon Glenties. The western lowlands of Donegal south of the Rosses show decreases in population of 20 to 30 per cent. and even more in the very poor country between the Dunglow area and the Gweebarra river. One would expect the Rosses, to the north of Dunglow, to show the same features, but this area, almost alone in Donegal, had a greater population in 1936 than in 1891.

The Glenties area, south of the Gweebarra river, had three-quarters of the families on holdings valued at less than £4 and one-quarter of the total is recorded as very poor. In general, the farmers had one-half of the area (of say six acres) in meadow and the other half divided equally between oats and potatoes. There was little migration, owing to the local demand for labour, but nearly two-fifths of the annual income of most families came from knitting and here, as elsewhere in Donegal, the industry has since been established on a factory basis, as at Glenties. Only those human paradoxes which defy all attempts to lay down general laws in geographical study can explain the prosperity of the Rosses. The story of the co-operative movement in this area has been told by Gallagher<sup>14</sup> and need not be repeated here. Even at the time of the congested districts reports, the inhabitants showed that spirit of enterprise which has made the Rosses so unusual an area among the peasant communities of Ireland. The report of Mr. William L. Micks,<sup>15</sup> published as a sample of such reports in his book, is of enormous interest.

<sup>14</sup> *My Story*, by "Paddy the Cope," 1939.

<sup>15</sup> Micks, *op cit.* in note 9, pp. 241-258.

Only 3 per cent. of the holdings were valued at more than £4 and 84 per cent. were rated at less than £2. Yet only 4 per cent. of the families were very poor. The holdings consisted of about 2½ acres, of which one acre or a little more was devoted to potatoes, half an acre to an acre to oats and one rood each to green crops and meadow. A form of seasonal migration to mountain grazing (transhumance) was practised and in some cases there was a second holding on higher ground.<sup>16</sup> Less well endowed in natural resources than almost any other part of Donegal, the inhabitants could not exist on the produce of their holdings alone. Mr. Micks gives an example<sup>15</sup> . . . “in Keadue there are exactly 100 families, while the valuation of the townland is £103 4s. The population is 505, so that the valuation per head of the population amounts to four shillings and one penny! And yet, owing to the wages earned in migratory labour, the people of Keadue are in ordinary years well fed according to the standards of the district, and also comfortably clad and housed.” The women cared for the home and farm during the summer, knitting and sewing at all possible times, while almost all the able-bodied men, girls and even children went away as migratory labourers. The men went to Scotland primarily for agricultural work, but also to industrial occupations. The girls and children went to farmers in east Donegal, Londonderry and Tyrone, especially to the Lagan. Micks suggests that some men came back with as much as £20 saved, but in any case more than half the annual cash income of £43 came from the migratory labour (say £10 from Scotland and £6 from the Lagan) and the knitting and sewing of the women (say £7 10s.). In 1939 there were 94 girls working in a knitted gloves factory in Dunglow.<sup>14</sup>

Off the rocky coast are islands, including Aranmore, which has a population 20 per cent. larger than in 1891. Here the annual income was similar to that in the Rosses, and the holdings very small, but 35 per cent. of the population were recorded as very poor. Migratory labour, especially to Scotland, was almost as important as in the Rosses and an added resource, not of much significance in the Rosses, was fishing, and, one may add, salvage. In the nineties, kelp manufacture was important and knitting also a supplementary resource. At the present time, the boats of Aranmore are in frequent communication with Burtonport, the terminus of the railway from Strabane, which was in use until 1939.

North of the Rosses, the lowland fringe is much narrower, less rocky, with few lakes, but almost continuous agricultural settlement in holdings not unlike those already described. On the west side of the Bloody Foreland there are a great number of arable fields, with potatoes and oats growing in black-soiled fields surrounded by walls as much as five feet high. There are patches of meadowland and green crops. Of the holdings from the Gweedore river northwards around the Foreland practically none have a valuation of more than £4 and 87 per cent. were rated at less than £2. Some rough grazing exists on the uncultivated areas and mountain grazing is not far distant. In 1891 it was estimated that nearly two-fifths of the whole population found annual employment as seasonal labourers, the men mainly to Scotland but also to the Lagan, to which the women and children also went. The people were described as “industrious and energetic” and weeded the land more than was general in the poorer areas of Donegal. None the less, one quarter of the population was recorded as very poor. The loss of

<sup>16</sup> For traces of transhumance in Donegal, see Evans, E. E., in *Geography*, vol xxiv, 1939, pp 24-36, and also in *Antiquity*, vol xiii, 1939, pp 207-222.



population has not been unduly high (between 10 and 20 per cent.) and the figures for density of population, necessarily based upon divisions, give no conception of the thick settlement of the areas, especially along the roads, wrested from the boglands. Here and there are farms with ruined cottages and the small fields returning to rough pasture. Tory Island is one of the areas in which the provision of turf was a problem and it was reported in the congested districts reports that the inhabitants were burning the very sods which formed their pastures; according to Mason this was still the case in 1931.<sup>17</sup> No holding was valued at more than £4; fishing (and formerly kelp also) accounted for the annual income, with some from agricultural produce: salvage might also be useful at times. In normal years now, as in 1891, the inhabitants are able to maintain a simple standard of living which does not constitute poverty but at times distress may be general on the island.

Passing eastwards from the Bloody Foreland, peat bog lies on the flat coastal lowland but at Meenaclady farmlands reappear and around Gortahork and Falcarragh there are signs of that increasing richness towards the east of the county which was noted in southern Donegal. The farms tended to be larger and in this area were of 5 to 8 acres, of which more than half was distributed between oats and potatoes, with the former predominant, and small patches of cabbages and turnips. The remainder of the farm was grazing land. Around Gortahork and Falcarragh only 10 per cent. of the families had farms rated at more than £4 and 19 per cent. were recorded as very poor, but in the Dunfanaghy area over 30 per cent. had these larger holdings. Through all this area there was temporary migration to Scotland and the Lagan of as much as 30 per cent. of the population. Other resources include some home-weaving and fishing, especially in the Dunfanaghy district. Here there was in 1891 a considerable demand for local labour, largely on the estates, one of which, on the south-facing slopes of the Horn Head peninsula, has since been divided by the Land Commission, and stands out as a rich fertile area with a well-drained red soil in striking contrast with the black-soiled fields of the smaller farms in the higher parts of the Horn Head peninsula. If the congested districts were defined again on the same basis as in 1891, the Dunfanaghy area would be excluded (see fig. 4). This is, however, partly due to the fact that the area has lost nearly one-third of its population in the last fifty years.

The central mountain area was thinly peopled in 1891 but had, along with the south-western peninsula, the highest incidence of real poverty and has also been the heaviest sufferer by emigration. The division into districts made in the reports is such that any general statistical summary of the mountain area is impossible but there are in the valleys, especially on the eastern side, some relatively prosperous communities who supplemented their incomes by seasonal migration to the Lagan and Scotland and by the domestic resources of knitting and sewing. None the less there were some miserably poor communities. The permanent movement of migrants, especially from the poorer areas, has resulted in a decline of population reaching over 40 per cent. in some areas. Owing to this very heavy decline, many parts of the mountain region would no longer rank as congested districts if re-assessed on the 1891 basis, even though the area still remains miserably poor. This is to some extent an indication of the limitations of statistical assessment (see fig. 4).

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<sup>17</sup> Mason, T. H., *The Islands of Ireland*, 1936, pp. 11-20.

Horn Head, which has been noted under the Dunfanaghy area, is a peninsula, the first of a series of increasing grandeur towards the east. These peninsular areas of north-east Donegal have considerable regional diversity within quite small areas and thickly populated lowlands contrast with wild and almost uninhabited moorlands and mountains. Rosguill and the Fanad, which is almost bisected by arms of Mulroy Bay, are areas of hills varied by stretches of lowland where most of the settlement is found. Between the true Fanad and the Knockalla Range there is a lowland including Portsalon, Tawny and Kerrykeel, generally with productive red soils contrasting with the black soils of the Fanad. From the Knockalla Range southwards to Ramelton there is an area of jagged hills from 500 to 1,200 feet high, with valleys having farmlands wrested from the prevailing peat-bogs and a somewhat richer area in the lower slopes of the valleys and the coastal regions of Lough Swilly. Inishowen offers more possibilities of successful agricultural settlement than areas further west. It is a peninsula dominated by mountains, of which the most striking are the Urris hills, continuing the line of Knockalla, Slieve Snaght, over 2,000 feet high with its satellites, and the long range from Scalp mountain to Inishowen Head. The areas chiefly settled are the coastal lowlands, which are usually not continuous, and the lower parts of the various small river valley areas. The more important lowland areas include the northern areas west of Clonmany, the lowland from Ballyliffin to Malin and Culdaff, the area focussing on Buncrana and the only long unbroken belt in Inishowen stretching from Muff to Inishowen Head.

The number of holdings valued at more than £4 increased from one-fifth in Rosguill to one-half in north Inishowen and the number of very poor was very small except in north Inishowen, where it reached 17.4 per cent. The smaller farms were usually of from 4 to 7 acres and the distribution of crops similar to that found further west, except that oats generally occupied a larger area than potatoes and turnips and cabbages are generally grown. The annual cash income in many areas reached £55 per year or even more, but might be very much lower, as for example in the upland areas of Cranford, Glen and Carrickart, where it would be about £32. In Inishowen fishing and sewing (for shirt factories in Derry) ranked as ancillary resources but there was little seasonal labour. Domestic industry, primarily sewing but also including weaving and spinning, was found in other areas of this attractive peninsula with the additional resource of seasonal migration to Scotland and the Lagan. The decrease of population is varied, but averages about 30 per cent. and this is largely due to movement to America. A re-assessment of congested districts on the 1891 basis would exclude Fanad, except for the division in the extreme north (Fanad North) and the mountainous Knockalla, with its very typical upland farms of black peaty soil. The whole of Inishowen would be excluded except for a group of divisions in the hilly country north of Buncrana and one division (Carthage) in the Malin Head peninsula.

In terms of natural resources, if not of scenic attractions, the good wine has been kept until now. From Millford eastwards there are lowland areas, of which the monotony is relieved by isolated hills from 600 to 900 feet high. The Lough Fern-Ramelton depression is continued along the shores of Lough Swilly to Letterkenny, where we enter the Lagan, the area to which temporary labourers proceed from many parts of Donegal. This area is chiefly around Letterkenny and Manorcunningham, but it has on occasion been taken to extend as far northwards as the

Pennyburn depression, between Londonderry and Fahan. In any case there is continuous lowland, punctured by isolated hills, from Letterkenny and Manorcunningham to the foot of the Scalp mountain north of Londonderry and southwards through Carrigans and St. Johnstown, spreading out into an area of many square miles from the west bank of the Foyle in the valleys of the Swilly Burn, the Deele and the Finn.

Though unquestionably the most prosperous part of Donegal, this area has lost from one-fifth to one-quarter of its population since 1891. The rate of decrease may be less than in the mountain areas, south-east and south-west Donegal and other areas, but it is still quite considerable and contrasts strongly with the Rosses and the north-west area of the county around the Bloody Foreland. As a richer agricultural region, it is served by large market villages almost reaching the stature of small market towns, such as Stranorlar, Ballybofey and Raphoe (in Stranorlar rural district 17.6 per cent. of the population is in towns and villages, contrasting with 5.6 per cent. in Dunfanaghy and 8.2 per cent. in Glenties—all figures for 1936). This higher percentage is partly due to the textile industries, as at St. Johnstown; in the whole rural district in 1936 there were 174 men and 239 women returned as textile workers and 76 men and 277 women returned as makers of apparel. The land is divided into larger farming units than in other parts of Donegal; in Stranorlar r.d., one-eighth of the farms have over 100 acres and the remainder are divided almost equally between small and medium-sized farms. The position in the Letterkenny r.d. is much the same and observations in the Inishowen and Millford areas would suggest the usual paradox of Irish farming that the better the land, the larger the farm. In any case, this lowland area, with a density of population little higher than that of Donegal as a whole has at the same time received seasonal, but apparently not permanent immigrants and lost an appreciable part of its own population by emigration.

There are many other problems which affect the life of Donegal as reflected in population movements but the writer of the paper has thought it best to concentrate on certain aspects. A fuller treatment of the ratio of males and females would raise many points of interest, as would a treatment of the present position of factory and home industry. None the less, the evidence considered enables the writer to put forward two main conclusions, which could probably be applied very generally in Ireland, especially in the areas covered by the investigations of the Congested Districts Board.

In the first place, while absolute poverty may act as a hunger drive stimulating permanent migration, as in the central mountain area and the south-west peninsula, the rate of decline over fifty years or less depends upon a number of factors, which can only be estimated by a study of local conditions with actual field work and, as the position in the Rosses makes abundantly clear, no *à priori* correlation between natural resources and population movement is possible.

Secondly, the ancillary resources of income among a population such as that in Donegal are quickly affected by trade and political conditions. American money may be withheld in periods of slump, migratory movement of labour to Scotland may be made difficult by travel restrictions, the kelp gatherers may be ruined by remote movements in international trade and not everyone can be induced to enjoy carrageen, even with the most discreet advertisement. The influence

of the Border is also worthy of full investigation. In such times as the present, attention should once more be focussed upon the needs of such areas as Donegal and questions of resettlement and industrial development, discussed in the Gaeltacht Report,<sup>11</sup> are once more of urgent significance. Even so, the basis of the life is agricultural and the Donegal peasant and farmer has not lost the love of his own most usually indifferent but sometimes good earth.

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#### DISCUSSION ON MR. FREEMAN'S PAPER.

MISS BEERE in proposing the vote of thanks said that she hoped that Mr. Freeman's most interesting paper would inspire others to make similar contributions in respect of different counties. While she had no criticism to make of the paper she wondered why no mention had been made of the Tourist Industry. Donegal abounded in hotels, ranging from small but comfortable boarding houses to luxury hotels—indeed at the 1936 Census of Population, 344 persons had described themselves as "keepers of hotels, restaurants and boarding houses"—an increase of 15 per cent. on the corresponding figures for 1926. It was significant that half these keepers of hotels, etc., resided in rural areas, compared with only one-third in other tourist counties such as Wicklow and Kerry. The tourist industry brought a great deal of money into the county—probably running into several hundred thousand pounds in a normal year. Further, the visitors stimulated home industries and tourists bought the tweeds, knitted goods, etc., made in the cottages and did much to advertise these goods. Donegal is fortunate in having an excellent system of bus transport—probably had it not been for tourist demand transport facilities would have been developed to a much lesser extent.

Referring to the various industries found in the county she stated that on a basis of the value of net output, industry might be divided as follows:—Food, drink and tobacco, 21 per cent.; textiles and clothing, 40 per cent.; other manufactures (industrial alcohol, carpets, etc.), 7 per cent.; building and services, 32 per cent. Many of the workers in the textile and clothing industries are employed in their own homes and their earnings average only about £10 per annum.

The various crops grown in Donegal had been mentioned, but no reference had been made to flax. In the middle of the last century this county grew over 20,000 acres of flax, but this gradually fell to about a quarter of that figure. During the war of 1914-18 it increased again to 12,000 acres, but in peace time there was no market and the people almost ceased to grow flax. In 1939 Donegal grew only 2,000 acres of flax but it would probably be found that this figure doubled in 1940. There now appears to be a large demand in Northern Ireland for flax and steps might well be taken to encourage the farmers of Donegal to increase their acreage. Flax-straw is also used in Donegal for thatching; it is most durable and lasts many years longer than oat straw.

Miss Beere also referred to the fact that rural Donegal headed the list of counties in 1936 with the highest proportion of persons living in overcrowded conditions—34.5 per cent. living with more than two persons per room. The standard of living varied widely in different localities of the county. In some places new houses had been built of the local stone and were a great improvement on houses erected in some other parts of Ireland. In parts of Donegal many ruined cottages were still standing where the families had died out, and there were

districts where there was scarcely a normal family comprising parents and children, and where in truth it could be said "the families are worn out."

MISS DOWLING, who seconded the vote of thanks, said that she spoke as a novice in the Society, only having been elected a member of the Society that evening. On the industrialisation of Donegal she spoke not as a novice but as a Factory Inspector of some fifteen years' standing.

Her first experience of Donegal was in 1928 when she was detailed to undertake a thorough investigation of the Hand Embroidery industry for the purpose of enforcing the statutory minimum rates of wages prescribed by the Hand Embroidery Trade Board.

She referred to the beneficial effects of Old Age Pensions, and described a family dinner at which the old woman of the house was given an egg flip, while the other members of the family had only potatoes and a small portion of milk.

She then added to the tribute paid in the paper to the women of Donegal, who were the mainstay of the people. The woman has maintained the home industries of knitting, embroidery and shirtmaking, notwithstanding the competition of the "factory" product.

In dealing with the changing face of Donegal, she referred to the geographical division of industry:—

West and North West	—	Hosiery and Handweaving.
Inishowen Peninsula	—	Shirtmaking.
South and South West	—	Embroidery.
Lagan Valley	—	Scutch Milling.

She referred to the prosperity of the Rosses and stated that it was due to the Templecrone Co-Operative movement which was started by Paddy Gallagher and which has flourished due to his untiring efforts. The amount of employment given by the Co-Op. has brought prosperity to the Rosses and kept the people at home.

She gave interesting figures showing that the industrialisation of Co. Donegal and Co. Kerry (being approximately 112 per 1,000 of the population) ranked very high compared with other counties. She showed that the industries as well as the hotels in Donegal are situated in rural areas rather than in the towns.

The future of Donegal, she said, lay in a nice or even balance between agriculture and industry.

PROFESSOR HACKETT said that those who have read Mrs. Dugdale's memoirs will remember that scene dated 1928 when Mrs. Dugdale, seeking to stir up old memories, said to Arthur Balfour: "But what is Ireland now and what remains of your Irish policy?" He sat up thoroughly aroused. "Everything! Everything! What was the Ireland the Free State Government took over? It was the Ireland we made . . . The Irish Government could have done nothing with Ireland but for our work. Fetch me that book on the mantelpiece—that book about the Congested Districts Board. Take that away and read it. Give it to me a minute!" He turned over the pages for a quarter of an hour, reading attentively some pages of the story of planned relief for Irish poverty—a story thirty years old and yet it is remarkably modern.

Dr. Hackett congratulated Mr. Freeman in bringing before the Society this valuable survey, utilising the large amount of material for our social and economic history contained in the reports of the Congested Districts

Board. The county has a unique characteristic as it was the last county to obtain the advantages such as they are of railway transport. The system of light railways radiating through Donegal from Strabane and Londonderry was largely due to the initiative of Arthur Balfour when he was Chief Secretary. He planned in conjunction with his Irish advisers the scheme of the Congested Districts Board, and almost the last act of his administration was a memorandum to his successor detailing the principles of that financial autonomy of the Board from the fettering and paralysing restrictions of the Treasury which was such an important factor in giving the vitality and vigour which characterised its operations.

Up to the eighties all transport was by road. Small inns or hotels were required to suit the stages of a day's journey by jaunting car. A good tradition of hotel keeping grew up which explains the number and variety of hotels, outstanding in their class, throughout the county.

Valuable as the data given by Mr. Freeman they require to be enlarged by more human studies such as the description Stephen Gwynn has given us of the people of Donegal and his account of their lively interest in their traditions; legends and history. The culture of a people make a part of that indefinite thing "the standard of living" which it is impossible to evaluate on terms of money.

Mr. Freeman has referred to the black bogland soils. It is not generally appreciated that most of the crops we grow have more tolerance for the acidic soils derived from bogland than for neutral or alkaline soils. The heaviest crop of potatoes recorded in Ireland was taken from the bogland soil near Creeslough with the aid of artificial manures. Even in the higher moorlands, homesteads of solid comfort are to be found. It would appear that, running through this paper, there is an unwritten query—how can such conditions of simple, contented, and satisfactory living be explained? Perhaps one answer might be that the Donegal people know the value of time.

This survey requires to be supplemented by a cultural survey on parallel lines, perhaps in co-operation with the Irish Folklore Commission who could be trusted to deal adequately with the traditional and Gaelic aspects.

MR. LYNCH: I have none of the detailed knowledge of Donegal possessed by the previous speakers. Yet, as a student of economics, I would like to add my thanks to the lecturer for his most enlightening paper. He has succeeded in humanizing statistics as far as Donegal is concerned. Would that all statistics could be presented in a like manner.

Perhaps the most interesting phenomenon presented by Donegal is its large number of migratory workers who seek seasonable employment in Scotland and return home when the work there is done. I was rather sorry that Mr. Freeman did not discuss this part of his subject at greater length. It seems to me that if emigration must be, this type is much preferable to the type that gives to a foreign country an Irishman representing perhaps twenty-one years of investment. It has been calculated that it costs £1,600 to bring an Irishman to the age of twenty-one. His permanent emigration, then, is a total loss to the country of this sum. Seasonal migration, on the other hand, is more in the nature of foreign investment. The worker returns home for over half the year. And Mr. Freeman estimates that he generally brings about twenty pounds (£20) with him, which is quite a reasonable return for his investment.

Like the proposer of the motion, I think that too much emphasis could not be laid on the benefit of the tourist industry in Donegal. After the present war, tourists will probably be Ireland's greatest invisible export. And Donegal is certainly amongst the counties that will gain most from it, for what with the charm of its people and the beauty of its scenery, Donegal has much to offer. Indeed, even at present the attractions of Donegal could be publicized to a greater extent. It is now that we Irish should show our initiative, and substitute home-produced services for those which many of us previously imported. Foreign holidays are rendered impossible by the war. Perhaps if Donegal and other similar counties were patronized to a greater extent by Irish people now they might continue to fascinate after the war many who previously spent their vacations abroad. This added to foreign patronage should bring much prosperity to Donegal when peace is restored to Europe.

There is one thing the lecturer did not discuss—the Two Pound Scheme (Scéim an Dá Phúnt). The effect of this aspect of Government policy for the revival of the Irish language must considerably increase incomes in certain parts of Donegal, and perhaps may be regarded as a substitute for the American remittances which naturally show an annual decrease. Apart from these comments I can say no more than reiterate my thanks to Mr. Freeman for his extremely interesting and informative paper and to hope that in the near future we may have the pleasure of hearing him examine other counties in a similar manner.

THE PRESIDENT: You have heard the resolution so ably proposed by Miss Beere and seconded by Miss Dowling, that the best thanks of the Society be tendered to Mr. Freeman for his excellent paper. The observations of some of the speakers contain many points to which Mr. Freeman, I am sure, will reply. The observations of Professor Hackett were very interesting to me and I am sure to you. I thoroughly agree with the suggestion he made that some member of our Society ought to go through the reports of the late Congested Districts Board and select therefrom material for a paper dealing with the economic position of the residents in that area and the amelioration of the conditions of their daily lives as a result of benevolent administration. The reports are very exhaustive and are mostly prepared by William Lawson Micks who was, I think, a member of this Society. I should also refer to the first reports on statistics of migratory labourers drawn up by the late Dr. W. P. Coyne, the first Superintendent of the Statistics and Intelligence Branch of the Department of Agriculture. These are really human publications and contain many extracts from the actual reports of Inspectors. Coming back to Mr. Freeman's paper, I must say I like the way in which he has given such copious references in his notes at the foot of each page. It is of very great assistance always to those who may wish to follow up any of the details of the paper to be given ready reference as to where they should look. I cannot help thinking, nevertheless, that the question of the migratory labourer has not been fully dealt with in this paper. Mr. Freeman may have been induced in these days of economy in paper to curtail his observations in reference to this part of his lecture. I sincerely hope, however, that Mr. Freeman will at some later time develop his subject and that we can look forward to having some more interesting facts from him. I have much pleasure in joining with the other speakers in thanking Mr. Freeman for his paper.

MR. FREEMAN: I quite agree with Miss Beere that the tourist industry is one of the most important for Donegal and the West of Ireland, and as I said nearly two years ago I think that these people can reap in the future a great harvest from the tourist industry. I would like to thank Miss Dowling for her intensely human account of the factory industry, and I would like to add one or two comments.

It is very embarrassing to say anything about women, but I entirely agree with all the laudatory remarks this evening about the women of Donegal. I wonder if the Old Age Pensions have solved the problem of the support of the old people. I think Miss Dowling was right when she said that the future of Donegal must be both agricultural and industrial. I think there could be a healthy balance between them. Professor Hackett referred to the material collected by the Congested Districts Board. There is an abundance of interesting material in the reports themselves, such as the unusual enterprise of the people in the Rosses. Eggs are frequently mentioned in the Donegal reports, and these eggs went to market in Donegal much too late. By the time they got to the market they might be fresh and they might not. At any rate three weeks elapsed between the laying of the eggs and their exposure in the markets. Then there were the doings of the "gombeen man." You all heard of the man who bought your eggs and gave you tea and other things instead—probably inferior tea. I would just say this, that we in our line of work limit ourselves in various ways, and my interest in the population of this country is chiefly geographical. As I have gone about the country I have been fascinated by all the evidences in the living landscape as it is now in the changing distribution of the population of Ireland. There is vast material available, not only in literary sources but also for research students in the field.