

## THE CHANGING DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION IN KERRY AND WEST CORK.

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County Kerry now has less than half its peak population of 293,880 recorded at the 1841 Census.<sup>1</sup> In 1936, with 139,834 people, it had lost less heavily than all the other Irish counties, excluding Louth, Kildare and Donegal, with Dublin city and county, the one area to show an increase. Some comparisons with Donegal are possible: the population of the two counties is similar (Donegal 142,310), the rates of decrease and existing percentage of the 1841 population much the same and the problems of the two areas in some ways parallel. Closer investigation reveals significant contrasts. The interest of Donegal lies largely in its capacity to provide the unexpected phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> Areas such as the Rosses, with a peasant community more numerous and more prosperous than fifty years ago, living on extremely small farms, are rare if not unique. Ancillary sources of income are of unusual importance in the life of this and other communities and account for the persistence of settlement in unfavourable areas. In Kerry, the congested areas show the heavier declines of population between 1891 and 1936. Additional sources of income include, as in Donegal, seasonal migration within the county itself, fishing and the profits accruing from the tourist industry, but seasonal migration to Great Britain and domestic or small factory industries are less well developed than in Donegal. Many of the picturesque areas in the peninsulas known to tourists have lost forty per cent. or more of their 1891 population. The loss is so striking that a very small area would remain as a Congested District if re-assessed to-day on the same basis as in 1891. In Donegal, approximately half the area congested in 1891 is still congested to-day.

In this paper the whole of Kerry is considered, with the four rural districts of West Cork (Bantry, Castletown, Skibbereen and Skull), which were taken over by the Congested Districts Board in 1909, when the scope of their work was extended to include part of the richer hinterland of the poverty-stricken western regions.<sup>3</sup> Geographically, there is no line of separation between West Cork and Kerry and the whole region gives a compact area forming the extreme south-west of Ireland south of the Shannon. It is a region in which the sea penetrates in long deep inlets between high moorlands and rugged hills. Coastal lowlands of varying size exist, especially in the south, but the areas of potentially cultivable land are greatly reduced by the continued growth of bogland on many level areas. The climate, almost perpetually moist, with rain on approximately three out of every five days, induces a prodigality of vegetative growth rare in Europe, with large areas of a saturated bogland and

<sup>1</sup> Census of Population, 1936, vol. I, pp. 3-7. 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, 1940-1941, pp. 31-46.

<sup>3</sup> Micks, W. L., *History of the Congested Districts Board*, 1925.

marshland flora. The essential problem is the drainage of low-lying areas which have soils over-saturated with water and semi-decomposed vegetable matter. Many of the richer farmlands are on lighter soils, such as sands and loams, and well-drained hillsides. Large stretches of farmland occur only in a few areas of Kerry and West Cork; more generally, scattered holdings are separated by deep peat bogs. In the extreme south of the region, in West Cork, there are considerable areas which recall the greater fertility of lands further east in Co. Cork; in the north of the region, around Tralee and Listowel and to the north of Killarney, there are farmlands which simulate richer areas in the great interior lowland of Ireland. Even here, however, there are hills, with low rounded outlines very different from those further west, which break the continuity of the lowland and include vast and unattractive moorlands and peat bogs.

The population of Kerry in 1891 was 179,136, 60 per cent. of the total in 1841. The present population shows a decrease of 22 per cent. during the succeeding 45 years from 1891 to 1936 and the rate of emigration has slackened considerably.<sup>4</sup> The volume of movement was not constant before 1891; it depended upon conditions at home and in America, where the gradual development of rich resources was inevitably marked by periods of maladjustment and depression. However, 211,642 people left Kerry during the latter half of the nineteenth century, from 1851 to 1901, seven per cent. of the total emigrants from Ireland, if the estimate of three millions is correct. Donegal lost only 123,000 during the same period and the difference is due to causes which include the greater home resources of the Donegal population in domestic industries and the firm establishment of the Donegal people in the seasonal labour market in Great Britain. The remoteness of Kerry has militated against the movement of seasonal labourers and permanent migration has resulted.

Movement from Kerry was particularly heavy in the decade 1851 to 1861, when 52,672 people left. 35,356 of these left in the first four years, when the impetus of the "hunger drive" during the post-famine years still remained. 40,480 left during 1861 to 1871, and the high levels of 9,400 and nearly 8,000 were reached in 1863 and 1864 respectively. During this decade, however, the population of the county declined by only 5,214 (2.58 per cent.). In the next decade the movement slackened considerably and the population increased by 4,453 (plus 2.27 per cent.), while 27,036 emigrated. Kerry is the only county in Eire, apart from Dublin, to show an increase of population in any inter-censal decade between 1841 and 1901. From 1881 to 1891, emigration was heavy once again, and 50,855 left in a steady stream of between 4,000 and 6,000 annually. During 1881 to 1891, the population of Kerry declined by 10.89 per cent., slightly more than the average for the whole country. Distress was considerable in some years;<sup>5</sup> in 1890 the potato crop failed along the western seaboard and in most of the western unions the crop was from one-third to one-half of the normal yield, but in several as low as one-quarter. The yield was especially low in many of the poorest districts with cold, wet and inferior land. The imminence of distress led to measures for public works, in which thousands of pounds were spent on railway and other schemes. This period saw the construction of the lines to Dingle, Valentia harbour and Kenmare. Emigration had con-

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<sup>4</sup> Census of Ireland, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901. See also Carrothers, W. A. *Emigration from the British Isles*, 1929, chs. x—xiv.

<sup>5</sup> O'Brien, W. P., *The Great Famine in Ireland and a Retrospect of the Fifty Years, 1845–1895, 1896*, esp. pp. 293 ff

tinued steadily to the present, perhaps stimulated by the railway development. In 1891 to 1901, 38,599 left Kerry and the population declined from 179,136 to 165,736 (decrease 7.49 per cent.).<sup>6</sup> In 1901 to 1911, with a decrease of 3.64 per cent., the emigrants numbered over 18,000; from 1911 to 1926, with a decrease from 159,691 to 149,171 (10,520, 6.59 per cent.), the loss by emigration was approximately 20,000, and from 1926 to 1936, with a decrease of 9,237, the loss was about 16,700. The tide has slackened, but over 100,000 left Kerry as permanent migrants between 1891 and 1936, making a total of approximately 277,000 from 1851 to 1936.

The 211,842 migrants who left Kerry from 1851 to 1901 were almost equally divided between males and females. In the heavy emigration of 1851 to 1861, females exceeded males by 28,128 to 26,544, but the excess of females among the migrants did not occur again until 1884. Since then the females excess has been increasingly marked with the result that at the 1936 Census all save a few divisions in Kerry and West Cork had an excess of males in the population. In some divisions there were less than 70 females to 100 males. With local exceptions, the excess of males was highest in the peninsular areas of Kerry and the eastern divisions of the county from which areas, mainly congested, emigration was particularly marked.

During the period from 1891 to the present, the population of Kerry in towns and villages did not share in the general decline. It numbered 32,423 (18.1 per cent. of the county total) in 1891 and 33,071 (23.7 per cent.) in 1936. A number of places are recorded as towns in 1936 which are not so recorded in 1891. Each succeeding Census, in fact, appears to have more places recorded as "towns"; this may indicate a growing tendency towards nucleated settlement, fostered perhaps by re-housing schemes.<sup>7</sup> There are three chief market towns. Tralee, now the ninth town of Eire (10,285 in 1936) and a flourishing county town serving a wide area as a minor regional capital, showed an increase from 9,318 in 1891 (plus 11 per cent.). The study of occupations in the town revealed no unusual features; remote for the location of any considerable industry, the town has the normal range of occupations associated with a distributing centre, including milling and bacon curing. Killarney, a tourist-centre and market town for central Kerry, had 5,609 in 1936 and 5,510 in 1891; the occupations showed nearly one-quarter of the employed population to be engaged in personal service. Listowel lost 13 per cent. of its population from 1891 to 1936, declining from 3,566 to 3,098. Of the remaining towns, Dingle had 1,764 in 1891 and 1,800 in 1936, but Cahersiveen declined from 1,987 in 1891 to 1,680 in 1936, a decrease of 15 per cent.

In the four rural districts of Co. Cork, the population was 63,743 in 1891 and 39,980 in 1936, a decline of 37 per cent. Here the town population shows a general decline, from 13,578 in 1891 to 8,694 in 1936 (decrease 36 per cent.). Even allowing for the inclusion, in 1891, of some thousands of people on board shipping, the decreases are high. The two market towns shared in the decline: Bantry, with 3,327 in 1891, had 2,643 in 1936 (decrease 20.6 per cent.) and Skibbereen, with 3,269 in 1891, had 2,541 in 1936 (decrease 22 per cent.). It will be noted that the small towns, with the exception of Dingle, lost relatively heavily, thus sharing the common experience of the smaller towns in Eire.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Census of Ireland, 1901, 1911, 1926, 1936.

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, T. W., in *Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland*, vol. xvi, 1938-1939, pp. 89-104.

TABLE. Number of farmers and their relatives, working farms of various sizes in each rural district with totals of agricultural population, farm labourers and entire population. Various percentages are included for purposes of comparison.

RURAL DISTRICTS	1-15 acres	15-30 acres	30-50 acres	50-100 acres	100-200 acres	Over 200 acres	TOTAL	Total Agricultural Population and per cent. of total Producers	Total Population and per cent. engaged in Agriculture
<b>CO. KERRY :</b>									
<b>CAHERSIVEEN :</b>									
Farmers	450	647	538	443	161	113	2,367	5,155	15,371
Percentage	19.0	27.4	22.8	18.7	6.8	4.7	100	91.5	35.9
Relatives	338	659	583	502	197	154	2,437	321 <sup>a</sup>	—
<b>DINGLE :</b>									
Farmers	333	449	392	306	70	32	1,596	4,121	13,838
Percentage	20.8	28.2	24.5	19.2	4.4	2.0	100	88.2	27.2
Relatives	364	587	533	452	106	53	2,106	408 <sup>a</sup>	—
<b>KENMARE :</b>									
Farmers	150	292	330	439	198	123	1,538	3,411	10,143
Percentage	9.8	19.0	21.4	28.6	12.9	8.0	100	89.7	37.9
Relatives	100	244	331	519	245	167	1,609	234 <sup>a</sup>	—
<b>KILLARNEY :</b>									
Farmers	707	743	945	860	208	63	3,548	8,928	26,051
Percentage	19.9	21.0	26.6	24.2	5.9	1.8	100	90.5	22.5
Relatives	484	780	1,061	1,078	272	84	3,765	1,515 <sup>a</sup>	—
<b>LISTOWEL :</b>									
Farmers	769	581	689	734	248	36	3,071	8,830	26,309
Percentage	25.0	18.9	22.4	23.9	8.1	1.2	100	88.1	15.1
Relatives	465	664	919	1,010	365	82	3,511	2,224 <sup>a</sup>	—
<b>TRALEE :</b>									
Farmers	563	654	783	961	240	58	3,279	9,208	29,130
Percentage	17.2	19.9	23.8	29.4	7.8	1.8	100	88.2	11.9
Relatives	390	760	948	1,279	295	81	3,755	2,113 <sup>a</sup>	—
<b>Co. KERRY—RURAL DISTRICTS :</b>									
Farmers	2,972	3,366	3,677	3,743	1,125	425	15,399	39,653	120,834
Percentage	19.4	21.9	23.8	24.4	7.3	2.6	100	89.3	22.0
Relatives	2,141	3,694	4,375	4,840	1,480	621	17,183	6,815 <sup>a</sup>	—
<b>Co. CORK (WEST—PART OF)—</b>									
<b>BANTRY :</b>									
Farmers	274	282	331	276	121	77	1,333	3,013	10,335
Percentage	20.7	21.2	24.8	20.7	9.1	3.6	100	94.6	31.8
Relatives	247	291	344	320	142	57	1,402	373 <sup>a</sup>	—
<b>CASTLETOWN :</b>									
Farmers	406	427	214	102	21	13	1,183	2,478	7,833
Percentage	34.4	36.9	18.1	8.6	1.8	1.2	100	91.8	36.8
Relatives	355	466	241	125	28	15	1,230	60 <sup>a</sup>	—

(a)—Number of farm labourers.

TABLE. Number of farmers and their relatives, working farms of various sizes in each rural district, (Cont.) with totals of agricultural population, farm labourers and entire population. Various percentages are included for purposes of comparison.

RURAL DISTRICTS	1-15 acres	15-30 acres	30-50 acres	50-100 acres	100-200 acres	Over 200 acres	TOTAL	Total Agricultural Population and per cent. of total Producers	Total Population and per cent. engaged in Agriculture
<b>SKIBBEREEN.</b>									
Farmers ..	336	580	716	580	120	15	2,368	5,394	15,500
Percentages ..	14.2	24.4	30.2	24.4	5.2	0.7	100	88.2	36.6
Relatives ..	243	514	655	638	146	25	2,227	754a	—
<b>SKULL:</b>									
Farmers ..	163	308	309	228	56	5	1,073	2,242	6,312
Percentages ..	15.2	28.8	28.8	21.2	5.2	0.4	100	88.0	44.8
Relatives ..	114	247	289	233	47	9	945	215a	—
<b>CO. CORK—Above Four Rural Districts:</b>									
Farmers ..	1,179	1,597	1,570	1,186	318	70	5,957	13,254	39,980
Percentages ..	19.8	26.8	26.4	19.9	5.3	1.2	100	90.9	37.2
Relatives ..	959	1,518	1,529	1,316	363	106	5,804	1,402a	—
<b>CO. KERRY and (Part of) CO. CORK (WEST)</b>									
Farmers ..	4,151	4,963	5,247	4,929	1,443	495	21,356	52,907	160,814
Percentages ..	19.4	23.2	24.6	23.0	6.8	2.8	100	89.6	33.9
Relatives ..	3,100	5,212	5,904	6,156	1,843	727	22,987	8,217a	—

(a)—Number of farm labourers.

The main interest in the Irish population movements lies in the rural areas. These have been drained of much of their youth for towns and areas overseas (See Figures, I, II, III). North of a line drawn approximately east-west through Killarney lies the Dingle peninsula, which will receive separate treatment later, and the area of lowlands and uplands which forms North Kerry.<sup>8</sup> This area is formed largely of carboniferous limestone lowlands covered with glacial deposits and alluvium, and uplands of various rocks of the same geological era. In the lowlands there are considerable flat areas of reedy pastures and peat-bogs, but other areas have good alluvial soils, with some fertile red soils. The river Feale wanders through many square miles of bogland to the west of Listowel, and the lowland becomes richer as it sweeps around the hills past Tralee and Castleisland in the direction of Killarney. The uplands have flat rounded outlines and generally wide valleys, reaching heights of over 1,400 feet to the east of Castleisland. The upland lines so clearly seen from Killarney or Tralee are about 800 feet, 1,000 feet, or 1,200 feet. This somewhat uninspiring landscape is continued eastwards into the counties of Limerick and Cork. These uplands are deeply covered with peat and most of the settlement within them is on farmlands in the various valleys or on the lower slopes of the hills,

<sup>8</sup>In the general topographical description, some material has been used from the Memoirs of the Geological Survey and from personal observations in the area.

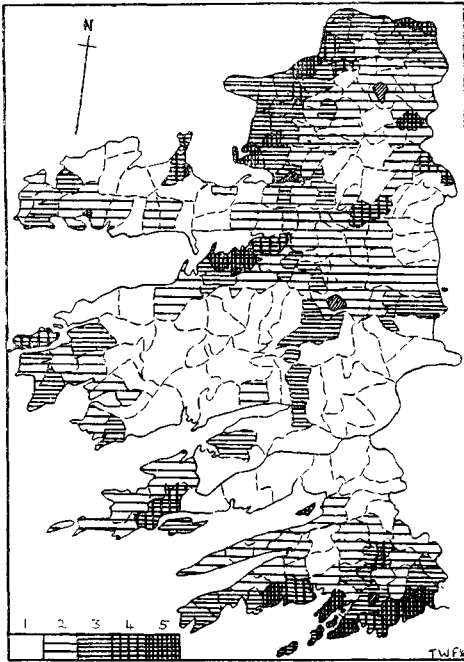


FIGURE I—Distribution of Population in 1891, according to District Electoral Divisions. Key: Persons per square mile—1, 0-80; 2, 81-120; 3, 121-160; 4, 161-200; 5, 201 and over.

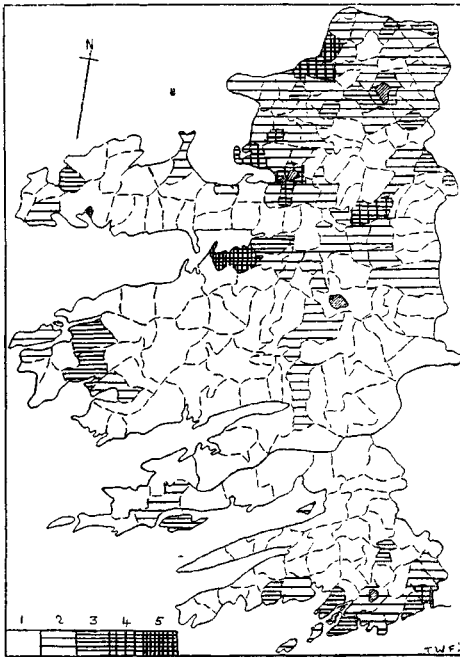


FIGURE II—Distribution of Population in 1936, according to District Electoral Divisions. Key as for FIGURE I.

Scale of all maps: 1"=approx. 18.5 miles.

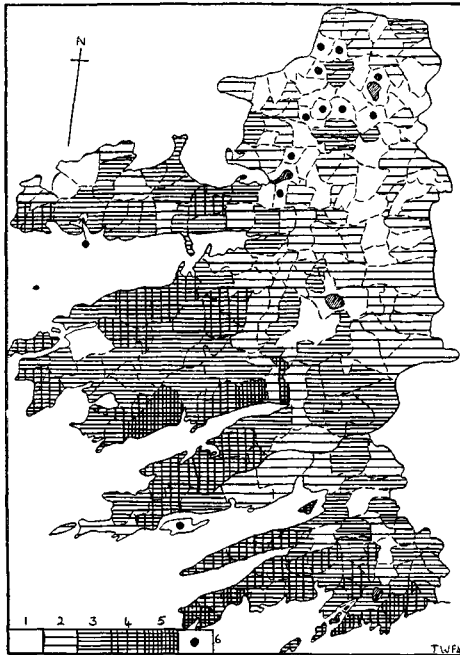


FIGURE III.—Increases and Decreases in Population, 1891-1936. Key: Decrease per cent:—1, 0-20; 2, 20-30; 3, 30-40; 4, 40-50; 5, over 50; 6, Increases.

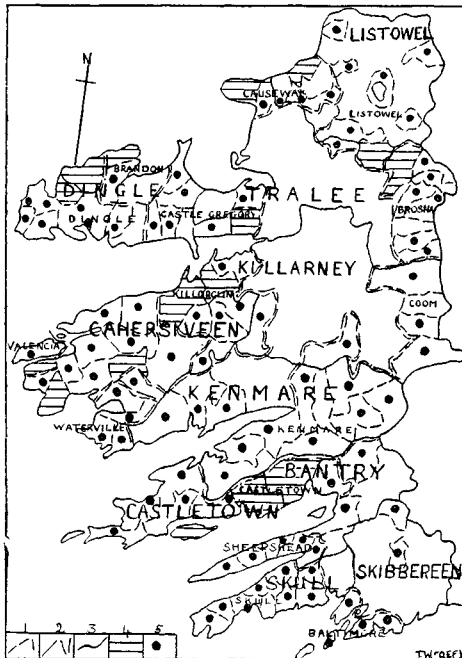


FIGURE IV.—Congested Districts. Key: 1, Boundaries of District Electoral Divisions; 2, Boundaries of districts delimited by the C.D. Board (small letters) 3, Boundaries of Rural Districts (large letters); 4, D.E.D.'s ranked as congested in C.D. Reports which still had a Valuation of less than £1 10s. per head in 1936; 5, D.E.D.'s. congested in 1891 which now have a Valuation of more than £1 10s. per head.

reaching over 800 feet in places. The Kerry Head peninsula is included in North Kerry, although in structure it is strikingly different. It is the most northerly and most humble of the old red sandstone peninsulas of West Kerry and Cork. Rising to a modest 717 feet in Maulin mountain, it falls gently to the east and loses its identity around Ballyduff, just to the east of the river Feale. The lower slopes are covered with farmlands.

In North Kerry, as described above, three main areas were "congested;" the Kerry Head peninsula (Causeway district), the upland areas towards the county boundary in the east (districts of Coom, Brosna and part of Listowel), with some isolated divisions in the lowlands around Listowel (the remaining part of the district)<sup>9</sup> (See Figure IV). Elsewhere in these northern lowlands, larger farms prevail, but even in 1936, one-quarter of the farms in Listowel rural district, and over one-fifth of those in Killarney were of less than 15 acres. In the Causeway district, over one-third of the families were on holdings rated at less than £2 and almost half on holdings of less than £4. About ten per cent. of the families were recorded as very poor. The farms valued at less than £4 included about 3½ acres tilled, of which ½ acre was given to green crops and the remainder divided equally between oats, potatoes and meadow. Dairy farming is universal in Kerry and West Cork and the arable area is important for its production of feedstuffs and foodstuffs. Only a small area can be tilled each year in the congested areas, as spade cultivation is almost universal and elaborate manuring with seaweed, farmyard manure and artificial fertilisers is necessary. The farms have areas of good pasture, varying in extent and generally a large area of rough pasture on the surrounding moorlands. Fishing for lobsters and salmon also employed a number of men, as a part time occupation. Thirteen boats, mainly canoes, manned by 26 men, were occasionally used for lobster fishing and 30 boats, manned by 180 men in the salmon fishery. Probably many of the 127 fishermen recorded under Listowel rural district in 1936 live in this area,<sup>10</sup> but as so few depend upon fishing exclusively and the remunerative qualities of the occupation vary enormously from season to season, the figure is of comparative value only. Apart from local employment as labourers, there was no other ancillary source of income in this area in 1891. The loss of population between 1891 and 1936 was not phenomenally high and was generally less than 20 per cent., but more in the peninsular area of Kerry Head.

The lowland areas around Listowel include some district electoral divisions in which the population lives largely on very small farms among large stretches of bogland, either on the flat lowland areas or in the valleys and on the lower slopes of the hills near the boundary with Co. Limerick. The smaller farms are very similar to those already described. The number of very poor families averaged about 10 per cent,<sup>11</sup> and there was some seasonal labour, with a few men employed in fishing. Since 1891, the population of these areas has declined by over 30 per cent. in some cases. The districts of Brosna and Coom, with Kilshenane in the southern

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<sup>9</sup> Base Line Reports of the Congested Districts Board, produced in 1891 and following years. The reports for Co. Kerry are far less detailed than those for Co. Donegal.

<sup>10</sup> Census of Ireland, Occupations volumes for 1926 and 1936. These volumes include information relating to the size of farms and the number of workers.

<sup>11</sup> This is a highly subjective judgment, depending upon the standards set by the C. D. inspector. However, the percentages, when plotted on maps, show interesting comparisons with the value of the holdings and the percentage decline of population.



part of Listowel, form a hilly region with valley and upland farms amid peat bogs. Some parts are thinly inhabited and this is largely a moorland district with exposed, very bleak and shelterless uplands. These areas had the cultivated part of the small farms divided as in the Causeway district. In Brosna, 17.5 per cent. of the farms were rated at less than £2 and 9 per cent. at £2 to £4; only a small number of families were recorded as very poor. In Coom, nearly 30 per cent. of the holdings were rated at less than £2 and an additional 10 per cent. at £2 to £4; 15 per cent. of the families were recorded as very poor. The decline in population is generally about the average for the county; local labour formed the main extra source of income and employment, both for men and women, was available in the lowland dairy districts of Kerry, Limerick and Cork.

The large area of Kerry which never ranked as a congested district stretches from the Shannon to the south of Killarney and includes the towns of Listowel, Tralee and Killarney. The agricultural standard is not constant but this region, primarily lowland, includes many excellent medium-sized farms and a small percentage of larger farms. The figures for Killarney, Tralee and Listowel rural districts, also show that nearly 6,000 agricultural labourers are employed within this area, which absorbs labourers and domestic servants from the surrounding upland areas. Most divisions show a decrease, which reaches over 30 per cent. in some cases, but a few show a small increase, especially around Listowel. This increase is small and far below the natural increase so this area, with all others in Kerry and West Cork, is one of emigration. The increase of 12.5 per cent. in Tralee rural district electoral division is largely due to suburban developments. In the rural districts of Listowel and Tralee, the decrease in population from 1891 to 1936 is substantially lower and in Killarney very slightly lower than the average for the rural districts of Kerry as a whole.

The Dingle peninsula is a wind-swept region, with striking mountains which rise from the lowland to the south of Tralee and continue westwards, broken only by passes at considerable altitudes and with several summits over 2,500 feet to the east of Dingle. Here the main ridge turns sharply northwards to Brandon Mountain, and terminates in the sea at Brandon Head. Deep glacial valleys trench the upland in places and there is a coastal lowland, better developed and more continuous in the north than in the south. Settlement is limited to this lowland, the valley floors where they are not deeply covered with bog, and the lower slopes of the hills. To the west of Dingle, there are many square miles of lowland, divided by lines of hills, with Mount Eagle rising to 1,696 feet in the extreme south-west. The last and most westerly outposts of Ireland are the Blasket Islands of which the Great Blasket, true to the Dingle type of scenery, is a ridge with sharp cliffs dipping precipitously into the sea. The Dingle, so limited in its areas of cultivated land, is thinly peopled, but far less poverty-stricken than many parts of the west of Ireland. Many of the soils are fertile, the number of very small farms is not unduly high and the town of Dingle, with its creamery, market and fairs, is a useful commercial asset.

In 1891, practically the whole peninsula was recorded as congested, and the average rateable value per head in divisions not included was very little greater than £1 10s. The area to the east of Dingle was grouped as the Castlegregory district, two divisions east of Mount Brandon were considered as the Brandon district and the remaining western divisions as the Dingle district. The proportion of families of holdings valued at less than £2 was highest in Castlegregory, where it was nearly 40 per

cent., with about 10 per cent. between £2 and £4. The proportion was approximately similar in Brandon, but in Dingle about 25 per cent. of the farms were rated at less than £2 and rather less than 10 per cent. at £2 to £4. The eastern part of the peninsula had one-fifth of the families recorded as very poor, while few were so regarded in the western area. The arable area of the small farms varied from  $3\frac{1}{2}$  to  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres, divided equally between oats, potatoes and meadow, with a smaller area given to green crops. This area is one of the few districts in the West with a fisherman class possessing no land, though many of the fishermen outside the town of Dingle have small-holdings as a secondary source of income.<sup>12</sup> The number of fishermen was greater in 1891 than now. There were few in Castlegregory, but Brandon had 170, and Dingle district, 383. In 1926 there were 415 fishermen in Dingle town and rural district, but in 1936 only 252, many of whom were in a distressed condition. The only other source of income was as labourers within the area or in the richer districts of Tralee and North Kerry generally. The area has lost very heavily in population; Dingle rural district records a loss of 27.9 per cent. from 1891 to 1936, and the loss would be still heavier if the town of Dingle were excluded. Local observations show that the eastern part of the peninsula is poorer than the western; settlement is restricted to some naturally fertile red sandy soils on well-drained hillsides and in isolated patches on the coastal lowland, with small areas reclaimed from boglands. The area of good soils is larger in the central part of the peninsula, as in the long valley carrying the road through Anascaul, and on the gently sloping hillsides around Dingle and further west. However, extensive areas have been abandoned, especially on the boglands and towards the upper limit of cultivation, which varies according to the type of soil and drainage, but reaches 700 feet in places. It is also obvious that many small farms have been amalgamated and the general standard of housing has risen; two-storied slated houses have replaced thatched cottages which remain as outbuildings. Poor thatched cottages surrounded by a few poor fields are still a picturesque, if depressing feature of the landscape. About one-fifth of the farms cover less than fifteen acres and medium-sized farms are the most numerous group. They are generally worked by the farmer and his relatives; in Dingle rural district there were only 408 farm labourers in 1936. From Dingle, cattle, sheep and pigs are sent regularly to larger centres, notably Tralee, Limerick and Cork, and buyers come regularly from these towns to the monthly fairs at Dingle.

The peninsular region to the west of Killarney is bounded by Dingle Bay in the north and Kenmare Bay in the south. It is called the "promontory of Iveragh and Dunkerron" in the memoirs of the Geological Survey, but for convenience in this paper will be called the Iveragh peninsula. From Mangerton to the south of Killarney a long ridge, with many mountains over 2,000 feet, is continued in a south-south-westerly direction, unbroken except by high passes to the sea south of Waterville, in Hogs Head. Many projecting ridges separate the various valleys which have streams flowing into Kenmare Bay. The magnificent Reeks mountain area lies to the south-west of Killarney and extends westwards to the Caragh River; beyond are the mountains limiting the Caragh river valley on the west and the Behy river. Further west, several ridges rise sharply from the lowlands and the chief valleys are the Ferta, flowing into the Valencia river through Cahersiveen and the Inny, flowing into Ballinskelligs Bay.

<sup>12</sup> Coimisiún na Gaeltachta, Report, 1926, pp. 46 ff.

In the north of the peninsula are the districts of Killorglin, including the poor lands around the town and in the Caragh and Behy rivers; Valencia, including the island and Portmagee district electoral division on the mainland and Cahersiveen, covering the remaining part of the region. The very small farm is not by any means as frequent as in similar districts of Donegal. In Cahersiveen, 19 per cent. of the farms are of 15 acres or less, in Glenties, 58.5 per cent. The decrease of population from 1891 to 1936 was over 30 per cent. almost everywhere, reaching nearly 60 per cent. in several district electoral divisions. This accounts for the fact that only five divisions would now rank as congested. The density of population is generally low, but slightly higher along the coastal plain from Killorglin to Glenbeigh and beyond, and on the western seaboard, where there is some development of coastal lowland and some cultivated areas in the valleys and on hillsides. Some coastal lowland areas and valleys have almost continuous settlement but others, such as at Caragh Lake and in the Behy, Ferta and Inny valleys, have enormous areas of bogland. There is abundant scope for very detailed work on a single valley showing the control of settlement by conditions of soil and drainage.

The proportion of families on holdings rated at less than £2 was over 50 per cent. in Killorglin and Valencia, and nearly 40 per cent. in Cahersiveen. In addition, 25 per cent. in Killorglin and approximately 20 per cent. in Valencia and Cahersiveen were rated at £2 to £4. Over 10 per cent. of the families were recorded as very poor, but this percentage was greatly exceeded in some areas, such as the remote districts of the upper Caragh river. The farms valued at less than £4 had about 3 acres cultivated in the Killorglin and Cahersiveen districts, 1 acre under oats,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres potatoes, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre green crops. In Valencia the cultivated area was even smaller and averaged  $2\frac{1}{4}$  acres, of which 1 acre was given to oats,  $\frac{3}{4}$  acre to potatoes and  $\frac{1}{4}$  each to meadow and green crops. From the Killorglin district a few young men went to the dairying areas in North Kerry, Limerick and Cork as farm servants and girls to Limerick as dairymaids. In all the three districts a limited amount of employment was available on the larger farms. Fishing was of some importance throughout the region. In Killorglin district there were 48 boats and 192 men engaged in salmon fishing in the tidal waters of the Caragh and Laune rivers. In the Cahersiveen district, there were 89 boats with 289 men fishing in the tidal waters of the Valencia river and the open sea. Lobsters, salmon, mackerel and herrings were sold and there was a considerable export of cured mackerel, mainly to America and of herrings, mainly to Russia and Germany.<sup>12</sup> The market collapsed sharply in 1920, but at the present time there are signs of revival. Valencia district has fishing in the channels around the island and in the open sea; in 1891 there were 45 boats and 158 men engaged in Valencia and 64 boats and 268 men at Portmagee. At the 1926 Census, 213 fishermen were recorded, but in 1936 only 97 from Cahersiveen rural district and town, although there may be others who fish when market conditions are suitable.

The south of the Iveragh peninsula is partly included within the districts of Waterville and Sneem. Here, as in the north of the peninsula, farmlands are confined to favourable stretches on hillsides and in valleys and areas of coastal lowland, generally discontinuous, but extending for several miles north and south of Waterville. The number of holdings valued at less than £2 was approximately 40 per cent. in Waterville and 25 per cent. in Sneem, rather less than further north. In addition, about 27 per cent. of the holdings in Waterville and nearly 25 per cent. of those in Sneem were valued at £2 to £4. The small farms had 2 to 3 acres

cultivated,  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 acre under oats, 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres under potatoes,  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre under green crops and a patch of meadow. Nearly 20 per cent. of the families in Sneem district were recorded as very poor, but less than 10 per cent. in Waterville. Throughout the area, there was some local employment of labour. Men from the divisions of Sneem and Tahilla went to work in Wales with the object of saving sufficient money to emigrate to America. The girls went to the dairying areas of Limerick and the farmers' sons to Limerick and Cork for potato digging. From Castlecove division a few men went to London to help in market gardening, leaving in spring and returning at Christmas. Fishing was the only other source of income and approximately 400 men were so engaged intermittently.

Further south there are some good lands in the Roughty valley around Kenmare and Halissy<sup>13</sup> has described the rich farming of a particularly favourable area of limestone, thickly covered with glacial drift, lying to the west of Kenmare. Halissy distinguishes from these lowland farms those of the mountain-farm belt and gives as an example a well-managed mountain farm at the unusual altitude of 900 feet, at Greenane. The rental is £1 18s., and through unremitting reclamation work the farm has been extended to cover 13 acres of arable land and 70 acres of rough grazing. Only about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres are tilled each year, as everything has to be done with the spade. Such a farm is most unusual and "for a long time the great tendency has been to allow land formerly reclaimed to revert to its natural state. The shrinkage of the arable land is . . . mainly attributable to the scarcity of labour resulting from the great decline of population since the middle of the last century." A number of district electoral divisions to the west of Kenmare were not congested in 1891, but the Kenmare district includes a considerable area north of the Roughty valley east of the town, and shares with the Castletown district the whole of the peninsula between Kenmare Bay and Bantry Bay. This peninsula has no name in common use, but it is proposed to call it the Caha, after the range of mountains by which it is dominated. These mountains, with the Slieve Miskish, form a continuous range parallel with the coasts and with passes below 1,000 feet only in the extreme west. Ridges scarcely less significant in altitude run off at right angles to the main ranges, separating a number of valleys with swift-flowing streams. Here, as further north, the cultivable land is restricted to valleys, the lower slopes of hills and the discontinuous coastal lowlands. The density of population is slightly higher than that in the Iveragh peninsula, with the same increase towards the western seaboard. Every district electoral division had a decrease from 1891 to 1936, of over 20 per cent. and in several the decline was over 40 per cent. In consequence, only three district electoral divisions would still rank as congested on the basis of the 1936 Census.

In the Kenmare district only about 10 per cent. of the farms were valued at less than £2 and an additional 20 per cent. at £2 to £4. In the Castletown district, 17.5 per cent. of the farms were valued at less than £2 and a slightly greater percentage at £2 to £4. These small farms had arable areas of between 3 and 5 acres, of which  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres were under oats,  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre green crops, 1 to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres potatoes, with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  acres meadow. In the Kenmare district, a small number of labourers were employed on farms and unloading ships in Kenmare town. About

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<sup>13</sup> Halissy, T., in Wright, W. B., and Cole, Grenville A. J., *The Geology of Killarney and Kenmare*, 1927, ch. ix.

fifteen men were engaged in salmon fishing for about three months each year, and there was home weaving of flannel and tweed, which was sold in Kenmare. Home weaving has since practically died out. From Adrigole and Kilcaskan divisions men went to work in Wales in iron works. They stayed from April to December and brought home about £15 each. At the 1936 Census, there were only 234 agricultural labourers in the whole of Kenmare rural district, and only 10 fishermen. In the Castletown district, fishing was the main extra source of income. There were 194 boats in the district, with 1,024 men engaged and foreign boats provided work for others. Mackerel and other fish were caught in the spring and summer and sold fresh. In the autumn the mackerel was cured and part was then sold and part kept for home consumption. In three years, £6,000 worth of fish was sold at the principal curing station in Garinish. This area has suffered very heavily from the general decline in fishing; in 1926, there were only 36 wholtime fishermen and in 1939 only 32 in the whole of Castletown rural district.

The remaining area of West Cork includes a maritime fringe within the Congested Districts area and a somewhat richer area around the head of Bantry and Roaringwater Bays and in the Ilen valley and its various affluents, which have Skibbereen as a market centre. These areas are included within the rural districts of Bantry, Skibbereen and Skull and it will be noted that the percentage of small farms is not high. This part of Cork is more densely peopled than parts of Cork and Kerry further north, but the decline of population between 1891 and 1936 has been remarkably heavy. Every district electoral division within the congested area and most of those outside it lost at least 30 per cent. of the 1891 population; several divisions, including all in the Sheepshead peninsula, lost at least 40 per cent. and five over 50 per cent. The causes for the particularly heavy loss are numerous, but include especially the decay of the fishing industry. As a result of this decline, no part of the area would rank as congested if re-assessed on the 1891 basis.

The Sheepshead peninsula, between Bantry Bay and Dunmanus Bay, is a delicate miniature of peninsulas further north. It is from 2 to 2½ miles wide with a ridge of hills rising to 1,156 feet in Seefin, and agricultural land is confined to strips of coastal lowland and valleys developed on the south-facing slope. About one-fifth of the families were living on holdings valued at less than £2 and nearly another fifth on holdings valued at £2 to £4. Nearly one-fifth of the families were returned as very poor. The small farms had about 3¼ acres cultivated, 1 acre each to oats, potatoes and meadow and ¼ acre in green crops. In this district, there were few labourers and no migratory labour, but there were 55 boats with 220 men engaged and the fish was sold in Bantry. In 1926, there were 45 fishermen in Bantry rural district, with 27 in 1936. There were 373 farm labourers in Bantry rural district in 1936, but these are employed mainly in the more prosperous parts of the area.

Skull district covers the very greater part of the Skull rural district, and consists of the peninsula between Dunmanus Bay and Roaringwater Bay. Here there are considerable stretches of lowland and the hills are more broken than in the peninsulas further north. About one-fifth of the holdings were rated at less than £2, another fifth at £2 to £4, and rather over one-fifth of the families were recorded as very poor. The small farms had cultivated areas very similar to those of the Sheepshead district. There was comparatively little demand for labour locally; in 1936, there were 215 farm labourers in this area. Fishing was the main additional resource; 13 boats with 52 men were engaged in lobster fishing and Crookhaven had a deep sea fishing fleet of 103 boats. Mackerel was cured

at Skull and Dunmanus. 71 fishermen were returned for Skull rural district in 1926 and 38 in 1936.

The last district to be considered here is Baltimore, covering various islands and a small area on the mainland to the south-west of Skibbereen, and included within the Skibbereen rural district. Of the farm holdings, slightly over 10 per cent. were valued at less than £2 and slightly over 10 per cent. at £2 to £4; 15 per cent. of the holders were recorded as very poor. The cultivated area on the small farms was, as everywhere else along this seaboard, about  $3\frac{1}{4}$  acres, one acre for each of oats, potatoes and meadow with a patch of green crops. The adult male population was mainly small farmers and fishermen and there were few labourers in the ordinary sense, with no migratory labour. It is a reasonable assumption that most of the 754 farm labourers in the Skibbereen rural district in 1936 were in the rather richer areas further east. Fishing was of considerable importance; there were 211 boats employing approximately 1,000 men. Out of season, the boats carried seaweed and turf from the mainland to the islands. In addition, there was a lobster fishery in summer at Aghadown South, with 40 boats and 120 men and a salmon fishery in summer in the river Ilen, with 12 boats and 48 men. The people were reported to be very industrious and excellent fishermen. In 1926, there were 236 fishermen in the Skibbereen rural district, and in 1936, 115. There are probably many others who fish at times, but depend primarily upon farming, yet the obvious decline in the fisheries does something to explain the very heavy loss of population in this area.

It remains to summarize the main conclusions of this rapid survey of a wide and varied region. The tale is one of continued outward movement of population from a region broadly divisible into a series of lovely but unremunerative peninsulas with some less attractive but more fertile interior lowlands. These lowlands, of which North Kerry is the chief, have either lost their population less markedly than the peninsular areas or else failed to absorb their natural increase. They cannot absorb the surplus population of the poorer regions which must look further afield, to Co. Limerick and Co. Cork, to the towns and notably Dublin, or to whatever area, British or American, is in need of labour at any particular time. The tourist industry provides some alleviation, but only in certain places. Spinning, weaving and knitting were never as widespread or commercialised as in Donegal and only from a few areas in Kerry was there any seasonal migration. Probably the simple geographical factor of remoteness and the expense of a railway fare operated here, or it may be that the men of Kerry never acquired the habit of going away for several months each year. Dairy farming is universal, and co-operative creameries, found in all parts of Kerry and Cork, have proved of great value. The saddest feature is the decline of fishing in spite of all the efforts of the Congested Districts Board and governmental loans and other schemes<sup>3,11</sup>. The industry depends upon factors beyond the control of the fisherman. There is, however, another side to the picture. The actual congestion is very much less marked now than in 1891 and the standard of living has been enormously improved. The grinding poverty and discomfort of the past is substantially alleviated. Between 1926 and 1936, a number of district electoral divisions in the lowlands of North Kerry recorded an increase of population, though the decreases in the peninsular areas were almost universally high. There is in progress a gradual adjustment of population density to the natural resources, under modern social and economic conditions, and the process is not by any means complete.

## DISCUSSION.

**Professor Smiddy** in proposing the vote of thanks said he had little to say in the way of criticism of the paper which was essentially an analysis of the population statistics of Kerry and West Cork. The paper was a valuable contribution to the subject in which personal observation was largely coupled with a study of official records.

One might draw the conclusion from the paper that the maintenance of a large number of small holdings on the land, especially in the Congested areas, consistent with the present standard of living, is dependent upon ancillary sources of income other than farming. As Mr. Freeman points out, in the Rosses in Co. Donegal there is a more numerous and prosperous community than fifty years ago living in extremely small farms, due to seasonal migration to Great Britain, domestic or small farm, industries and fishing. Whereas in Kerry, even with tourist traffic, where such ancillary sources of income are not present in a like measure and where migration is mainly within the county, only a small area would remain as a congested area in Kerry if re-assessed to-day on the same basis as 1891, and which lost forty per cent. of its population since 1891.

Up to 1891 the fishing industry—especially mackerel—flourished along the south-east coast of Kerry and all along the south-west Cork coast. Its collapse must have necessitated emigration from the coastal areas. Further, as Mr. Freeman points out, in Kerry and West Cork, unlike Donegal, seasonal migration to Great Britain was not the custom for reasons which he sets forth in his paper ; whereas in Co. Donegal such migration was usual which meant supplementary incomes and the retention of the population. In fact, in West Cork the decrease in population between 1891 and 1936 would be greater were it not for the fact that until recent years—1936—the very small farmers were able to supplement their direct farm income by farmyard industry, viz., the comparatively extensive breeding and rearing of pigs and poultry which the purchase of cheap maize meal enabled them to carry out. The small farms themselves already fully utilized for the production of the crops, hay and grass and potatoes for the support of cattle, sheep and family could not produce sufficient for the pig and poultry stock carried. In recent years this farmyard industry has got a setback, with reduced incomes as a consequence which is exemplified by Mr. Freeman who shows the co-relation between population and natural resources—emigration being greater from the poorer areas.

The decrease in the rural areas of Kinsale, Bantry and Castletown has been marked in recent years. I was informed when recently in Bantry that the serious problem is the decrease in the number of marriages and children as evidenced by the fall in the numbers of children in the schools during the last nine years. It is natural to expect emigration from the country areas as only a few children from each family will find work on the land ; but it is otherwise when the existing population is on the way to a marked decrease as shown by the decreasing number of children due to less marriages and aggravated by the decrease in the fertility of women in rural areas as shown by the last Census.

**Mr. Lynch :** Those of us who heard Mr. Freeman's paper on County Donegal last session have been looking forward to the lecture he has just delivered, and I feel that none of us has been disappointed. It seems to me that the full merit of his work will not be appreciated till the statistical under-structure which he has presented is made a basis for a

social inquiry of the districts he has dealt with. An attempt to interpret such statistical information should be invaluable in tracing the valuation and fortunes of the community. I sincerely hope that Mr. Freeman continues this work, for in doing so, he is making available what will be a very acceptable basic material for some social historian of our people.

As a matter of convenience, the Irish name Corcha Duibhne covers roughly the areas about which our lecturer spoke to-night. In the course of his paper some aspects of the districts' economy were treated of. It is clear, of course, that he was more concerned with the statistical background itself than with a social analysis of it. Still, in order to see the picture in perspective both the statistical and social elements must be co-related. Another comment I should like to make is that I do not think adequate emphasis was laid on the influences of social services under the native Government since 1922 on the areas in question.

The existence of the Irish language as the only medium of expression until early in this century meant that the advantages of education as a social service were not made available to the people of Corcha Duibhne. English was almost unknown. The result was that a people with a culture as old as any in Western Europe were faced with the alternatives of emigration to America or drudgery at home.

Mr. Freeman has dealt at length with the excellent work of the Congested Districts Board. After 1920 the advent of lean times, however, meant that many fishermen who had bought trawlers during the prosperous years were now unable to maintain payments on their loans. In Kerry the effects of this were not so disastrous to fishing, for by means of the naomhog deep-sea mackerel fishing could be continued; this was impossible, however, with the currach of the west—a much smaller and frailer craft.

I would like to advert to some of the social services provided for those areas by the native Government: large numbers of scholarships for the Universities; the Two Pound Scheme for the encouragement of Irish speaking; Schemes under the Department of Agriculture—the Farm Improvements Scheme; Lime and Seed Schemes. All these must have widespread effect amongst the people of West Cork and Kerry.

I shall leave to a future speaker the task of discussing that very important aspect of Kerry economy—Tourism, which in the years of peace ahead seems likely to be our biggest invisible export.

I have great pleasure in seconding this vote to Mr. Freeman in thanking him for his very comprehensive and painstaking paper.