

COMMISSION TO INQUIRE INTO CHILD ABUSE
PUBLIC HEARING

HELD AT HERBERT PARK HOTEL
BALLSBRIDGE, DUBLIN 4

ON TUESDAY, 16TH MAY 2006 - DAY 218B

EVIDENCE OF SR. MARGARET CASEY

BEFORE:

MR. JUSTICE SEÁN RYAN
CHAIRPERSON OF THE INQUIRY

and

MS. MARIAN SHANLEY

MR. FRED LOWE

218B

I hereby certify the following to be a true and accurate transcript of my shorthand notes of the evidence in the above-named action.

MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION PRESENT:

REGISTRAR TO INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE: MR. B. REEDY

COUNSEL FOR THE COMMISSION: MR. N. MacMAHON SC
MS. L. RATTIGAN BL

Instructed by: MS. E. McHUGH

FOR THE SISTERS OF MERCY: MR. P. GAGEBY SC
MS. NI RAI FEARTAI GH BL

Instructed by:

MR. M. CONNAUGHTON SC

Instructed by: LAVELLE COLEMAN

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I N D E X

| <u>W I T N E S S</u> | <u>EXAMI NATION</u> | <u>QUESTI ON NO.</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| SR. CASEY | | |
| | QUESTI ON - THE COMMI SSION | 1 - 5 |
| | EXAMI NED - MR. CONNAUGHTON | 6 - 61 |
| | FURTHER QUESTI ONED | |
| | - THE COMMI SSION | 62 - 62 |
| | EXAMI NED - MS. NI RAI FEARTAI GH | 63 - 100 |
| | FURTHER QUESTI ONED | |
| | - THE COMMI SSION | 101 - 116 |

1 THE HEARING COMMENCED AS FOLLOWS ON TUESDAY, 16TH MAY
2 2006:

3
4 THE CHAIRPERSON: Now, Mr. MacMahon.

5 MR. MacMAHON: The Committee is now going 11: 34
6 to hear from Sr. Margaret
7 Casey in relation to St. Joseph's Industrial School,
8 Clifden.

9 THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes. Thank you very much
10 Sr. Margaret. Now, 11: 34
11 Mr. Reedy, we will remember to swear Sr. Margaret
12 today.

13
14 SR. MARGARET CASEY, HAVING BEEN SWORN, WAS QUESTIONED,
15 BY THE COMMISSION, AS FOLLOWS: 11: 34

16
17 1 Q. MR. MacMAHON: Sister, I think you are the
18 Provincial Leader of the
19 western province of the Sisters of Mercy?

20 A. Yes. 11: 34

21 2 Q. You prepared a statement for the Commission and gave
22 evidence in public to the Investigation Committee on
23 10th January 2006 in relation to St. Joseph's
24 Industrial School in Clifden?

25 A. That's correct. 11: 34

26 3 Q. I think in that statement and in your evidence you set
27 out the source of the information you were relying on
28 to give your evidence?

29 A. That's true.

1 4 Q. I think you have since then attended in the private
2 hearings and heard the evidence given in private in
3 relation to Clifden Industrial School?

4 A. That's correct.

5 5 Q. I think you gave evidence yesterday on behalf of the 11: 35
6 Sisters of Mercy in relation to another institution
7 under their control and I think you are aware of the
8 terms on which you have been asked to return for the
9 purpose of answering questions in relation to certain
10 matters or issues which may remain unresolved. 11: 35

11 A. Yes, Mr. MacMahon.

12 MR. MacMAHON: I think don't think there
13 is anything further I
14 propose doing at this stage. Mr. Connaughton, I think,
15 will take up the questions at this point in time. 11: 35

16
17 END OF QUESTIONING OF SR. CASEY BY THE COMMISSION

18
19 THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes, Mr. Connaughton.

20
21 SR. MARGARET CASEY WAS THEN EXAMINED, AS FOLLOWS, BY

22 MR. CONNAUGHTON:

23
24 MR. CONNAUGHTON: Good morning, Sr. Casey.

25 A. Good morning. 11: 35

26 6 Q. Mark Connaughton is my name and I am instructed by
27 Lavelle Coleman solicitors and I don't represent any
28 particular claimants at this stage or complainants at
29 this stage of proceedings. There are a small number of

1 fairly discreet headings that I wanted to discuss with
2 you, if I may. The first one you might have heard me
3 asking Sr. McQuaid some questions earlier, I don't know
4 if you were here for that?

5 A. I was here. 11:36

6 7 Q. I have a similar question to begin with you, it relates
7 to the records of the institution. I think you
8 conceded fairly when you gave evidence to the
9 Commission, I think, on 10th January 2006, that really
10 you hadn't much by way of the institution's own records 11:36
11 to go by in terms of your own research into what went
12 on in Clifden?

13 A. Yes, that's true.

14 8 Q. That you had to go out and around a bit in terms of
15 assimilating or accumulating some information and 11:36
16 knowledge about what went on?

17 A. Yes, I would have had to.

18 9 Q. And you have no personal involvement obviously, you are
19 too young to have been involved there?

20 A. No, no. 11:36

21 10 Q. One of the things which struck me in this regard was
22 the dearth of information about the children themselves.
23 I noted, for example, that you refer in your evidence,
24 the previous evidence that you gave, to a
25 recommendation that had been made in your booklet. Do 11:37
26 you have a copy of the transcript from the previous
27 occasion?

28 A. Yes.

29 11 Q. You referred there, at page 22 of that document, it

1 flows on from what was contained at page 21, and you
2 refer to Mr. Granville, the Inspector:

3
4 "...he highlighted that the Resident
5 Manager, he wrote to her and suggested
6 that in future she shouldn't even take 14: 52
7 children in without having the
8 necessary back-up information which was
9 essential at that time and he listed
10 those things like family history, the 14: 53
11 siblings, the interaction in the
12 family, the names and ages, the medical
13 records and also the medical assessment
14 of the child provided by the GP when
15 the child was admitted. He even
16 requested that school reports and birth
17 certificates be included because he
18 felt that it was necessary for a
19 placement to have all this background
20 information."

21 He goes on to say that that was in the 1970's, that
22 kind of information wasn't available. 14: 53

23 The first question I wanted to ask you, from the
24 research that you have been able to do have you been
25 able to find any explanation as to why there was such
26 dirth of records maintained by the Sisters themselves 11: 38
27 in relation to this particular institution, I am not
28 asking you to speak beyond this institution?

29 A. Well, the fact that Mr. Granville in 1978 and again in
the early 1980's referred to the necessity to obtain
records indicated to me that that hadn't been the 11: 38
practice beforehand when the children were admitted.
Now, the children, when they were admitted, obviously
the information would have had to come through the
source, be it the court or whatever, and at that time

1 the information on those documents was very, very
2 minimum and he was highlighting this and highlighting
3 the need for social workers and, in fact, as in 1978 as
4 well, Mr. Granville pointed out the importance even of
5 having a case conference about the children, 11: 39
6 particularly with social workers and Health Board
7 officials because he was emphasising how important it
8 was to even assess the suitability of the environment
9 and to have that knowledge of the environment from
10 which the child was coming. So the information just 11: 39
11 wasn't there.

12 12 Q. I appreciate that and by way of concession I also
13 appreciate the point that I think you are making, that
14 practices develop and they modernise and things that we
15 didn't even think about 50 years ago people think of 11: 39
16 now as being important in terms of the welfare of
17 children?

18 A. Yes.

19 13 Q. But I am talking about very basic information that
20 doesn't seem to exist. I am obviously not talking 11: 40
21 about the late 1970's, I am talking about much earlier
22 than that. The very basic information did not seem to
23 be retained by the Sisters in relation to children who
24 were placed there. I am putting it to you, I suppose,
25 that even though the documentation that might have been 11: 40
26 available was sparse, there doesn't even seem to be the
27 basic records maintained in terms of birth certificates
28 and other documents that ought to exist?

29 A. Well, I am actually not aware of whether there were

- 1 actually birth certs or that kind of documentation.
2 The admissions book just had, you know, basic
3 information, where the child came from and that. If
4 other information was exchanged when the child was
5 being brought into the institution the information 11: 41
6 would have been given possibly to the Resident Manager,
7 but I am really not sure how much of that kind of
8 information was actually given even to the Resident
9 Manager, beyond the basic documents that came from the
10 court or Health Board. 11: 41
- 11 14 Q. Or sought by her? I mean when you say
12 given... (INTERJECTION)?
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 15 Q. As I understand it these institutions, and in
15 particular this institution, was certified as an 11: 41
16 industrial school at the request of the Sisters of
17 Mercy, they, as it were, volunteered themselves to do
18 this service and provide this service?
- 19 A. Yes.
- 20 16 Q. While I am obviously familiar generally with the 11: 41
21 statutory regime under which they were formed,
22 established and supervised, to a large extent it
23 appears that from the day-to-day aspect of the running
24 of an institution it was really up to the organisation
25 itself as to what rigours or regime was put in place. 11: 42
26 And there was no requirement in this regard?
- 27 A. There was no requirement.
- 28 17 Q. No, that's all.
- 29 A. I am conscious too that it was an era when there

- 1 22 Q. But that this was not something that the Department of
2 Education favoured. I think just again to refer you
3 back to the particular passage of your evidence in this
4 regard, it is at page 52 of the transcript and it is
5 question and answer 94. The question was: 11: 44
6
7 Q. Yes. In relation to the question
8 of education you have referred to the
9 fact that until 1969 the children were
10 educated within the internal school
11 separate therefore from the town's
12 children? 15: 43
13 A. Yes. There was an attempt in 1942
14 to amalgamate the two schools and there
15 were different opinions on that, but 11: 44
16 the final outcome and suggestion of the
17 Inspector at the time was that the
18 pupils of the Industrial School would
19 not gain educationally or otherwise by
20 being taught along with the pupils of
21 the other school"
- 15 A. That's the reference that was in the discovery
16 document. 11: 44
- 17 23 Q. I think this document that you are referring to in
18 particular, it is a document -- it is a letter dated
19 25th May 1942. Now, I have it in a booklet, Chairman,
20 if you want I also have your code number on it. Will I 11: 45
21 read you out your code number?
- 22 THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes, please.
- 23 MR. CONNAUGHTON: It is DECLF051-00, and I
24 don't have the last one.
- 25 MR. GAGEBY: I could put it up on the 11: 45
26 monitor.
- 27 24 Q. MR. CONNAUGHTON: That would be very helpful.
28 Maybe the witness could be
29 given a copy of it. (Same handed to the witness).

1 (To the witness) In a moment I just want to refer you
2 to a particular passage of that letter, that letter, as
3 I said, is written on 25/5/1942 and it is obviously
4 dealing with the specific issue:

5 "It would be quite possible to have the 11: 45
6 pupils of both schools taught together
7 in the convent national school, as the
8 floor space available there would be
9 ample for all. There are at present
10 195 pupils".

11 Is that all told? 11: 46

12 A. No.

13 25 Q. Sorry.

14 "In the convent national school and 100
15 in the industrial school, the floor
16 space is 47 square feet in extent". 11: 46

17 It just goes on to say:

18 "The Reverend Mother of the community,"
19 and identifies her, "who is the manager
20 of both schools and the principal
21 teacher of the convent national school,
22 are all three opposed to the idea of
23 having the pupils of both schools
24 taught together, mainly because they 11: 46
25 fear that the parents of the children
26 attending the national school will
27 object. I think it is likely that
28 there would be some such objection."

29 Then it goes on to say:

30 "In fairness the Reverend Mother and 11: 46
31 manager have a further reason for
32 opposition, they say that if all the
33 children are taught together in the
34 national school the consequence will be
35 the disuse of the existing classrooms
36 of the industrial school, these rooms
37 are very well fitted and are very
38 suitable for school purpose. A
39 considerable sum of money, £4,000, were

1 spent on the building some years ago
2 and the community would not now wish to
3 see any part of the building unused."

4 Now, it does go on this then to express the opinion on
5 behalf of the writing:

11: 47

6 "In my opinion, the pupils of the
7 industrial school would not gain
8 educationally or otherwise by being
9 taught along with the pupils in the
10 other school. I do not think the
11 present arrangements should be altered.
12 The industrial school has been very
13 well conducted for many years and is
14 doing very work at present".

11: 47

15 I suppose that I have to suggest to you that in its
16 entire context what that letter is saying is an awful
17 lot more than somebody simply expressing an opinion for
18 the benefit of the children, that they shouldn't be
19 moved down to the national school. I wonder would you
20 like to make any further observation to that which you
21 originally made in your evidence to the Commission in
22 January 2006 by way of clarification or correction even
23 in that regard?

11: 47

11: 48

24 A. I suppose in hindsight it would have been better if the
25 schools possibly had amalgamated in 1942 from a
26 socialisation point of view. But that was the opinion
27 at the time and they did have discussion and meetings
28 and obviously the Inspector was involved with it. I
29 wondered why between 1942 and 1969 that it wasn't
mentioned again. But it was -- the school was run
under the same conditions or the same school programme
as the ordinary national school. And three teachers

11: 48

1 taught -- three Sisters taught in the external school,
2 as we call it, and three taught in the internal school.
3 And it was the same programme. But in hindsight it
4 would have been better if -- as at that time in Ireland
5 most of the schools amalgamated but it just didn't for, 11: 49
6 obviously, the reasons and the opinions that the people
7 involved in discussion at that time had.

8 26 Q. I am not going to press you in your answer because you
9 have been very fair in giving your answer. But for the
10 sake of completeness, I just wanted to put one further 11: 49
11 observation to you in relation to the letter as it was
12 written then and what it reflected at the particular
13 time. I am going to put it to you that it reflected at
14 the particular time less a concern for the welfare of
15 the children than maintaining the fabric of the 11: 49
16 industrial school because of the expenditure that had
17 been incurred in running the industrial school?

18 A. I suppose one could interpret that from the paragraph
19 there, but one would expect that if the Inspector
20 really was in a position to have actually, you know, 11: 50
21 been more forthright in the Department's desire in that
22 regard at the time. I can't -- it would be making a
23 judgment which I am not in a position to do at this
24 time.

25 27 Q. All right. I have to put it to you because it is 11: 50
26 something that I may well be making as a submission to
27 the Commission and I think it is only fair that you
28 should know the way I am thinking and have an
29 opportunity of commenting upon it. The other related

1 question I wanted to ask you to do with the area of
2 education and numbers is this: Have you had a chance
3 to consider -- it is something that came up with the
4 previous witness, have you had a chance to consider the
5 ratio between pupils in the industrial school or 11:50
6 children in the industrial school and carers, in the
7 broadest sense of that word, in the industrial school.
8 In other words, the staffing to pupil ratio formally
9 and informally in Clifden?

10 A. I wouldn't have worked out the actual mathematics of 11:51
11 the ratio of carers to children, but I have
12 acknowledged in my original statement that the ratio of
13 the careers to children in Clifden was unacceptable
14 certainly by today's standards. And we do recognise
15 and realise that up to 1969, for example, you would 11:51
16 have had the principle carers were the two or three
17 Sisters that were there and some that would have
18 helped. Now, there were a few lay people, but really
19 it was after 1969 before you had a significant increase
20 where seven lay people were employed and subsequently 11:51
21 then you had two Sisters full time and another Sister
22 came along in 1973/74. So the main carers before 1969
23 would have been the two principle Sisters, some of the
24 older girls.

25 28 Q. You did indeed make both those points in your earlier 11:52
26 statement to the Commission, and for your benefit
27 members, it is at pages 22 and 33 respectively -- 23
28 and 33 respectively of the transcript. But the point I
29 wanted to put to you is this: That there doesn't seem

1 to have been any determination or consideration even as
2 to whether a determination should be made by the
3 governing authorities in the school as to whether they
4 wouldn't take additional numbers until they had
5 allocated additional staff. The numbers appeared over 11: 52
6 a period of time to be fairly consistent and
7 consistently high, yet the resources allocated were
8 relatively low, in fact on your concession too low.
9 But there seems to be no evidence that pressure was put
10 on the powers that be that Clifden wouldn't admit any 11: 53
11 more people or couldn't handle the numbers that it
12 already had, based on the staffing that it had in
13 place. There doesn't seem to be anything of that
14 nature in the documentation that is available?

15 A. No, that's correct, because it was only really at the 11: 53
16 crisis point around 1969 with numbers that and with the
17 changeover of Resident Manager that all the extra staff
18 were acquired.

19 29 Q. And that appears to -- again I may have misunderstood
20 it, but that appears not to have come from the school, 11: 53
21 but rather from the authorities, if I may call them
22 that, at page 33 of your transcript of the previous
23 day, question No. 60, it refers to a letter of 29th
24 October 1969 and it says:

25 11: 54
26 "Which was also the same day, as the
27 files indicate, a direction was given
28 from the Department inspector to
29 someone in the Department to phone the
District Court Office in Dublin
suggesting that no further children
should be sent to Clifden until further
notice owing to overcrowding there."

1

2

3 A. Yes.

4 30 Q. That was in 1969 at a time, where according to the 11: 54
5 figures that are in appendix one presumably to the
6 original statement that was furnished to the
7 Commission, OSCLF-001, that the numbers had decreased
8 to some extent from what would have been the prevailing
9 numbers?

10 A. That's true, because around 1969 there would have been 11: 55
11 about 80 there.

12 31 Q. Well I have it down as 89, or there or thereabouts?

13 A. Yes.

14 32 Q. It having reduced from 56, we see it had been running 11: 55
15 on an average from the 1940's right through until the
16 mid-1950's of around about 120 and gradually it seems
17 to have fallen off until boys, some younger boys, were
18 admitted in 1965 but it climbed back but only for a
19 short period of time?

20 A. Yes. 11: 55

21 33 Q. But that was regarded then as overcrowding but not
22 previously as overcrowding?

23 A. I think regrettably it wasn't in their consciousness of
24 the Resident Manager in the school apparently at the
25 time that, and she was ageing, that in fact that there 11: 55
26 were problems emerging because of the overcrowding and
27 because of the lack of staff. Again, if one were just
28 providing basics, you know, it was institutional and
29 with the institutional there seemed to have been the

1 need for less numbers and it was just basic clothing,
2 shelter, that in a sense you wouldn't have needed as
3 many numbers. But if you were to really give the
4 children the care that they needed, and we would
5 acknowledge that, then they would have needed more full 11:56
6 time carers and we would have apologised for the fact
7 that there weren't enough carers at the time for the
8 children to really meet their needs.

9 34 Q. Maybe I am not putting it particularly well. I suppose
10 what I am trying to put to you is this: That something 11:56
11 in the nature of a small crisis appears to have
12 occurred at or about this time?

13 A. Yes.

14 35 Q. But prior to that nobody seems to even have adverted to
15 the possibility that the place might have been 11:56
16 overcrowded?

17 A. Well, regretfully, they didn't -- I think it was
18 brought further to their notice by the fact that in the
19 mid-1960's or the 1960's that boys came into the school
20 as well and that added another dimension and it was 11:57
21 more difficult then obviously in the relationship and
22 dealing with the mixed grouping. All I can say is that
23 it doesn't just seem to have been.

24 36 Q. Let me look at it from a different way. Looking at the
25 archives, looking at the material that has been made 11:57
26 available to you, and thinking of the various duties
27 that you have to perform yourself in your current role,
28 have you an observation on even on how much pressure it
29 put the staff members under in the old regime, that is

1 the Sisters who were working in Clifden, as to whether
2 they had to work a hard week's work, an easy week's
3 work or a really rough week's work, you must surely be
4 looking at it?

5 A. Well in hindsight we have, in fact in our public 11: 58
6 apology we apologised to our Sisters as well as to the
7 complainants because we do recognise that we didn't put
8 in place for them support services when they were
9 working under these conditions. We do recognise that
10 they worked long hours. 11: 58

11 37 Q. You see, one of the things I suppose that's troubling
12 me is that I think -- and maybe this is something that
13 you can enlighten us all on, I think of the Sisters of
14 Mercy in the country as having been a very, very large
15 organisation. Now, I appreciate you have given 11: 58
16 considerable assistance to the Commission as to
17 structure and organisation, as did Sr. Breege, as to
18 the structure and organisation, it looks to me as if
19 this industrial school was starved of staff, and yet
20 there were people who could have been sent there to 11: 58
21 help?

22 A. I explained in my original statement, because the
23 Inspector made reference to the fact he couldn't
24 understand that there were 30 people in the convent
25 between Clifden and Carnagh and how come there weren't 11: 59
26 more than two Sisters available to work in the actual
27 convent -- in the industrial school. I would just
28 reiterate that at that time, before 1971, Clifden was
29 an autonomous unit, so the only pool available of

1 Sisters to work in the industrial school was from the
2 community at Clifden or Carnagh. And I tried in
3 preparing for my original statement in January, to
4 establish in conversation with the Sisters how many
5 were there and what they were working at. Insofar as 11: 59
6 we could put it together, in fact, there were six in
7 Carnagh, three working in the primary school, two in
8 the secondary and one in the house.

9 38 Q. Yes, I saw that.

10 A. You had two in the industrial school, there were six -- 12: 00
11 between the two primary schools you had six Sisters.
12 You had three in the secondary school, three in the
13 hospital, three in housekeeping. There were at least
14 seven or eight retired, some of them working in the
15 garden, in the church grounds, etc. And then there 12: 00
16 were at least five or six younger Sisters who at that
17 time were either in formation or engaged in their own
18 professional training. So while it seems that there
19 was a very large number they actually just weren't, you
20 know, available there to work in the industrial school. 12: 00

21 39 Q. What you seem to be saying is that there was in
22 addition, is that there was simply no possibility of
23 calling upon the broader, I call it, organisation but I
24 perceive you may... (INTERJECTION)?

25 A. It seems difficult to understand, but that was the 12: 00
26 structure of the organisation at that time, we were
27 independent houses. In 1971 Clifden then became a
28 member of the Tuam diocese, so from then on it would
29 have been a much wider pool of people that could be

1 called on, not only for industrial school but for any
2 Ministry.

3 40 Q. I am sorry to take you back to something that we have
4 already covered and to do with education but I omitted
5 to put something to you just for the purpose of 12: 01
6 observation that you might wish to make an observation
7 on it. In relation to the standard of education, we
8 obviously know from the material that has been
9 submitted that the general standard of education in
10 industrial schools would have been below that which was 12: 01
11 achieve in primary schools generally?

12 A. Yes.

13 41 Q. The standard of achievement, but I am only putting to
14 you something particularly pertaining to Clifden.
15 Would you acknowledge that notwithstanding that it 12: 01
16 operated to the same curriculum --

17 A. Yes.

18 42 Q. -- that in practice the results wouldn't have been
19 great in terms of the outputs at the other end?

20 A. Yes, I would acknowledge that, because the children in 12: 02
21 the industrial school, as I have said, were vulnerable
22 children. They would have had a lot of psychological
23 baggage really because of emotional stress. Some of
24 them actually that came into Clifden came in, you know,
25 at 11 or 12, so they would have come in already having 12: 02
26 a certain level or not having attained a certain level
27 of education. There was a whole effect of
28 institutionalisation on the children which obviously
29 would have had an impact on them and on their ability

1 to achieve. Like these would be some of the factors,
2 and there are many other factors that would have
3 impacted on them and on their ability to achieve in the
4 primary school.

5 43 Q. The couple of documents that I wanted to put to you are 12: 03
6 at page 66 of the little booklet that I have handed up
7 to you. The pagination in the middle at the bottom,
8 bottom centre is the pagination. From the Commission's
9 point of view they are at DECLF043-00. The first
10 letter, it is from a Mr. LP Scott, described as agent, 12: 03
11 now manager I suppose of the local bank. He describes
12 the fact that he had taken a couple of the children
13 out. You are familiar with the letter?

14 A. Yes.

15 44 Q. He goes on to say: 12: 03

16 "There is one aspect which I would be
17 grateful if you could advise me on:
18 One of the girls came to us at age 14,
19 from my conversation with her I
20 understand that none of the children,
21 even those up to 16 years of age are
22 educated beyond 6th class in the 12: 04
23 primary school. There may be
24 exceptions but this would appear to be
25 in order.

22 When I queried the reason from one of
23 the Sisters I was informed that the
24 children do not wish to receive further
25 education. I cannot accept that as a
26 valid reason, especially when I witness
27 the acute embarrassment of the child
28 aged 14 when she had to admit to many 12: 04
29 younger Castlebar children that she was
30 only 6th class.

31 It is very hard to understand in this
32 day of free education (as read)
33 technical school or to vocation school
34 in their region. It is most obvious to
35 all of those who had these children in
36 their homes that without more and

1 broader education they are very
2 unfitted to take their place in the
world when they leave the convent.

3 I am not for a moment belittle the work
4 of the Sisters who are doing their best
5 and doing great work, which others
6 would not undertake but it appears to
7 the ordinary layman that these young
8 children are leaving school with
9 insufficient knowledge of the world and
insufficient education. What becomes
of these children, it seems to me they
are condemned forever ... for the most
part, in the most menial task, perhaps
you would be good enough to make
observations.

12: 04

12: 04

10

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16

That then in turn led to a fairly detailed response,
which comes at pages 68, a document I think bearing the
same code number from the point of view of the
Commission. A three-page handwritten letter, obviously
written from St. Joseph's school itself?

12: 05

17

A. Yes.

18

45 Q. While I am happy to read out the terms of that letter,

19

if I may just for the moment paraphrase it, at least

20

the way I read it, is that it reads almost as if an

12: 05

21

apology for an existing situation rather than an

22

determination that this is something that we are going

23

to move forward and deal with. Maybe that's something

24

you would like to comment on, just to refresh your

25

memory, I will very quickly read through the letter and

12: 05

26

that way you can have the benefit of its content and

27

giving a response. It says... (INTERJECTION)?

28

THE CHAIRPERSON: Mr. Connaughton, can I just

29

stop you for a second.

1 MR. CONNAUGHTON: Yes, Chairman.
2 THE CHAIRPERSON: If you are going to read
3 it, Ms. McCarthy has to
4 take a note of actually what is said, so if you are
5 going read it do it slowly. 12: 05
6 MR. CONNAUGHTON: I am sorry, I thought maybe
7 that she had the benefit of
8 the documents.
9 THE CHAIRPERSON: She does, but the way
10 Ms. McCarthy does it is she 12: 06
11 takes exactly what's said and what's said. If that's
12 what is said then that's what she notes. So if you are
13 going to do it that way read it slowly. There is no
14 problem whatsoever. It is no criticism, I understand.
15 But it is best to do it nice and slowly. 12: 06
16 46 Q. MR. CONNAUGHTON: Very good, Chairman. The
17 letter is a letter dated
18 24th September 1968 and it reads, it is in reply to
19 Mr. Scott -- sorry, it is a reply to the Inspector, it
20 referenced the letter from Mr. Scott: 12: 06
21 "Your communication re the above
22 received. In the past five years 35
23 children have received post primary
24 education before leaving St. Joseph's
25 school, but of that number the majority
26 did commercial while some did both
27 secondary and commercial. Within the
28 past five years I think there is three
29 children have taken up nursing while
three others have obtained their finals
in nursing; five have obtained office
work in England; two who did a domestic
economy course in technical school
obtained positions in hotels; this year
three have commenced secondary school
here while three others are at
commercial.

1 May I add that the older girl who went
2 on holidays to Mr. and Mrs. (BLANK)
3 has not the ability for secondary
4 school. In fact, she was one of the
5 children called for assessment by
6 research worker Department of
7 Psychology, UCD last week while here.
8 She's considered very much below
9 average intelligence for her years, her
10 IQ was assessed at the nine and a half
11 year level. Her teachers say that this
12 child would really be lost in secondary
13 school, she is however still at school,
14 the full day, and the Sister is doing
15 some typing with her and it may be
16 useful to her.

12: 07

17 This particular child is very much
18 inclined to have a taste for domestic
19 chores and we feel sure that at the age
20 of 17 or 18 we will be able to place
21 her in somewhere more suited to her
22 ability. With all good wishes".

12: 08

23 What I wanted to put to you is that by and large the
24 possibility even of going into ordinary second level
25 education, as opposed to doing a commercial course, but
26 ordinary second level education, that by and large in
27 Clifden this was not an opportunity that was available
28 to the children in Clifden?

12: 08

29 A. Well, I would have to reply just to say that the free
30 education came in in 1967, from the records that we
31 have of Clifden, while it was small, for 1943 it is
32 recorded that three went to secondary top, that in 1950
33 some four or five went to the rural domestic economy
34 school; in 1955 about 11 went to the secondary top; in
35 1965 five or six went to secondary school; by 1975
36 there were 22 or 25 at secondary school or boarding
37 school. Certainly the new manager that took over in
38 1969, one of her main priorities, and she would

12: 08

12: 09

1 acknowledge that even in talking to her now and she's
2 in her 90's, she tried to get as many as possible into
3 a secondary education and she even went so far as to
4 send some of the -- the girls went to the boarding
5 schools run by Sisters in different places in Spiddle, 12: 09
6 Adare, Portumna, Navan. The boys attended colleges
7 like St. Gerard's, St. Enda's and St. Mary's. They
8 actually were very active in engaging with the
9 Department in trying to provide and establish better
10 post level secondary school education for the -- and 12: 10
11 that's on the Department discovery. All around the
12 1970's, where they kept pursuing with the Department
13 until they succeeded in getting a community school
14 established in Clifden. Because they only could go
15 vocational school over in Carnagh and she had a concern 12: 10
16 that that even was far and she wanted something
17 available locally for them, so they actively pursued
18 that in the 1970's.

19 47 Q. I don't think any of us would greatly disagree that
20 there were significant changes in the 1970's. This 12: 10
21 letter was written at the end of the 1960's?

22 A. Yes.

23 48 Q. I suppose what I am putting to you is that at that
24 point in time the vast majority of the children in
25 Clifden did not go beyond the Primary Certificate? 12: 11

26 A. Up to that time, yes.

27 49 Q. Now, that seems to be as much a reflection of their not
28 being in a position to move forward as the absence of
29 free education, in other words, if they had been in a

1 position to move forward into secondary school they
2 would have moved forward into secondary school at that
3 time, but they simply hadn't achieved the required
4 standard to do so?

5 A. By 1969 are you saying? 12: 11

6 50 Q. Yes.

7 A. I would say again, as I said 1966 to 1969, while that
8 free education only came in then, in 1967, that was a
9 very turbulent time of change in Clifden itself, so I
10 can understand why it wasn't until the 1970's that more 12: 12
11 of the children were encouraged or in a position then
12 to actually attain second level. Because, in fact, at
13 that time there was huge difficulty in trying to cope
14 with the numbers. In fact, when the Resident Manager
15 came in, in the discovery there is reference to 12: 12
16 children being unruly and all of that and thereafter
17 the Resident Manager -- the few children were sent to
18 another school and they set about actively reducing the
19 numbers to restore the standards.

20 51 Q. With a new Resident Manager? 12: 12

21 A. The new Resident Manager came in, yes.

22 52 Q. I want to turn now, if I may, to something else which
23 is the general environment in which the children lived
24 in Clifden and operated in, were schooled and worked.
25 I am going to put a few things to you that are informed 12: 13
26 by things that -- matters that were put in evidence, I
27 won't refer to the specific evidence or the specific
28 people in the second phase of the Commission's
29 investigations, and also by reference to what you

1 yourself have said previously?

2 A. Yes.

3 53 Q. The first general point I wanted to put to you is that
4 it has been said that insofar as inspections were

5 concerned, that there was a general clean up for

6 inspections and everybody was putting on their best

7 gear and the good clothes came down from the attic and

8 the beds were all turned out beautifully but that this

9 didn't reflect the norm, that specific complaint has

10 been made, and that a special show was put on for the

11 inspections which was not truly reflective of what

12 occurred on a day-to-day basis in Clifden. What do you

13 say to that?

14 A. I accept that an effort was made -- I accept that is

15 possible. They had their best clothes and all of that

16 on. But also I am thinking in the 1970's the

17 inspections lasted three days rather than one day, and

18 the inspectors would have been professional people, who

19 were observing and in other institutions and were in a

20 position to make comparisons, they were -- in all of

21 their Inspection Reports they also would have been --

22 it was set in the standard of the time, so one would

23 have to accept the Inspectors Reports and I would

24 presume that they just wouldn't be taken in. It is

25 true they only could observe -- say, for example, the

26 day that they were there they may not have been able to

27 observe a level of corporal punishment, but they were

28 professional observers, they were trained and that was

29 their job.

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So and when they weren't -- you know, they made positive records, but also when it was necessary, pointed out certain things in all of their inspection reports.

12: 15

54 Q. There are two other things I wanted to put to you again in relation to the physical environment you knew that the children lived in. You very fairly made concessions, they are recorded at page 16 of the transcript of the evidence of the -- of your evidence before the Commission in January, that the children would have been expected to engage in significant amounts of domestic work, depending on their age, such would be the laundry, the kitchen, they might at times have worked on the farm. And the second acceptance was that you do accept that some children experienced life there as being harsh and also impersonal, in fact even abusive, and you reiterate the apology which had been given by Sr. Breege O'Neill.

12: 15

12: 16

12: 16

But again by reference of things that occurred during the course of the second phase of this Committee's investigation, or this part of the Commission's investigation, there have been specific complaints that, for example, children would have been taken out of the school to do physical work?

12: 16

A. Well, I actually spoke to one of the Sisters who worked in the school as principal from 1962 to 1969 and I put that question to her and she was quite emphatic that at

1 no stage were children actually taken out of the
2 primary school for industrial school training, that the
3 industrial school training that was available by way of
4 instruction in laundry, housewifery and needlework that
5 that was for the 14 to 16 year old, so that they had 12: 17
6 their primary school and that was separate. She said
7 that that was done -- they had the programme in the
8 early years for two afternoons a week and then on
9 Saturday. But that to her knowledge, while she was
10 there as principal, no child left the primary school to 12: 17
11 go to do industrial training chores.

12 55 Q. I'm not really talking about industrial training as
13 such, I am talking about just simply being taken out of
14 school in order to do the ordinary domestic chores that
15 had to be done and with a limited number of staff there 12: 18
16 the children inevitably got drawn into the performance
17 of those chores, and not as part of any industrial
18 training for the older girls but the just ordinary run
19 of the mill domestic work that was required to be done?

20 A. But the evidence of the Sisters would be in conflict 12: 18
21 with that.

22 56 Q. In relation to the issue of corporal punishment, I know
23 that in your statement you have said at least two
24 things in that regard, one of which was in relation to
25 the absence of a record after 1950, I can't remember 12: 18
26 what year in 1950 but one of the mid-1950's perhaps of
27 the record of punishments, and the acknowledgment that
28 in 1980 there was a particular incident?

29 A. Yes.

1 57 Q. Again by reference to that has occurred -- generally
2 that which has occurred in the Phase II stage, there
3 has been complaints of -- specific complaints that
4 corporal punishment was used regularly against the
5 children in Clifden?

12: 19

6 A. I am aware that there is again a direct conflict of
7 evidence in the whole area of corporal punishment and
8 in due course the Commission will no doubt adjudicate
9 on that. I do acknowledge and have acknowledged that
10 corporal punishment was a feature in the school life,
11 as it was in most primary schools in the 1960's, and
12 that slapping was the primary form of punishment and I
13 did acknowledge and apologise if children were hurt or
14 damaged by excessive use of corporal punishment while
15 in Clifden.

12: 19

12: 19

16
17 Insofar as I could establish from my conversation with
18 Sisters, there didn't seem to have been a policy in
19 Clifden school whereby children were specifically, for
20 example, sent to the Resident Manager. And the only
21 record of the incident of corporal punishment in our
22 own archival material and in the discovery documents
23 was the incident you referred to in 1980.

12: 20

24 58 Q. Just about that, and I am coming very close to the end,
25 one of the things for me certainly is unresolved, is
26 what evidence exists, if any, that that particular
27 incident was taken up with the individual concerned.
28 Because there appears to be no record generated by the
29 Sisters of Mercy of this particular incident at all?

12: 20

- 1 A. Whilst we hadn't a record of that incident, and it only
2 came to light when we received the discovery documents,
3 the discovery documents do note that Mr. Granville in
4 1981 said, "I have investigated the attached report,
5 together with the Resident Manager and the programme 12: 21
6 manager of the western Health Board, there is no
7 further action required at this time."
8
9
10 Now, it is a matter -- regret, first of all, for the 12: 21
11 punishment but it is also a matter of regret to us that
12 we don't actually have sight of -- whilst accepting
13 that we don't have sight of the actual report that
14 resulted from this investigation. But the Inspector
15 just says that no further action was required. So 12: 21
16 that's all that I can go on.
- 17 59 Q. I think you would agree with me that although it is
18 described in an investigation report as having been a
19 particular staff member rather than residential
20 childcare policy? 12: 22
- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 60 Q. That it was a significant incident?
- 23 A. It was a significant incident, yes.
- 24 61 Q. And at the very at least it offers to the Commission
25 evidence that as late or as recently as 1980, corporal 12: 22
26 punishment was still taking place in the school?
- 27 A. Well I just have the evidence as you have said, that it
28 wasn't the Resident Manager, it just referred to a
29 staff manager, a member of staff.

1 MR. CONNAUGHTON: Thank you very much.

2

3 END OF EXAMINATION OF SR. CASEY BY MR. CONNAUGHTON

4

5 THE CHAIRPERSON: Now, Mr. MacMahon. 12: 22

6

7 SR. MARGARET CASEY WAS FURTHER QUESTIONED, AS FOLLOWS,
8 BY THE COMMISSION:

9

10 62 Q. MR. MacMAHON: Just one puzzling aspect. 12: 22

11 Mr. Connaughton referred to
12 the inspections that were conducted and I am wondering
13 if the Sisters of Mercy are in a position to cast light
14 on the gaps which appear to exist in the inspections,
15 the annual inspections, for the 1960's. Just a perusal 12: 23
16 of the documents suggest that there was an inspection
17 in November 1962 by Dr. McCabe and we don't appear to
18 be able to immediately find at least any further
19 inspections by the Department until one was conducted
20 by Mr. Lyssot on the 4th May 1966. Then there again 12: 23
21 appears to be a gap, which goes on to, I think, January
22 or February 1970, when there is a letter referring to a
23 visit of the acting Inspector. Are the Sisters in a
24 position to fill in any of the gaps in between those
25 dates or is there an explanation for those gaps from 12: 24
26 their perspective?

27 A. I am sorry, Mr. MacMahon, in researching I only had
28 available to me what was made available through the
29 discovery of the Commission, so I wouldn't have had any

1 other copies of the Inspectors Reports, I just had all
2 that were made available to me, and I don't have an
3 explanation for the gaps.

4 MR. MacMAHON: Thank you. I have no
5 further questions. 12: 24

6
7 END OF FURTHER QUESTIONING OF SR. CASEY BY THE
8 COMMISSION

9
10 THE CHAIRPERSON: Now Ms. Ni Rai feartaigh. 12: 24

11 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

12
13 SR. MARGARET CASEY WAS THEN EXAMINED, AS FOLLOWS, BY
14 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH:

15 12: 24
16 63 Q. MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: Sr. Margaret, just in
17 relation to that last
18 matter to clarify, I think the situation was that the
19 Inspectors came in and inspected and produced
20 Inspection Reports which were for internal consumption 12: 24
21 only, in other words, the practice was that they went
22 to the Department and not back to the school?

23 A. Right.

24 64 Q. So is that your experience from looking at the records?

25 A. Yes. I had forgotten that came up at the last time, at 12: 24
26 the public hearing, and I just had forgotten that.

27 65 Q. Isn't it the case that the Sisters and the Sisters in
28 Clifden would be entirely reliant on what came through
29 on discovery from the Commission before those

- 1 Inspection Reports?
- 2 A. Absolutely, because we wouldn't... (INTERJECTION)
- 3 66 Q. You had none at all?
- 4 A. Absolutely none at all. That's the first sight of them
5 is what came through the discovery. 12: 25
- 6 67 Q. Shortly before the module?
- 7 A. I got the documents in November of 2005.
- 8 68 Q. I think just to go in reverse order and where
9 Mr. Connaughton was asking you there at the end of his
10 questioning about this incident of corporal punishment 12: 25
11 in 1980 and the investigation followed is illustrative
12 of the fact that there was corporal punishment as late
13 as that. I suppose the interpretation of the fact that
14 there was an investigation at that time would also be
15 that it was significantly unique to warrant a full 12: 25
16 investigation by social workers?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 69 Q. And the Department Inspector who then concluded that no
19 further action was required?
- 20 A. That's true. 12: 25
- 21 70 Q. That is noted in the same records that this was not a
22 generalised practice but particular to the staff
23 member?
- 24 A. That's what is noted, yes.
- 25 71 Q. Just in relation to secondary education, I think you 12: 26
26 very fairly accepted that it wasn't the general run
27 certainly that children were going to post primary of
28 any kind prior to the late 1960's. Just one document,
29 if I can put up, in this regard. Mr. Chairman, this is

1 again the same document that we referred to earlier.
2 It is only a snapshot and that's accepted. But it is a
3 snapshot of what appears to be, just working ourselves
4 from the document, summer of 1952 or thereabouts. I
5 should perhaps clarify that we got this document from 12: 26
6 the Department and it seems to have come in the context
7 of a Department file of documents in preparation for
8 the proposed institutional course which didn't come to
9 pass at that time. It may have been, we are only
10 speculating, that the Department was gathering this 12: 26
11 information from schools in preparation for the course.
12 But we have already referred earlier to the numbers in
13 respect of Dundalk.

14
15 I am trying to calculate the date of the document from 12: 27
16 the two columns because the column to which I am
17 pointing says:

18 "Number of children afforded post
19 primary education in the academic year
1951/52, top ten."

20
21 The other one is:

22 "Number to be afforded in the
23 forthcoming year."

24 THE CHAIRPERSON: So it is between those two
25 years. 12: 27

26 72 Q. MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: It is between those two and
27 also another matter of
28 speculation to which I draw the Committee's attention
29 is that it is not clear what the recording is, all the

1 children going into secondary school that year or all
2 going in plus those who are already there in more
3 senior years, so it is simply not clear on the face of
4 the document.

12: 27

5
6 In any event, if we come the Clifden, it is 1952 so it
7 is long before the element free education. In the
8 number to be afforded there is five and it just has the
9 comment:

10 "In 1950 to 51 one girl obtained
11 intermediate certificate pass. All
12 suitable pupils afforded secondary
education".

12: 27

13 So whilst it is very far, Sr. Margaret, from the
14 situation that many would have access, it does seem
15 that even as far back as the early 1950's some people
16 were being afford the opportunity?

12: 28

17 A. That's true.

18 73 Q. Of course that wasn't being funded by the State?

19 A. No.

20 74 Q. I think you would also accept... (INTERJECTION)

12: 28

21 THE CHAIRPERSON: Ms. Ni Rai feartaigh, this
22 is what the Department is
23 recording it was told.

24 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: Yes.

25 THE CHAIRPERSON: Somebody was ringing up, or
26 whatever it was, he's

12: 28

27 summarise the information.

28 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: Yes, it is

29 contemporaneously given

1 information.

2 THE CHAIRPERSON: Yes.

3 75 Q. MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: Sr. Margaret, I think you
4 would also accept the
5 proposition that Mr. Connaughton was putting to you, 12: 28
6 that the difficulty in providing post primary education
7 was not simply the lack of funding for it, but also the
8 fact that the standard of many of the students wouldn't
9 have been at that level?

10 A. That's true. 12: 28

11 76 Q. That can be seen, for example, in the case of the girl
12 that he discussed where someone raised a query why she
13 wasn't at post primary and, in fact, in her particular
14 case there had been a psychological statement and she
15 was at the age of nine and a half and wasn't deem 12: 29
16 suitable?

17 A. Yes.

18 77 Q. And that may have been the case in others, so it was
19 really a double problem; wasn't it?

20 A. It was, yes. 12: 29

21 78 Q. Coming back to the issue of staff student ratio, I
22 think Mr. Connaughton was putting to you -- he was
23 quoting from correspondence around the late 1960's when
24 it was being suggested that the staff child ratio was
25 inadequate? 12: 29

26 A. Yes.

27 79 Q. Just with that in context, that arose in the context of
28 a series of documents which seem to relate to a
29 particular and temporary crisis in or around 1965?

1 A. Yes.

2 80 Q. I think that I will perhaps put the document up, but
3 there is a letter, 29th October 1969, it is a letter to
4 the Archbishop and it seems to me that there was
5 concern because -- and I am quoting:

12: 29

6 "A group of older girls were flouting
7 authority by refusing to attend school,
8 by roaming the streets of Clifden after
9 dark, catcalling and behaving rudely to
10 the elder and that the Gardaí visited
the school last week with a view to
establishing more disciplined behaviour
on the part of the children in
residence there".

12: 30

11 A. Yes.

12 81 Q. It seems that there was a concern not so much, I
13 suppose if you like, generated about the quality of
14 care for the children, but that they are getting into
15 an unregulated state and this was causing concern in
16 the town and so forth?

12: 30

17 A. That's true.

18 82 Q. In that context then various things happened, the
19 Archbishop was consulted and staff child ratios did in
20 fact improve?

12: 30

21 A. Yes.

22 83 Q. But it does seem to be in the context of a particular
23 crisis; isn't that right?

24 A. It was, obviously, as I mentioned that incident, it
25 seemed to be that the children -- it was a changeover
26 the -- from the Resident Manager who had been there for
27 33 years to the new Resident Manager, and that
28 particular incident that is reported it is just at that
29 transition time and it was straight after the new

12: 30

1 Resident Manager had been appointed and it was almost
2 as if those particular teenagers were really testing
3 the new management.

4 84 Q. If I could just put up a document then which is 1970,
5 and what's interesting is that this is 1970, and if I 12: 31
6 could draw attention to the last paragraph it says,
7 this is an Inspector, the second page of an Inspector's
8 letter:

9 "Having seen the chaos which existed
10 with 85 children in residence and 12: 31
11 insufficient staff. (INTERJECTION).

12 THE CHAIRPERSON: Slow down.

13 85 Q. MS. NI RAI FEARTAI GH: Yes, I am sorry.

14 ". . . And the relative improvement with
15 72 children and additional staff, I am 12: 31
16 now moving toward the view that in a
17 small town like Clifden with its
18 limited services and its comparatively
19 isolated position the number of
20 children who could be successfully
discuss the question on the phone." 12: 31

21
22 Then he mentions a number of people. That could be
23 interpreted as an indication that it was really only in
24 the 1970's that they are moving towards the view that
25 there should be a different type of child staff ratio 12: 32
26 and numbers in the (inaudible)?

27 A. Yes, that's true.

28 86 Q. If I could put up another document in this regard and
29 it is from an earlier period and it is perhaps

1 indicative of the Department's attitude to the ratio in
2 the school. It is from 1959 and it is in the context
3 of where the school was applying to admit boys. And
4 the application was ultimately successful, but at that
5 time there was obviously a consideration of the quality 12: 32
6 of care in the school and the numbers in the school and
7 perhaps what's of interest is that in the context of
8 improving the school, this letter states:

9
10 "This is a particularly good and well
11 run school, it is ideally situated and 12: 32
12 has lots of ground. The children in it
13 are well catered for in every possible
14 way. I recommend that the certificate
for this school be increased to 140 and
that permission be granted also for the
reception of boys up to the age of ten
years.

15 And so forth.
MR. MacMAHON: What document is that? It 12: 33
16 would be helpful if the
17 document was identified and also the last one.

18 87 Q. MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: DECLF043/0029 and perhaps
19 if I could give my friend
20 the reference to the other one after because I removed 12: 33
21 my own marker.

22
23 (To the witness) What it would appear to suggest,
24 Sr. Margaret, I am suggesting to you, is that the staff
25 child ratio in Clifden, which may have been fairly 12: 33
26 typical for a large industrial school at the time,
27 would not in the 1950's or even the early 1960's have
28 necessarily been considered problematic at that time?

29 A. No, it wouldn't have been considered problematic at the

1 time.

2 88 Q. And that the Department itself was well aware of the
3 ratio and would not either have considered it
4 problematic?

5 A. No, that's true.

12: 33

6 89 Q. When you look through all of the Inspection Reports
7 from the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's the first mention of
8 ratio being unacceptable is 1969?

9 A. That's correct.

10 90 Q. I think when you were responding to Mr. Connaughton's
11 questions earlier about staff/child ratio being
12 unacceptable are you talking with hindsight or are you
13 accepting on behalf of the Sisters at the time that
14 they realised at the time that it was unacceptable?

12: 34

15 A. No, with hindsight because the Sisters at the time
16 didn't realise that they were happy to -- from our
17 perspective now, looking back on it, we would say
18 having so few Sisters working there, that it would have
19 been unacceptable.

12: 34

20 91 Q. And presumably the Department also?

12: 34

21 A. Yes.

22 92 Q. Now just in relation to another aspect of education
23 other than the post primary aspect, the question was
24 raised about the integrated education, and I think we
25 are aware and even from yesterday's sitting, in some
26 schools the children were educated locally with the
27 town children and in other schools they weren't around
28 the country?

12: 34

29 A. Yes.

- 1 93 Q. From your reading of the documents and particularly the
2 Department of Education ones, when did it seem that
3 that the Department favoured a policy of integration,
4 when I say integration, I mean the children in the
5 industrial school being educated with the children from 12: 35
6 the town, in terms of there being a policy favouring
7 them?
- 8 A. I don't know when the policy -- I just know from my
9 involvement in the other particular school,
10 Newtownforbes, that there was a move to emerge the two 12: 35
11 of them in 1942 as well.
- 12 94 Q. I see.
- 13 THE CHAIRPERSON: Didn't the Cussan Report
14 recommend it,
15 Ms. Ni Rai feartaigh, that's 1936? 12: 35
- 16 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: The Department didn't
17 initiate any discussion of
18 this in the context of Clifden after 1942.
- 19 A. There is nothing on record that was available to me to
20 indicate that they had engaged any further. The only 12: 35
21 reference was in 1942 and again in 1969 when it was
22 noted that the two schools should merge.
- 23 95 Q. MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: That was discussed with the
24 Department?
- 25 A. It was discussed with the Department. 12: 35
- 26 96 Q. Notwithstanding that it was officially supposed to be
27 the policy, there is no further discussion after 1942?
- 28 A. There is no records.
- 29 97 Q. In relation to the final matter, which is the first

1 matter Mr. Connaughton raised with you, that is the
2 provision of information for children?

3 A. Yes.

4 98 Q. That is an important area and obviously you appreciate
5 the enormous disappointment for anyone who went to an
6 industrial school to come and find there is so little
7 in the records about them personally?

12:36

8 A. Yes.

9 99 Q. Just to give a context to you, you were describing how
10 the school was given very little information, do you
11 know much about the court process by which the children
12 came to the school and the kind of information that
13 came from the court?

12:36

14 A. I personally wouldn't know a lot of information about
15 that.

12:36

16 100 Q. For example, did the birth certificate come with the
17 papers from the court?

18 A. I don't know that.

19 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: Thank you very much.

20 12:36

21 END OF EXAMINATION OF SR. CASEY BY MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH

22
23 THE CHAIRPERSON: Mr. Lowe, have you anything
24 to ask?

25 12:36

26 SR. MARGARET CASEY WAS FURTHER QUESTIONED, AS FOLLOWS,
27 BY THE COMMISSION:

28
29 101 Q. MR. LOWE: I want to refer to a letter

1 in this booklet, it is on
2 pages 72 to 73. It is 29th October 1969 to the
3 Archbishop of Tuam. The problem is outlined in the
4 bottom four lines of the first page:

5 "It seems, as a result of the recent 12: 37
6 inspection, that by reason of advancing
7 years and other duties in her capacity
8 as Superior of the convent the nun has
9 little time to devote to the actual
day-to-day care of the children, though
she still controls the finances."

10 Then he outlines his opinion: 12: 37

11 "In my opinion, this is an entirely
12 unsatisfactory arrangement".

13 He goes on in the next paragraph:

14 "Administratively it would be a simple
15 matter to change the payment of the 12: 37
16 maintenance grant from one nun to
17 another. But in the particular
18 circumstances of the community in
Clifden this change would not be
effective unless Your Grace intervened
to make it so.

19 Accordingly I would ask Your Grace to
20 use your good officers to ensure that 12: 38
21 the financial control of the
22 maintenance grants paid by this
Department and the local authorities in
respect of the committed children is
placed in the hand of the other nun".

23
24 Now this is a simple administrative matter and yet it
25 involves so much political intrigue to bring it about. 12: 38

26 Can you explain?

- 27 A. The only explanation I can offer is that the particular
28 Resident Manager had been Resident Manager for 33 years
29 and she was in her 1970's at that stage and I am only

1 assuming that because of her age and because she had
2 worked all of her life in the industrial school, that
3 she just had difficulty in letting go. That's the only
4 interpretation that I can put on it. You see, she was
5 Reverend Mother and you had the new Resident Manager, 12: 39
6 so as Reverend Mother in one sense it would seem that
7 she was keeping some hand in, but the wisdom prevailed
8 and the funding and the arrangements were made that the
9 Resident Manager was thereby able to control the
10 finances from there on. 12: 39

11
12 Because again the timing of that, Mr. Lowe, was prior,
13 it was when they were an autonomous unit and the
14 Reverend Mother would have been the authority figure.
15 The next senior authority person to her would have been 12: 39
16 the ordinary, who was the Bishop and, in fact, he would
17 have been the one who would have been in a position to
18 bring about a change in that. It wouldn't have been
19 until after 1971, which would have been a different
20 structure. 12: 39

21 102 Q. MR. LOWE: But it is the assistant
22 secretary of the Department
23 who is asking for a change but he has to go through the
24 hierarchy?

25 A. Obviously it must have been a difficulty experienced 12: 39
26 with, as I said, the Resident Manager in letting go and
27 allowing the new Resident Manager to take over.

28 103 Q. MR. LOWE: When she's changed, in a
29 letter already referred to:

1 "On my visit to Clifden on 23rd January
2 1970 I found the new manager had made
3 good progress, numbers had been
4 reduced. The dormitories were clean
5 and smelt pleasantly."

6 Behind all of this political intrigue there was 12: 40
7 children being neglected. I mean, isn't there a system
8 within this to guarantee the quality of the school?

9 A. I would accept that it would appear that the children
10 were being neglected but I would have seen it more as a
11 management failure than actually neglecting the 12: 40
12 children.

13 MR. LOWE: Okay.

14 104 Q. THE CHAIRPERSON: I should say out loud what
15 I'm whispering to Mr. Lowe.
16 What's the consequence of management failure? 12: 40

17 A. The children and... (INTERJECTION).

18 105 Q. THE CHAIRPERSON: It depends on who you
19 prefer. If you like to
20 keep the thing in apple pie order, fair enough. But
21 I like everything else there are consequence and they 12: 41
22 reflect themselves.

23 A. And we do regret that that was the situation.

24 106 Q. THE CHAIRPERSON: No, no, I understand.

25 A. And it is personalities, and as I said, she was a long
26 time involved in it. 12: 41

27 107 Q. THE CHAIRPERSON: But the reality is?

28 A. The children did, yes.

29 108 Q. THE CHAIRPERSON: If you say in order to
tiptoe around the

1 sensibilities of the particular person in charge, in
2 whatever institution, in order to tiptoe around those
3 sensibilities I pay a price; isn't that right?

4 A. Yes.

5 THE CHAIRPERSON: Sorry, Mr. Lowe. 12: 41

6 109 Q. MR. LOWE: The children pay a price.

7 A. Yes.

8 110 Q. MR. LOWE: One of the things that
9 stood out in my memory from
10 the evidence we heard, there was one of your colleagues 12: 41
11 who was singled out by most of the children who gave
12 evidence as nice, as a very good nun, and she said yes,
13 she did use to give them a hug from time to time when
14 nobody was looking. That there was a kind of imbargo
15 on showing affection and she had to give them a hug on 12: 42
16 the sly. Can you comment on that situation, where a
17 very human need is somehow made difficult to perform?

18 A. I suppose in the context of religious life, how human
19 and all of us have our own natural warmth and affection
20 needs and the way we express it, with the vow of 12: 42
21 chastity and celibacy, the thinking was that instead of
22 showing specific affection and love for just one person
23 that you were freed to love all. It would have been
24 discouraged to, you know, show affection. But that's
25 not to say that individuals within that, you know, 12: 43
26 weren't able to build up relationship with them. I
27 just can't -- I am just trying to recall the context of
28 your question and I just can't recall it just now from
29 the evidence.

- 1 111 Q. MR. LOWE: The context is really
2 finding out why she was
3 singled out by so many as being a nice nun?
4 A. Obviously the children had a relationship with her and
5 were able to relate to her. 12: 43
6 MR. LOWE: Yes.
7 THE CHAIRPERSON: All right. Thank you.
8 Now, Ms. Shanley.
9 112 Q. MS. SHANLEY: Just clarification, if you
10 wouldn't mind. It was an 12: 43
11 issue that arose earlier on this morning. When you
12 would be providing secondary education prior to 1969,
13 you said or it was said this morning, in fact, that the
14 fees would have to be paid, would have to be met from
15 the industrial school, that you would have to pay the 12: 44
16 fees yourselves?
17 A. Are you asking what happened in... (INTERJECTION).
18 113 Q. MS. SHANLEY: I am just wondering is that
19 the case?
20 A. My understanding is that I truthfully don't know 12: 44
21 exactly what happened. Some of the -- we would have
22 had an arrangement with some of the schools perhaps but
23 the fees -- when I asked the Sister here in this case
24 why so many of them were able, it was paid from schools
25 or the health department board would have contributed 12: 44
26 towards the -- the social services which would have got
27 them funding for the children.
28 114 Q. MS. SHANLEY: Yes, I mean, are you aware
29 that there was a payment of

1 school fees from the industrial school to the convent
2 in Clifden, did that occur? I mean, to the school, to
3 the secondary school, convent, did that occur?

4 A. I am not aware of that. They wouldn't have had to pay
5 fees for secondary school after 1967. 12: 44

6 115 Q. MS. SHANLEY: No, no, I'm talking about
7 before 1967.

8 A. Before 1967.

9 116 Q. MS. SHANLEY: It was just a comment, as I
10 say, that was made this 12: 45
11 morning, that Sr. McQuaid made the point that she would
12 have had to and I didn't pick her up on it so it is not
13 fair asking you. But just for clarification, maybe
14 this was a practice peculiar to each individual
15 institution and didn't apply across the board, but I'm 12: 45
16 just wondering would you have paid fees from the
17 industrial school to the secondary school if the child
18 was going forward to the secondary school?

19 A. I truthfully don't know.

20 MS. SHANLEY: Well we can find that out, 12: 45
21 that's okay.

22

23 END OF FURTHER QUESTIONING OF SR. CASEY BY THE
24 COMMISSION

25 12: 45

26 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: In response to that
27 Commissioner, may I just
28 say that we will check that, but our understanding is
29 that it was not the case that industrial school funds

1 were used to pay for secondary school education, that
2 the funding had to be found elsewhere. For example,
3 the convent or an arrangement with the particular
4 secondary school or something of that kind.

5 THE CHAIRPERSON: But if it was run by the 12: 45
6 nuns.

7 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: If it was, yes.

8 THE CHAIRPERSON: If it was run by the nuns,
9 it seem as bit artificial

10 (A) and (B) I am just wondering how much it would have 12: 46
11 been.

12 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: But it wasn't coming out of
13 the capitation grant is the
14 point.

15 MS. SHANLEY: That was the precise 12: 46
16 impression I got, that it
17 was having to be funded.

18 MS. NI RAI FEARTAIGH: It was more that I was
19 putting to her that it
20 didn't come out of the State funding in any way, it had 12: 46
21 to come from some other source and that we can check as
22 far as we can, the financial records. But it is not
23 our understanding that anything came out of the
24 capitation grant to pay for the secondary education.

25 THE CHAIRPERSON: Thank you very much, 12: 46
26 Sister. Just before we go.
27 We have this afternoon we have Cappoquin, isn't that
28 right? Just before we go, when we started I referred
29 to something that I overlooked yesterday morning and I

1 may have given the impression that I was blaming
2 Mr. Reedy or involving him in anyway, it wasn't, I made
3 the mistake in relation to the swearing of the witness.
4 It was entirely my fault and my apologies to Mr. Reedy
5 for seeming to be trying to distribute the blame in any 12:46
6 way. It was my fault entirely. Thank you very much.

7
8 THE HEARING THEN CONCLUDED AT 12:47 P.M.